highlights of our year

In 2006, regional community outcomes were identified as part of the Regional Council's aim of creating a sustainable region of choice for Northlanders.

The outcomes describe what the people of Northland value and what they would like the region to be like in the future. They are intended to guide the planning processes of local authorities.

Full details of these outcomes and how the Council's activities contribute to the achievement of these outcomes can be found in the Northland Community Plan 2009-2019 or on our website *www.nrc.govt.nz/LTCCP*

The Council's activities are also guided by the various plans and strategies that are at the core of the services we are required to provide to the people of Northland. (Details of these plans are broadly shown in the table opposite.)

Later in this Annual Report, you will find explanations of how the Council has performed during the past year in terms of its various levels of service, performance targets and measures.

In order to provide you with an overview of our achievements, following is a snapshot of our key successes.

Key infrastructure – millions spent on public facilities

The Regional Council funded a number of key community infrastructure projects throughout 2009-2010.

The Northland Events Centre is now operational. Work began on the Okara Park, Whāngārei project early in 2009, funded by $13 million from the Northland Regional Council and $3 million from the Whāngārei District Council. A subsequent $2.5 million grant from Central Government was used to further enhance the multi-events centre, which will host two matches during the Rugby World Cup 2011.

The Kerikeri Sports Complex was completed in early 2010. The $2 million multi-purpose Far North District Council building was funded in part through the Regional Council's Recreation Fund.

The complex features 12 netball courts, three sports fields, 300-plus car parks and the multi-purpose shared facility with eight changing rooms, canteen, social area, officials' meeting and control rooms, kitchen and tiered decking for spectators.

The new 50-metre Dargaville swimming pool also received money through the Regional Council's Recreation Fund. The 50 metre pool features solar panels as a back up for the heat pump to keep the pool at 25-26°C, while the hydrotherapy/learners' pool will operate at 32-34°C.

The 30 Year Transport Strategy was a substantial infrastructure planning project completed by the Council during 2009-2010. The Strategy was adopted at the end of May 2010 and addresses all forms of transport – including air and coastal. It is the first Strategy of its type in New Zealand to have a 30 Year outlook.

A SUSTAINABLE REGION

Regional Community Outcomes

COUNCIL CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOMES

Regional Policy Statement (RPS)
Provides the framework for managing the resources of our region in a sustainable way.

Regional Coastal Plan
Regional Air Quality Plan
Regional Water and Soil Plan
These plans set controls for the use, development and protection of water, soil, air and the Northland Coast.

Regional Land Transport Strategy
Provides the statutory planning framework for land transport in our region.

Civil Defence Emergency Management Plan
Provides a process for regional hazard identification and management.

Pest Management Strategies
Provides a strategic framework for the management of pest plants and animals in Northland.

River Management Plans
Provides details of plans to reduce the impacts of flooding of Northland rivers.

Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan
Details the Council's response to oil spills in the marine environment.

Working with the Community

HOW THE COUNCIL CONTRIBUTES TO THE OUTCOMES

Emergency Management – from tsunamis to drought

In September and October 2009 earthquakes in Samoa and Vanuatu saw the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre generate tsunami warnings for New Zealand. In response to these warnings, the Northland Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Group activated its Group Emergency Operation Centre and the Far North, Whāngārei and Kaipara District Councils activated responses at various levels.

Immediate action was taken to alert communities using a variety of methods including the media, fax, email, text messages and telephone trees. Although there were no reports of damage, there were reports of strong tidal currents around the Tutukaka marina.

After the events a number of suggestions were made for improvements that could be made for future events. These were mainly recommendations about more effective ways to distribute warnings through the national media.

It was also noted that public education on tsunamis needed to be improved, particularly around the impacts of such events. The success of the community response plans was noted, and it was agreed that the Northland population at large was aware of the tsunami warnings.

A national tsunami training exercise is planned on 20 October 2010 to test all arrangements at a national, regional and local level in real time. The object of the exercise is to build on the lessons learnt and the improvements that were made as a result of the 2009 tsunamis, in order to improve our awareness and safety for any future events.

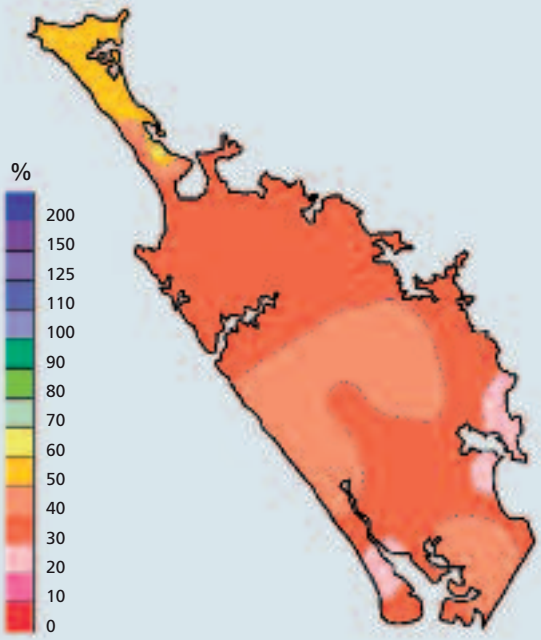
Drought has a major impact

During mid 2009 the National Institute of Water and Atmosphere (NIWA) climate scientists advised that an El Niño weather pattern in the Pacific Ocean was expected to intensify and persist through to the autumn of 2010. Low spring and summer rainfalls occurred in the east of Northland between Kaitāia and Whāngārei.

During early December the Northland Regional Council issued more than 600 letters to consent holders taking water from bores, streams and lakes. These advised users of potential water shortages and restrictions and the need to conserve water, monitor usage and plan for alternative supplies. The Government declared Northland a medium level drought zone in January 2010.

Northland Age photo.

Percentage of Normal Rainfall in Northland
November 2009 - April 2010



Severe drought conditions continued throughout April in areas of the far north and central and eastern Northland. Water restrictions were enforced in the far north areas during January. The water level in Whāngārei's Whau Valley Dam was only 45% full at the end of April. Water restrictions were placed in Whāngārei City and Whāngārei Heads areas in April. The fire risk remained high, with a total fire ban in force across Northland throughout the summer.

Rainfall amounts from November 2009 to April 2010 were only 300mm along the eastern coast of Northland (normally 800mm), the lowest rainfall amount for this period in 90 years. The regional rainfall deficit – that is the amount of rain required to reach normal rainfall – over the 6 month period was 400mm.

Soil moistures dropped in response to low rainfall and the warmer temperatures and river flows steadily declined in most catchments. Rivers in the far north and eastern areas were at their lowest flows in 40 to 50 years. Many irrigators had to stop taking water from rivers because the levels were so low.

The Council's hydrometric network – a series of rainfall, water level, flow and some climatic stations – provided crucial information enabling Council staff to determine whether river levels were dangerously low and at what point irrigation should be stopped on farms and orchards.

A Northland Drought Committee was established, led by Rural Support Trust Northland. The committee provided advice and support to farming families affected by the drought. The Regional Council provided water management advice, monitoring and reporting to major water users and the public and managed consent compliance.

Information was regularly posted on the Council's website and Council staff worked with Northland's District Councils to monitor and develop specific plans to cope with water shortages.

The drought was 'broken' when significant rain fell during the first week of May. Water shortage directions were cancelled and water restrictions were lifted. By the end of May 2010 many parts of Northland had received double the May average rainfall resulting in improved river flows and an increase in soil moisture.

Even though the drought has broken, the ongoing impacts have been severe and widespread. These include the costs of re-stocking and winter feed, lower lambing/calving, water stress which has impacted tree health and next season's harvest. The economic cost of the drought on Northland has been estimated to be over $300 million.

Water quality – still a top priority

Northland's rivers and streams provide habitat for a range of indigenous flora and fauna, as well as being an important water supply for rural communities, horticulture and agricultural demands.

Our rivers and streams also provide important recreational, aesthetic and cultural value to Northlanders.

Pollution enters rivers and streams directly from industrial discharges, and indirectly when rain creates runoff over the land, which then enters our waterways. Because our rivers are comparatively small, they have little capacity to dilute contaminants. As the majority of Northland's rivers flow into harbours rather than open coastline, poor river water quality can also affect the health of our harbours.

Water quality monitoring of rivers and streams is undertaken at 35 sites throughout Northland as part of the Council's state of the environment monitoring network. Water quality is monitored monthly for a range of properties such as bacteria and nutrients.

Changes in the water quality of Northland's rivers and streams during the past year were:

- **Water clarity** – water clarity measures how clear or cloudy the water is. Poor water clarity compromises the river's suitability for swimming. In 2009-2010 most sites had good compliance with water clarity guidelines. Clarity was poor in areas with a lot of erosion such as the Utakura, Ruakaka and Paparoa Rivers. Water clarity improved in the Awanui, Victoria, Kaeo and Ruakaka catchments. This improvement may be partly explained by the drought with less rainfall running off the land, taking sediment into the rivers.
- ***E.coli* bacteria** – low levels of bacteria are present in freshwater as a result of natural processes such as plant decay. However, land-use practices and human activity can increase the levels of bacteria. Water that has been contaminated by human or animal faeces may contain a range of disease-causing micro-organisms, such as viruses, bacteria and protozoa. These organisms may pose a health hazard when the water is used for recreational activities such as swimming and bathing.

  Most sites had average to good compliance with the water quality guidelines for bathing. However, when compared to the previous year, most sites had worse water quality in terms of bacteria. This is thought to be due to the drought – when stream levels became very low less water was available to dilute pollution that entered the rivers. Further work is being done to determine the source of *E.coli* in rivers.
- **Nitrogen and phosphorus** – both of these elements are needed by aquatic plants and algae for growth and occur naturally. However, if excess nitrogen and/or phosphorous enters a river as pollution, it can lead to extensive algal growths which then impact on aquatic life.

When compared to the previous year, most sites show notable improvements. It is likely that less rainfall runoff during the drought resulted in fewer nutrients entering rivers and streams.

Recreational bathing water quality programme

This programme is a joint project between the Northland Regional Council, the Northland District Health Board (DHB) and Northland's three District Councils and aims to provide information to the public on how safe the water is for swimming. Some sites are not always safe as water can sometimes be contaminated with human or animal waste, particularly after heavy or prolonged rainfall.

Monitoring of 63 coastal sites and 23 freshwater sites was carried out throughout 2009-2010 with our popular swimming spots monitored weekly during the summer. The results were posted on the Council's website with colour-coded 'green', 'orange' and 'red' dots showing whether the sites were safe for swimming.

A total of 45 coastal sites were safe for swimming 100% of the time. A further 13 were safe on all but one occasion (90-99% compliance) and three were safe on all but two sampling occasions. Two sites – the Ōpua foreshore at the shop end of the beach and Ngunguru at the toilets – were

safe for swimming on all but three and four occasions respectively (75-89% compliance). No coastal sites had compliance of <75%.

The level of compliance for coastal sites was higher in 2009-2010 compared to 2008-2009. This is most probably related to the lower levels of rainfall received across the region during the summer of 2009-2010.

In 2009-2010, six freshwater sites were safe for swimming 100% of the time. Two sites were safe on all but one sampling occasion and four were safe on all but two sampling occasions. Overall, more freshwater sites had a compliance rate of 100% in 2009-2010 compared to 2008-2009. This may be due to the lower rainfall over the summer this year, which in turn reduced the amount of contamination entering freshwater systems from rainfall run-off.

However, nine freshwater sites were safe for swimming for less than 75% of the time. These sites were Ocean Beach Stream, Waipū Beach Stream, Kerikeri River at the Stone Store, Pacific Bay Stream, Whāngārei Falls, Kapiro Stream, Otamure Bay Stream, Coopers Beach Stream and Langs Beach Stream.

In addition to sampling for swimming water quality, 15 sites were also graded for their suitability for recreational shellfish gathering. Only two sites, Oakura and McLeod Bay, complied with the microbiological water quality guidelines during the summer months.

Environment fund

Through its Environment Fund, the Council has continued to assist landholders and community groups to implement and maintain indigenous biodiversity protection and enhancement projects.

The Environment Fund has provided more than $2.5 million to help people improve and protect Northland's natural environment over the 14 years it has been available.

Around $500,000 was available from the 2009-2010 fund, which could be applied for – and was allocated – over a 10-month period. In order to improve accessibility, changes were made to the time people could apply to the fund. This meant people could apply for worthwhile projects almost year-round, rather than within a previously much smaller 10-week application window. This was very favourably received and will be continued in the future.

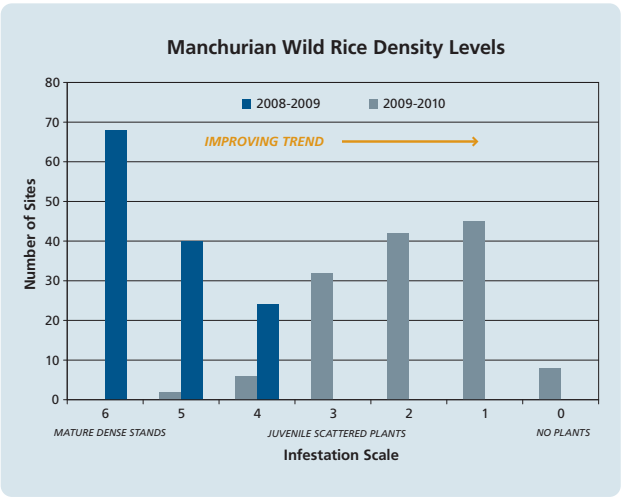
Biosecurity

Northland Regional Council is responsible for the management and control of plant and animal pests in Northland. Pests of particular concern in the region are identified in the Northland Regional Pest Management Strategies (RPMS).

The strategies are a collection of action plans that describe why and how plant and animal pests will be controlled and the functions of the Biosecurity Act 1993. The Council works in partnership with local communities and industry to promote pest management and facilitate pest control.

A major Council project has been the collaborative approach between the Northland Regional Council and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) to contain Manchurian rice grass. This plant is a major invader of wetlands, river margins and poorly drained pasture and has been recognised as a pest plant of national importance. Manchurian wild rice is widespread in the Kaipara district and covers approximately 500 hectares with the main infestation found next to the Northern Wairoa River and its tributaries.

As illustrated in the following graph, sites which have now been sprayed at least three times have shown a dramatic decline in the number of mature plants and the amount of ground cover. There are a growing number of sites where there are now only scattered juvenile plants or nothing at all.




Moth plant


Wild ginger

N


Privet


Argentine ants


Rats


Mustelids


Possums

Community Pest Control Areas
Proposed Large CPCA
Crown
Forest Areas
State Highways
Auckland Region

0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometres

Northland Community Pest Control Areas

Shown are some pests that are controlled in multi-species CPCA areas.

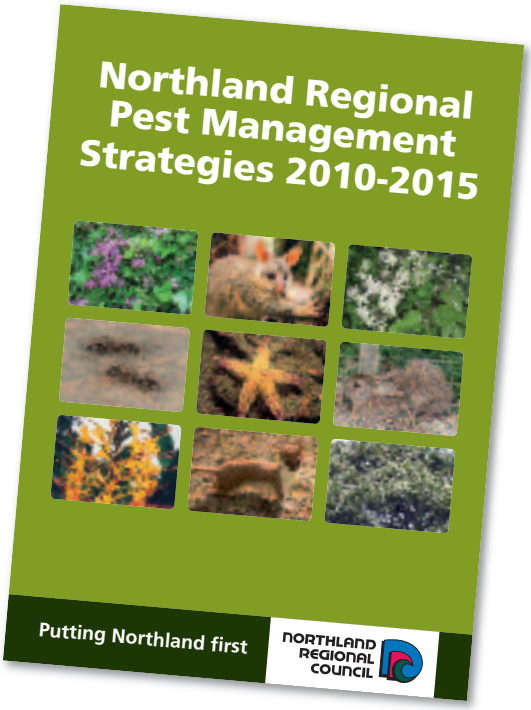
In May 2009, grass carp were released into Lake Roto-otuauru (Swan) on the Poutō peninsula to control the very invasive aquatic plants hornwort and egeria, commonly known as oxygen weed. Monitoring carried out in March 2010 showed that most of the weed has already been removed by the grass carp.

In June 2010, grass carp were also released into Lake Heather, north of Kaitāia. This high value dune lake is also infested with hornwort and egeria and grass carp are expected to have an impact on these weeds over the coming summer months. Fish will be removed from the lakes once the pest plants have been eradicated, which is predicted to take up to five years.

Managing pests

The Regional Council aims to reduce the impacts of marine, plant and animal pests on primary production, natural ecosystems and human health.

Pest species in Northland are listed in the Regional Pest Management Strategies (RPMS). These strategies provide guidance on how pest plants and animals should be managed in the region.



During the 2008-2009 financial year, the Council began the process of reviewing the RPMS and decided to merge the existing 25 documents into three – marine pests, animal pests and plant pests. This process was completed during 2009-2010 and the new RPMS were ratified by the Council in July 2010.

Communities are also active in pest control, fostered by the Council's biosecurity staff through Community Pest Control Areas. The Council works jointly with the community to develop pest control plans for these areas. This community partnership has been operating for five years and has grown to involve 30 communities region-wide, covering more than 23,000 hectares of land. More than 600 people are involved and 3300 hectares of privately owned indigenous forest is protected from pests as a result of these community plans. The map (left) shows the location of each plan across Northland.

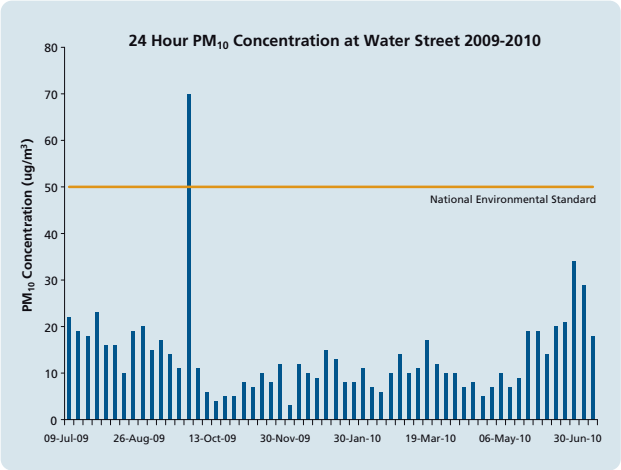
Air quality

In order to protect our air quality, the Northland Regional Council developed the Regional Air Quality Plan (RAQP) for Northland. The plan gives guidance to those using our air resource, in addition to specifying rules on what discharges into air are allowed.

The Council has been monitoring air quality in the region since 1996. The main purpose of air quality monitoring is to find out where air pollution might affect human health. The Council has an ongoing programme monitoring pollutants such as particulate matter (PM_{10}) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2) in places that are suspected of having occasional poor air quality. In addition to ambient air monitoring, the Council monitors activities that involve a discharge to air and investigates environmental incidents where the main resource affected is air.

PM_{10} is a term used to describe very small solid or liquid particles in the air, such as dust, fumes, smoke and fog. PM_{10} comes from both natural (wind blown dust, forest fires or pollen) and manmade sources (including automobile exhausts, solid fuel burning and industrial emissions). In Whāngārei, the main source of PM_{10} in winter is wood burning fires used for home heating.

Monitoring results from 2009-2010 for Water Street indicated that ambient PM_{10} concentration exceeded the National Environmental Standard (NES) on 25 September 2009. This was due to pollution from the Australian dust storm that engulfed Sydney and Brisbane on 23 September 2009. Other than on this occasion, PM_{10} levels were slightly higher a number of times over the winter months, most likely due to cool, calm conditions that allowed air pollution from domestic fires to build up as illustrated in the following graph.



In terms of SO_2, the most significant industrial source in Northland is the New Zealand Refining Company Limited, located at Marsden Point. The prevailing wind in this area frequently blows emissions from the refinery towards the Whāngārei Heads, a largely rural, residential area.

The Council monitors ambient SO_2 using a continuous monitor stationed at Taurikura Bay. In 2009-2010, results from the monitoring station at Taurikura indicated 100% compliance of SO_2 concentrations with the National Environmental Standard of 350 µg/m^3 one hour average and also well below the current 24-hour ambient air quality standard of 120 µg/m^3.

Improved bus services in Whāngārei a success

The Regional Council has a statutory role in regional transport. The overall aim of transport planning is to achieve an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable land transport system.

As part of these responsibilities, the Council administers the Whāngārei urban CityLink bus service. On 1 July 2008 a new service was introduced through contracted transport provider NZ Bus. This new service consisted of increased morning and evening peak trips, increased afternoon Saturday trips and the introduction of an inner city circular service.

The most visible aspect of the new service was the 10 low floor, low emission (Euro 3), air-conditioned buses seen throughout Whāngārei. These vehicles are fitted with on board cameras, facilities for the accommodation of disabled persons and visual and verbal announcement facilities. Changes to the service are clearly a success with passenger numbers increasing by just over 21,000 in the first year, and a further 20,000 in 2009-2010.

Following thorough analysis of the new service, changes were introduced on 1 March 2010 which resulted in poorly patronised trips being removed. These included peak trips, the inner city circular service, Saturday afternoon trips and public holiday services. The impact on passenger numbers and revenue was minimal. This resulted in a reduction of an average of 7,000 kms per month and a reduction in the cost of the contract by $26,876 (ex GST) per month.

A passenger satisfaction survey undertaken recently showed that 98% of passengers rated the service "excellent, very good or good".

Our marine environment

The maritime team had a busy year with a record number of cruise ship visits to the Bay of Islands, two regional response oil spill exercises and the Council's 18 harbour wardens patrolling Northland harbours from Mangawhai to Houhora.

A record number of ships visited Northland with 29 cruise ships and two super-yachts piloted safely into and out of the Bay of Islands. The cruise ship Queen Mary II – the largest ever to visit Northland – anchored in the Bay of Islands in March. Planning for the event took 18 months with navigation and safety aspects the subject of a comprehensive operations plan coordinated by the Regional Council's Harbour Master, who also piloted the vessel safely into and out of the bay.

A significant upgrade to navigation aids on Rangaunu Harbour was completed and maintenance carried out on all Houhora Harbour navigation aids.

The Council's team of harbour wardens was increased to 18 with the appointment of wardens for Pataua and Whangaruru. The Northland-wide warden team continues to provide a valuable source of local knowledge and advice. Harbour patrols were carried out on the busiest harbours during December and January and were augmented by a Northland-wide commercial radio campaign.

Two regional response team training exercises were also completed by the maritime team, working with other key stakeholders. The first tested our ability to contain, recover and store oil while it was still out on the water.

The second exercise ran over two days in May 2010. The exercise involved about 40 representatives from the Council, local iwi, Maritime New Zealand, the Department of Conservation and local industries. It centred on a fictional spill that sent nine tonnes of 'oil' from a ship on to Bream Bay's beaches.

Staff from local authorities as far south as Marlborough took part and the exercise saw a number of national firsts with the use of heavy machinery to clean up parts of Ruakaka beach, a special decontamination tent and a helicopter and fixed-wing aircraft to find and spray the 'slick' with special dispersant chemicals.

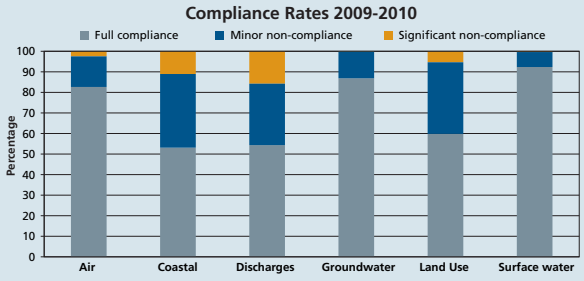
Compliance with resource consents

The Northland Regional Council is responsible, under the Resource Management Act (1991), for the control of activities that may have a negative effect on our environment.

Activities such as discharging a substance to air or water are controlled by rules in Regional Plans, and if required, by resource consents. In order to make sure that activities are not having an effect on the environment, the Council monitors compliance with these rules and the conditions of resource consents.

When an activity is monitored, it is graded according to its level of compliance. Activities can:

- Be fully compliant – within the rules or resource consent limits;
- Have minor non-compliance – some evidence of minor/actual, or potential for minor effect on the environment;
- In cases of significant non-compliance, the Council can take enforcement action to stop an activity, or fine or prosecute a serious offender, and restore the affected area.



In 2009-2010, 66% of consents monitored were fully compliant, 25% of consents monitored had minor non-compliance and 9% of consents monitored were significantly non-compliant. Monitoring showed a slight decrease in non-compliance compared to 2008-2009.

The Council has continued to take a tougher line on monitoring throughout the 2009-2010 financial year including four prosecutions: one for a sediment discharge to the Mangawhai harbour and three farm dairy effluent discharges. Over the past seven years there has been a general decrease in significant non-compliance. The following table illustrates compliance rates across a range of activities during the 2009-2010 year.

Be significantly non-compliant – they are having, or have the potential to have, a major or significant effect on the environment.

In terms of trends, compliance rates for the last seven years show a general decrease in the rate of significant non-compliance as detailed in the table below.

Sharing services

During the course of its work, the Council is involved in a wide range of activities and shares its services and knowledge with other organisations and community groups.

The build up to the Rugby World Cup 2011 in Northland started during 2009. A Regional Co-ordinator was appointed – Stewart McElwain from the Regional Council's regional development agency Enterprise Northland. Council staff provided support and assistance to the Co-ordinator including development of the Northland 2011 website.

The site features business guidance on supplying to Tournament organisers and associated business, as well as advice as to what's available – and where – in terms of training. Background information about the tournament, the teams visiting Northland and more is available at ***www.northland2011.com***

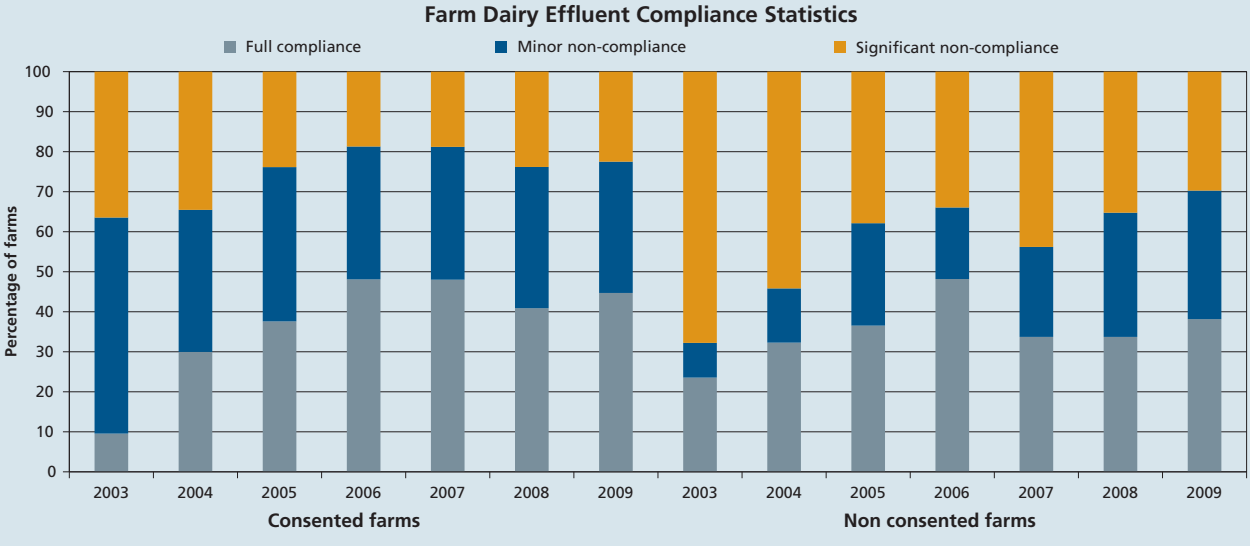
A new Biodiversity Northland website was developed during 2009-2010. Biodiversity Northland is a forum made up of the Regional Council, Northland's three District Councils – Whāngārei, Kaipara and Far North – the Department of Conservation, Fish and Game NZ, the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, NZ Landcare Trust, Kiwi Foundation and Kiwi Recovery Programme.

The site aims to provide access to data on biodiversity and natural areas of ecological significance within Northland. Layers of information contributed by the group's members will be available including reserve and covenant boundaries, habitat survey information, weed and pest sites, Landcare group locations etc.

Anyone will be able to access the site although some areas will be subscription only to protect any sensitive details. The site will go live in September this year – go to ***www.biodiversitynorthland.org.nz***

Civil Defence is managed by Northland's Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group, which is made up of the Regional Council, the region's three District Councils and agencies such as Police and the Fire Service.

The CDEM Group works to reduce the potential effects of hazards, to promote community and Council readiness to



respond to emergencies, and to help the community to recover after an event.

During 2009-2010 the group worked with local communities on their Community Response Plans. There are currently 39 community response groups in Northland who are either currently being established or who are aiming to have completed or draft plans later this year.

The Regional Council worked with the Whāngārei District Council during 2009 and early 2010 to establish key contacts in most of the priority communities. We also provided support to develop the Mangawhai plan in the Kaipara District.

The Kaipara Harbour Technical Advisory Group – which the Regional Council is a member of – secured funding to significantly increase our understanding of the effect sediment has in the Kaipara Harbour.

A $14.4 million Foundation of Research and Science and Technology grant was awarded for the research after considerable work by the group during 2009-2010. The funding was awarded to the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd. (NIWA) to manage. NIWA will spend the next six years working with other organisations – including the Regional Council – to learn more about how aquatic ecosystems survive in 'muddy' waters and how sediments may affect the productivity of these waters.

Information gained through the research will help the Council improve and sustainably manage Northland's land and marine systems.

The promotion of safer and more environmentally conscious beach driving continued, the 2009-2010 summer being the fourth that the Safe Beach Driving programme has run.

The Council is now active with almost thirty CoastCare groups, which aim to enhance coastal dune systems. A Facebook page was set up for CoastCare Northland which will be used to share information about CoastCare, including events such as planting days and workshops.

Flood protection and priority rivers projects

The priority rivers flood risk reduction project aims to reduce the flood hazard risk in 27 priority rivers throughout Northland.

Each of the priority rivers has a draft river management plan developed, detailing flood risk and the options for reducing risk. Detailed hydraulic models have been developed for each of the priority rivers, incorporating extensive air and conventional survey data. Flood hazard maps have been prepared using the models. The maps show the extent and depth of flooding that could occur in a range of 'design storm' scenarios. Risk assessment and identification of options to reduce flood risk have also been developed. Draft river management plans are scheduled for completion during July – August 2010.

During the 2010-2011 year, the Council is planning to share the results of the catchment modelling with the community and explain the process used. We will be seeking feedback on the content of the plans, in particular the options for flood risk reduction. Any feedback received from this consultation will be considered before the plans are finalised.

A flood risk reduction strategy was developed for Kaeo and planning on how this will be carried out has started. Flood mitigation and protection works also continued in the Kaihū, Kaeo-Whangaroa and Awanui river schemes.

Tsunami hazard modelling work was also completed for priority coastal communities and reports were placed on the Regional Council's website. Additional tsunami hazard modelling work also started for the area around the Whāngārei Harbour.

Extending our reach

The Council uses a range of ways to communicate information about our activities to the community. Social media – like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook – is an ever-increasing communications medium that now has a wider reach than any other form of media.

The Council joined Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook during 2009-2010 and now sends live updates from its monthly meetings as well as information about job vacancies, events, consultation and local service information.

For more information go to:
http://twitter.com/NRCexpress
www.facebook.com/NorthlandRegionalCouncil
www.linkedin.com/companies/northland-regional-council

The Council's newsletter to Northland ratepayers, the Regional Report, was sent to more than 60,000 households four times during 2009-2010. It features articles about the Council's projects and some of the people in our community, who we work with.

Northlanders were able to access hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of aerial photography and other local authority geographic information system (GIS) data during 2009.

The Council granted access to around 90 percent of the data on its GIS databases, a first for any Council in New Zealand.

The move allowed ratepayers to source both Regional Council-produced data – which is available free and includes things like Regional Water and Soil Plan layers, Regional Coastal Plan layers, flood susceptible areas etc – and aerial photography.

In our community

Awards were presented by the Council for excellence in dairy industry environmental management through the NRC Sustainable Land Award, the runner-up Sharemilker of the year award and NRC Sustainable Development Award at the Northland Business Excellence Awards.

The Council also presented an award in the annual Northland Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

The Council was involved in several events including eDay, a community initiative designed to raise awareness about the hazards of electronic waste (e-waste).

The 2009 eDay was co-ordinated by the Community and Business Environment Centre (CBEC), with support from the Northland Regional Council, Far North District Council and Whāngārei District Council.

Around 58 tonnes of e-waste was collected at centres in Kaitāia, Kaikohe, Kerikeri and Whāngārei during the September event.

The Regional Council added its voice to calls for Northlanders to join millions of others around the globe and switch off their lights and other electrical appliances to mark 'Earth Hour 2010'.

Organisers of the worldwide event – held at the end of March – hoped as many as a billion people globally would flick off their lights and other electrical appliances between 8.30pm and 9.30pm for Earth Hour.

The Regional Council held a sustainability exhibition outside its Water Street, Whāngārei offices, across the road from the popular early morning farmers' markets.

Visitors to the event had the chance to view displays and chat about a range of ways to reduce their 'environmental footprint' from worm farming and composting, weed and pest control to using CityLink Whāngārei buses.

The education and Enviroschools team visited schools throughout the region to promote the education programme. The Regional Youth Summit was held in October 2009 and Environmental Curriculum Awards were presented to 19 schools from August to mid-October. The Council also ran a range of projects and professional development workshops for the Enviroschools programme.

Our year in numbers

1129 resource consent applications processed.

98.8% of resource consent applications processed within statutory time frames.

28 lakes monitored quarterly by the Regional Council.

35 river quality monitoring sites sampled monthly.

86 freshwater and coastal sites monitored weekly throughout summer.

34 reported marine oil spills responded.

130 projects were funded to a value of $531,249 through the Environment Fund.

90% approximate amount of GIS data and aerial photography now publicly available.

98% of passengers surveyed rated the CityLink Whāngārei bus service as "Good, Very Good or Excellent".

149 permanent staff employed by the Regional Council in Whāngārei, Ōpua, Dargaville and Kaitāia.

170 cleaner production and hazardous waste site inspections made.

290 maritime incidents responded to throughout the year.

376% increase in our website subscribers.

$476k flood mitigation and protection works continued in Kaihū, Kaeo-Whangaroa and Awanui river schemes.

$700k contribution to swimming pool complex in Dargaville.

$500k contribution to Kerikeri Sports Complex from the Recreation Fund.

23,000 hectares of land now covered by Community Pest Control Areas.

36,262 Total Mobility trips were operated.

58 tonnes of e-waste collected on eDay across the region.