

ENVIROSOUTH

An underwater photograph of a vibrant kelp forest. Large, green, lobed kelp leaves dominate the left side of the frame. To the right, a dense thicket of smaller, colorful marine life, including red and orange sponges and various algae, covers a rocky or coral reef structure. The water is clear and blue, with sunlight filtering through from above.

November 2010

www.es.govt.nz

Issue 21

Environment Southland News

IN THIS ISSUE:

Kanakana link local knowledge with science

New summer walking series

Red Alert for blue-green algae

What's in your backyard?

for now and



From the Chair



Cr Ali Timms

My sincere thanks to my fellow Councillors for their support of my Chairmanship of Environment Southland. My

previous nine years experience as a Councillor has given me the skills and knowledge to lead the Council and I'm looking forward to the challenge. I am committed

to a collaborative and cooperative approach to debate and decision-making around the Council table and believe this is the best way to achieve long term effective outcomes for the good of the province's environment.

An integral part of this approach is to continue to consult widely with key stakeholders as we formulate policy and plans. The most recent successful examples of this are the Regional Policy Statement and farm dairy effluent Discharge Plan review processes.

Dealing with diffuse or non-point-source pollution of our waterways remains our biggest region-wide challenge. Recent finger-pointing at certain sectors of our community

as the major polluters is ultimately unhelpful and divisive. If we are to build on recent gains made in improved surface water quality throughout Southland, we all need to take ownership of our actions. Whether in the home, workplace, farm or when enjoying our great outdoors, we are all contributing to the cumulative detrimental effects which lead to poor water quality.

I am mindful of the effects the recent severe winter storm will have on the Southland economy. This comes on top of a local and national economy which is struggling to get fired up since the international recession in 2008. The Council and staff need to work with the community so our core functions are maintained whilst positioning ourselves to meet the challenges ahead. ■

New Council sworn in for three-year term

Five new members have joined Environment Southland following last month's elections.

Crs Peter Jones, Grant Hubber, Jan Riddell, Robert Guyton and Rowly Currie were all sworn in at the Council's inaugural meeting on 29 November.

Cr Ali Timms was elected Chair of the Council with Cr Nicol Horrell as her deputy. Cr Timms first joined Environment Southland in 2001 and was previously Chair of the Environmental Management Committee. She is also Chair of the Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust.

Cr Horrell has been on the Council since 2007. He has taken over as Chair of the Environmental Management Committee, while Cr Maurice

Rodway was elected Chair of the Consents Committee. Cr Ross Cockburn is the new Chair of the Regional Services Committee. The Committees will meet for the first time on 17 November and the full Council on 15 December. ■



Environment Southland Councillors 2010-2013. Back row, from left: Ross Cockburn, Peter Jones, Grant Hubber, Neville Cook, Robert Guyton, Maurice Rodway. Front row: Rowly Currie, Jan Riddell, Deputy Chair Nicol Horrell, newly elected Chair Ali Timms, Marion Miller, Brian Mason

Otama's Green Gold Award a first for Southland

Otama School is celebrating Southland's first Enviroschools Green Gold award. And they attribute their success in part to the inclusive community approach that the school adopted from the start.

Green Gold is the top award that schools aspire to achieve in the national Enviroschools programme. There are only 21 Green Gold schools holding that coveted status, out of more than 700 involved in the programme. The top ranking reflects the effort and commitment that Otama School and its community have made to environmental sustainability, particularly over the past five years since joining the Enviroschools programme.

Environment Southland's Environmental Education Coordinator, Nikki Tarbutt, believes that Otama School thoroughly deserves its success. "The whole school and its community are dedicated to the Enviroschools ethos of sustainability," she says.

At Otama, studying the environment isn't just an optional extra, it's been integrated into the whole school's curriculum. "None of it is taken in isolation – everything is part of the bigger picture, and everyone from the youngest student to the staff and families knows how it relates to that wider perspective."

Janet Gregory, Regional Coordinator for NZ Landcare Trust, is a local who has been involved with Otama since the beginning of its Enviroschools journey. The school called on Janet with their first project; wanting to make over their garden area. "It was about what the kids wanted," Janet says. "I helped them to identify some of the weeds, and they wanted to take out the plants that cut them. They wanted a space in the middle that could be a play area, but also an outdoor classroom."



Students from Otama School with the model they made to illustrate their journey in the Enviroschools programme.

The pupils are now applying the same principles to other projects they are involved in. "They consider what would have been there previously, what plants would be best and they include climate, soils and land type in their planning."

Students' activities now include monitoring water quality and stream health in the Otama Stream, riparian planting, participation in the Hokonui Rūnanga's mataitai project and working with Mataura School to begin a riparian planting project at Mataura.

Janet is particularly proud of how the whole school has embraced the Enviroschools message. "It's really in everything they do at the school. From maths to creative writing, the environment is part of it all." Students have drawn their families and neighbours into their actions, creating lasting links that have strengthened the small rural community.

"It's great to see this young generation taking it on, it's really powerful," Janet says. "That's the

beauty of enviroschools. They have pulled people in, reconnected with their community. It's given others the motivation. Other adults, other schools want to do similar things."

There are 17 Southland schools in the Enviroschools programme, which is coordinated by Environment Southland with funding support from the Invercargill City, Gore District and Southland District Councils, The Community Trust of Southland, and Mother Earth. ■





WATER

Driveway Car Washing – A Problem for our Waterways

Honestly now – have you ever washed your car on your driveway or the street? And have you ever thought about where that water goes once it's run off your car?

Many believe that, like the water that gurgles down the plughole in our homes, stormwater is treated before it reaches waterways. But this isn't true.

You might be surprised to know that the water carrying car engine oils and detergent flows into our local waterways.

Pollution Prevention Officer Jodi Thompson says that much of Southland's urban pollution happens because people don't realise where their stormwater pipes lead.

“Stormwater is not part of the sewerage system. So, unlike the water from the bathroom and laundry sink, the toilet and the shower at home, or trade waste from industry, stormwater isn't treated. It goes straight to our rivers.” This means that all chemicals and detergents that run off your car or spill onto your driveway pollute your local waterway.

Washwater also contains contaminants such as sediments, metals, paint residues, oil and grease, which can have a significant effect on water quality. They also affect everything that lives in the waterways, including aquatic plants, fish and macroinvertebrates.

If you think that it's ok to carry on washing your car on the street as long as you use a biodegradable detergent ... unfortunately that's wrong too. Even biodegradable detergents are harmful because they also remove oxygen from the water, and their additives can affect aquatic life.



There's a right way (above) and a wrong way (below). Washing your car on grass will filter out contaminants before the dirty water gets to the drain.



This is no small problem. It can take oxygen from as much as 70 litres of water to compensate for the de-oxygenation caused by just one litre of washwater.

What can you do?

At home:

- Wash your car on the grass or a gravel driveway away from drains
- Minimize the amount of detergent you use
- Go to a commercial car wash (their wastewater goes into the sewerage system and is treated)

At work:

- Read our Vehicle and Equipment washing factsheet: www.es.govt.nz
- Contact the Pollution Prevention Officer for site-specific advice.

At school:

- Talk to the Pollution Prevention Officer at Environment Southland before planning a car washing fundraiser – seek advice!

Contact Jodi Thompson, Pollution Prevention Officer 0800 76 88 45, or go to www.es.govt.nz. ■

Kanakana project links local knowledge with science

Night after frozen night through the winter last year, Vinnie Leith kept vigil beside the water at Māngai Piri / Niagara Falls. He was counting hundreds upon hundreds of wriggling, writhing kanakana as they waited for the right conditions to allow them to move on upstream.

Vinnie's whānau have been catching kanakana at Māngai Piri / Niagara Falls near Waikawa for generations. He hopes that by taking part in a new study of the migratory fish, he will help ensure that they will still be available for whānau to catch and enjoy 200 years hence.

Kanakana are also known as lamprey and they're often mistaken for eels – their wide, sucking mouth marks them out as a different species but few people get close enough to see that distinguishing feature. They are parasites, sustaining themselves at sea by latching on to whales and large fish and sucking their blood and juices.

From around August to the end of October, kanakana swim up the Waikawa and Mataura rivers, congregating in pools below the falls until rain or high flows enable them to negotiate the rocks and continue their way to the spawning grounds upstream.

Kanakana are an important mahinga kai (source of food) for



Environment Southland water quality scientist Kirsten Meijer with a kanakana.



Kanakana gathering in a pool at Niagara Falls, waiting for sufficient water to continue their journey upstream. Photo: Steve Ledington

Ngāi Tahu. Dean Whaanga, Te Ao Mārama Inc's Resource Management Officer, says that historically, Māori trekked to the southern rivers from as far away as Temuka to catch kanakana. Anecdotal reports that kanakana stocks were declining led to the first concerted efforts to monitor their numbers last year.

This year, Te Ao Mārama Inc, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Environment Southland have brought in help from the Cawthron Institute, whose sophisticated underwater "Didson" sonar camera was used to get an accurate count of numbers, adding to the information gathered by Vinnie Leith and others who were again counting the kanakana in the pools below Māngai Piri over late winter and early spring. This research is funded by Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga, the New Zealand Māori Centre of Research Excellence.

Environment Southland has been monitoring water quality and conditions in the Waikawa River, compiling information about water levels and temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, salinity, conductivity, temperature and pH levels.

Scientist Jane Kitson, who works for both Environment Southland and Te Ao Mārama Inc, said that other information was also being collected to provide the fullest possible picture of kanakana. That includes oral history to record information from local whānau and fishers, and an assessment of changes in land use to see whether they might be influencing kanakana numbers.

She and Dean Whaanga concur that this is just the beginning of the kanakana research. The interim results will be presented to a hui towards the middle of next year, where the next steps will be agreed. ■



Neighbours benefiting from new possum control programme

John Cowie vividly remembers the massive effort that went into possum control through the Tb programme when he was farming in the 60's and 70's. Now John's 300ha family farm predominantly runs sheep but back then he farmed deer.

"I was on the Regional Animal Health Committee in those days and we weren't getting anywhere with the possums," John says. "You were always worried about Tb, it was a nasty disease."

"We finally got rid of it, but not until we started doing control properly. 1080 did a great job in the Hokonui's." However as the risk of disease reduced, so too did the amount of possum control which meant the possums quickly started to come back into large parts of Southland.

Biosecurity Officer Andrew Kirk says that recent information shows possum numbers are steadily increasing in many areas where regular control is not occurring.

Rather than allow possum numbers to build up again, Environment Southland is implementing a new project called Possum Control Areas – PCA. Council staff coordinate landowners in an area to carry out effective control at least annually by designing effective control plans for each property, providing advice and information along with some of the control materials used.

John Cowie was one of the first landowners to join the Winton Hill Possum Control Area programme about six months ago. The programme, also running in South Hillend, is aimed at landowners willing to maintain low possum

numbers. "I was glad to see a coordinated programme get going again," John says. "We had good results with possum control in the past and it's all about maintaining those good gains. It's much easier to contain them rather than letting them get away again."

"In the PCA programme, each landowner is challenged to achieve 5% residual trap catch (RTC), which is the formula used to measure possum density," Andrew says.

The possum population is monitored before the programme starts. John's property had quite a high RTC at around 20%, and one of John's neighbours had 33% - considered to be very high.

John's property is one of two halves and therefore, quite unique. About four years ago, John had two QE2



Biosecurity Officer Andrew Kirk (left) with long-time possum control advocate, farmer John Cowie.

covenants placed on his remnants of native bush. One of his possum control lines is on flat land, in the native bush running along one of the few un-straightened rivers left in Southland. “There were low possum numbers in this area when they did the monitoring,” John says. “But there were high numbers in the native bush on the hill.”

“By having neighbouring landowners in the programme, there is a better chance of reducing the possum reinvasion, as they travel across boundaries,” Andrew says. Bait stations are one of the main control methods used in PCAs. They’re a good tool for PCAs because the poison can be topped up as required with a relatively low level of manpower.

Most of John’s neighbours are part of the Winton Hill PCA programme, which is helpful in reducing the chances of possum reinvasion from adjoining properties.

AB Lime is one of John’s neighbours and the property includes the biggest privately owned bush remnant on the Southland Plains. John says that he’s seen a big difference in the native flora and fauna now that possum numbers are staying low. “The rata is now flowering in the area, which is a good indicator of the success of the control programme, and there’s mistletoe and wood pigeons that I haven’t seen in this area for years.”

John is keen to see the programme expanded to other areas. “Being Tb free is important, but through ongoing possum control we are also protecting native vegetation, birdlife, land productivity and even the roses in our gardens.”

If you’re interested in joining or learning more about a PCA programme, please contact our Biosecurity staff on 0800 76 88 45 or look on our website www.es.govt.nz. ■

Taking your boat into Fiordland? Help protect the precious marine environment

As summer approaches, boaties are keen to get out on the water. If you have a moored vessel and you’re heading into the waters of the Fiordland Marine Area, there are some important things you need to know about marine pests and the harm they can do to this unique marine environment.

Many marine species can travel from one location to another growing as fouling on dirty boat bottoms. In new locations they can often establish quickly, overrunning native species, damaging marine ecosystems, affecting fish stocks, recreational activities and tourism.

In a discovery that stunned and dismayed environmental management agencies, conservationists and boaties alike, a small population of the invasive seaweed undaria was found earlier this year in the remote Sunday Cove in Breaksea Sound. Environment Southland is now working closely with MAF, the Department of Conservation and the Fiordland Marine Guardians in an effort to eliminate the weed from the area.

Its finding is, however, a reminder of the value of Fiordland and the importance of protecting it. As a boatie, you can play a significant role in this protection by following these simple biosecurity precautions.

- Check your boat’s hull before entering Fiordland and if it is dirty, clean it. As a general rule, your boat hull should not be carrying any more than a light slime layer.
- When hauled out for a clean, dispose of any debris removed from the hull and underwater fittings on land (i.e. don’t let it get back into the water where it can reproduce).



Beautiful but a pest - the long fronds are undaria, found at Sunday Cove.

- Ensure your antifoul coating is in good condition and re-applied as recommended by the manufacturer or retailer.
- Check, clean and thoroughly dry any mooring lines and buoys, fishing or dive gear, kayaks and any other marine equipment before using it in Fiordland waters.
- Register your intention to visit with Environment Southland’s Vessels Intentions Register: <http://www.es.govt.nz/environment/coast/maritime/vessel-intentions.aspx>.

Finally, when you’re in Fiordland, if you see any marine life that looks unusual, note its location, collect a sample if you can and phone MAF Biosecurity New Zealand on **0800 80 99 66**.

You’ll find more information about marine biosecurity in Fiordland and how you can play your part, at www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/surv-mgmt/mgmt-partnerships/fiordland. ■



COMMUNITY

Cruise ship visits fund coastal management and planning

A record 66 cruise ships will be sailing southern waters this summer.

Environment Southland, which is responsible for navigational safety, levies a fee on each cruise ship as part of its resource consents for visiting the most sensitive areas of the Fiordland coast including Stewart Island.

It's a unique arrangement that other regions envy, providing Environment Southland with over \$1 million for coastal management activities every year – money which would otherwise come from rates.

Policy and Planning Manager Ken Swinney says that the Environment Southland Marine Fee pays for Environment Southland's coastal planning and management activities, including navigational safety and harbourmaster services and maritime research. The fee also contributes to other Council and community projects directly linked



The Diamond Princess, pictured in Doubtful Sound

to the coast, such as coastguard services, coastal clean-ups and the first stage of the new coastal walkway linking Invercargill and Bluff.

The levy – currently 35c for each gross registered tonne – was first set in 2000 when Environment Southland developed a Deed of Agreement with the cruise ship industry through Cruise New

Zealand to regulate the large vessels' visits to sensitive parts of the southern coastline.

The arrangement means that no more than two cruise ships are allowed in any of the sounds, fiords or passages at the same time, and requires that a pilot with special Fiordland certification is on board every vessel during its time in the restricted waters. ■

Mataura Catchment Strategic Water Study

A new strategic study of water resources in the Mataura Catchment has attracted funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Community Irrigation Fund.

The Mataura Catchment was chosen for the study as it has the highest demand for water of any catchment in the region and therefore the most urgent need to better define both the amount of water available and possible future demand.

The strategic water study will form part of Environment Southland's work to resolve water management issues in the catchment and to identify opportunities for better management of the existing resource.

A consortium of consultants will carry out the technical work for the study and, with assistance from Environment Southland staff, run consultation with water users and the community in the Mataura Catchment. Headed by Brydon Hughes of Liquid Earth Ltd, the team also includes experts in catchment and farm scale modelling of water supply and demand, resource economics and strategic assessment of infrastructure and regulatory options to address shortfalls between supply and demand.

A major feature of the study is the commitment to working with water users and the community in the catchment. The work will be overseen by a steering group

that includes representatives of Environment Southland, the Gore District Council and Southland District Council, major industrial water users, farmers and primary producers and environmental groups. Two workshops have already been held to gather information and assess the values of the catchment that are important to people.

A third workshop is planned before Christmas to look at potential management options.

With the help of the steering group, the project team will be looking to consult with the public in the new year about the integrated management of the catchment. ■



Coping with the big snow

Piles of dead lambs, embattled farmers and the collapsed roof at Stadium Southland are some of the enduring images from September's snow storm.

As the snow fell on Saturday 18 September, Emergency Management Southland swung into action, working with police to coordinate the response to the blizzard and the hazard that the heavy snow was causing to large buildings in Invercargill.

In the days that followed, staff worked with the Rural Support Trust as they coordinated assistance to stressed farmers.

Environment Southland's compliance, land sustainability and planning staff also became involved, advising farmers of ways to deal with the consequences of the snow. Environmental Management Director Warren Tuckey said this ranged from providing practical suggestions about disposing of hundreds of dead lambs to finding safe ways of dealing with overflowing effluent ponds.

"Realising the pressure that all farmers were under, we also took the Compliance inspectors' trucks off the road for several days, suspending routine inspections, and we took the unprecedented step of withholding invoice deliveries for a fortnight."

Vaughan Templeton of Federated Farmers Southland acknowledged the support from Environment Southland.

"It was great to know there was support for those who were desperate from the Rural Support Trust and the suspension of routine compliance inspections was definitely appreciated by stressed out farmers and staff," Vaughan said. ■



The Jollies Pass, Northern Southland, 20 September 2010

Councils come together for civil defence



Over 50 staff from Southland's four local authorities joined emergency services and army personnel recently in a full day exercise designed to test the region's preparedness to deal with an emergency. Exercise Tangaroa was planned by the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management, and coordinated locally by Emergency Management Southland. It challenged participants to deal with a tsunami generated from an earthquake off the coast of South America. The exercise was held in the new emergency operations centre at Environment Southland. Pictured from left, Dallas Bradley (Environment Southland), Pamela Gare (Invercargill City), Roger Washbourne (Southland District), Ingrid Darragh (Environment Southland) and Michelle Chapman (Invercargill City) work together in the Planning and Intelligence Team.



COMMUNITY

New Summer Walks Series gets underway

Environment Southland is teaming up with Sport Southland and other sponsors to run a series of walks around Invercargill's popular walking tracks this summer.

The network of walkways around the city's stopbanks are already well used, with one riverside resident counting 200 walkers and cyclists on one stretch of the Waihopai walkway alone, between 7am and 8am one day last summer.

The new Invercargill Summer Walks Series gives people an opportunity to walk as part of a group, though at their own pace.

Walks will take place each Tuesday, at 10am and again at 6.30pm. The first will be on the Waihopai Walkway on 16 November, meeting at the North Road bridge.

All walks are on formed tracks and generally easy terrain, except for a couple to be held at Sandy Point which include steeper sections, or steps. Most are suitable for parents pushing strollers. A staff member from Sport Southland will coordinate each walk.

Details of the first two walks are below. Information about the whole series is at www.es.govt.nz and www.sportsouthland.co.nz. We'll list each week's walk in our Enviroweek column in The Southland Express and The Ensign. There's also a pamphlet that will be widely available. ■



The Summer Walks Series, Tuesdays 10am & 6.30pm

16 November 2010 – Waihopai Walkway

North Road Bridge to Stead St and return

Track: Easy / flat

Start / parking: Holywood Tce opposite All Saints Church

Approx Distance: 7km

Est time: 1 hour 25 min

Shorter option to Otepuni Creek and return

Approx Distance: 6km

Est time: 1 hour

23 November 2010 – Bushy Point, Otatara

Bushy Point Reserve

Track: Easy / flat

Start / parking: East end Bryson Road, Otatara

Approx Distance: 5km

Est time: 1 hour

Watch for details about walks across the region for the rest of the summer in our Enviroweek column in The Southland Express and The Ensign.

Red alert for blue-green algae

Environment Southland's scientists are expanding the Council's bathing water quality monitoring programme to include the toxic algae cyanobacteria this summer.

Coastal scientist Greg Larkin and water quality scientist Kirsten Meijer are working together to find out more about how widespread the algae is in Southland, and what level of threat it poses to human and animal health.

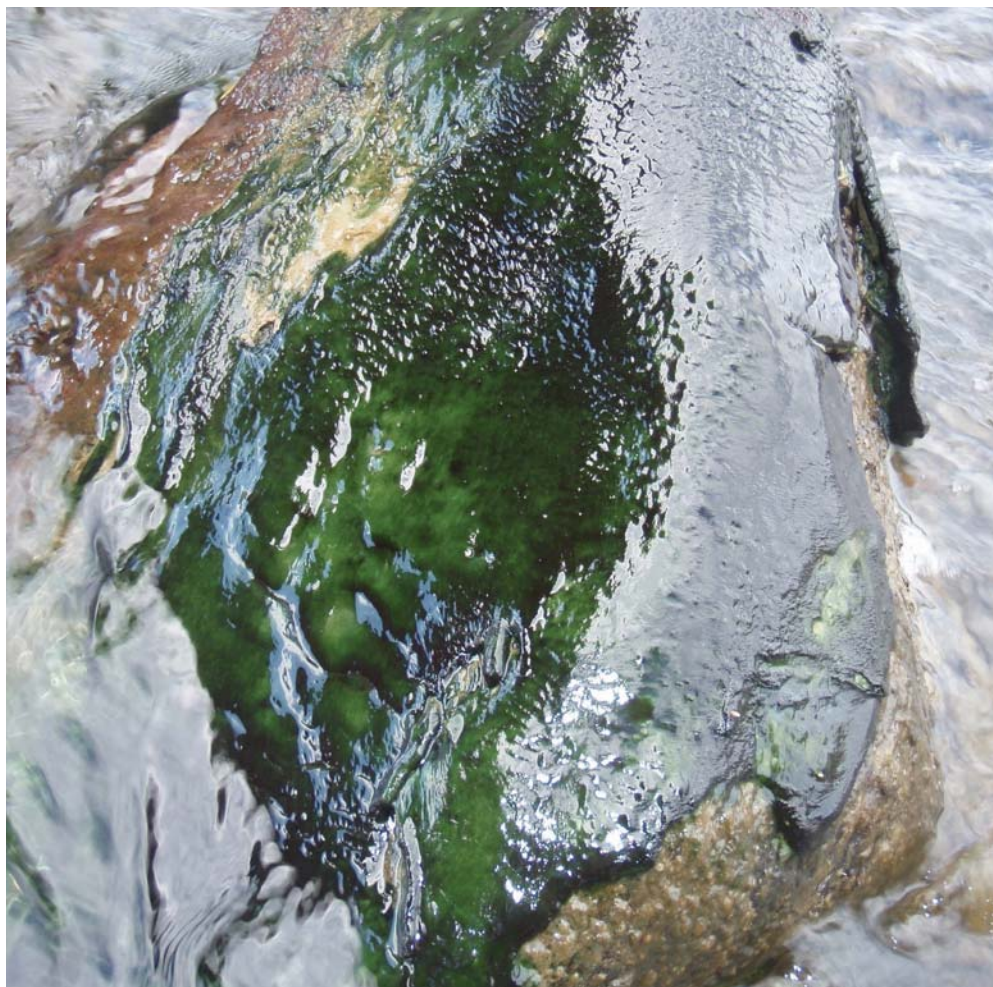
"We're building it into the bathing water programme for the first time so every two weeks the staff who collect our water samples will be assessing the cyanobacteria's abundance and cover and taking samples," Greg says. "It's a trial to see how it fits into our programme."

Cyanobacteria is often called "blue-green algae" (although technically it is a bacteria, not an algae) and it has been held responsible for the deaths of several dogs in past summers.

Kirsten began a study into the incidence of the algae at five sites last summer and confirmed that it is widespread in our region, from small mountain creeks and lowland bush streams to major rivers. "Toxins were present at three of the five sites we monitored last summer, but the other two sites had algae but no toxins."

The sites where toxins were found were the Mataura River at Gore, the Waikaia River at Piano Flat and the Oreti River at Wallacetown. The sites where no toxins were found were the Makarewa River at Wallacetown and the Aparima River at Thornbury.

She expects that this summer's monitoring will provide more information about the algae's biology and its toxicology – particularly the conditions which increase its toxicity.



There are several different strains of algae. Some produce toxins and some don't, but people should treat all cyanobacteria with caution, Kirsten says. "There is no correlation that we have found at this point between how much there is in the river and the presence of toxins."

In increasing the monitoring programme, Environment Southland will be following the newly released guidelines issued by the Ministry for the Environment. These provide that if more than 50% of any monitoring site is covered with cyanobacteria, warning signs will be put up to alert the public to the risk from the toxins. The most common of these are neurotoxins, which have potentially life-threatening effects

on humans and animals, including convulsions.

Kirsten cautions against handling the algae, which is normally a slimy black or green colour, or allowing dogs to sniff around it, regardless of whether it is attached to rocks or floating at the water's edge. "In the summer when the algae mats detach, they can accumulate at the edges of the river and that can be a high risk to dogs and humans through swallowing it, swimming among it or touching it."

Cyanobacteria is common throughout the country and Environment Southland is one of several regional councils helping fund a PhD student's thesis on cyanobacteria, investigating the factors that cause it to grow. ■

Survey confirms why Milford Sound is so special

The chance to view the natural scenery and landscape is what visitors value most about going to Milford Sound, a perception survey has found.

The survey asked both New Zealand and international visitors about their visit to Milford Sound and various aspects that may have affected their experience.

With over 500,000 visitors to Milford Sound every year, many reported having had a good experience.

Visitors were asked to comment on things like scenery, wildlife, traffic around the village, the number of visitors, the walking tracks, information signs as well as the effect of planes, helicopters and cruise boats.

The scenery was particularly important to those who took part in the survey. However, the analysis has shown that some activities are having an impact on several user groups' experience of the area. It has also highlighted several areas where more work is needed.

The survey was part of a joint project between Environment Southland and the Department of Conservation, which aims to develop a holistic approach to how each agency manages the activities for which they have statutory responsibility in Fiordland.

The survey report is the culmination of four years work between DOC, the Council and community representatives. It is seen as an opportunity to ensure that Milford Sound is managed appropriately to enable all users to enjoy the area.

Ken Swinney, Environment Southland's Policy and Planning Manager, said both agencies were working closely together. "As part



of the project, we're both looking at our respective planning documents to see if they align, or can align more closely, to protect the important values of the area."

The monitoring report, project methodology and background is available on the project website, www.ifm.org.nz. ■

Solid waste plan changes proposed

Reducing the amount of solid waste generated and disposed of, and improving protection of the environment are the main goals of four plan changes the Council has notified recently.

Council planners have been working with stakeholders to update existing rules for managing the environmental effects of discharges of solid waste to land. Four proposed plan changes were publicly notified on 16 October and submissions close on 16 November.

Key differences between the old rules and new rules are:

- The definition of cleanfill has been clarified and cleanfill material that can be discharged without the need for resource

consent has been restricted;

- New rules have been added to manage discharges of organic waste;
- Discharging solid waste to farm landfill has to meet new criteria, including a requirement for alternative disposal methods for certain types of waste;
- Discharging carcasses and offal to land must meet new criteria around protecting end users of groundwater.
- Disposal of baleage wrap to land will no longer be allowed.

To make a submission, download the Water Plan change and submission form from www.es.govt.nz or call 0800 76 88 45 and ask for an information pack on Plan Changes 5, 6, 7 and 8. ■

Report finds most consent holders comply with conditions

Most consent holders have made every effort to comply with the conditions on their resource consent in the past year, Environment Southland's annual summary of compliance monitoring shows.

Some major changes have occurred to the way the compliance team monitor dairy consents.

Compliance Manager Mark Hunter says this was as a result of feedback the Council received during the annual planning process last year.

"We implemented a modified programme of inspections, making our processes more efficient and cost effective. A process of rewarding good practice has also been worked into the monitoring programme."

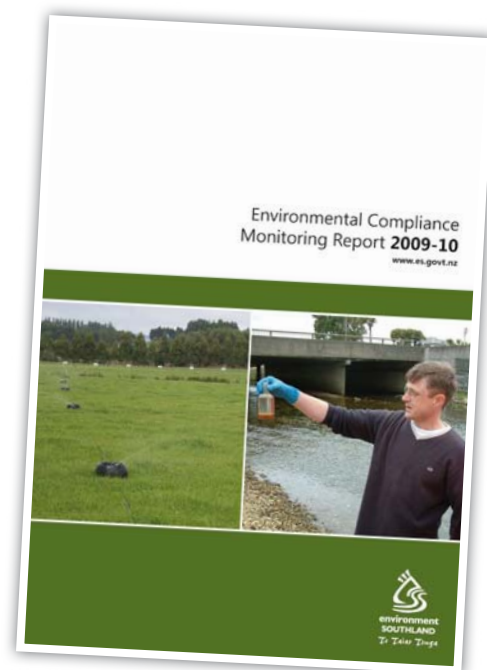
The report also highlights the ongoing relationship that we have with key stakeholders in the dairy industry. The Dairy Effluent Reference Group will continue to play a key role in advising on

consent monitoring processes and in policy and planning decisions.

On the whole, major industries are leading the way with their proactive approach to achieving better environmental compliance than their consents require.

"Many have been actively seeking feedback from our staff about the measures they plan to take to achieve these results," Mark says. "Some have dedicated environmental staff and are taking their responsibilities to minimise their environmental impact seriously. This is great to see."

The Council is also putting more effort into new pollution prevention initiatives. Mark predicts that this will be an important part of his team's work over the coming year as new standards are likely to be implemented and more Southland businesses seek ways to improve their environmental standing in the community.



You'll find the Compliance Monitoring Report at www.es.govt.nz, or you can request a printed version by calling our staff on 0800 76 88 45 or emailing service@es.govt.nz. ■

Annual report available

Improving water quality and working cooperatively with the agricultural sector to manage the consequences of intensive land use are two of the major achievements recorded in Environment Southland's Annual Report.

The report was adopted by the outgoing Council last month.

The Council's auditors, Deloitte, issued an unqualified audit report, signifying their satisfaction with the information presented. Deloitte audited the report on behalf of the Office of the Auditor General.

A summary of the Annual Report and the full document are both available online at www.es.govt.nz. Please e-mail service@es.govt.nz or phone 0800 76 88 45 if you would like a printed copy. ■

Environmental Monitoring Report Cards

Later this month we'll be publishing our Annual Environmental Monitoring Report Cards, a series of 14 cards that provides a snapshot of the state of Southland's natural resources.

They include air quality, information about ground and surface water quality and quantity, the Living Streams programme and estuarine health.

All the cards are written in laymen's language, making the information accessible to everyone.

If you'd like to receive a set, please contact the Council and ask to be put on the mailing list, or check our website towards the end of November. ■



BIOSECURITY

What's growing in your backyard?



Darwin's barberry



Cotoneaster



Gunnera



Old Man's Beard

As summer approaches, many pest plants are beginning to flower, making this the ideal time to identify them, cut them out and dispose of them before they seed and spread.



Biosecurity Officer Amy Lagerstedt

Biosecurity Officer Amy Lagerstedt is keen to hear from people who have a problem with pest plants growing on their properties.

Amy is focusing on eight plant species this summer, with the intention of eradicating them from certain areas.

“Darwin's barberry and Cotoneaster are a focus for me in Manapouri, while Gunnera is an issue on Stewart Island. Other pest plants like German Ivy, Old Man's Beard, Purple Loosestrife, Smilax and Rough Horsetail are found across Southland, and I'm keen to find out how widespread they are,” Amy says.

These plants usually invade forest margins, disturbed bush, shrubby areas, riverbeds, cliffs, hedge-rows and gardens. They can cause significant damage in our native forests, killing native trees as well as preventing the growth of desirable species.

If you suspect you have one of the pest plants on Amy's list at your place, Amy is keen to hear from you. “I can identify the plant and if it is one of the ones on the eradication list, I can help to get rid of it.

“I'd love to hear of any sightings of these plants around Southland, not just the ones you might have in your backyard,” Amy says. “I'm interested in learning just how widespread some of these plants are, which will help us eradicate them from Southland, as one of the big problems with eradication is finding them all.”

You'll find more information to help you identify pest plants online www.es.govt.nz, or call Amy on 0800 76 88 45. ■

Don't miss your chance to be on top of the world

Have you ever driven over the Jollies between Lumsden and Athol, looked up at Mid Dome and wondered what it would be like to stand up there?

This could be your chance to find out.

If you're fit and you fancy a day in the high country doing something good for the environment, you can register to take part in the wilding trees volunteer work day at Mid Dome on Saturday 27 November.

The work day is run by the Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust, with help from the Department of Conservation and Environment Southland. The trust is tackling the monumental task of eradicating millions of self-seeded contorta pines from Mid Dome and the surrounding high country.

Volunteers will be removing young trees to remove the future seed source. Previous work days have killed thousands of trees, so you'll be making a worthwhile contribution to an important environmental restoration project.

Environment Southland and DOC staff will provide 4WD transport up to Mid Dome and a packed lunch. Because of the steep terrain, high altitude and changeable weather, this is not a suitable activity for children or those who are physically unfit.

Registrations are essential. E-mail service@es.govt.nz or phone 0800 76 88 45. ■



Volunteers tackling wilding pine trees at Mid Dome

Wilding pines a threat to the high country

Pinus contorta trees (commonly known as contorta pine) were planted on Mid Dome between the 1950s and 1980s as part of a trial to control erosion.

Strong nor-westerly winds make Mid Dome a perfect take-off point for up to 1.5 million seeds that these pine trees produce each year. The self-seeded wildings tend to eliminate most other plants as they grow and as a result, 475ha of Mid Dome is now totally covered by contorta and another 13,000ha downwind is also seriously infested.

A further 90,000ha is also at risk from invasion by wilding trees as they spread year by year.



These trees are stunted and hard to get at. They have no commercial value as timber or firewood. The unplanned and unmanaged forests they are creating are growing much faster than the high country's native species.

They threaten to totally change the southern landscape forever.

The Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust is working hard to stop that happening, with a 12-year plan to eradicate the seed source and deal with the self-sown wildings across the high country. ■

for now and your future



Making tracks



Project manager Robin Wilson, from Environment Southland, on the recycled concrete beams which form the basis of the new walking and cycling bridge across the Kingswell Creek.

Work has begun on the first stage of a new walk-and-cycleway between Invercargill and Bluff.

The track will start at the southern end of the boardwalk along the east side of the New River Estuary, which in turn links with the Waihopai Walkway.

Project Manager Robin Wilson, from Environment Southland, said that a bridge was being installed over the Kingswell Creek. It was being constructed using recycled beams that were previously part of the Tiwai road bridge.

Environment Southland and the Invercargill City Council each contributed \$50,000 towards the cost of the first stage of developing the track, with Environment Southland's share coming from the marine fee reserve, which is funded by cruise ship levies.

This 7km stretch of track will skirt the estuary and go to the City Council's industrial subdivision at Awarua.

It will be formed to the same high standard as the existing walkways around the Invercargill floodbanks, developed and maintained by Environment Southland. ■

About this newsletter

Envirosouth is published four times a year by Environment Southland. It is delivered to every household in the region.

We welcome your comments on anything published in this newsletter, as well as your suggestions for topics you would like to read about in future issues.

The next Envirosouth will be published in January 2011.



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