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KEY DATES

Council meetings

27 March: 1pm - Council

28 March: 10am -
Waikato Central Drainage
Subcommittee

Service levels up for just 0.3 per cent more



An average rate increase of 0.3 per cent to existing ratepayers, a big boost to work to protect water quality and solid funding for biodiversity and flood control feature in Waikato Regional Council's [2014/15 Draft Annual Plan](#) now out for public feedback.

We've made it easier for you to have your say with a [new online submission form](#). You are able to read the plan and make comments as you go. Even better, if there's something you want to think about or investigate further, you can save your submission and come back to it later. The new software also makes it more cost efficient for us to process your feedback.

The submissions period closes at 4pm on Thursday, 17 April. Hearings are scheduled for May, with adoption of the final plan due on 26 June 2014.

Photo: John Parker

Large lime deposit washed from Waikino stream in storm



Visit [our website](#) for full meeting details, including agendas.



These pictures of a Waikino stream show how last weekend's heavy rainfall from Cyclone Lusi has seemingly washed away a significant deposit of lime.

Golden Cross Joint Venture says the significant unauthorised discharge from the gold mine's water treatment plant followed a suspected act of vandalism on either Tuesday night or early Wednesday morning last week.

A quantity of lime from a tank in the Golden Cross Rd plant entered the Waitekauri Stream and was last week having effects on koura, eels and aquatic insects up to three kilometres downstream of the discharge point.

Waikato Regional Council has been assessing the full impact on aquatic life and the health of the waterway. Staff returned to the stream this week to obtain more samples for testing and found that the large deposit of lime had been washed away.

Until the test results have been received it's unknown if the stream has been flushed clean following last weekend's storm.

Meanwhile, an investigation is continuing into how the discharge happened and what quantities of lime had been discharged.

Latest Hikuai weed clearance underway





The latest phase of major weed clearance at a rare cabbage tree wetland at Hikuai on the Coromandel Peninsula has gotten underway this week.

Waikato Regional Council contractors will be working up to the end of April to clear weeds over a 9 hectare section of the 13 hectare wetland known as the Hikuwai Ti Kouka Grove.

The wetland runs along the lower Tairua River between the Hikuai and Woody streams and contains one of the region's last remaining cabbage tree forests of this scale. However, the forest has been threatened with strangulation by weeds.

Supported by local residents and local iwi Ngati Hei and Ngati Maru, the council began restoration work several years ago. Contractors and volunteers have already removed weeds over about three hectares. More than 1200 native plants have been planted as well.

The latest work is focused on the northern part of the wetland and removing larger unwanted weeds and plants, such as privet, wattle, willows, poplars and wilding pines. Smaller weeds like blackberry and honeysuckle are also on the hit list. Much of the work is targeted at the worst area for weeds near the road going past the wetland.

"This work will make a real difference to the health of this iconic wetland," said Coromandel catchment management officer Andy Wills. "We really appreciate the support we've been getting from local people and iwi to restore this very special area."

It's expected that all the bigger pest plants will have been removed by the end of April from the northern end of the wetland. After that, contractors will be planting 3500 native plants along the road edge which will act as a buffer against the re-introduction of weeds.

People keen to get involved in the project can call Andy Wills on freephone 0800 800 401.

BUSIT to the Night Glow

Waikato Regional Council's free park and ride bus services are back for this



month's Balloons Over Waikato premier event, the Night Glow.

Visit [the BUSIT website](#) for full details of the Balloons Over Waikato parking locations and pick-up points, or call 0800 4BUSLINE (0800 4 2875 463).

Five routes will run between key Hamilton locations and the University of Waikato from 4.15pm on Saturday 29 March, with the last bus leaving park and ride sites at 7pm. Event patrons will also be collected from official 'event bus stops' on route when they signal the drivers.

At the conclusion of the Night Glow, buses will leave on a continuous, as-available basis until all event-goers have boarded for their return journey.

If rain postpones the [Balloons Over Waikato](#) event until Sunday 30 March, there will still be park and ride services available.



New stock truck effluent facility opened



A new facility which will help to reduce spills of stock effluent on King Country roads has opened in Te Kuiti this week.

The \$75,000 stock truck effluent disposal facility has been designed and built by Waitomo District Council, with funding split between the Waikato Regional Council and NZ Transport Agency.

Pictured at the official opening yesterday is (from left): Robert Brodnax from the NZ Transport Agency, Waitomo district mayor Brian

Hanna, and Waikato regional councillor and regional transport committee chair Hugh Vercoe.

The new facility will provide 24/7 truck access and is located in Cotter Street, just off Waitete Road (State Highway 30), and is immediately adjacent to the Te Kuiti Sale Yards.

Effluent is spilled onto the road from stock trucks when the holding tanks are deliberately discharged or accidentally overflow. These sorts of discharges can cause traffic crashes if they make roads slippery or spatter on to windscreens.

Discharge is also a health hazard for cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians, and causes smelly and unsightly pollution on highways and road sides. Uncontrolled discharges of effluent can cause environmental problems if the effluent enters waterways.

A clear vision was set in the [2010-2016 Stock Truck Effluent Strategy](#) for zero discharge of stock effluent from trucks onto Waikato roads by 2020.

There is one in-transit effluent dumping site in the Waikato, on SH5 at Tapapa, and there are now five at or near sale yards in Te Kuiti, Morrinsville, Taupo, Matamata and Tuakau. Two further high-priority locations for in-transit disposal facilities are being progressed, with three other sites under investigation, near Putaruru and on SH27 near the Tahuna Road roundabout. Other in-transit facilities are to be investigated in Taupo and Ngaruawahia, as well as another one near Te Kuiti.

Research will help to protect New Zealand's whitebait populations



Research being undertaken by a Waikato university student will help to protect populations of one of New Zealand's most popular delicacies,

says Waikato Regional Council.

Alicia Catlin has won the **\$5000 Dr Stella Frances Scholarship** from Waikato Regional Council and the Department of Conservation and will be using it to research the effects of floodplain inundation on whitebait food supplies.

“It is important to know whether whitebait are deriving the zooplankton from the main river channel or lateral floodplain areas,” explains Ms Catlin, who is formerly from the Walton/Matamata area.

“If they are selecting zooplankton from the floodplain areas over the river channel and the floodplains get disconnected, for example due to stopbanks or flood gates, they will lose this food supply which could dramatically affect their populations.

“Knowing what they feed on will allow organisations to know where to focus their management of whitebait in terms of restoring connectivity with lateral floodplain areas, as well as restoring vegetation in these areas to support vital zooplankton generation,” she said.

“The results of my research will also educate the wider public on how they can further help whitebait populations to continue into the future,” she said.

Freshwater zooplankton are unicellular and multicellular animals found in the water in wetland areas such as lakes, tarns, streams and swamps and are a main source of food for whitebait and other aquatic organisms.

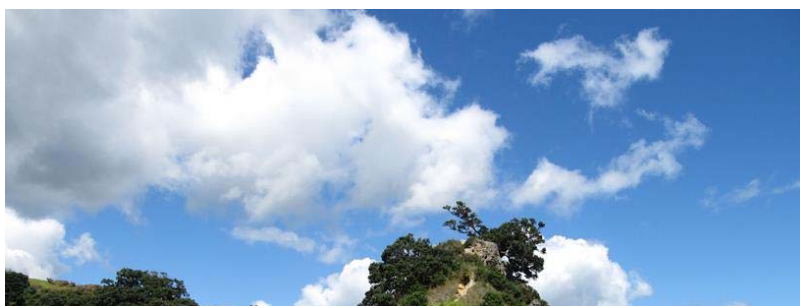
Regional council chairperson Paula Southgate said: “Alicia’s work is highly relevant to the Waikato region, where water quality is the big issue that we face going forward. This research will help to address this priority environmental issue, as well as river restoration, and traditional and commercial food sources.”

Photo: Scholarship winner Alicia Catlin with Waikato Conservation Board chair Arthur Hinds and Waikato Regional Council chairperson Paula Southgate.

For farmers



New Sea Change website is go!





In February, just in time for Sea Week, the new [Sea Change - Tai Timu Tai Pari website](#) developed by Waikato Regional Council went live.

“Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari is an extraordinarily exciting project,” said Nick Main, Stakeholder Working Group independent chair. “It is also a complex one, so we felt it would be helpful for everyone to have access to a central repository of information and resources so they can share the information being used to guide the Group’s deliberations.

“The new website gives more context around the project and also outlines the innovative ‘outside in’ engagement model which is informing all our activity.”

The site already has a solid core of information. More information on specific areas of focus will be added as the project progresses and all events related to Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari will be advertised ahead of time on the [dedicated events page](#).

The ultimate aim of Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari is to produce a marine spatial plan that protects the health, productivity and sustainability of the Hauraki Gulf. It will give more clarity and certainty to people and groups who use the space – as well as the agencies who manage the gulf and its resources.

Sea Change – Tai Timu Tai Pari is a partnership involving mana whenua, Auckland Council, Waikato Regional Council, the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Primary Industries and the Hauraki Gulf Forum.

Check out the new website at www.seachange.org.nz – and don’t forget to [complete the survey](#) while you’re there!

Keeping the local in local government





Waikato people need the ability to drive funding for activities and events in their communities whatever the shape of the region's councils in the future, says Waikato Regional Council.

Chairperson Paula Southgate said the regional council was not proposing any particular structure for local government in the Waikato, but wanted to play a constructive part in discussions about local government reform.

"We want to have principles-based discussion about the form and function of local government and focus on collaborating with other councils to see how we can collectively drive greater efficiencies for our ratepayers," she said.

"We have an excellent opportunity to work together for the betterment of the region and all our communities," she said.

The current Waikato local government model includes a regional council and 11 territorial councils.

The council has agreed to the following set of 13 principles against which to test any proposals for change.

The form and function of local government in the Waikato region should ensure that:

1. there is effective local government at the local community and regional level
2. there is strong united and uniting leadership at the local community and regional level
3. there is one clear voice for the Waikato region with respect to matters of regional significance
4. at the regional level there is effective strategic integrated planning, at least with respect to land use, transport, hazards, infrastructure and economic development
5. planning in the Waikato region is simplified, including fewer planning documents with more consistency across the region
6. there is a clear and unambiguous division of responsibilities for regional and local community authorities
7. the effectiveness and efficiency of local government procurement, infrastructure management and service provision is optimised
8. local government entities have adequate capacity, capability, financial and other resources to successfully carry out their roles and responsibilities in a way that is affordable to their communities
9. there is a clear process for iwi involvement in local government which recognises the importance and status of iwi in the region
10. water management occurs at a scale that includes entire catchments
11. local government is successful across the whole region

12. there is an understanding of the diversity of communities of interest with respect to local governance
13. there is strong community support for any change.

[Read more about the council decision.](#)

We're hiring



Student with passion for the environment wins award

A top university student with a passion for keeping waterways clean has won Waikato Regional Council's prize for water science.

The prize for \$500 of book vouchers was presented to 21-year-old Raglan local Amy Waters this month.

"Water quality is the big issue that we face going forward and we need science to underpin it," said council chairperson, Paula Southgate, during the ceremony. "It's a nice part of council work to reward clever people who are doing wonderful things in our community and who will go on to share their expertise," Cr Southgate said.



The water sciences prize started in 1990 and is awarded to the top Bachelor of Science student enrolled in the Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences at the University of Waikato.

Ms Waters majored in earth science and quickly realised she enjoyed hydrology, taking every paper in natural water that she could during her final two years of study.

"I like how it relates to daily life. We all drink water from the tap everyday and I want to help make sure it is clean and free of contaminants now and for generations to come," she said.

Ms Waters graduates in April and then intends heading to Europe for a couple of years, before returning to the University of Waikato to do her Masters, with a focus on groundwater.

"I would eventually like to do some work in Africa to help with the provision of clean drinking water, but I'd rather go there with more knowledge," she said.

Ms Waters, who attended Raglan Area School and became head girl in her final year, says her degree combined her love for both science and the outdoors.

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