

envirocare

your environmental news update from Environment Waikato

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It's a great backyard

Quick facts

- The Waikato region is the fourth largest region in the country, covering about 25,000 square kilometres or 2.5 million hectares.
- About 75 percent of people in the Waikato region live in urban areas.
- Our region has more than 20 rivers, 100 lakes, about 1420 streams and 1,150 km of coastline.
- The region contains almost 80 percent of New Zealand's geothermal systems.
- The region has over 4000 dairy farms and approximately 1.5 million cows.
- In the Waikato region we have more than 900 native plants and 124 native bird species.

It's another beautiful day in the Waikato region. People are going about their lives, enjoying the great lifestyle our region has to offer.

The Taylor family at number 36 are up early for a busy day enjoying the region's backyard. Reg Taylor is heading off to the coast for a day of fishing with some workmates. His son Jim is trying to find his wakeboard before his friend calls by on the way to the lake. The youngest Taylor, Amber, is heading off with a school group to tramp up a nearby mountain. With the whole family out of the house, Joan Taylor has arranged to meet up with her neighbour for a walk along the water's edge into town to enjoy some good coffee, food and conversation.

Like the Taylors, many of us will have stories to tell at the barbecue tonight from another day in the region.

The Waikato is a great backyard to live in and the lifestyle it offers is one of the main things that people love about living here.

But, our backyard needs looking after. Environment Waikato has a key role in helping the community achieve this. Individuals, community groups and businesses can also do their bit to look after our backyard.

This edition of EnviroCare celebrates some of the activities going on in our region. It also provides some ideas for simple things we can all do to help look after our backyard.

Some of the things Environment Waikato is doing to help look after our backyard

- Managing the use and impacts on the region's natural resources.
- Protecting productive land through flood protection and drainage.
- Monitoring the health of the region's environment.
- Managing and reducing risks from hazards.
- Getting rid of plant and animal pests.
- Responding to pollution emergencies.
- Meeting your transport needs with the provision of bus services.
- Making water recreation safe for everyone.
- Supporting community groups like Beachcare and Landcare.
- Supporting special places through the Natural Heritage Fund.
- Inspiring children to be passionate about our environment through a range of education programmes.

Check out our website www.ew.govt.nz to find out more about our environment, or call Environment Waikato's Freephone **0800 800 401**.



Chairman's message

'Think global, act local' – this is a simple and well-used phrase. But what does it really mean in practical terms?

All too often we're good at dreaming grand visions of a better, more peaceful world where everyone has clean water, fresh air and a healthy environment that we can pass on to future generations.

But when it comes to taking those small, practical steps in our own lives towards cleaning up the environment, many of us find we're not quite sure what to do.

In some ways it's a symptom of our modern fast-paced world, where everything seems disposable. Often we've forgotten the simple things that our parents and grandparents used to do, such as:

- composting
- growing worms to make the garden healthy
- taking the bus instead of always using the car
- using calico bags, instead of plastic bags
- making informed choices at the supermarket about the food we buy.

These sorts of simple, practical steps are among the issues we talk about in this edition of EnviroCare. So why not start today in your own backyard?

Jenni Vernon
CHAIRMAN

The variety of life

Biodiversity has become a key focus for many landowners and agencies over recent years, but what does it really mean?

The word itself means 'the variety of life' and focuses on sustaining natural ecosystems and habitats. This includes plants and animals, right down to micro-organisms and genetic material.

Although it's important to protect and preserve individual plants, animals and organisms, biodiversity is not just about individual species but more about managing the long-term effects on the environment. Take one piece out of the chain and the impacts further down, often on human life, can be significant. We rely on biodiversity in every part of our lives, for example:

- our food and medicine come from biodiversity
- native birds and insects pollinate our gardens
- we breathe the oxygen produced by trees
- tiny bugs break down our rubbish into fertile soil.

There are particular types of ecosystems that are identified as being of high biodiversity value, including wetlands, geothermal areas, forest fragments and the areas around streams.

"Everybody can play their part in helping sustain the region's biodiversity," says Councillor Paula Southgate, chair of Environment Waikato's Environment Committee.

"From planting native trees, shrubs and grasses in the backyard, through to joining a local care group, every step helps to preserve our environment now for generations to come."

What can you do to help?

Urban residents – Biodiversity resides in many unexpected places, including your own backyard. It is surprising how many species can live in a small space if the right conditions are created. Make your garden a haven for biodiversity by controlling unwanted animal and plant pests and planting site-appropriate native plants. This will provide a miniature habitat for native birds, insects and lizards.

Groups – There are already more than 150 community groups working together on a huge range of projects around our region. Some groups are large and highly active, and others are small groups of friends and neighbours passionate about preserving their special location. Projects include kiwi protection groups in the Coromandel, pest control and planting of natives on the Hakarimata Ranges and bush restoration on Mount Pirongia.

Many groups are eligible for funding to support their endeavours. Biodiversity Advice Waikato can offer advice on sources of funding and general information on biodiversity. Contact Jan Hoverd on 0800 BIODIV (0800 246 348) for further information.

Farmers – Check out www.ew.govt.nz for details and checklists on pest and weed control, planting guides and biodiversity values of rural areas. Call 0800 BIODIV (0800 246 348) for information on the many sources of funding available to farmers for biodiversity protection.



Photo by Leif Figgat

Stop the spread

In the Waikato region 85 plants have been declared pests.

Plant pests threaten native plants in our forests, wetlands and coastal areas. Many are a nuisance to farmers, in suburban gardens and can cause health problems for some people. It's important we control plant pests and stop them from spreading.

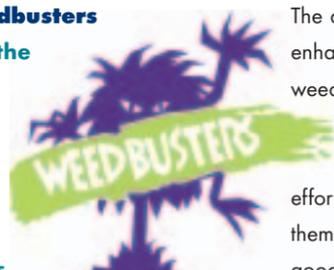
Alligator weed, woolly nightshade and privet are three of the most invasive plant pests.

Phone Environment Waikato Biosecurity – 0800 BIOSEC (0800 246 732) or visit www.ew.govt.nz for more information and advice on plant pests in our region.

Pest	Description	Why it is a problem	Getting rid of it
 Alligator weed	A low-growing, non-woody perennial that spreads on both land and in our waterways. Its leaves are generally arranged in opposite pairs along hollow horizontal stems. Stem and leaf sizes can be compact in lawns or grazed pasture, or much larger when growing in water. Alligator weed has clover-like, papery flowers, from December to March.	Alligator weed is fast growing and difficult to eradicate. It threatens farmland, market gardens and urban properties. Because it can grow in water, alligator weed also threatens waterways by clogging them, increasing sedimentation and the risk of flooding. Although stock will eat it, alligator weed is toxic and can cause blindness in cattle.	Under the regional Pest Management Strategy, Environment Waikato is responsible for controlling alligator weed – it is a total control pest for the whole Waikato region. If you see this weed on your property, do not cut or treat it. Call 0800 BIOSEC (0800 246 732) to report it to your nearest Biosecurity Plant Pest Officer.
 Woolly nightshade	A rapidly growing tree that can reach up to nine metres tall. Leaves are grey-green, oval shaped and densely covered with furry hairs. Flowers have five purple petals with a yellow centre.	Woolly nightshade forms dense stands, crowding out and suppressing other plants. A single plant can produce up to 10,000 seeds.	Landowners and occupiers are responsible for controlling this pest on their property. Small plants (less than 60 cm) can be pulled out. Larger plants need to have their stumps treated with herbicide or they will regrow.
 Tree privet Chinese privet	There are two species of privet. Tree privet can grow into a large tree and has larger leaves. Flowers are creamy coloured and appear from January to March. Chinese privet is smaller with smaller leaves and flowers earlier (September to December) with white flowers.	Privet rapidly invades bush margins and waste areas, and may add to respiratory problems such as asthma and hayfever.	Landowners and occupiers are responsible for controlling this pest on their property. Pull up or dig out small plants, removing the entire root system. If you have cut down a larger plant, you will need to treat the stump with herbicide to stop it regrowing.

2006 Weedbusters Awards

The Regional Weedbusters Awards recognise the dedication and commitment of community groups, organisations and individuals in the fight against weeds.



The awards pay tribute to 'local heroes' who give their time to enhance the environment, and who help raise awareness of weed issues within the community. Everyone who volunteers their time to weed busting is eligible for an award, and anyone can put forward nominations. If you know and value the efforts of a group or individual then make sure you nominate them; or if you feel that you or your group has been putting in good work, don't be shy – please feel free to nominate yourself.

There are five awards categories:

- public land
- private land
- education
- industry/organisations
- excellence.

Nominations close **March 31, 2006**. For more information, visit www.weedbusters.org.nz.

Aquatic hitchhikers – pests catching a ride

Around our coasts and waterways, aquatic pests spread by 'catching a ride' on boats and trailers, 'hitching' from one lake, river or harbour to the next.

Freshwater fish lay eggs on weeds and use weeds for shelter. Eggs and juvenile fish can be carried between water bodies on weeds that get caught on boats, trailers or fishing gear. This is a problem because some weeds grow and spread rapidly from just tiny fragments.

Marine hitchhikers affect aquaculture, fishing and recreation. They displace native plants and animals and some can even threaten human health if they enter the food chain.

Freshwater fish pests to look out for:

- **koi carp** damage aquatic plants, degrade water quality and cause damage to lake margins and river banks
- **catfish** eat plants and animals, including freshwater snails, koura, bullies, smelt and juvenile trout
- **mosquito fish (gambusia)** attack native whitebait species.

Plant pests to look out for in rivers and streams:

- **oxygen weeds** *Lagarosiphon* and *Egeria* crowd out native plants
- **hornwort** is a nuisance to recreational water users
- **alligator weed** and **Senegal tea** smother native plant species and increase sedimentation and the risk of flooding.

Check out www.ew.govt.nz for more information on aquatic plant and animal pests.



Stop aquatic hitchhikers – remember to wash your boat down.
Photo supplied by Department of Conservation

Hot Tips

Stopping the spread of aquatic hitchhikers

- Plants or fish (including aquarium fish or weeds) should not be placed in waterways. Put them in the rubbish or compost them.
- Before you launch, check your boat and trailer for weeds, fish and fish eggs. Don't forget to check the anchor, rollers, axle, motor, propeller, cockpit and bins.
- Carefully wash your boat and fishing and recreational gear – like kayaks, jetskis and towropes – after you take them out of the water.

As well as following these simple precautions, water users should report sightings of any unusual plant pests to Environment Waikato and fish pests to the Department of Conservation, so they can be stopped before they spread further.

Hot Tips

On the water

- Remember the 5 knot rule.
- When waterskiing, wakeboarding or towing your mates around, it takes three to keep them safe – a driver, lookout and the person being towed.
- Every person on the boat needs a lifejacket that fits and should wear it, especially in rough water and when crossing bars.
- Keep to the right on rivers and in ski lanes.
- You've got to be 15 or over to drive a powered boat or jetski.
- Don't dive or jump off the jetty (unless the Harbourmaster says you can).
- Make sure your jetski is registered.



Katie Shattock (left) and Jo Day with a selection of items Gribbles-Alpha recycles through the Waste Exchange.

Office waste reduction in action

Jo Day of Gribbles-Alpha is described by a work colleague as 'the recycling queen of the world'. A tireless crusader for reducing office rubbish, she supports the company wide objective to reduce, reuse and recycle on a daily basis.

Hamilton based Gribbles-Alpha, a veterinary diagnostics service for the animal health industry, utilises the Waste Exchange to redistribute recyclable items. Local schools have welcomed unused chemicals for their science laboratories and defunct computer keyboards and monitors are recycled by a Frankton company.

Recycling and reducing waste is a daily ritual at Gribbles-Alpha. "Non-confidential waste paper is made into pads and all clean cardboard, plastics, confidential and other paper and polystyrene is recycled," says Jo, who adds that every six months or so a waste audit is carried out to monitor company progress.

Even lunchtime is no exception at Gribbles-Alpha – staff recycle all their food scraps to a thriving on-site worm farm.

Gribbles-Alpha was recognised for its excellence in business waste reduction and efficient resource use, winning the silver Paua award in the 2005 Business and the Environment Awards, run by the Waikato Environmental Business Network.

Do the best by your business waste

Contact the Waste Exchange on 0800 NO THROW (0800 668 479) to talk about getting rid of your business waste. From steel drums to canvas, bricks to cardboard boxes, your waste could be somebody else's treasure!

Environment Waikato is the principal funder of the Waikato Waste Exchange. Other local councils also sponsor this service.



CEO's message

Welcome to this edition of EnviroCare, which focuses on our backyard.

What surprises many people is just how large our region is – it is more than 2.5 million hectares, covering most of the central North Island.

Another way of looking at this is to imagine a raindrop falling on top of Mount Ruapehu and then watching its pathway down into Lake Taupo, meandering down the Waikato River and heading out to sea at Port Waikato. At the same time, another raindrop falling in the Franklin district along the Bombay Hills will also flow to sea at this rivermouth. Any drop of rain falling on the western seaward ranges from Mokau to Port Waikato will head off into the Tasman Sea.

Equally, a raindrop falling on the western side of the Kaimai Ranges will flow towards the Waihou River and follow the ancient path of the Waikato River down through the Hauraki Basin to the sea.

Thus, our regional boundary is defined by water and sea.

Within this large and diverse area, we are responsible for the sustainable management of natural resources, and the wise management of the environment. It's a complex job – but it means that our backyard will be enhanced for future generations to enjoy.

Harry Wilson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Peninsula Project – highlights from year one

The Peninsula Project – designed to better protect people, property and the environment on the beautiful Coromandel Peninsula – made significant progress in 2005.

In the past the stunning peninsula environment has been hit by widespread problems caused by riverbank erosion, animal pests, and debris blocking rivers and streams. Buildings, bridges, roads, estuaries and harbours have been damaged, forest health has suffered, flooding has increased and productive land has been lost.

The Peninsula Project was developed to help deal with these problems. A partnership between Environment Waikato, Thames-Coromandel District Council, the Department of Conservation and Hauraki Maori Trust Board, it integrates three key areas of work – flood protection, river and catchment management and animal pest control.

Addressing flooding problems on the Thames coast has been an initial priority for the Peninsula Project, but significant progress has also been made on the east coast.

Date	2005 Highlights
February 2005	Maintenance work was carried out at Te Puru, including the removal of sand and gravel from the stream channel. Once removed, the sand and gravel was placed on the foreshore providing Te Puru School with better protection and re-nourishing the beach.
March – December 2005	Around 18,000 plants were planted and 30 km fenced for erosion protection and biodiversity in catchments around the peninsula. Landowner interest in protecting and enhancing habitat fragments such as bush and wetlands resulted in further applications for funding for fencing and planting.
March 2005	The Manaia Stream was realigned to its natural course and a 650 tonne rock wall and earth bank constructed to prevent further soil erosion, which had been threatening access to the local marae.
April 2005	Stopbanking was completed around the Elizabeth Park Retirement Village in Coromandel Town, providing residents with much needed peace of mind. Weeds and vegetation along the streams in Te Puru, Waiomu and Tapu were cleared. Blockages and gravel were also removed, allowing the water to flow through.
May – June 2005	Habitat restoration was carried out for the release of endangered pateke (brown teal) into the wild at Port Charles.
June – December 2005	The Department of Conservation goat hunting team hunted goats on 3,500 hectares of land it administers from Te Puru to the Tapu-Coroglen Road. In November it moved into the area west of the Coromandel Range from the Tapu-Coroglen Road to Manaia.
July 2005	Following the July storm event, debris was removed from under the bridges and in the streams at Te Puru and Waiomu. The first stage of channel training works was carried out on the Whangarahi and Karaka streams in Coromandel Town. This included the removal of a significant volume of accumulated shingle at the point where these two streams meet. Environment Waikato and Thames-Coromandel District Council began discussions on the Pohue culvert upgrade. Thames-Coromandel District Council plans to replace this culvert early this year. The concept design of the proposed floodway at Waiomu/Pohue was completed for wider community consultation.
September – November 2005	A blockage under the bridge at Kapanga Road in Coromandel was removed and the streambanks planted and fenced.
September – December 2005	The Department of Conservation managed ground-based and aerial possum control operations on approximately 16,000 hectares of land it administers and some private land west of the Coromandel Range from Te Puru south to the Kopu-Hikua Road.
October 2005	Around 700 native trees were planted along the Manaia Stream to help stabilise the riverbank and re-establish vegetation. Thames-Coromandel District Council and Environment Waikato met with a number of Coromandel property owners, whose properties are located in high risk flood areas, to discuss possible land retirement options.
November 2005	The first riparian plan was completed under the Peninsula Project for the Whangarahi and Karaka streams. The plan identifies weed and erosion areas and options for protecting the streams.
November 2005	Channel maintenance work was undertaken at Graham's Creek in Tairua. This involved the removal of 2,500 cubic metres of built up silt, reformation of a section of the creek to help it take floodwaters without breaking its banks and removal of exotic vegetation, which was affecting the creek's flow. The concept design of flood works at Te Puru was finalised for wider community consultation.
December 2005	The upper channel of Te Weiti Stream in Whangamata was cleared of obstructions including car bodies, built up silt, undesirable willow species and clumps of pampas which had been contributing to flooding, erosion and sediment problems. Similar work was carried out on Waikiekie Stream. Environment Waikato and Thames-Coromandel District Council started targeting possums in residential areas from Kauaeranga Valley to Tararu.
Ongoing	Environment Waikato has continued to work with Transit New Zealand on bridge designs for Tararu and Te Puru. We have also continued discussions with Transit about upgrading the bridge across Waiomu stream.

River maintenance works will continue over summer. In the next six months we'll focus on supporting communities to develop catchment management plans and consulting with Thames coast and Graham's Creek residents on major flood protection works. The flood protection proposals will be included in Environment Waikato's Draft Long-Term Council Community Plan, which will be publicly advertised in March 2006.

Caring for your backyard

Do environmental issues in your backyard need addressing? Are pests threatening native bush in your area? Do eroding riverbanks need to be planted?

If you'd like to tackle an environmental project with other people from your community, you might be interested in starting or joining a landcare, rivercare, streamcare, lakecare, harbourcare or beachcare group.

It's a great way to meet and mix with like-minded people while doing something positive for the environment. We can help you set up a barbecue or morning tea with your friends and neighbours to discuss potential projects.

Environment Waikato, together with the New Zealand Landcare Trust, supports about 50 care groups throughout the Waikato region, helping with technical advice, information and financial support.

For more information, call Alan Campbell at Environment Waikato on 0800 800 401.



Step forward in Lake Taupo protection plan

A trust has been set up to manage an \$81 million public fund designed to protect the long-term health of Lake Taupo.

Six trustees appointed in December 2005 will meet this month to decide how the money, jointly contributed by Environment Waikato, Taupo District Council and the government, will be spent. The fund is designed to encourage and assist with land-use change in the Taupo catchment to achieve a 20 percent reduction in nitrogen entering the lake.

Environment Waikato released a change (or variation) to its Waikato regional Plan last July. The variation is designed to protect water quality in Lake Taupo, primarily by capping and reducing nitrogen loss from the catchment. Two rounds of public submissions on the Taupo plan were held last year, the last closing on December 19.

The next stage in the process is public hearings, which will be held in Taupo and Hamilton from April to July 2006. We expect to release decisions on individual submissions and any resulting amendments to the Taupo variation in late 2006. The variation, a summary of submissions and the Lake Taupo Protection Trust deed can be found on www.ew.govt.nz.

Getting around

Feeling the pinch of rising petrol costs? Having trouble finding a parking space near the office? Why not take the bus?

In addition to the 20 bus routes which cover Hamilton, we also offer the Night Rider late night service. The Night Rider leaves from outside Iguana regularly between 7.00 pm to 3.45 am on Friday and Saturday nights.

Our BUSIT! card makes taking the bus around Hamilton even cheaper. With a BUSIT! card, fares are only \$1.40 per trip for adults and 70 cents for children.

Over the next few months major improvements are being made to Hamilton's bus network to make taking the bus even easier. New routes are being introduced, such as Chartwell Direct and Ruakura, as well as service improvements like RealTime (an electronic system that tells you when the next bus will arrive).

Bus services are available in Taupo and between Hamilton and a number of surrounding towns, including Huntly, Paeroa, Raglan, Cambridge and



Te Awamutu. There are also services between Tokoroa and Mangakino, and Tokoroa and Taupo.

To find out more about the BUSIT! card, timetables and available routes, check out www.busit.co.nz or call 0800 4 BUSLINE (0800 428 7546).

Regional land transport strategy update

The regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) is nearing completion. We've been talking with people to get their views on the future transport needs of the region.

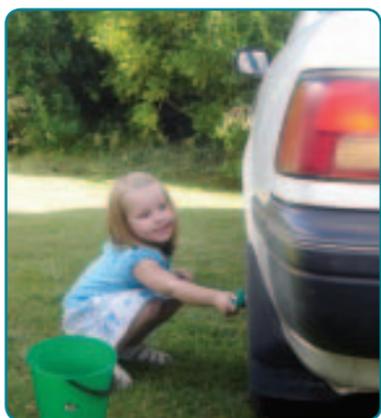
We have a vision of a safe, sustainable and integrated transport system that really works and enhances the environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being of the region. This strategy is not just about roads – it also includes passenger transport such as buses and active transport like walking and cycling.

We've worked on a strategy that draws together your views within a national transport framework that addresses the following areas:

- access and mobility
- safety and personal security
- public health
- environmental sustainability
- economic efficiency.

The strategy acknowledges that different parts of the region have different needs and that we need to look at a range of options for rural, semi-rural and urban areas.

In March, copies of the RLTS will be available for public submission. The regional Land Transport Committee will take all submissions into consideration before preparing the final strategy.



Wash your car on the grass

Thousands of litres of detergents find their way into our streams and waterways just from washing vehicles on driveways and roads. These detergents kill marine life and can also pollute our rivers, lakes and beaches.

However, when you wash your car on the grass, the detergents are easily broken down by the soil. When you've finished, either tip the left-over water down a sink inside or onto the grass or garden.

If you haven't got a grassed area at home, try a carwash. Water from carwashes drains to the sewerage system meaning fewer chemicals end up in our local rivers, lakes and seas.

Students clean up at Enviroschools awards

Hamilton's Hukanui Primary School was recently awarded the top award in the Enviroschools programme – the Green-Gold Award. Hukanui Primary is the first school in the Waikato region to receive a Green-Gold Award, and the third nationally.

Enviroschools focuses on a whole-school approach to environmental education. There are 46 schools in the Waikato region that are part of the Enviroschools programme, receiving three years of support from an Enviroschools facilitator and a comprehensive resource kit.

There are a further 14 schools throughout the region that participate in the Enviroschools Awards programme.

Dean King, Environment Waikato's Schools Programme Co-ordinator explains,

"Through the Enviroschools programme children enquire, explore and contribute to decisions about their school environment. Students learn that they can make a difference as part of a community and that they can be active participants in directing and managing environmental projects. This can be an empowering experience that will develop their capacity for life-long learning and action to care for the environment."

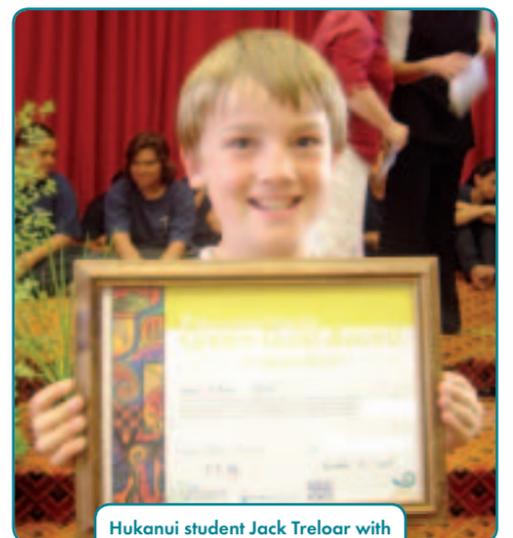
Hukanui School's achievements as an Enviroschool include:

- establishing recycling systems for food scraps, paper, bottles and cans
- changes to school food – both lunches and fundraising snacks have created opportunities to reduce packaging waste

- forming a school community gully group to help restore native bush in the school grounds
- being one of the first schools in Hamilton to establish a walking school bus, reducing congestion and providing a more environmentally friendly way for students to travel to and from school.

Congratulations also to Te Miro School and St Peters School who won Silver Awards and to Pokuru, Rukuhia, Raglan Area, Pukemiro, Ngaruawahia, Hillcrest Normal, St Josephs Catholic and Tairua schools who were awarded Bronze Awards.

Environment Waikato works in partnership with Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council, Waikato District Council, Matamata-Piako District Council and Taupo District Council to fund the Enviroschools programme throughout the region.



Hukanui student Jack Treloar with the school's Green-Gold award.

Halve your rubbish

Hot Tips

Composting



Did you realise half the contents of the average household weekly rubbish bag can be composted?

Why compost?

- Compost improves soil fertility and texture, and helps hold in moisture and nutrients.
- Composting cuts down on green waste going to landfills.
- It's inexpensive and easy to make.
- You need less garden chemicals because soil enriched with compost grows healthier, more productive plants that are more resistant to pests.

It's easy to compost at home using:

Compost heaps – Your heaps should be one metre square and built to up to one metre high. Keep them well covered with old carpet or polythene to keep in the heat.

Compost bins – Manufactured compost bins are covered containers handy for a small space. There are all sorts available in garden centres, from plastic bins to the wooden slat design. You can even make one for yourself.

Alternatively you can get a garden bag company to collect your garden waste, or you can deliver it to your local transfer station if they have a green waste recycling centre.

- Sprinkle your compost with water to keep it moist.
- Add a shovel of soil now and then.
- Don't add dairy products, meat, fat or cooking oil.
- Use a good mix of materials, from greens to grass clippings.
- Watch the weeds you're composting as some seeds can survive the compost process. If you're not sure which weeds you can compost, call Environment Waikato Biosecurity on 0800 BIOSEC (0800 246 732).
- Regularly turn your compost to mix up the ingredients.

Shopping challenge



Modern, well-designed and operated landfills may seem like a reasonable option for getting rid of your weekly household rubbish. But we don't have enough of them in New Zealand to cope with the increasing amount of rubbish we're throwing away.

Constructing new landfills is not the best solution. It's difficult to find suitable locations - would you like to live beside the next new landfill? They're also expensive to develop and operate - costs that are passed onto you.

The best solution is to reduce the amount of rubbish we create. Shopping wisely is one way you can do this.

Find out if you're a sustainable shopping star by taking our shopping challenge next time you're at the supermarket. Calculate your score when you get home using the table below. Remember to consider:

- the type and amount of packaging that's been used
- bulk-buy options
- whether or not the product's biodegradable
- economy sized choices, concentrates and/or refills.

Item	Comments	No	Yes	Bonus Points	Why?
Cucumber	Seal wrapped or in a plastic bag?	1 point	0 points		Sometimes you need a plastic bag, but they're not essential when you buy fruit and veges. Twelve per cent of the weight of the average rubbish bag is packaging. If you don't need a plastic bag, don't take it.
Fruit juice	The major juice brands use recyclable plastic bottles. Did you buy your juice in a recyclable plastic bottle? If you bought a three-litre container, you saved on packaging - give yourself a bonus point. Sorry, no points for Tetra paks unless you bought a concentrate - give yourself half a point.	0 points	1 point 1/2 point - concentrate	1 point - 3L	Type 1 and 2 plastics can usually be recycled. Recyclable packaging means less rubbish. Buying larger sizes and concentrates gives you more product, reducing the packaging. Tetra paks are made out of layers of cardboard and foil so can't be recycled or composted.
Potato chips	Did you buy a multi pack with 12 individually wrapped packets?	1 point	0 points		Multi packs are convenient, but think of the extra packaging. Try large single packs and put servings into a plastic container you can reuse.
Tomato sauce	There aren't many brands of tomato sauce that use recyclable plastic bottles. Did you find a brand that does, or did you buy your sauce in a glass bottle or can? If you bought 2L give yourself a bonus point.		1 point	1 point - 2L	Glass, cans and type 1 and 2 plastics can usually be recycled. Buying larger sizes gives you more product and helps reduce the amount of packaging.
Cat food	Did you buy single serves?	1 point	0 points		Recyclable packaging like cans are preferable to non-recyclable options, like the composite foil packaging of the single serves.
Batteries	Did you buy rechargeable batteries?	0 points	1 point		Globally, 15 billion ordinary batteries are thrown away every year, many of which end up in landfills. Rechargeable batteries can be reused again and again. Rechargeable batteries may initially cost more and need a recharger, but costs are outweighed by the long term savings and environmental benefits.
Yoghurt	Did you buy a 1 litre tub?	0 points	1 point		Instead of individual serving pottles (which often can't be recycled), you can buy a one litre tub of yoghurt and place servings into re-useable containers.
Packing your groceries	Finally, did you reuse some old plastic shopping bags or cloth bags? If you asked the checkout operator to put more items in a plastic bag than they usually do, give yourself half a point.	0 points	1 point 1/2 point - reduced the number of plastic bags used for packing groceries		New Zealanders use over 22 million plastic bags each week. Each bag can take 500 years to break down. You can purchase inexpensive cotton bags at your supermarket.

If you scored:

- 0-2** Oh-oh, looks like you need to rethink your shopping habits!
- 3-7** You're on the right track, but a bit of extra effort will help keep landfill waste down.
- 8-10** Give yourself a big pat on the back - you're a sustainable shopping star!

If your local council has a kerbside recycling collection make sure you find out what can and can't go in your recycling bin.

Green dates

February - April 2006

Biodiversity Waikato

Contact: 0800 BIODIV (246 348)

Breakaways Tramping Club

Piopia tramp

February 15
Contact: Helen (07) 889 6950

Bethells Beach tramp

February 19
Contact: June (07) 856 3407

Kauaeranga Valley - Wainora Kauri tramp

March 5
Contact: Adrian (07) 887 4706

Coromandel weekend tramp

March 18-19
Contact: Mick (07) 887 4710

Choices: Hamilton Healthy Lifestyle Group

Meets every Thursday at 1.30 pm,
62 London Street, Hamilton
Contact: Louisa Talbot (07) 839 3917

Department of Conservation

Contact: Margaret Stephens (07) 838 3363

EONZ Outdoor Education Workshops

Contact: Alison Porter (07) 843 0922 or
email trv.ali@paradise.net.nz

Guides

Guides Waikato has activities for young people 5-18 years. Call (07) 856 5965 for your local group, or email guideswaikato@xtra.co.nz

Hamilton Anglers Club

Contact: Stephen Martin (07) 855 3762

Hamilton Junior Naturalists

Meets every Friday, Hamilton Rose Garden Horticultural Centre
7.00 pm-8.30 pm in term time, for ages 11-17
Contact: John Dale (07) 855 4458 or email junats@mahipai.co.nz

Hamilton Search and Rescue Group

Meets third Monday each month, 7.30 pm,
Hamilton Central Police Station
Contact: John Twizell (07) 856 2844

Hamilton Tramping Club

Sailors Grave, Tairua tramp

February 12
Contact: Lynne (07) 855 1447

Wairoa Stream to Katikati tramp

February 26
Contact: Kevin (07) 870 5242

Whakapapa tramp

March 4-5
Contact: John (07) 843 2344

Pirongia tramp

March 19
Contact: Alan (07) 849 2602

Bream Head Walkway

March 25-26
Contact: Wendy and Mike (09) 292 7838

Camel's Hump, Tapu Road tramp

April 2
Contact: Gail and Paul (07) 825 2133

Easter in the Uraweras tramp

April 14-17
Contact: Bill (07) 827 1807

Monday Bushtrampers (Sport Waikato)

Full day tramps, weekly from Memorial Drive,
Hamilton, 7.30 am or 8.00 am
Contact: Marian (07) 828 9029

Mountain Safety Waikato

Regular courses on abseiling, bushcraft, bushcraft for women, river safety, bush navigation and snowcraft
Contact: Milli Lovell (07) 827 1070 or waikato@mountainsafety.org.nz

Pirongia te Aroaro o Kahu Restoration Society

Contact: Carla Vincent (07) 872 8168 or carlajoynz@hotmail.com

Royal Forest and Bird - Thames Hauraki Branch

Farm and Beach Walk - Tapapakanga Farm Park, Firth of Thames

February 11
Contact: Bill and Hazel (07) 968 9057

Visit Waikaka Flax Block and Peat Dome to see important regeneration and increased bird presence

February 25
Contact: Marcia (07) 868 8696

Visit Kaiua Coast and Miranda Shorebird Trust Centre

March 5
Contact: Frances (07) 868 9707

Walk Humunga to Waihi Beach

March 18
Contact: Jan (07) 867 5113

Whanganui Island trip

April 8
Contact: Marcia (07) 868 8696

Scouts

Plenty of outdoor opportunities for young people 6-18 years. Call 0800 SCOUTS (0800 726 887) or email scoutingwaikato@xtra.co.nz for activities and events in your district

Sport Waikato

Echo Walking Festival

April 22-30
Daily guided and freedom walks and tramps covering the Northern Kaimais. (Katikati, Matakana, Waihi, Karangahake, Paeroa, Te Aroha and Waiorongomai)

Contact:
Te Aroha Information Office - (07) 884 8052
Paeroa Information Office - (07) 862 8636
Waihi Information Office - (07) 863 6715
Katikati Information Office - (07) 549 1658

Taupo Fishing Club

Contact: Russell Rountree (07) 377 1177

Taupo Tramping Club

Contact: Barbara Morris (07) 378 6620

Waikato Tramping Club

www.wtc.org.nz

CLUBNIGHTS

Every first Wednesday of the month, 8.00 pm
St Stephens Church Hall, Corner Ohaupo Rd and Mahoe St
\$2 for hall hire and supper

Wanderers Tramping Club

Mangakino Pack Track tramp (Northern Kaimais)

February 12
Contact: Ann (07) 847 2460

Waiorongomai/Te Aroha tramp

February 26
Contact: Colin (07) 855 1335

Te Waotu to Arapuni tramp

March 12
Contact: Roger (07) 856 7550

Horohero Cliffs tramp

March 26
Contact: Ron (07) 855 5684

Kohukohunui Trig (Northern Hunuas)

April 9
Contact: Mary (07) 856 4752

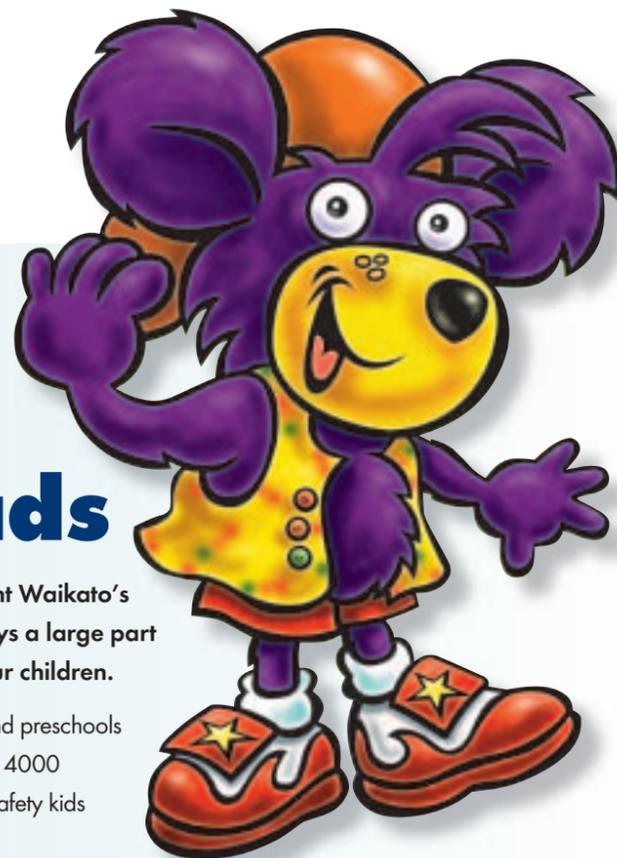
If you have trips or events organised for 2006, let us know. They will go in the next edition of EnviroCare, and be added to the Green Dates calendar online at www.ew.govt.nz
Email: envirocare@ew.govt.nz
Mail: EnviroCare, Environment Waikato, PO Box 4010, Hamilton East.

Keeping kids safe on our roads

Ruben the Road Safety Bear is Environment Waikato's road safety icon for the region. Ruben plays a large part in the road safety education of many of our children.

In 2005, Ruben visited more than 110 schools and preschools spreading his road safety messages to more than 4000 Waikato children. Ruben also has his own road safety kids club with over 3500 members.

Look out for Ruben at schools and preschools this year. For more information or to join Ruben's club check out www.ruben.govt.nz.



Kids' colouring competition

Colour in this backyard picture and be in to win a great prize! Send your entry to:

EnviroCare, Freepost Environment Waikato, PO Box 4010, Hamilton East. Entries close March 31, 2006.

Please tick

Age Under five 5-8 years 9-12 years

Name _____

Address _____





David Peart

HAMILTON

The challenge of pest control

At this time of the year, councils are beginning the process of deciding what needs to be done, what should be done and what is affordable in the next financial year.

One of the biggest challenges facing our region is what happens to our animal pest control programme.

Over the past 30 years, most of the costs of this activity have been borne by farmers and central government through the Animal Health Board. This occurred because possums and other feral introduced species were targeted as part of the programme to eradicate bovine Tb.

Now that success is within our grasp in this region, we are realising the tremendous side benefits that have accrued. These include improved forest health with its downstream benefits in catchment management (slower runoff in storms with less flooding and erosion) and greater breeding success for our threatened bird species. These national assets are considered by most to be priceless – but protecting them costs.

Councillors will have to decide how much value there is in continuing animal pest control to protect our heritage, who will benefit, and how costs will be allocated.

Farmers in our region will still be funding Tb programmes in other areas of the country through stock levies as the battle continues to reach the levels of control needed to ensure ongoing market access for our exports.

Your views are important.
Contact me on (07) 847 6319 or email:
david.peart@councillor.ew.govt.nz.



Lois Livingston

HAMILTON

The joys of composting

Hi everyone – hope you have managed to have a well earned break and have recharged the batteries for the year ahead.

Just before Christmas I moved into my new home – an old state house in Hamilton East. And what a 'state' it was in.

But I was looking forward to the challenge. While the builders, plasterers and electrician were doing their thing to make it liveable, I was outside putting in my new vege garden.

I love growing vegetables and making compost. When I left my last house I bagged up the compost and used it to make a small garden for my daughter in Raglan and it has been a great success. So I can't wait to get my next good batch to add to my garden.

Composting is so easy and so rewarding, however big or small your garden is. Environment Waikato has brochures on how to compost, as does the Environment Centre in Ward Street.

The Environment Centre will also sell you compost bins and worm farms – so have a go! You can also buy compost enhancers from most garden centres and they work really well.

I think it is a real shame so much of our kitchen and garden waste goes into landfills when it could be going back into our back and front yards and feeding our soils, our pots and our souls by providing beautiful gardens for us to enjoy.

Lois Livingston is available on Environment Waikato's Freephone 0800 800 401, or email: lois.livingston@councillor.ew.govt.nz.



Paula Southgate

HAMILTON

The threat of invasive weeds

In New Zealand, 75 percent of invasive weeds are garden plants that have 'jumped the fence'. This means that what grows in our own backyards will affect the wider environment.

Our backyard does not stop at our gate. It extends across the region to the shared forests, lakes, wetlands, rivers and coasts.

Invasive weeds are a huge problem. They clog up waterways, smother native forests, choke recreational areas, affect agriculture and can be harmful to animals and humans alike. They destroy the places where many of our special native animals and insects live.

Problem weeds in Hamilton include alligator weed, climbing spindleberry, mignonette vine and woolly nightshade.

Prevention is best. If we all play our part to stop weeds getting started in our own gardens, it benefits us all. We need to recognise them when they appear and control or remove them in the best way.

This does not include dumping into gullies or reserves. Correct disposal of weeds is essential as seeds and root matter are easily spread. There is a lot of good advice available, including two very knowledgeable plant pest officers. Weedbusters has a good website www.weedbusters.org.nz.

Hamiltonians have a lot of outdoor areas to enjoy within and surrounding the city. A shared approach to preventing and controlling weeds will keep these areas beautiful and healthy for us and our children.

Paula Southgate is available on (07) 856 1470, or email: paula.southgate@ew.govt.nz.



Ian Balme

HAMILTON

Environmental management

Hamilton is a big city in education. At this time of year students pour into town from all around the world (and the Waikato) to study at schools, tertiary institutions and private training enterprises.

That's a great asset for the community. Economically it is perhaps our most sustainable industry because knowledge is never depleted by being shared. It connects students with new perspectives that can only strengthen their ability to work with other people.

Like so many others, I've enrolled at Waikato University again this year as I work towards a Masters in Environmental Management. It's a stimulating learning experience that is already benefiting my work as an Environment Waikato councillor.

This year, in addition, I've been selected for the Leadership NZ programme that builds community leadership capability at the highest level. I am looking forward to the learning, opportunities, and networks it will build for me at a national level.

Leadership is an attribute that guides our community forward. I see it in action every day, demonstrated by so many individuals committed to building our environmental asset base and using their knowledge to help others make sound decisions.

By the end of this year, I will be incorporating my learning from these two programmes in my work. That will be another small plus on the region's environmental balance sheet.

Ian Balme is available on (07) 829 8855, or email: ian.balme@councillor.ew.govt.nz.

When's my bus coming?

The trial of a new RealTime bus tracking system has been underway in Hamilton for the past few months. The system aims to improve bus patronage by providing instant information on the precise arrival time of buses.

Thirty display units have been installed across four city routes: Glenview, University, Claudelands and Frankton.

The RealTime system works through Global Positioning System (GPS) transponders installed on specific buses, which can give the exact position when questioned by the display units, which are activated at the push of a button.

The solar powered display units electronically display the time remaining until the bus will arrive at the stop. The units are audio-equipped so the number of minutes until the bus arrives will also be spoken through a built-in loudspeaker.

An additional 94 display units will be installed across Hamilton bus routes over the next few months.

Environment Waikato's representative on the Hamilton



RealTime display unit. Photo courtesy of Waikato Times

Passenger Transport Subcommittee, Councillor Paula Southgate, says she believes the RealTime system is a big step forward for passenger transport in Hamilton.

"At a time of rising fuel prices and increasing congestion in the city, it is these types of service improvements that are likely to be a key factor in encouraging more and more people to leave the car at home and catch the bus," she says.

"RealTime will help solve the age-old question 'have I missed the bus?' and help to end passenger uncertainty about when the next bus is going to arrive."

RealTime is one of many improvements planned for Hamilton bus services over the next few months – new routes such as Ruakura, the CBD Shuttle, Chartwell Direct and the Orbiter will be rolling out over the next few months.

For more information on city and regional bus services, check out www.busit.co.nz or call 0800 4 BUSLINE (0800 4 287 546).