

The onset of wild winter weather is a reminder of the impact that climate has on the environment, with landslides, trees blown down and flooding in many places in recent weeks.

The surge in rainfall over the last few months has had an upside: as noted in this issue, the combination of more rain and energy conservation has staved off the threat for the moment to hydro lake storage levels.

Climate change is a gradual process with long-term impacts. Recently-released guidance by the Ministry for the Environment explains that sea level rise is likely to continue for the next century and beyond, with serious implications for some coastal communities.

Other recent Ministry guidance on climate change impacts predicts that annual New Zealand temperatures will increase by 1°C by 2040 and 2°C by 2090, based on an average of 12 climate change scenarios. The report also predicts increased rainfall in the west of the country and less rainfall in the north and east.

Kind Regards



Lindsay Gow

DEPUTY SECRETARY
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➤ Councils warned: plan for sea level rise

Councils are being advised to plan for a minimum rise in sea level of at least half a metre within the next 100 years, but also to consider the consequences of sea level rise of more than 80 cm over the same time period.



> Shaky Foundations: a house slides into the sea at Ohiwa Spit, Bay of Plenty. Photo: R.K.Smith.

The recommendations are found in *Coastal Hazards and Climate Change: A guidance manual for local government in New Zealand*, launched at the Australasian Hazards Management Conference in Wellington on 28-31 July.

Dr Warren Gray, Senior Operator, Science and Technology at the Ministry for the Environment, said that science could not precisely predict sea level rise. But councils should plan on a base level rise of 50 cm, and should also consider the impacts of higher sea levels.

“Sea level rise will continue over time, so at some point the rise is likely to exceed 80 cm,” he said. “We need to think carefully about what this means for our infrastructure in coastal margins.”

The impacts of climate change would vary markedly at different coastal locations, he said. For example, the West Coast is likely to experience bigger waves, while the Bay of Plenty might have more benign waves but bigger storms than in the past, with big implications for coastal erosion.

“The science is very clear that sea level rise will continue, it’s just not clear by how much at the worst end,” he said. “Because people have to make decisions now that will have long lasting implications, we are providing advice for prudent planning.”

The guidance is based on the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report published in 2007.

In May, the Ministry issued a guidance manual for local government on climate change effects and impacts. The manual sets out the likely impacts of climate change on temperature and rainfall, and also provides a risk management framework for considering the implications. The summary of this manual has been updated and is available, with the other manuals, on the Environment Ministry website at www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/climate/#local.

Network a hit with business

Businesses are queuing up to take on the sustainability challenge – and an organisation that advises them is enjoying record popularity.

The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) is in the happy position of not having to chase members, said SBN Northern Regional Manager David Clendon.

“Few people are asking ‘why should we bother?’ They’re now saying ‘what can we do and how do we do it?’ People recognise the importance and value of being sustainable and of future-proofing their business.”

SBN membership has taken off since 2006, from just over 400 to more than 700 businesses nationally. Members are serviced from five regional offices in Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, and Christchurch, as well as a small office in Nelson.

SBN Chief Executive Rachel Brown put the surge in business interest down mainly to rising national awareness, through factors like *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Stern Report, the food miles threat, and the increased profile of sustainability.

“The early drivers were mainly based around individuals’ passions and beliefs they could do good things for their businesses that would improve everyone’s lot. For others it has been about ‘brand’ and ensuring they are being seen to be doing the right thing by the environment and society as a whole,” Rachel said.

“The clever businesses have been able to make money out of this through efficiency gains, but more interestingly some have used sustainability to drive innovation and new thinking into their businesses.

“Some are also motivated internally by their staff – key talented individuals who have a personal commitment to environmental or social issues and want to see these reflected in the business. For young graduates this is now a key question they are asking businesses at job interviews,” she said.

The SBN, which is supported by the Ministry for the Environment, advises and supports businesses through networking opportunities, programmes, training, and sustainability assessments. Through the ‘Get Sustainable Challenge,’ the SBN provides face-to-face business assessments covering areas like energy, transport, community relationships, and staff management.

David said that the SBN offers services that suit individual business needs: “For example, if they are an intensive energy user, we give them information to manage their energy use better.”

He said the SBN tried to stay relevant to companies regardless of how far they were down the sustainability path.

“The challenge for us is to stay relevant to our members who have been with us since day one. With them, you have to provide leadership at the strategic level,” he said.



> Happy winners: Rachel Brown (front, third from left) and David Clendon (back right, partly obscured) at the Northern Region Sustainable Business Awards.

↘ New sustainability market tips for NZ exporters

New Zealand businesses and exporters wanting to keep tabs on overseas trends in sustainable products can now source timely, country-specific information tailored to their needs.

A market intelligence reporting system has been established on sustainability issues in key food and beverage export markets, using information gathered offshore by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise.

This information is shared with New Zealand businesses and exporters on the Market New Zealand website (www.marketnewzealand.com/MNZ/services/14703.aspx).

MFAT Sustainability Market Intelligence Coordinator Laura Hogg said consumer and retailer behaviour is increasingly reflecting awareness of global environmental issues like climate change.

“Internationally, consumers want to know more about the products they buy – where they come from, what’s in them, how they were made and by whom,” she said.

“Retailers are capitalising on these changing preferences by making public statements of intent and introducing rigorous sustainability requirements into their supply chains. Governments are following suit with programmes that encourage sustainable consumption.”

New Zealand businesses faced both opportunities and risks in this more environmentally-aware global marketplace, she said.

“We already have some experience of this, with the food miles issue in the UK. The concept that the further food has to travel, the worse its impact on the environment – although flawed – was easy for consumers to grasp, and for the media to present as a way to make a difference for climate change.

“New Zealand industry and the government have worked hard over the past couple of years using science to show that food miles is not a valid indicator of sustainability, and that distance does not necessarily equate to a worse environmental impact.

“But the issue has not solely been bad for New Zealand. It has helped our businesses realise that being a sustainable producer opens up opportunities. Through this, businesses are taking a closer look at their product life cycles, and finding innovative ways to improve environmental performance.

“Understanding trends and developments in our key export markets will enable New Zealand producers to target these sustainability ‘investments’ to best effect,” she said.



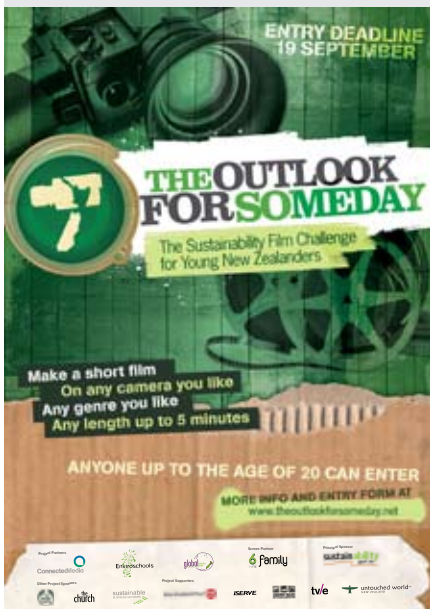
Green RIG rolls into Parliament

What’s big, green, has eight wheels and is powered by three alternative sources? It’s the Green RIG (Regional Information 2 Go), the Horizons Regional Council’s mobile environmental education unit. The Green RIG is an interactive learning centre that visits schools and communities in the Manawatu-Wanganui region educating the public about living more sustainably. The RIG’s on-board interactive exhibits and displays focus on water, land and habitats. The RIG sets a good environmental example, being powered partly by eight roof-mounted solar panels that store energy in onboard batteries. All its carbon emissions are offset through native tree planting. The RIG’s role in raising environmental awareness was acknowledged when it won a Green Ribbon Award earlier this year. For more information about the Green RIG, and when it’ll be near you, check out its website, www.greenrig.co.nz.

↳ Sustaina-briefs

Youth film challenge

The *Outlook for Someday* sustainable film challenge is on again, with young film-makers encouraged to submit entries by 19 September. The challenge invites anyone aged under 21 to make a film up to five minutes long on a sustainability topic. The winning entries will be screened on TVNZ channel 6, and a documentary about the competition will also screen on TV2. Project Manager Andrea Price, of Connected Media in Auckland, said there had been considerable promotion of the competition this year through workshops, radio promotion, posters in schools, and items in the *Education Gazette* and *Tearaway* magazine.



'Powersavers' saves power

The 'Powersavers' advertising campaign has ended, with savings of between 4 and 5 per cent in most regions. As of 21 July, shortly before the final advertisements were run, there had been savings of 4.9 per cent in the upper North Island, 3.8 per cent in mid North Island, 4.4 per cent in the southern North Island, 5.1 per cent in upper South Island and 4.8 per cent in the lower South Island. Campaign Convenor and Transpower Chief Executive Dr Patrick Strange said a combination of prudent savings by the public, collaboration from industry, and rainfall in the right places had improved hydro lake levels.

Ditch the old fridge

Aucklanders can get paid \$25 for their old, energy-hungry fridges and have them taken away for free, thanks to a joint initiative from ENERGYWISE™ (by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority) and Fisher and Paykel. The company is removing old fridges and freezers for free and giving owners the choice of receiving \$25 or donating that money to the children's charity Ronald McDonald House. Under the scheme, covering the Auckland region, old refrigerators are recycled at the Fisher and Paykel recycling plant in East Tamaki, which processes around 40,000 old washers, dryers, cookers, fridges and freezers every year. Conditions apply – visit www.energywise.govt.nz for more information.

NZ in top 10

New Zealand has been ranked seventh out of more than 140 countries for its environmental sustainability. The Environmental Performance Index, a collaboration between Yale and Columbia Universities in the US, gave New Zealand a score of 88.9, with a perfect 100 in the areas of water and sanitation. It also scored well for environmental health and ecosystem vitality, but did less well for pesticide regulation, marine protected areas, biodiversity and emissions. Switzerland was the top ranked country, the UK was 14th, the US 39th, and Australia 46th.

Wind farms appeal

Most New Zealanders like the look of wind farms, with the majority not minding seeing them from their homes, according to a Research New Zealand Survey. The poll found 84 per cent had no objection to the look of wind farms, and 70 per cent said they would approve of being able to see a wind farm from their home. The same poll also found that 54 per cent of respondents opposed nuclear power in New Zealand, although 37 per cent felt the idea should be considered. The nationwide poll of 502 people was conducted in July.



> Photo: Jeff McEwan, capturenz.com

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