

EnviroSOUTH

June 2016

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A major biosecurity operation
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environment
SOUTHLAND
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Taiao Tonga

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EnvirosOUTH

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 magazine.

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Cover

SIT students and their family members joined the teams out inspecting fodder beet crops during the recent velvetleaf response operation (story – page 4).



The new Water and Land Plan has just been publicised. It's based on robust Southland-specific science and the really good feedback you gave us during the engagement period last year.

The aim of the plan is to address activities we know are having a negative impact on Southland's water quality, such as land intensification and wintering. It is clear from our scientific monitoring that water quality is declining in some areas of Southland and this plan is an important step toward halting that decline.

During the engagement process we received a strong message that all farmers should be moving to good management practices, and farm-specific environmental management plans are a great way to achieve this.

I hope all of you, town and country, have a good look at the new plan and come back to us with your views.

Ali Timms, *Chairman, Environment Southland*

It was incredible the way Southlanders quickly recognised the risk posed by the recent outbreak of velvetleaf and responded to it.

Now we need to build on that and stay vigilant.

The velvetleaf weed has had a devastating impact on cropping and livelihoods overseas. Our imported fodder beet seeds were contaminated with it, and had been planted. We had to move quickly before plants seeded and spread.

Environment Southland farm inspection teams were activated and joined by staff from all Southland councils, Fonterra, South Roads, Fulton Hogan, students and their partners from SIT, and AsureQuality contractors (MPI).

Southland's operation was the country's biggest. Inspection teams worked 1874 person days, covered 4,442 hectares on some 300 properties, and located 199 velvetleaf plants.

Now we're working on securing a nationally-directed follow-up phase, but farmers need to continue checking their crops.

Rob Phillips, *Chief Executive, Environment Southland*

Environment Southland

A vibrant organisation actively enhancing the experience of living and working in a sustainable Southland.



▲ Owen Horton with his album of photographs following drainage works along the Makarewa River in the 1960s.

Years dedicated to rivers

Owen Horton dedicated over 30 years to solving river erosion and flooding problems across Southland.

Owen, who retired from the Makarewa River Liaison Committee in February, reflects on his reasons for becoming involved with the management of the river.

“I got involved at Makarewa because we couldn’t farm the way it was. It was 1970 and the Southland Catchment Board hadn’t long completed works along the flood-prone Makarewa River to increase its water-carrying capacity and prevent flooding of surrounding farmland.

“Unfortunately, the rail and timber groynes installed to train the river flow away from vulnerable banks did not withstand the pressure, and land from the surrounding farms was eroding fast.”

Owen was farming at Grove Bush and, with his neighbours, they decided they needed to find a better way to protect the banks and slow the floodwaters.

“We came up with a different method of river protection using netting fences with trees and flax planted behind for stability, which seemed to work well.

“My neighbours put me in charge of talking to the catchment board about our ideas and setting up a rating district to fund the remedial work.”

It took a while for the board to warm to their ideas, but eventually a river liaison group was formed with representatives from across the catchment.

Environment Southland has seven River Liaison Committees comprised of representatives who are elected annually by their communities.

Their role is to advise and assist Council on the development of annual maintenance programmes and budgets, and provide

an important local contact for river and drainage issues.

“I think it is imperative that locals are involved in managing their catchment. They are the ones who live with the river and usually this means they understand what solutions will work the best.”

Over his time with the Makarewa River Liaison Committee, Mr Horton also served as an elected member and chair of the Southland Catchment Board, the Makarewa Landcare Group and Southland Community Wastebusters Trust.

Looking back he says securing government funding for flood protection works carried out following the 1984 floods was a highlight.

“It was an achievement to get funding from the government at the time and with it we built extensive flood protection networks, which have helped prevent a lot of property flooding over the years.

“That’s a good feeling”.



Fighting back against velvetleaf

▲ A team make their way through an extensive fodder beet crop during velvetleaf inspections.

It's 7.45am and there's a busy hum in the Emergency Operations Centre at Environment Southland.

People clad in hi-vis vests, clutching brown paper lunch bags are checking whiteboards to find out which team they are in. Just on 8am, the chatter is called to a halt and biosecurity manager Richard Bowman addresses the crowd of 90 for their morning briefing – outlining the purpose of the job, thanking them for being part of the operation and reiterating the health and safety risks.

A few minutes later a quiet calm has descended on the building – all the field staff have piled into vehicles and headed out to farms around the region. Those left behind take a deep breath and enjoy the momentary lull before embarking on the logistical challenge of planning for the next day. There are team members to be sourced, lunches to be ordered, vehicles to be organised and farmers that need to be contacted

This same scene has taken place in the operations centre nearly every morning for five weeks as part of the nationally

directed velvetleaf response to prevent this devastating pest weed establishing in New Zealand.

An enormous job

Nowhere was the job greater than in Southland. Velvetleaf seeds had been discovered in two lines of imported fodder beet seeds. With Southland growing more than half the country's fodder beet, the risk to future crops and the economy was enormous.

Two days before Easter, biosecurity staff were presented with a list of account holders known to have purchased the suspect lines of seed, with instructions to systematically search all the crops planted from these seeds. The list contained more than 120 names but gave no indication of the size of the job. A single account holder could have several farms and the number of hectares planted in suspect fodder beet ranged from single digits through to hundreds. The final figure would total almost 4,500 hectares.

Combined effort

Activating the Emergency Operations Centre became crucial to the operation's success - it was the central hub for all logistics and the critical morning and afternoon briefings.

“One farmer with a heavily infested maize crop is faced with the possible loss of their year's sole source of income. They're understandably devastated, and we're working hard with them to find a safe option for the harvesting and sale of their maize.”

Darion Embling – Waikato Regional Council



▲ AsureQuality meat inspector Jackie Watson with a velvetleaf plant she spotted while inspecting fodder beet crops.

The response was directed at a national level by the Ministry for Primary Industries, who contracted AsureQuality to oversee the operation. Locally Environment Southland led the response, supported by Emergency Management Southland.

Team members were pulled from many organisations within and outside of Southland. Staff from every division at Environment Southland put their other work aside and gave up time on weekends to walk fodder beet paddocks looking for velvetleaf. They were joined by colleagues from all Southland councils, students and their partners from SIT, as well as staff from Fonterra, South Roads, Fulton Hogan, the Ministry for Primary Industries and AsureQuality.

The weather was kind but the work was physically demanding and the plants were difficult to find. In other areas velvetleaf could be spotted above the fodder beet, but Southland's cooler climate meant it often grew to similar heights or even shorter than the fodder beet, requiring an intensive inspection regime.



Light at the end of the tunnel

Finally, after five weeks, the end was in sight and it was with a definite sense of achievement that the entire team could look back and acknowledge what had been done. With nearly 4,500 hectares searched and 199 plants found, it may be difficult for some to see the impact of the work, but the potential devastation of those 200 plants cannot be underestimated. Every plant is capable of producing up to 17,000 seeds – seeds that could germinate and outcompete almost any other crop.

Devastating effects

In Waikato, the devastating effects of velvetleaf are already being felt. Waikato Regional Council biosecurity pest plants team leader Darion Embling says velvetleaf is now on 29 farms in Waikato, with the source traced to infested fodder beet seeds, maize, maize silage and unclean machinery.

“We’re also continuing to investigate other possible pathways to infestation,” he says.

“One farmer with a heavily infested maize crop is faced with the possible loss of their year’s sole source of income. They’re understandably devastated, and we’re working hard with them to find a safe option for the harvesting and sale of their maize.

“In the Waikato and around New Zealand we have a real opportunity to get on top of this issue now, so it won’t become a major problem in the future. But it does require farmers and agricultural contractors to be vigilant about machinery hygiene.”

◆ Senior biosecurity officer Randall Milne talks with Fonterra driver Glynn Yern about the plan for the day during a morning briefing.

What is velvetleaf?

- ▶ A pest plant established overseas and not wanted in New Zealand.
- ▶ One of the world’s worst cropping weeds.
- ▶ Outcompetes crops for water, space and nutrients.
- ▶ Seeds last in the ground for up to 60 years.
- ▶ Each plant can produce up to 17,000 seeds.

What do farmers need to do now?

It is highly likely there will still be velvetleaf seeds in the ground in Southland. These may become obvious this season or may germinate next year.

Keep your eyes peeled for velvetleaf especially when break feeding fodder beet crops and report any suspect plants to the Ministry for Primary Industries on 0800 80 99 66.

Visit www.mpi.govt.nz for information on identifying velvetleaf and also for advice on managing your property if velvetleaf has been found.

See the opportunity

With financial pressure on the dairy sector at present and the world market in a highly volatile state, it's easy to see why many farmers are feeling overwhelmed at the prospect of new nutrient loss regulations coming into play around the country.

What if we stopped and looked at this in a different way? If we started to see not the crisis, but the opportunity?

Doing what's right can result in a win for the environment, a social licence to operate, and more money in the back pocket if you're smart about the way you go about it.

It's no coincidence that the high performing environmental farmers tend to be the higher performing profit farmers. Why? Because of attention to detail. They constantly monitor, check and adjust to optimise their performance.

And when times are tough, they seek out innovation, get some fresh perspective on their farming systems, and find new and innovative ways to do more with less. They

learn from others and make the most of support from experts.

Think about this. Environmental regulations are here to stay, and you can bet your bottom dollar that the demand for swimmable waterways won't ease up because times are tough on the farm.

For many, councils equal compliance, and it's not uncommon to hear complaints about council regulations. What some people fail to understand is that councils represent the voice of the community. And the community is demanding change.

If New Zealand agribusiness doesn't embrace this change, we will progressively lose our licence to operate along with our competitive advantage. Customers around the globe are demanding traceability to environmentally friendly farms – and



▲ Campbell Parker – General manager sales, Ballance Agri-Nutrients Limited

they're willing to pay a premium for that peace of mind.

This is not the danger, it is the opportunity. The opportunity to lead the change for profitable, sustainable New Zealand farms.

Guest columnist Campbell Parker is the general manager sales for Ballance Agri-Nutrients Limited. His column covers the highlights of an inspiring speech he gave at Southland's Ballance Farm Environment Awards held in April.



▲ Environment Southland chairman Ali Timms (centre) congratulates Bridget Speight and Shane Gibbons who won the council's Water Quality and Biodiversity Award at the recent Ballance Farm Environment Awards. The couple who farm sheep, beef and dairy support at Whare Creek in northern Southland also won other awards and were named the Southland 2016 supreme award winners.

Rates increase less in Annual Plan

The Council adopted its Annual Plan 2016/17 in May, with a major highlight being a reduction in the projected rates increase.

It represents the second year of the Long-term Plan 2015-2025 and stays true to its focus on *Southland's Big 3* priorities – water, air, biodiversity, while bearing in mind the challenging economic times Southland now faces.

There are no surprises. Any changes are minor and explained in brief in

the summary document, with a full explanation available in the Annual Plan 2016/17.

There will be an increase in expenditure of \$1,171,000 in 2016/17 on the 2015/16 year. This will be funded by a mix of reserves, surpluses, investment returns, plus \$192,885 from rate increases.

Changes

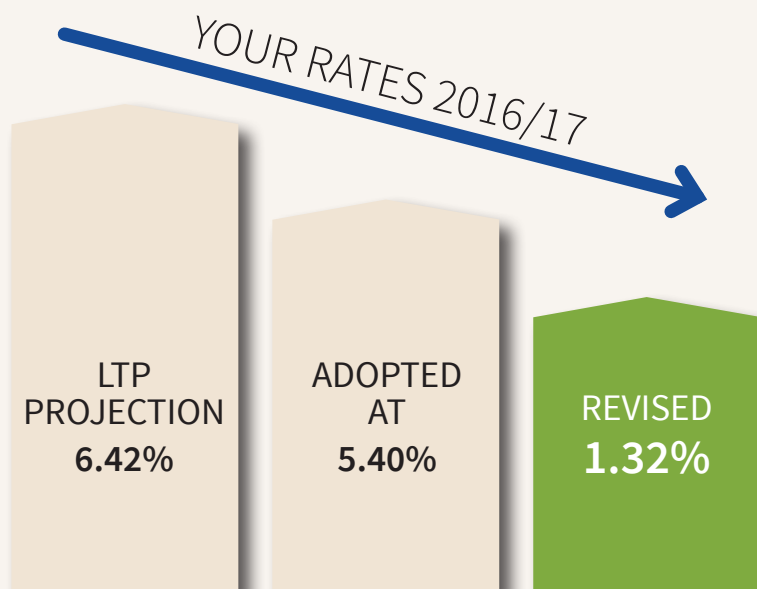
General rate reduces

For the 2016/17 year, the overall rate increase projection shown initially in the Long-term Plan (LTP) consultation document, *Southland's Big 3* (2015), was 6.42%. When the LTP was subsequently adopted, it was reduced to 5.40%. When revising the budget for the 2016/17 Annual Plan, councillors significantly reduced the rate increase down to 1.32% (which equates to \$192,885).

To lower the general rate, the Council made adjustments to the work programmes and budgets, and utilised a recently released South Port dividend, plus other reserves and surpluses.

Biosecurity rate reduces

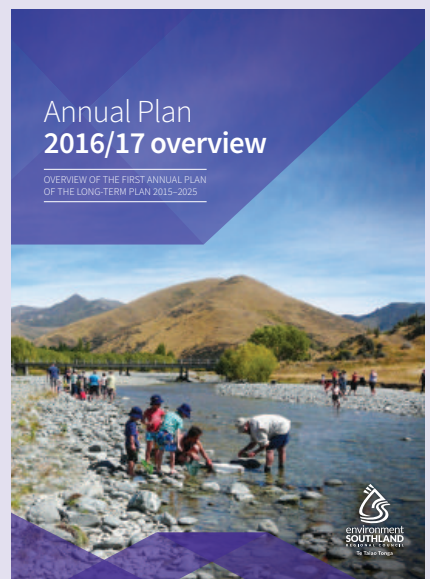
The Council prudently transferred \$100,000 from biosecurity surpluses to reduce the biosecurity rate from the projected 8.76% down to 3.67% for the 2016/17 year.



Read the plan

You can find the Annual Plan 2016/17 overview or the full Annual Plan online at www.es.govt.nz.

Copies are available from our office on the corner of North Road and Price Street, Waikiwi, Invercargill or contact us on 0800 76 88 45 to have one sent to you.



Loan scheme making a difference



Keeping people warm and healthy is the top priority for Awarua Synergy sales representative Michelle Collins.

Quick facts

- ▶ Clean Air Loans are available to ratepayers within the Invercargill airshed.
- ▶ You can borrow up to \$5,000.
- ▶ The loan is repaid over five years directly to the Invercargill City Council.
- ▶ A low interest rate of 3.95% is charged.
- ▶ The loan can be used to replace a current burner or open fire with a compliant wood burner, pellet burner or approved heat pump and/or to upgrade insulation.

**Contact Awarua Synergy
on 0800 WARM SOUTH –
0800 927 676**



▲ Awarua Synergy sales representative Michelle Collins says Clean Air loans are enabling people to upgrade inefficient and sometimes dangerous fires.

Michelle is leading the Clean Air Loans Invercargill scheme, being managed by Awarua Synergy and the Southland Warm Homes Trust.

Since the launch of the loans scheme in March, more than 70 households have requested an assessment, and some have had cleaner home heating options installed already.

Michelle says the assessment is the most important part of the whole process and key to ensuring people get heating that will be affordable in the short and long term.

She takes time to find out about their lifestyle, what is important to them, whether they have access to wood and their priorities in terms of convenience.

The Clean Air Loans scheme is jointly funded by Environment Southland

and the Invercargill City Council and is administered by the Invercargill City Council through their rates department.

As well as the long term goal of improving air quality in the city, Michelle is seeing additional benefits.

“We are already seeing people who have been using really inefficient and even non-consented and dangerous fires. They couldn’t afford to do anything about them and now they have an option, so it’s really going to make a big difference.”

Michelle says people shouldn’t be at all daunted by the process of applying for a Clean Air Loan as the staff at Awarua Synergy are the single point of contact, working with customers to complete all the paperwork, guiding them right through the process to the point of installation.

www.BreatheEasySouthland.co.nz

New look for website

Environment Southland's website has had a makeover.

Mobile capability and added online services mean it is much easier to use and there is greater opportunity for doing business online. It also sets us up nicely to take advantage of future technology innovations.

A key aim of the website upgrade was to provide a better user experience, says project lead senior communications coordinator Adrienne Henderson.

Visit www.es.govt.nz to:

- ▶ search property rates information
- ▶ contact your councillors
- ▶ identify pest plants
- ▶ report pollution
- ▶ find out rules
- ▶ access live monitoring data, maps
...and much more!

and uncluttered way of navigating around the site, whether visitors are browsing while out and about, or at home. A new property search tool is also available, which can be used for accessing publicly available rates and property information.

Other new website features include a document library, which holds all the council's online publications, a 'do-it-online' panel with quick links to the most popular online tasks, and a social media plugin to see the discussions on the Council's Facebook page.

A dedicated sub-site for the Council's *Water and Land 2020 & Beyond* project has been incorporated into the website, to accommodate the depth of the project. The latest news, reports and events for the project are all available on this site.

Our new website is powered by a customised template for local government organisations. It's the same solution that's behind a large number of other council websites across New Zealand, and Adrienne says choosing the tried and tested solution has a number of effective and cost-efficient benefits.

"It ensured everything worked right from the word go. Being a shared platform means we will benefit from future upgrades without having to fund improvements individually. It also means our website will be able to adapt to new technology in the future without the need for a complete rebuild.

"Our new website is a big improvement and I encourage everyone go online and check it out."

◀ Senior communications coordinator Adrienne Henderson checks out the new mobile-friendly website.

An initial website user survey, with close to 100 responses, identified the main priorities for the upgrade.

"In general people wanted to do more online, find things more easily and access our information from their phones and tablets."

As a result, a fully mobile design now provides a clear





A balancing act

Contract milker and Environment Southland senior policy planner Claire Jordan uses her combination of skills and knowledge to get the right balance for herself and her work.

In a quiet corner of western Southland, Claire Jordan and her husband Peter are preparing for their first season as contract milkers.

Both born and bred Southlanders, the opportunity this new role offered meant a move back home for Claire, while for Peter the drawcard was getting hands-on dairy experience.

Claire says the farm, which has been in the family for 50 years, was a mix of sheep, beef and deer when she was growing up, but her parents converted part of the farm to dairy in 2010 and the other part last year.

The 513 ha farm will milk about 1400 kiwi cross cows on the two platforms this season.

Claire and Peter met while studying in Canterbury. Peter gained a bachelor of agricultural science (hons) at Lincoln, while Claire completed a science honours degree in chemistry and environmental science at Canterbury University before they moved to Wellington.

Claire landed a planning role at the Ministry for the Environment in the environmental protection authority team and then moved into the marine policy team.

When a science role came up, she jumped at it. "Since graduating, I'd been really keen on being an environmental scientist at a consultancy. It just took a while for the right opportunity to come up."

After several years and some self-reflection, Claire and Peter decided it was time to come home.

"It's amazing how your priorities change in a short time. We looked around and thought about what was important to us, and most of those things were down in Southland," Claire says.

The transition from Wellington to the family farm was pretty smooth for Claire, as she was able to stay involved and learn the business while still living in Wellington. "The family business has an advisory board that includes me and my brother. So that gave me the opportunity to learn the ropes of the business."

Despite loving life on the farm, when they made the shift home Claire had an inkling that she would want to continue work in the policy/science field.

Earlier this year she joined Environment Southland as a senior policy planner and is relishing being on the ground floor of



policy development, providing advice to staff and councillors and working at the interface of policy and science.

“This policy role in the freshwater space really appealed to me,” Claire says. “Firstly, because it was about Southland’s future, which is where I see mine. Secondly, because freshwater is the lifeblood of agriculture, and my family’s background has made the interplay between agriculture and freshwater of particular interest to me.”

“We’ve got such strong science at Environment Southland. Generally, the science provides a clear direction of travel, so in reality it makes it quite an easy distinction to make.”

Claire Jordan

Claire has been involved in the development of the proposed *Southland Water and Land Plan*, getting it to the current stage of public consultation. She is very aware that decisions made by councillors on the plan will have an impact on her family farm.

Separating her work from her home life has been simpler than she had thought. “For me the science has been really vital in that. We’ve got such strong science at Environment Southland. Generally, the science provides a clear direction of travel, so in reality it makes it quite an easy distinction to make.”

Having a farming business background makes it easier for Claire to understand how the rules might work in practice. “Of course, just because I think that the rule is going to play out in a particular way doesn’t mean everyone will agree with me, but I can use that understanding to ground-truth some of the rules.”



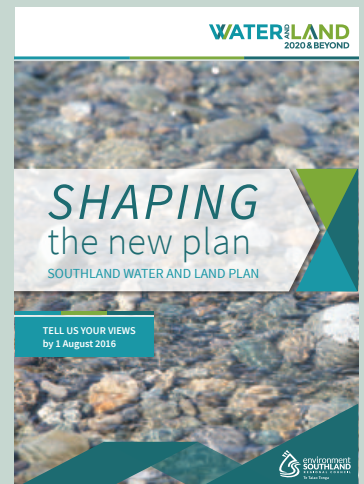
◀ Claire and her canine friend Milly take time out from life on the farm.

Southland Water and Land Plan

The proposed *Southland Water and Land Plan* is now out for submissions. This Plan has been developed using robust science, particularly the physiographics, and the feedback and ideas received during the engagement period last year.

The main aim of the Plan is to shift all farmers to good management practices, especially for activities we know adversely affect the quality of Southland’s freshwater such as land use intensification, wintering and stock in waterways.

You have until Monday 1 August 2016 to lodge a submission. The proposed *Southland Water and Land Plan* along with supporting information, including *Shaping the new plan* which explains how your ideas from the engagement period were used, are available online at www.es.govt.nz or from Environment Southland.





Working together for safer southern roads

‘Safe home every day’ is the key message at Fonterra, and right across the region the company’s drivers are helping to make this as true for all motorists as it is for them.

Fonterra transport administrator Dana Leggett and driver performance assessor Corey Millan are proud of the success Fonterra is achieving towards improving road safety and maintenance in conjunction with the Southland District Council.

Their current major projects, ‘Roadroid’ and ‘Eyes and Ears’ are focused on road conditions, and identification of hazards within the Southland District Council roading network.

The Roadroid project has been operating for more than a year and involves a smartphone installed into a single tanker, with the Roadroid app gathering

continuous information about the state of the roads – quality of the road surface, potholes etc.

“Just the one tanker probably covers 90-95% of the roading network in Southland and collects a huge amount of data,” Corey says.

Data collected is automatically analysed and placed on an active map. It allows the district council to accurately plan its roading programmes – and all in all provides a safer network that is kept in optimal condition.

Dana says as well as helping keep the roads in good condition, the data can be looked back on in the event of an accident

to establish road conditions at the time. It can also be used for identifying issues that require attention to provide a safer journey for both tanker drivers and the public.

The Roadroid project is the perfect complement to Fonterra and Southland District Council’s other project, Eyes and Ears.

Eyes and Ears encourages and supports drivers to provide feedback and on any road issues they encounter. Underway for some time, the project has resulted in a significant partnership between the two organisations and has improved the level of service and safety on the district’s roads.



▲ Fonterra driver performance assessor Corey Millan and transport administrator Dana Leggett are proud of the company's work towards improving road safety.

"When our drivers report anything, including things like potholes, overhanging trees which restrict vision or areas of safety concern, it is passed on to the council who are able to combine this information with the Roadroid data and establish the urgency of the situation and what remedy is required, in many cases without having to send somebody out to see it," Dana says.

"Just the one tanker probably covers 90-95% of the roading network in Southland and collects a huge amount of data."

Corey Millan

These two projects are contributing to the safety of drivers and other motorists and fit perfectly with the objectives of the newly formed Southern Region Road Safety Influencing Group.

Road Safety Influencing Group chair and Environment Southland senior transport planner Russell Hawkes says projects like these are exactly the type of things they want to see more of. Established earlier this year by the Regional Transport Committees for Otago and Southland, the group has a focus on road safety solutions across the two regions.

"It's about taking a strategic view to road safety, looking at the issues at all levels and replacing some of the barriers with solutions."

Russell says a big part of this is identifying potentially dangerous spots on the network and unusual driver behaviour, then establishing what could be done to improve safety. This is where organisations such as Fonterra, HW Richardson Group and Real Journeys (who are all involved with the group) can provide valuable information.

"The involvement of these organisations whose drivers spend every day on the roading network is invaluable in building the circle of knowledge."

Road Safety Influencing Group

The Road Safety Influencing Group involves representatives from Environment Southland, Otago Regional Council, Otago and Southland TLA roading managers, the New Zealand Transport Agency Board, ACC, Southern District Health Board and the Automobile Association.

The group has just one goal in mind – to improve the safety of everybody on the roads of Southland and Otago. Working together to come up with solutions is the focus of the group and involving people from all parts of the community is the essential component to the group being as effective as possible.

Environment Southland transport planner Russell Hawkes says minor incidents don't generally feature in crash statistics, but finding out what contributes to these and coming up with solutions could make the difference in preventing serious or fatal accidents.

"It can be as simple as looking at why there is a high number of near misses or minor crashes at a particular rural intersection. Sometimes fixing that is really simple, but it's not looked at because the incidents don't feature in statistics."

The Land Transport Management Act requires Environment Southland as the regional council to form and manage Regional Transport Committees. The Regional Transport Committee has a responsibility to consider road safety as a major part of any decision it makes regarding regional transport. Establishment of the Southern Region Road Safety Influencing Group will assist the committee in fulfilling this responsibility.

What's in a name?

The work to control giant buttercup

The name giant buttercup conjures up visions of huge luscious, bright yellow flowers – what's not to like? For a start, it's not as grand looking as the name suggests, and it really is 'giant' in terms of the damage it can do to productive dairy farms.

If you're a dairy farmer in Taranaki, Golden Bay or Southland, it's certainly not a plant you want to see in your garden or paddocks.

Giant buttercup is an introduced weed, not to be confused with the creeping buttercup we are all used to seeing.

AgResearch principal scientist Graeme Bourdôt has been working on finding a suitable control option for giant buttercup since it was discovered in the mid-80s in Golden Bay. "Yellow covered dairy farms all through the valley," he says.

It's estimated that giant buttercup is responsible for an annual industry loss of over \$150 million due to lost milk solid revenue. "On a typical Golden Bay dairy farm, giant buttercup reduces overall farm profit by \$1040/ha or around 36%."

At peak cover in November, giant buttercup can occupy 50% of a pasture. Dairy and other grazing cattle avoid the giant buttercup plants because of their bitter taste, but also don't graze the grass surrounding the plants. In addition to this loss in grazing pasture, it's become resistant to herbicides.

Environment Southland has been supporting AgResearch in its trials to develop a control method for the weed for the past few years.

It's estimated that giant buttercup is responsible for an annual industry loss of over \$150 million due to lost milk solid revenue.

Graeme is now leading the experiments, funded by the Sustainable Farming Fund, DairyNZ and Ravensdown, which are being conducted on Golden Bay dairy farms. The aim is to find effective management options for farmers. The experiments, which started in 2014 and will run for three years, involve treatments with chemical herbicides, a biological herbicide, growth promoting chemicals, pre-graze mowing and wet versus dry soils.

Graeme says early results suggest the pre-graze mowing option is quite a cost effective solution, as cattle are happy to graze the plants once they have wilted following mowing. One farmer using the pre-graze mowing method has reported some of the best summer grass growth he's had in four years.

Environment Southland has worked through a programme in recent years to identify where giant buttercup is in Southland. It was recorded in four main locations around the region and is now



Photo – G. Bourdôt, AgResearch



INTERESTING FACT

Once upon a time giant buttercup was used medicinally as a last resort cure for syphilis.

(www.agpest.co.nz)

▲ Giant buttercup flower

How to recognise giant buttercup

- ▶ Perennial, reaching up to 1 metre in height
- ▶ Yellow, glossy flowers 15–25mm across with 5 petals that mainly appear between November and April
- ▶ Leaves can be very large (as big as your outstretched hand), hairy, divided into 3-7 lobes, on long hairy stems
- ▶ Seeds have small hooks enabling them to attach to animals, clothes, equipment and travel in floodwaters



▲ Early trial results suggest that pre-graze mowing (shown left) is a cost effective solution to control giant buttercup (Photo – G. Bourdôt, AgResearch)

Once you've identified it

- ▶ If you have low levels – get control of it early
- ▶ If you have high levels – develop a management strategy for your farm

Check out the AgPest website for control options for both low and high levels of giant buttercup – agpest.co.nz

being considered in the review of the Regional Pest Management Plan. As part of the AgResearch project, field days are held annually in Southland to share the latest results, with a lot more information to come at the end of the trials.

So, while the name suggests it could be a great option for the garden, it's certainly not a plant to be encouraged. Graeme says the most important thing farmers can do is to get familiar with giant buttercup so they can identify it early and get on top of it before it spreads.

2016 elections

The local body elections are being held this year.

This is your opportunity to vote for your regional, district or city councillors, plus any licensing trust representatives in your area. You may also want to consider putting yourself forward as a candidate.

As a potential candidate for Environment Southland/Southland Regional Council you:

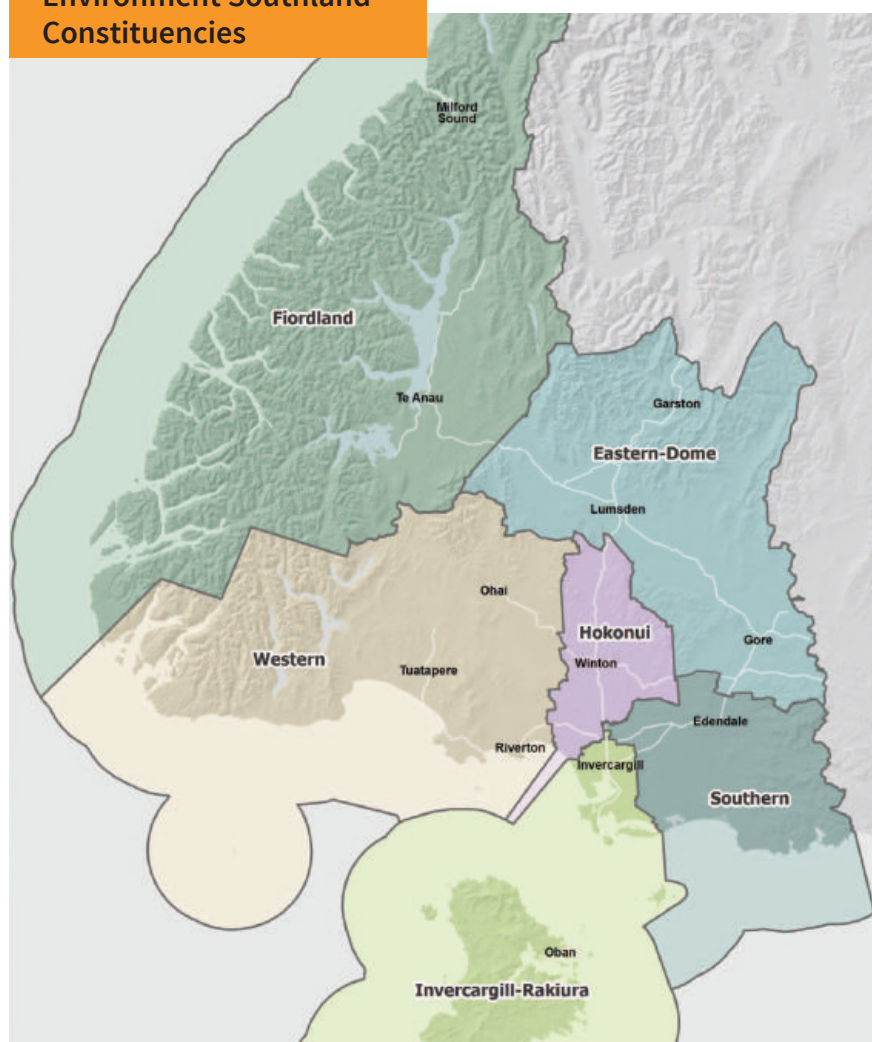
- ▶ must be a New Zealand citizen and enrolled to vote
- ▶ must be nominated by two people who are enrolled to vote in that constituency, and pay a deposit
- ▶ are not permitted to stand for other councils, but may stand for a licensing trust

- ▶ can obtain nomination papers and information packs from Environment Southland, other local councils and the electoral office – phone 0800 922 822.

As a voter you:

- ▶ need to be aged 18 or over and enrolled to vote
- ▶ can get enrolment forms from any Post Shop, and online at www.elections.org.nz/events/2016-local-elections
- ▶ can cast your vote via postal ballot or drop it off before noon on 8 October at either Southland District, Gore District or Invercargill City Council offices. *Note: Environment Southland does not receive voting papers.*

Environment Southland Constituencies



Local Elections 2016 YOUR VOTE YOUR COMMUNITY

Key dates



Candidate nominations open.



Candidate nominations close at noon. Electoral roll closes.



Publication of candidates' names.



Postal ballot, documents delivered to households.



Voting closes at noon.



Declaration of results, including ordinary and special votes.

Environment Southland

6 constituencies – 12 councillors

- ▶ Eastern-Dome Constituency
2 councillors
- ▶ Fiordland Constituency
1 councillor
- ▶ Hokonui Constituency
1 councillor
- ▶ Invercargill-Rakiura Constituency
6 councillors
- ▶ Southern Constituency
1 councillor
- ▶ Western Constituency
1 councillor

Driving the strategy

Keeping nearly 100 people in nine action teams moving towards a common goal is the pivotal task of Southland Regional Development Strategy programme director, Sarah Hannan, and project manager, Sarah Brown.

Both are critical in guiding the teams as they create tangible action plans to achieve the goal of 10,000 more people living here by 2025.

“Team members are volunteers with day jobs and real doers. We support them with a good structure and the information they need, while doing our best to ensure they are continually focused on the goal,” says Sarah Hannan.

It’s a hugely diverse project to pull together. The pair’s complementary backgrounds—Sarah Hannan was

Southland Chamber of Commerce CEO while Sarah Brown is a lawyer, bring balance.

“As Southlanders, we sometimes tend to downplay what we have. The strategy encourages people to look with fresh eyes at what Southland offers,” says Sarah Brown.

People are the region’s best resource, says Sarah Hannan.

“They’re at the heart of our successes. That’s why the strategy’s goal is to increase the number of people.”

SoRDS

The Southland Regional Development Strategy (SoRDS) was launched in October 2015 as a joint initiative between councils, iwi, business and community organisations.

It is an economic and social development strategy and action plan with the primary aim of increasing Southland’s population to 105,000 by 2025 (about 10,000 more people); and 110,000 by 2030.



Southland Regional
Development Strategy
TE IWI ME ORANGA RAUEMI

Progress

- ▶ There are 95 people working across nine teams. The Welcome Southland team has been divided into: International Students, Tourism and Destination Attraction. The New Industries and Innovation action team has been divided into two.
- ▶ Stakeholder/community engagement focus groups began and will continue to run over several months for some teams.
- ▶ The website (www.sords.co.nz) and Facebook page went live in March.
- ▶ A series of newspaper features about team leaders continues. SORDs chair, Tom Campbell has a busy speaking events schedule.
- ▶ All teams are progressing on or ahead of schedule towards the July action plan goals.



▲ SoRDS project manager Sarah Brown (left) and programme director Sarah Hannan

Updates



Proposal for a Fiordland Marine Pathway Plan

With its breathtaking scenery and pristine waters, Fiordland is one of New Zealand's most unique and nationally significant areas – ecologically and economically. It is vital we protect it.

The underwater world is as spectacular as the land above, and marine pests pose one of the biggest threats to this unique area. The impact of a marine pest establishment could be significant, jeopardising both the economic and ecological wellbeing of Fiordland.

The Fiordland Marine Pathway Plan aims to greatly reduce the risk of marine pests being carried in on local and visiting vessels. Vessels of all types and sizes can provide a pathway for marine pests, which can attach to boats and gear, and in pockets of residual seawater and bilge water.

Keeping these areas clean means the pests are unable to attach. This is the pathway, and Fiordland is protected. The pathway approach is designed to work with the existing regional pest management plan by preventing marine pests from reaching Fiordland in the first place, rather than responding after a pest has arrived and established.

The plan establishes clean vessel standards that would ensure Fiordland must meet, and proposes a Fiordland Clean Vessel Pass to ensure vessel owners/operators understand and adhere to the standards. The plan has been developed and will be implemented by a partnership group including Environment Southland, Fiordland Marine Guardians, Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation and Ngāi Tahu.



Making history

Southland made history in April when a proposal was notified for a Fiordland Marine Pathway Plan, the first of its kind to be developed in New Zealand. The plan aims to reduce the risk of marine pests being carried into the Fiordland Marine Area by local and visiting vessels.

Public feedback was sought on the proposal for the plan, which would require all vessels, regardless of their size, to abide by a number of rules regarding clean hulls, clean gear and residual seawater.

Biosecurity manager Richard Bowman says the plan has been developed by a partnership group including Environment Southland, Fiordland Marine Guardians, Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation and Ngāi Tahu.

Public submissions on the proposal closed on 13 May.

Pest plan

Southlanders have demonstrated a keen desire to talk about which pests should be included in the new Regional Pest Management Plan being developed. Over 120 submissions were received during the initial feedback period which ended on 31 March, with suggestions on which animal, plant and marine pests should be incorporated into the plan.

Biosecurity manager Richard Bowman said it was great to have so many people interested in the plan which will set the scene for pest management in the region for the next 10 years.

The feedback is currently being compiled and will be used to guide the writing of the Regional Pest



Management Plan, with a draft expected to be released for further public comment before the end of the year.

Environment Awards

More than 27 individuals, community groups, schools and businesses are in the running for this year's Southland Community Environment Awards.

Judging teams are out and about in the region now assessing entries in preparation for the awards night on 28 July.

Seven different award categories cater for all kinds of environmental projects and activities: individual, farming, school, community group, commercial, innovator and achiever.

The annual awards are an opportunity to recognise achievements of special significance that benefit Southland's environment.

Every year the judges are impressed by the things everyday people are out there quietly doing. The awards are a great opportunity to acknowledge them.



▲ 2015 Councillors' Special Award winners Malcolm and Margaret MacKenzie.

Time to think about...

📅 JUNE 2016

▶ Mustelids/rats

When you are out at your duck pond during the duck shooting season, remember to set and check traps for mustelids and rats.

▶ Outdoor burning

Outdoor burning is prohibited in the Invercargill and Gore airsheds from 1 May until 31 August.

▶ Southland Water and Land Plan

The proposed *Southland Water and Land Plan* is out for consultation now. You can read it and the explanatory document, *Shaping the new plan*, online at www.es.govt.nz or give us a call on 0800 76 88 45 and we can send you a copy. Submissions close on 1 August.

📅 JULY 2016

▶ Rabbits

Winter is the most effective time for rabbit control before they start breeding again in spring.

▶ Southland Community Environment Awards

Keep an eye out for the winners who will be announced in July.

📅 AUGUST 2016

▶ Environmental Enhancement Fund

Get your application in now. This fund can assist with projects to protect and enhance indigenous biodiversity on private and community-owned land in Southland. Visit www.es.govt.nz for more information on how to apply.

▶ Riparian planting

Plan for spring plantings of riparian buffers and shelterbelts. Getting stock-proof fences up prior to planting is critical.

Down on the farm



By **GARY MORGAN** Environment Southland principal land sustainability officer

Winter is a time when weather can have a significant impact on your property and how it responds to the way you manage it.

Good management practice can make a major difference and is especially important for winter grazing.

A farm environment plan is one of the best ways to get information and advice specific to your property. Environment Southland land sustainability officers can help with these and can also supply a full colour, scaled, aerial photo of your farm which is very useful for planning.

There are few other things worth thinking about at this time of year:

- ▶ Organise getting a nutrient budget prepared for your farm.
- ▶ Look out for velvetleaf plants when shifting fodder beet breaks.
- ▶ During winter, identify significant critical source areas on the farm so you can plan how you will manage these. These are overland flows that form into a channel and can carry sediment and contaminants to waterways.
- ▶ If you are planning to plant any bare-rooted trees, including poplars and willows, now is the time to order these and prepare the planting sites.

Out in the field

Our people are no strangers to extraordinary situations as they go about looking after the region's natural resources.



▲ Consents officer Matt Hoffman (right) joins staff from the Royal New Zealand Navy during a compliance patrol in Fiordland in February.



▲ Southland Girls' High School students (from left) Jenna Herbert and Tasmyn Stronach discuss their planting with environmental education officer Pat Hoffmann at a planting day on the Invercargill estuary boardwalk.



▲ Environment Southland chairman Ali Timms (centre), Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt and staff from Awarua Synergy celebrate the launch of the Clean Air Loans (Invercargill) scheme at the fire station in March.