

Magazine of the Ministry for the Environment

ENVIRONZ

Take Taiao Aotearoa

November // 2007



By being clever and strategic, we can improve our way of life and reduce our impact on the planet.



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

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Climate change solutions

New Zealand can be a country that looks after its environment as well as its economy, the social well-being of its people and its culture. Being sustainable will involve a transformed economy where people are prosperous, but not at the expense of the planet. //

We are pleased to welcome our new Minister for the Environment, Hon Trevor Mallard, and look forward to working with him on the environment portfolio. We are also pleased to continue working with Hon David Parker on climate change issues and with Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Associate Minister for the Environment.

Like many others internationally, the Ministry was delighted that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Al Gore won the 2007 Nobel Peace prize for their efforts to increase and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change. It is encouraging to see acknowledgement of the IPCC. Enormous credit is due to many New Zealand experts who have played a key role in the IPCC in raising awareness of climate change.

New Zealand must prepare for a carbon constrained world in order to be a good global citizen, to grasp economic opportunities, and to be a leader. To guide our progress the Government has adopted targets for New Zealand:

- // by 2025, 90 per cent of our electricity generation will be from renewable sources
- // by 2040, our per capita transport greenhouse emissions will be reduced by half of those in 2007
- // we will be one of the first countries in the world to widely deploy electric vehicles
- // we will remain a world leader in agricultural emissions reduction research, and in the early adoption and application of new technologies and processes that reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions
- // By 2020, we will achieve a net increase in forest area of 250,000 hectares compared to 2007.

These are ambitious goals, but they are achievable. Together, through business and community efforts alongside the Government's active programme, we must use our expertise and commitment to shift New Zealand to achieving these targets.

I wish you a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year from all in the Ministry. //



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh Logan".

Hugh Logan

Secretary for the Environment
Ministry for the Environment



01

THE STATE OF NEW ZEALAND'S ENVIRONMENT

01 // People who make decisions about the environment need accurate information.

The most comprehensive report on this country's environment for a decade will be released when *Environment New Zealand 2007* is published.

A core team of Ministry staff has been responsible for producing the report of more than 400 pages.

"As we take action to achieve sustainability, having comprehensive information on the well-being of New Zealand's environment is crucial. *Environment New Zealand 2007* will offer essential guidance as our decision makers focus on ensuring this country's unique environment is well managed and protected long into the future," said Secretary for the Environment, Hugh Logan.

The first major report of this type was 1997's largely qualitative *The State of New Zealand's Environment*. Logan says the new report will give a national picture, but also show trends over time, reflecting an evolution in environmental monitoring and reporting by both territorial and central government during the past decade.

"The 1997 report concluded that New Zealand's environmental information needed considerable upgrading. I'm pleased that an emphasis on the Ministry developing a national reporting framework has led to this new benchmark report being possible," said Logan.

Justine Daw, Manager of Environmental Reporting, says it's important to have a detailed quantitative report to inform our sustainability work programmes. Producing *Environment New Zealand 2007* has been an ambitious and challenging project but a necessary one.

"We had a huge amount of help from staff in local and regional councils, and other agencies. Without their expertise it would have been difficult to collate the information essential to the report's success," said Daw.

Logan says the report represents another step in the commitment by central government to regular reporting on the state of New Zealand's environment.

"If we want a sustainable environment that supports our social and economic well-being, we need a clear picture of the challenges we face and the progress we have made. We want this report to help foster national conversation with New Zealanders on environmental sustainability."

The Ministry is finalising the report which will be circulated widely and made available on the Ministry's website. //

Environment New Zealand 2007 is divided into three sections:

- // setting the context
- // pressures on the environment (household consumption, transport, energy and waste)
- // state of the environment (air, atmosphere, land, fresh water, oceans and biodiversity).

For more information contact Justine Daw on (04) 439 7594 or email justine.daw@mfe.govt.nz

MINISTRY ON THE ROAD AGAIN

In October, the Ministry's Talk Environment Roadshow hit the road on a 13-day tour, holding meetings with the public and local government in 18 cities and towns.

The roadshow meetings make us aware of what is happening around the country and help us ensure we are addressing environment issues, says Secretary for the Environment, Hugh Logan.

Ministry staff facilitated discussions with members of the public, local businesses and local government. The main topics covered during the meetings were: adapting to climate change, national guidance under the Resource Management Act, sustainable business, and household sustainability.

Notes from discussions will be posted on the Ministry's website by mid-December. //



01 // Around 1,200 people attended this year's roadshow.

STAFF BUY-IN TO RECYCLING PROVES A WINNER FOR IRD

01 // IRD staff – not just tax collectors... they also audit their waste.

Photo // Inland Revenue Department.



Govt³ winners:

Inland Revenue Department for recycling/waste minimisation and for engaging staff in Govt³ – agencies with more than 200 staff.

New Zealand Police for sustainable buildings/fit-outs (environmentally sustainable design).

Ministry for the Environment for office consumables and equipment.

Housing New Zealand for sustainable transport.

Accident Compensation Corporation for sustainable procurement practice and for leadership in Govt³ – agencies with more than 200 staff.

Department of Corrections for sustainable improvement in energy efficiency.

Ministry of Research, Science and Technology for engaging staff in Govt³ – agencies with less than 200 staff and for leadership in Govt³ – agencies with less than 200 staff.

Inland Revenue shone at the Govt³ awards which recognise best-practice sustainable performance in the public sector in a bid to 'walk the talk'. The department attributes its success to management and staff support to implement change across the whole organisation.

The department took home two accolades at this year's awards – one for reducing their waste to landfill and the other for their success in engaging staff in recycling.

Peter Noble, Inland Revenue Govt³ champion, says they have groups of passionate people throughout the department who are championing sustainability. "It's great to have support from the grass roots up. All staff are very aware of sustainability issues and actively look for ways to improve the way we operate."

The last year has seen major change at Inland Revenue. All staff now have recycling facilities at their desk. That's more than 5,500 staff spread across 35 buildings in 16 towns and cities.

Old metal bins that sat under staff desks have been replaced with small desk-top cubes that collect less waste. Recycling bins for glass, plastics, cans and tins have been introduced in lunch rooms, and staff are encouraged to put paper into existing recycling bins.

Waste audits are carried out once a year for each site. This year they exceeded their expectations by reducing their waste to landfill by 35 per cent. That was 15 per cent ahead of their target. Noble is very proud of their achievements and claims it's only the start.

"We have plans to roll out other recycling practices including composting food scraps, the safe and environmentally responsible disposal of toner cartridges, fluorescent tubes, old computers, monitors and furniture and we will also be looking at vehicle procurement," said Noble.

Winning the 'Engaging staff in Govt³' award reflects Inland Revenue's comprehensive communications strategy and the way the department's sustainability team were able to actively reach people through a variety of communications.

"In the beginning we talked to 3,000 staff members face-to-face. We survey our staff every month and focus on a different sustainability topic every three months. We also use our intranet to reach staff, and screen savers to keep the latest topic on the agenda," said Noble.

Inland Revenue's inter-office shuttle service offers a sustainable transport option, and for the 2006/07 financial year, 18,907 passengers used the shuttle resulting in an increase of 140 per cent from the previous year.

The Govt³ Awards recognise achievements in eight categories ranging from transport and office consumables to staff participation and leadership. Congratulations to all those organisations that received an award or were highly commended. //

For more information contact
Kevin Broughton on
(04) 439 7407 or email
kevin.broughton@mfe.govt.nz

FROM RIVER TO TAP

01 // New drinking-water regulation will help ensure water is safe to drink.



01

Water from lakes, rivers and groundwater fills our taps. Ensuring this water is safe to drink is the purpose of new environment and health regulation.

The aim of a new national environmental standard coming into effect next year, is to protect the sources of our drinking water from further contamination.

“Safe drinking water is an essential human need, and even in developed countries water can be contaminated with bugs and other contaminants that can make us sick,” said Amanda Hunt, a senior adviser at the Ministry.

No single barrier is fail-safe says Hunt. Many disease outbreaks around the world have shown that treatment alone cannot be relied on to keep water safe. So, the World Health Organisation has advocated the “multi-barrier approach” which recommends having as many “barriers” as possible between the water source and the consumer. These barriers include source protection, treatment and maintenance of a safe distribution system.

The National Environment Standard for Sources of Human drinking-water focuses on the first stage of delivering healthy water to consumers – protecting water in the natural environment (eg, a river or groundwater) – and this comes under the control of the Resource Management Act. Health legislation applies once the water enters a drinking-water treatment or distribution system.

The national environmental standard will complement new health legislation – the Health (Drinking Water) Amendment Act, passed last month. The new health legislation focuses on effective water treatment and safe delivery to

consumers and together with the national environmental standard they provide a “multi-barrier” approach.

“Ensuring drinking-water sources are relatively clean helps protect existing treatment plants and infrastructure. It is more cost effective to keep out contaminants, rather than having to take them out later on,” said Hunt.

Once the sources of human drinking-water standard is passed, there will be a six month phase-in to give councils, water suppliers and consent applicants time to become familiar with its requirements.

The main requirements of the standard are for regional councils to:

- // decline discharge or water permits that are likely to result in community drinking water becoming unsafe for consumption following existing treatment.
- // be satisfied that permitted activities in regional plans will not result in community drinking water supplies being unsafe for consumption following existing treatment.

The standard will also require both regional and district/city councils to place conditions on relevant resource consents requiring notification of drinking water suppliers if significant unintended events occur (eg, accidental spills) that may adversely affect sources of human drinking-water.

Next year, the Ministry will produce guidance material and run workshops about the standard. //

RMAINFO at your service

For information about the Resource Management Act call **0800 762 4636** between 9am and 4.30pm or email **rmainfo@mfe.govt.nz**.

By contacting this new RMAINFO service you can receive project specific, tailored information on subjects including resource consents, plan changes, preparing submissions and attending council hearings.

For more information on the National Environment Standard for the Sources of Human Drinking-water contact **Amanda Hunt** on (04) 439 7521 or email **amanda.hunt@mfe.govt.nz**

For information on national environmental standards visit **www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/index.html**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE RMA



01 // Caring for our planet.

The Resource Management Act (RMA) remains an important tool for sustainably managing our natural resources.

The concept of sustainable development as being development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs was coined in the 1987 'Brundtland report'. Sustainable development was subsequently adopted as the central theme of a United Nations conference, in 1992, called the "Earth Summit".

The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro is widely regarded as the breakthrough in worldwide sustainable development thinking. It was unprecedented for a United Nations conference, in terms of its size and the scope of its concerns. The summit formed a platform for governments to rethink economic development and for the first time governments signed up to giving environmental, social and economic objectives equal status.

New Zealand was already one step ahead of many countries involved in the Rio summit, as the RMA – which explicitly recognises sustainability as its overarching theme – was already up and running.

"We were ahead of the game and can be proud that the Act came into force a year before the Rio summit," says Craig Mallett, Manager of RMA Implementation at the Ministry.

As a result of the Earth Summit, sustainable development is often viewed as resting on the three pillars of economy, society and environment. Each of these pillars is vital for the goal of sustainable development to be achieved.

The RMA is a part of the 'environment pillar' of sustainable development as it pursues sustainability by ensuring harmful effects of resource use are avoided, remedied or mitigated. It also imposes limits on the use of public resources (ie, air, water and coastal space) to avoid over-exploitation and enable fair and reasonable access for people and communities.

The RMA paved the way for showing how sustainable management could be a useful concept for guiding other legislative direction. Since the RMA in 1991, at least six other New Zealand statutes, including legislation for fisheries, indigenous forestry, transport, electricity and local government, have adopted sustainability as a core theme.

However, the RMA is narrower than sustainable development. That, says Craig Mallett, is because the Act was never intended as a 'blueprint for living'. The purpose of the Act is first and foremost about minimising environmental impacts. And while it does recognise social and economic needs, it does not actively promote social and economic aspirations.

In February, the Prime Minister announced six flagship initiatives to help New Zealand realise the economic opportunities as well as environmental benefits, offered by shifting towards greater sustainability. She also recognised the importance of culture in sustainable development.

These six initiatives are aimed at promoting sustainability in business, households and the public service, reducing waste and improving the certification of environmentally friendly products and services. //

For more information contact
Craig Mallett on (04) 439 7419 or
email craig.mallett@mfe.govt.nz



CLEANING UP THE SMOKE

01 // 'Smokey the bear' uses a low emission vehicle to tour Nelson.

Photo // Nelson City Council.

02 + 03 // Haze over Richmond, Tasman.

Photos // Tasman District Council.

Air pollution affects health and local councils are finding creative means to clean up our air. One example is introducing rules to ensure clean heating is installed in newly purchased homes.

Alison Henderson, also known as 'Smokey the Bear', is the Air Quality Liaison Officer for Nelson City Council and visits Nelson homes to educate people about the Council's new plan rules to tackle air pollution.

Generally, the main source of air pollution around the country is home heating, particularly wood burners and open fires, although in Auckland the main source is vehicles. Regional councils monitor air quality and are taking steps to meet national environmental standards to reduce pollution levels.

Overall, in New Zealand, poor air quality is estimated to cause 1,100 premature deaths each year, according to a Government-funded study called Health and Air Pollution in New Zealand published in July.

To tackle air pollution in Nelson, the City Council is banning open fires in urban areas from January 2008, and phasing out old enclosed burners in parts of the city from January 2010. 'Smokey' helps ensure residents know how the rules may affect them and if they are eligible for financial assistance to install a cleaner heating alternative.

Richmond, in Tasman, suffers bad air days and in response Tasman District Council has introduced new rules about the use of wood burners. Since January, when a house is bought

in Richmond, the new owner cannot use a non-compliant burner. For a small council with a budget stretched in all directions, this is a creative solution, says Tasman Policy Planner, Mary-Anne Baker.

"The cost of replacing a wood burner with a clean heat system or approved burner is a small proportion of total house value and the buyer and seller can negotiate who covers this cost."

The Council has raised awareness of the Richmond wood burner rules through real estate agents. At the outset, they received a lot of queries, but now things have settled down and people seem to have accepted the new rule, says Baker.

To tackle pollution problems nationally, in 2004 the Government introduced 14 national environmental standards to improve air quality. The standards include five health-based standards and restrictions on resource consents to reduce levels of particulate pollution (PM_{10}) in areas where it is high. The levels set by the standard are intended to protect the health of the whole community including the most vulnerable, such as children and old people.

Other central government action to improve our air includes research and funding for clean heating, and several transport measures including the introduction of cleaner fuels and proposed policies to reduce harmful vehicle emissions. //



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For more information contact
Louise Wickham on
(04) 439 7475 or email
louise.wickham@mfe.govt.nz



Emissions trading

MADE EASY

“Climate change is no longer solely an environmental issue – if we and the world do not reduce emissions major economic, social and even security ramifications are expected to follow,” said Climate Change Minister, David Parker, at the launch of the emissions trading scheme.

Why we need emissions trading

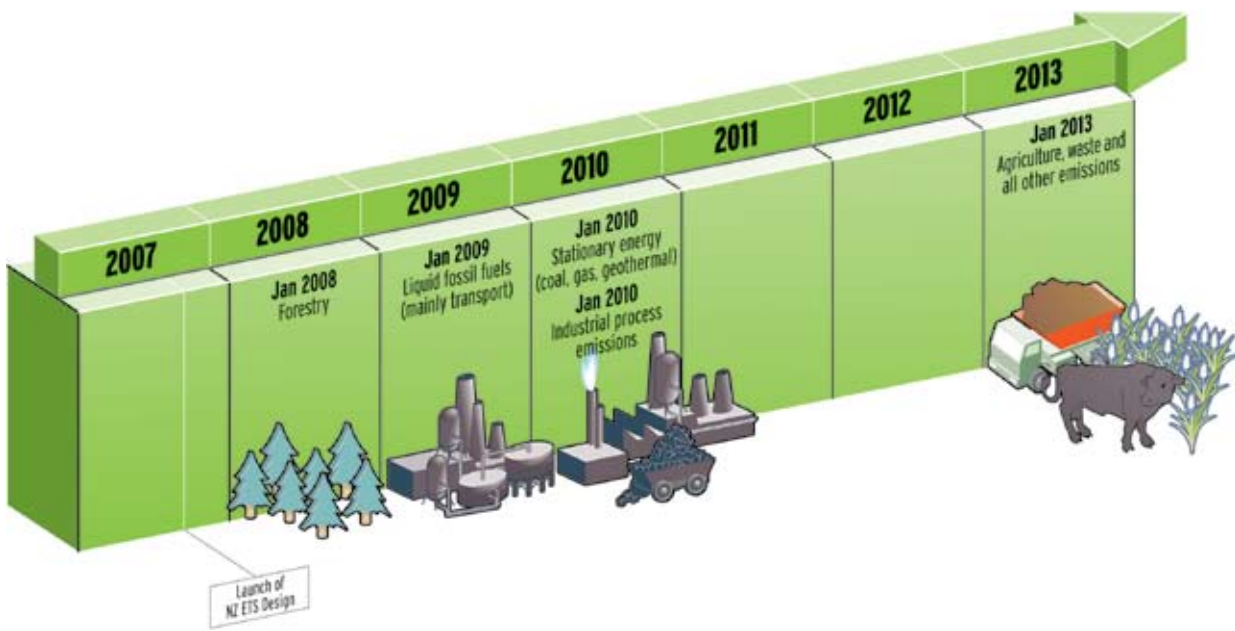
The emissions trading scheme, announced on 20 September, is in line with initiatives being developed in other countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Becoming more sustainable and dealing with climate change is an important part of the Government’s strategy for economic transformation. Failure to manage greenhouse gas emissions could have serious trade risks for New Zealand and damage our credibility internationally.

The main cause of climate change is greenhouse gases produced by human activity, such as driving vehicles, farming animals and manufacturing products. The most damaging greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.

The Government considered options, other than emissions trading, for reducing emissions, such as a carbon tax and new laws. However, emissions trading offers the most flexible and lowest-cost option.

If we do nothing, New Zealand’s greenhouse gas emissions are expected to rise significantly. Minister Parker, recently said, “I am confident we can nearly halve our projected greenhouse gas deficit of 45.5 million tonnes to 25 million tonnes or less by implementing an emissions trading scheme and associated initiatives.”

The effect on the economy of introducing the emissions trading scheme is expected to be negligible.



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Economic modelling predicts it will knock only 0.1 to 0.3 per cent off New Zealand's growth in gross domestic product between 2007 and 2012.

"The emissions trading scheme maintains economic flexibility, equity between sectors, and between industry, consumers and taxpayers. It does all this while achieving environmental integrity at least cost in the long term," said Minister Parker.

Emissions trading will mean some increases in the cost of products that cause greenhouse gas emissions, such as petrol and electricity, but the Government will help households, businesses and industry adapt to these increases.

It will also bring opportunities for New Zealand businesses. We are already a world leader in technology in important areas like agriculture, forestry and biotechnology. New doors will open for these sectors if they are at the forefront of developing new, carbon-friendly technology.

How emissions trading works

The New Zealand emissions trading scheme will cover emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydro fluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride. These are the greenhouse gases covered by the Kyoto Protocol.

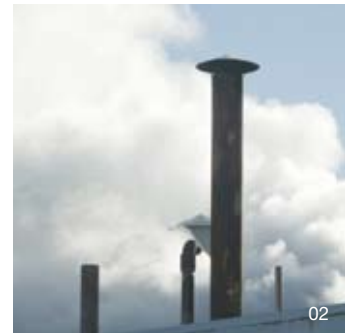
Since 1990, New Zealand's total greenhouse gas emissions from transport have increased by 62 per cent, and will keep rising if we do nothing. We also produce a lot of carbon dioxide by burning coal, oil and gas for electricity.

Almost half of our greenhouse gas emissions come from farm animals, which produce methane and nitrous oxide. Using nitrogen fertiliser also produces nitrous oxide.

Each tonne of greenhouse gas emitted will be equal to one "emission unit". Industries and foresters carrying out activities that cause emissions can buy and sell emissions units. At the end of a given time period, those people will have to give the Government a sufficient number of emission units to cover the emissions their activities have produced during that time. Once an emission unit has been given up, it cannot be used again.

Emissions trading schemes often operate under a cap-and-trade system. For New Zealand's emissions trading scheme, the overall limit on the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions that can be emitted is the global cap set by the Kyoto Protocol and any subsequent international climate change agreements. This means the New Zealand emissions trading scheme will not have an absolute limit on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced within New Zealand. Participants in the scheme will be able to buy emissions reductions from overseas using Kyoto Protocol mechanisms.

Approximately 170 large businesses as well as around 2,300 forest owners will participate in the scheme, and the rest from other industries. Not all participants in the scheme will necessarily be those directly responsible for producing greenhouse gas emissions. For example, a coal producer may have to give up emission units for the coal it sells, even though the emissions occur when coal is burned. However, the coal producer will pass on the cost of buying emission units to their customers thus providing an incentive for consumers to find ways of using less coal, to use it more efficiently or to find a cheaper, more sustainable source of fuel. Any of these results will mean less greenhouse gas emissions, and this is how the emissions trading scheme will be effective.



02

01 // Timeline for the entry of sectors into the Emissions Trading scheme.

02 // The scheme encompasses all greenhouse gases and all sectors.

“We’re proud that forestry is the first sector to join the emissions trading scheme”



03 // As trees grow they absorb and store carbon dioxide, and when they die that carbon is released back into the atmosphere.

04 // Forestry sector – joining the scheme in January next year.

Trading emissions units

Market traders can buy and sell emission units, rather like stocks and shares. Some “voluntary” units have already been sold to private buyers on TradeMe, and the New Zealand Stock Exchange proposes to launch a trading platform for emission units called TZ1. Participants in the emissions trading scheme will also be able to trade directly with anyone who holds emission units here or overseas. They may also be given free emission units by the Government, buy them from the Government, or buy them overseas.

The movements of emission units between scheme participants, the Government and traders will be recorded in an electronic register. It will also record who holds emission units and how many, how much greenhouse gas the holders are responsible for, and which emission units have been given up permanently.

Participants will also need to monitor, record and report their activities that lead to emissions.

Who participates in the emissions trading scheme and when

To be fair to everyone, the emissions trading scheme will include all industry sectors that emit greenhouse gases. This includes electricity generation and industrial heat and power, transport, forestry, farming, waste, and industrial processes such as aluminium smelting. Including all sectors maximises the opportunities for innovation to find cheap ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The participating sectors will be introduced to the emissions trading scheme over five years, starting in 2008. Forestry will be first to join the scheme on 1 January 2008. Liquid fuels for transport, such as petrol, diesel and oil, will join a year later, followed by other energy sources such as coal, gas and geothermal power in January 2010. Emissions from industrial processes other than those producing energy will also join at the beginning of 2010. Stock and crop farming and horticulture will be the last to join the scheme in January 2013, along with the waste sector. Although some sectors join the scheme later, they will need to start preparing now.

Forestry – the first to join the scheme

“We’re proud that forestry is the first sector to join the emissions trading scheme,” said Peter Berg, President of the New Zealand Forest Owners Association, “We’ve been recognised as a sector that is making a contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and will continue to do so. We’re ready to join the scheme, and it reflects well on our industry.”

The forestry sector is split into two different categories – forests planted before 1990 and those planted after 1989 – and each is treated differently under the emissions trading scheme.

Owners of forests planted after 1989 can choose whether or not to enter the trading scheme. If they do enter the scheme, they will receive free emission units from the Government while their forests are growing. This is to account for

You can download factsheets and other documents about the emissions trading scheme from the website www.climatechange.govt.nz or order them in hard copy by emailing publications@mfe.govt.nz.

For more information about the emissions trading scheme contact **Dave Brash**, email dave.brash@mfe.govt.nz

the carbon dioxide being stored by the trees. However, when they harvest a forest or if it burns down, they will have to give up some of their emissions units.

Owners of forests planted before 1990 will not face any emissions obligations if they harvest trees, as long as the land is replanted or left to regenerate into forest. But they will have to give up emission units to the Government if they permanently deforest their land after the forestry sector joins the scheme.

Forestry is unusual among participants in the emissions trading scheme because forest owners are responsible for emission units. In other sectors the people responsible for emission units are further up the supply chain.

“I’m sure the emissions trading scheme will work”, said Berg. “Foresters have been advocating for something like this for some time. The liability for greenhouse gas emissions will be where it belongs, and we’ll all see the benefit.”

New Zealand's response to climate change

The emissions trading scheme is one major project to tackle greenhouse gas emissions. However, over the last few months, the New Zealand Government has announced a range of policies to move New Zealand towards living and working sustainably. These policies will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally and in New Zealand, and start to combat climate change.

For example, in September, Agriculture Minister Hon Jim Anderton, announced \$170 million over the next five years to develop a comprehensive Plan of Action on Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change.

In October, the Government released its Energy Strategy and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy which will encourage New Zealanders to reduce energy use, and conserve energy, produce it using renewable technology and use it more efficiently.

“Climate change and how we deal with it is probably the most crucial environmental issue facing the world today”, said Minister Parker in October 2007. “The scientific evidence shows overwhelmingly that it is real and happening now.” //



01 // Tom led a community 'sustainable futures' forum.

LOCAL HERO

Tom Logan's enthusiasm for the environment has made him a local hero in Hawke's Bay. A recent feat for the 16-year-old environmentalist was to lead a community 'sustainable futures' forum organised by the Ministry and Hawke's Bay Regional Council.

Tom says he wants to act now to look after the planet, rather than regret things later.

“When I look forward to what I want to do in the future the thought always pops in – hang on, am I going to be able to do that? If I want to go to Venice is it still going to be there?”

The teenager led 50 adults at the forum which was part of a nationwide series, organised by the Ministry, to encourage people to take sustainable action in their communities.

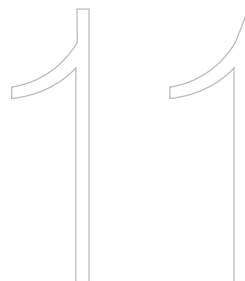
Tom says there are lots of things people can do to be sustainable without going out of their way, such as using a bus if it goes past their place.

When he's not at school, Tom is actively involved in the Youth Environment Council. Their latest community project is to restore the Ben Gee fountain area and plant native aquatic plants and trees to make it more of a community place. Now he is helping organise the annual Hawke's Bay Youth Environment Forum for local high school students. //

Young Peter Jackson's have their say about sustainability

Watch young people's vision of New Zealand's future through their own eyes on www.sustainability.govt.nz. The movies made by youths under 20-years were produced for a film challenge, partly sponsored by the Ministry in partnership with Connected Media, the EnviroSchools Foundation and the Global Education Centre.

For more information contact Madeleine Berry on (04) 439 7503 or email madeleine.berry@mfe.govt.nz





01

“The entries at this year’s awards showed sustainability has become business as usual in the packaged goods industry, mostly because sustainable products and practices have also proved to benefit profit.”

MOVE OVER FOR sustainable product design

Sustainability is a driving force for product innovation and yes, it’s good for our environment too.

Mortality is not something people like to dwell on every day, but have you ever considered the environmental impacts of a coffin?

Plastic, synthetic linings and glue containing formaldehyde are features in most New Zealand coffins. Now that more New Zealanders are becoming aware of their impact on the environment, the demand for natural burials and eco-friendly coffins is growing.

This is where the *Return to Sender* eco coffin, designed by Greg Holdsworth from Holdsworth Design, comes into play. It uses a minimum of materials which are also bio-degradable and non-toxic.

The interest in and uptake of the coffin are proof that its stylish, unique design appeals to a wide range of people, not just ‘green’ consumers. It is a great example of how good product design can go hand-in-hand with sustainable principles.

Designers are increasingly aware they have a responsibility to include sustainable principles into their work, says Cathy Veninga, Chief Executive Officer of Designers Institute of New Zealand.

“Ideally, products should be designed in such a way that consumers can rest assured the product of their choice is sustainably sound,” said Veninga.

With research showing that about 70 per cent of the environmental impacts of a product are determined at design stage, thinking about sustainability at the drawing board is an effective way to improve a product’s green credentials.



The *Return to Sender* eco coffin won a silver award for sustainable product design at the 2007 BeST Design Awards, supported by the Ministry. Formway Furniture struck gold, at the same awards, for their *Met Adapt* office furniture range.

However, the design world are not the only ones thinking sustainability at the drawing-board. Awareness is also gaining momentum in the packaging industry.

Kiwi export tray – a fine example of sustainable packaging

A good example of best practice sustainable design is a kiwifruit export tray which was supreme winner at the 2007 Environmental Packaging Awards. The tray, developed by Maniaia Mist Paper Solutions, incorporates environmentally-friendly principles throughout its life cycle – from design, to production and disposal.

The export tray is made of 65 per cent waste kiwifruit pulp and 35 per cent unbleached wood pulp. It is suitable for use in organic export markets because no artificial additives or chemicals are used in the production process and the trays are biodegradable, compostable and recyclable.

The kiwifruit plants aren't sprayed with a weed killer because vine trimmings are used to make pulp which prevents growers having to mulch into soil under vines.

Sustainable practices are used in the tray's production. During the pulp making process, water is recycled and energy is conserved by using energy efficient light bulbs. Also, time switches are used on machinery to keep electricity usage to a minimum.

Paul Curtis, Executive Director of the Packaging Council, says entries at this year's awards showed sustainability has become business as usual in the industry, mostly because sustainable products and practices have also proved to benefit profit.

"All winning entries share one trait: they will be successful. Not because they're eco-friendly or warm and fuzzy. They will be successful either because they are the most economical solution to a problem or because they will deliver better products and more profitable results" Curtis said.

Overall, the packaging industry has committed to increasing sustainable practices on an ongoing basis through the Packaging Accord. The Accord, which has just entered its fourth year, is based on the principle that all players in the life cycle of a product carry responsibility for its environmental impacts. It brings together the majority of New Zealand's packaging manufacturers, brand owners, retailers, recycling operators, central and local government.

A wide range of initiatives launched right across the packaging lifecycle, from design to disposal, has helped divert 57 per cent of packaging from landfill in the year to March 2007. This is an increase of 67,500 tonnes on the year before.

Encouraging all sectors to take responsibility for their products

The Government is working with many sectors (not just packaging) to accept responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products. To this end, the Ministry is working with a number of industries to establish 'product stewardship schemes', such as Agrecovery's collection of used agricultural chemical containers.

01 // Mortality is not something people like to dwell on every day, but have you ever considered the environmental impacts of a coffin?

Photo // Holdsworth Design.

02 // Electronic goods are collected on eDay to be disposed of safely.

Photo // Gareth Cooke.

03 // Maniaia Mist Paper Solutions considered the environmental impacts from design to production of their Kiwifruit export tray.

Photo // The Packaging Council.



04 // Agrecovery will enable farmers and growers to dispose of their plastic chemical containers in a responsible way.

Rachel Depree, General Manager of Sustainable Business at the Ministry, says the Government's preferred approach is to continue to support such voluntary schemes where they are meeting their targets. "It is also responding to calls from some industry sectors for regulations to reign in free riders."

A range of options for regulations have been recently outlined by the Government (see "Update on the Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill"). These would further support businesses to design practical solutions to reduce the environmental impacts of their products, says Depree.

"The new legislation is not a 'one size fits all' solution. It provides a selection of measures that Government can use to support product stewardship schemes. Businesses are still expected to design and implement their own schemes, to allow flexibility in how problems are addressed and to ensure that those who know most about a product are involved in reducing its environmental impact."

The proposed legislation is at the cutting edge of what is being developed around the world, and will provide New Zealand with an excellent base to meet the waste minimisation challenges ahead of us in a rational, timely and effective manner.

Government would have the ability to recognise and reward businesses that do the right thing. For example, through some form of accreditation such as 'Environmental Choice'.

"Businesses that adopt sustainable practices will find their innovation and flexibility rewarded with a competitive advantage over others," says Depree. //

For information on product stewardship legislation visit www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/waste.

For information on the Return to Sender Eco-Coffin visit www.returntosender.co.nz

For information on the Packaging Awards and the Packaging Accord visit www.packaging.org.nz

For information on the business benefits of sustainability visit www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/sustainable-industry/tools-services/concepts.php



UPDATE ON THE WASTE MINIMISATION (SOLIDS) BILL

The Government has recently released details of several proposals to help minimise the generation of waste and increase its recovery. The most important measures are:

- // a national waste levy at \$10 per tonne (exc. GST)
- // product stewardship legislation
- // new requirements for reporting on waste
- // new structures for the governance of waste
- // a new body to advise the Minister for the Environment on waste.

New legislation is needed to implement some of the proposed measures. The Waste Minimisation (Solids) Bill, currently before the Local Government and Environment Select Committee, offers a vehicle to achieve this, although substantial amendments may be required.

The proposals were presented to the Select Committee in September. They will be considered within the context of the Bill, and the Select Committee will report back to the House in March 2008, before Parliament votes on the Bill. //

01 // Working to reduce our waste.

Please visit www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/waste for more detail on these proposals.



A FINE WINE NEEDS GOOD PLANNING

15



Bacchus, the god of wine, is likely to be chuckling merrily as he observes how seriously we take wine production in New Zealand. We don't quite worship it but the high standards we aim for means exceeding expectations, and winning prestigious awards.

Kiwi ingenuity and determination is helping the wine industry and Government conquer the food miles issue and has led to New Zealand having the first certified carbon zero vineyard in the world .

But like any good thing, producing good wine takes time. It also takes good planning and these days the industry is planning for an environmentally sustainable future.

This is an industry that is working within the framework of the Resource Management Act (RMA) to get the balance right between local government regional plans, communities and industry demand.

Philip Gregan, CEO of New Zealand Wine Growers, says since the RMA became operative wine growers have embraced the act as an opportunity to build a sound regulatory base for an industry based around sustainability principles.

The wine industry is leading the charge in business sustainability. CarboNZero certified producer, Grove Mill supplies the leading UK supermarket chain Sainsbury's, and reported in May a lift in sales to the chain of more than 100 per cent. They have also been asked to produce the house brand for Sainbury's.

Winegrowers are showing commitment to sustainable production. Currently over 60 per cent of New Zealand's total vineyard area is covered by the industry's Sustainable Winegrowing

Programme, and they are aiming for 100 per cent of the industry to operate under independently audited sustainability schemes by 2012.

To advance sustainability and growth, the New Zealand Winegrowers, in partnership with the Ministry and Local Government New Zealand have just produced an RMA planning guidance note *Planning for the Wine Industry*.

"The launch of the guidance note is another very important step forward in building a sustainable future for our industry. Our work with the RMA has complemented other initiatives in areas such as research and our Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand programme," said Gregan.

The guidance note highlights various successful approaches applied in district plans to address resource management issues. It gives examples of 'special areas' and how to address issues, such as the use of agrichemical sprays, noise, parking, water allocation and use, and waste management.

On launching the guidance note in September, Acting Environment Minister David Parker said, "Given the growing importance of the wine industry to the New Zealand economy, this type of proactive thinking which supports New Zealand's clean, green image also protects our top shelf ranking on the world market."

This guidance note adds to the broad suite of RMA guidance that is on the Quality Planning website to assist planning practitioners.

01 // The wine industry is proof that businesses can grow and also be environmentally sustainable.

Photo // Olssen's Garden Vineyard.

02 // The industry is a significant contributor to the economy, with \$1.2 billion worth of total sales in 2006/07, projected to reach \$1.5 billion by 2010.

Photo // Seifried Estate.

For more information visit www.qp.org.nz or contact: Greg Vossler on (04) 439 7720 or email greg.vossler@mfe.govt.nz

IN BRIEF

Apply now to the 2008 Sustainable Management Fund

The Ministry is accepting funding applications for practical projects that promote community action and have long-term environmental benefits. Community groups, iwi, businesses and local government can apply for between \$10,000 and of \$200,000 per financial year. The funding round is open until the 22 January 2008. For more information visit www.mfe.govt.nz/withyou/funding.

What's your next step?

www.sustainability.govt.nz will be launched in December to challenge New Zealanders to take steps to be more sustainable. It will provide tips on being sustainable at home with energy use, water use, waste disposal, transport and building related choices. The website will also feature video clips from workshops, a weekly opinion poll, a YouTube competition 'what's your sustainability?' and forums for visitors to share their sustainability stories.

New Zealand is hosting World Environment Day next year

The United Nations have selected New Zealand to host international celebrations for World Environment Day on 5 June next year. The celebrations will focus on opportunities for countries, companies and communities to "Kick the habit" and make the transition to a low carbon economy and lifestyle. We need to hear your environmental success stories so please email WED@mfe.govt.nz

Climate change efforts rewarded with Nobel Peace prize

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Al Gore were awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace prize, on 12 October, for their efforts to build and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and for laying foundations for the measures needed to counter such change. Many New Zealand experts have been involved in the IPCC's research and assessment reports over the 19 years it has been operating.

Steps to strengthen contaminated land management

Priority issues and gaps in the way contaminated land is managed in New Zealand will be addressed through a new Ministry work programme announced on 17 October. For more information visit www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/hazardous/contaminated/ or email contaminatedlandinfo@mfe.govt.nz

eDay success a start to corporate recycling programmes

New Zealanders dropped off nearly 300 tonnes of computer equipment and mobile phones for safe disposal or recycling, on New Zealand's first national eDay, organised by the Computer Access New Zealand Trust with support from the Ministry. To learn how to dispose of mobile phones, batteries, household lamps and computer equipment in an environmentally responsible way visit www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/waste/

FOR YOUR DIARY...

Consultation – what's coming up

The wider community will be asked to provide input into the following consultations on environmental issues over the next few months. The plans and dates are intended as a guide only and may be subject to change.

| Topic | Approx Date | Input | Contact |
|--|---------------------------|---|---|
| A nationwide survey of inert landfill sites (commonly termed 'clean fills') and organic waste processing facilities. | January/ February 2008 | Phase 1: Regional authorities. Phase 2: Local Authorities. Phase 3: Site operators. | Ross Fitzpatrick Phone (04) 439 7448 or email ross.fitzpatrick@mfe.govt.nz |