

**REDEFINING A REGIONAL ROLE, OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYNERGY AND
INTRODUCING A PARTNERED RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF TARGETS IN
THE NATIONAL WASTE STRATEGY:
TOWARDS ZERO WASTE AND A SUSTAINABLE NEW ZEALAND**

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Introduction:

The New Zealand Waste Strategy (NZWS) presents national targets for a number of priority wastes, namely; organic, special, construction and demolition, hazardous, organochlorines and trade wastes. These targets are not just measurable, they also provide direction for local authorities and other parties on how to achieve them. The review of the NZWS targets, published by the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) stated “good progress is being made by Councils in setting local and regional targets and in adopting policies aimed at meeting these targets” (MfE, 2004). The review also stated “an effective and cost efficient monitoring and reporting system is essential for measuring progress in implementing the NZWS and achieving the targets” (MfE, 2004).

Following the launch of the New Zealand Waste Strategy (NZWS) in March 2002, Horizons Regional Council (HRC) invited representatives from the seven local authorities in the Manawatu-Wanganui region to meet and present their respective local situations with regard to waste and waste minimization. Feed back from the meeting was very positive and indicated that there was support for HRC to provide a coordinator/facilitator role in identifying and addressing waste issues across the region and to set direction through reviewed regional policy. Further discussions were required to define the HRC role and determine the regional waste issues that could be dealt with most effectively via a collective approach, hence, the Regional Territorial Authority Waste Forum (RTAWF) was formed.

The RTAWF’s first meeting was held in November 2003 with representatives from HRC, Ruapehu District Council, Manawatu District Council, Rangitikei District Council, Tararua District Council, Horowhenua District Council, Wanganui District Council and the Palmerston North City Council. While some of these Councils have officially adopted zero waste policies and others have not, all have either incorporated the NZWS targets to some degree into their Waste Management Plans or plan on doing so.

Further RTAWF meetings were held in March 2004 and May 2004 to which the Zero Waste Academy (ZWA) was invited to attend. The main outcomes of the RTAWF meetings have been the development of a comprehensive list of regional waste issues and a list of priority work for the short term was been determined. This priority work included the Regional Stock Take on Waste, which utilized the services of Envision New Zealand Ltd (Envision NZ), and the joint funding of a series of waste awareness forums, coordinated by the ZWA.

Regional Stock Take on Waste:

While the RTAWF identified a number of regional waste issues, it also identified that a key limitation to effectively dealing with these waste issues was the lack of readily available information and collective information across the region. The Regional Stock Take on Waste (Stock Take) was commissioned by HRC to assist in filling this information gap. Envision NZ performed the Stock Take on behalf of HRC.

The Stock Take represents the first ever attempt to identify and assess waste issues in the Manawatu-Wanganui Region using collated information from both the private and government sectors. While the information presented in the Stock Take was drawn mostly from the territorial authorities, where possible the perspectives of private operators have been presented. An advantage of using Envision NZ to perform the Stock Take, was that they added a fresh perspective and were able to contribute their experience and knowledge to distill key issues from such a wide range of information and provide recommendations.

The objectives of the stock take were to:

- (a) Develop a picture of “what is happening with waste and waste minimization” in the region,
- (b) Identify key waste issues for the region,
Identify opportunities and barriers surrounding each of the key issues.
- (c) The intention was that this information would feed into the review process of the regional plans and aid the progress of RTAWF initiatives.

The Stock Take brief reflected to some degree the NZWS, in that it sought to gather the quantitative information required to assess the national targets on a regional basis and focused largely on solid waste. However, the brief also expressed the desire to focus on qualitative information, such as the “who, what and where” of a wide range of waste issues including; solid waste disposal, resource recovery (recycling and organics), private sector and community enterprises and interest groups, special waste disposal (oil, tyres, batteries, electronic goods, farm plastics), demolition/clean fill wastes, hazardous waste disposal (agricultural and household hazardous substances), contaminated site registers (current practices), research/studies/reports, cleaner production uptake and waste education/information.

The methodology of the Stock Take included the distribution of a letter of explanation to private operators and an invitation to participate in the survey. This was followed up with an emailed questionnaire form, phone calls and/or face to face discussions. In parallel to this, key contacts in the region were asked to contribute their knowledge regarding more qualitative information such as current education initiatives, local resource recovery businesses and community groups, etc.

The final report from Envision NZ was presented to HRC in August 2004 and provided a first ever “snap shot” of the Manawatu-Wanganui Region’s current situation with regard to waste and waste minimisation and will be a valuable resource for future planning and implementation.

The Stock Take has provided the most concise information ever available for the Manawatu-Wanganui Region regarding the facilities and services, both private and council operated, in each district currently available for; solid waste disposal, kerbside recycling and refuse collection services, recycling, reuse, hazardous wastes, special wastes (waste oil, batteries, electronic goods, white ware and scrap metal in particular) and organics diversion from landfill (green waste and food waste in particular).

It also provides the most comprehensive lists ever available for the Manawatu-Wanganui Region with regard to; community groups interested in waste minimization, resource recovery businesses (second hand stores, etc), businesses using recovered materials in the region, businesses implementing cleaner production programmes in Palmerston North, and a summary of the current methods for the registration of contaminated sites in the region.

Regional information gaps identified include:

- (a) Identification of industrial waste streams to landfill,
- (b) Biosolid disposal,
- (c) Grease trap wastes,
- (d) Tyre disposal,
- (e) Agriplastics, silage wrap disposal facilities,
- (f) Clean fill locations,
- (g) Demolition and construction waste disposal.

During the process of collecting and collating the information for the Stock Take, Envision NZ distilled 17 key regional waste issues and 14 recommendations to HRC, to help the region move “Towards zero waste and a sustainable New Zealand” (MfE, 2002).

Key Waste Issues:

The key regional waste issues were identified as follows:

1. The loss of council control of the waste stream has resulted in limited power to implement waste reduction initiatives. Councils need to consider other ways to motivate the market to create opportunities.
2. The landfill capacity remaining in the region is likely to be less than 22 years.
3. The lack of adequate recording and/or data availability due to factors including commercial sensitivity, lack of recording systems and the private control of waste stream.

4. Councils are generally under resourced and deal with waste alongside a number of priority concerns.
5. Solid Waste Management Plans (SWMP) vary widely across the region with little co-ordination of strategies.
6. Disparity in the services available for waste/waste minimisation across the region. The same is true for resource recovery, waste education and the price of refuse disposal.
7. Commercial sensitivity of information meant that a large amount of the information collected for the Stock Take was sourced from the territorial authorities.
8. Territorial authorities and private operators have different motivations for providing services, hence, councils need to work more collaboratively with private operators to provide adequate services.
9. The Stock Take is only a “snap shot” because of a rapidly changing situation. For instance the situation can change rapidly due to transfer station ownership, leasing arrangements, landfill contracts and the acceptance of refuse external to the region.
10. Territorial authorities lack adequate support and information to determine outcomes for waste minimization locally. Waste minimization is largely driven by private operators, which does not necessarily provide results that are compatible with the wider public interest.
11. Disparity in hazardous waste facilities across the region. In general, private operators only provide hazardous waste facilities if the territorial authority is prepared to pay for the service.
12. The locations of clean fills are largely unknown and therefore are not checked for compliance.
13. On site burial and burning of waste occurs in rural areas.
14. Information on agrichemical container disposal is not readily available.
15. Information on industrial sludge, sewage pit and interceptor waste disposal is not readily available, despite a reasonable number of large industrial waste streams that are potentially being landfilled.
16. Concern over the Resource Recovery Park initiative due to a reported lack of opportunity for involvement of private operators in the Palmerston North City Council’s proposal.
17. Territorial authorities and HRC are not leading by example for in-house waste minimization, green purchasing policies, or contracts that model best practice.

Recommendations:

The recommendations for HRC were:

1. To continue to coordinate the RTAWF, to provide a coordination role, coordinate funding, set regional waste reduction goals, and initiate education on a regional basis.
2. To undertake regular waste stock takes to provide trends and information for planning. Information could include the annual landfill space remaining, actual business and employment opportunities, and information previously unavailable on biosolids, medical wastes, industrial chemical wastes, clean fills.
3. To develop and coordinate a regional education and information campaign in conjunction with territorial authorities. This would provide a cohesive message across the region, use skills of local people and use other models where possible.
4. To investigate the long term disposal requirements for the region including options to control the likely rise in the price of waste disposal, and plan for a waste minimisation infrastructure that can compete with the waste management infrastructure and preserve landfill life.
5. To lobby central government on behalf of the territorial authorities for national waste legislation.
6. To investigate regional regulatory measures –such as the licensing of haulers, introduction of regional landfill levies, and landfill bans on hazardous substances and recyclables.
7. To require full cost accounting for landfills in the region, consider fixing the range of landfill fees across the region, and improve the implementation of landfill acceptance criteria.
8. To investigate a regional resource recovery network that provides opportunities for many different sectors to participate.
9. To develop an auditing system for industrial hazardous waste.
10. To develop a coordinated approach to household hazardous waste by providing consistent facilities and handling across the region.
11. To take part in the Ministry for the Environment agricultural collection programme.
12. To provide support for local reprocessing plants and end use for recovered materials by bringing key players together to discuss needs and supporting businesses that close the loop on materials.
13. To develop waste management plan templates to enable cohesive waste planning across the region.
14. To assist in the development of green purchasing guidelines and in-house waste minimisation models for local authorities.

The key issues and recommendations presented in the Stock Take are written from Envision NZ's perspective, providing decision makers with a fresh mix of perspectives adding value to the information they have to consider.

The Stock Take represents the first ever attempt to benchmark what is happening with the waste and zero waste spheres in the Manawatu –Wanganui Region and has provided a useful “snap shot” of the current state of affairs. It has also contributed to the developing pool of knowledge and experience through other regional waste surveys, such as the Waikato and Bay of Plenty, and has potentially extended this groundwork by using an approach that brings together both quantitative and qualitative information.

Zero Waste Awareness Forums:

The NZWS provides a generic waste policy for territorial authorities, Regional Councils and their respective communities, encouraging them all to deal with similar issues within similar timeframes. Hence, local government and the community have a broadly common knowledge base from which planning and implementation can be generated in response to the NZWS.

One of the regional waste issues identified by the RTAWF in March 2004 was the lack of consistent generic regional information about waste. The RTAWF considered that there was potential for the ZWA to contribute positively to their discussions, and facilitate a series of zero waste forums to address this knowledge gap. The ZWA had already piloted a generic zero waste awareness forum early in 2004, which profiled excellence from the community enterprise and business sectors as well as the BusinessCare program. This pilot enjoyed solid participation and encouraging feedback. It led to the proposal, which was agreed to by the RTAWF as a means to increase the awareness of best practice thereby encouraging renewed actions on the ground.

The concept of the forum series was that it would be facilitated by the ZWA Coordinator and would cover identified priority issues for the region. The forums would be structured in two parts with two distinct functions. The first part would consist of a conventional public seminar format, which would enable the local authority staff, elected officials, business sector and community to listen to and interact with experienced practitioners who have engaged in the most successful programmes in that field. The emphasis would be on access to information, audience led discussion and engagement in a user-friendly format. The goal would be improved awareness and empowerment of the community such that they could then contribute positively to future planning and decision making process.

The second part would consist of a closed workshop session in the afternoon to provide the local authorities an opportunity to frankly discuss details with the practitioners. The aim of this session was to provide the local authorities with the information they would require to make informed decisions and decide on the best options for their region.

As coordinator of this forum series the ZWA would draw upon its established network of contacts and their own awareness of best practice and expertise relevant to the identified priority issues in the Manawatu-Region. The timeframe was initially determined as eight key subject areas at a rate of two to three forums per year, with a review of the program after the first year. The RTAWF identified a number of subject areas, the first three were seen as the priority issues to be covered in the first three forums:

1. Hazardous Waste: *focus* -Regional responses including education.
2. Special Waste: *focus* -Tyres, E-waste, Used oil, Fluorescent tubes, etc.
3. Waste Exchanges: *focus* -Central Districts Waste Exchange development strategy and management model.
4. Organic Recycling: *focus* -Greenwaste composting, Bio-solids, Food-waste, Anaerobic digestion, Bio energy options.
5. Resource Recovery Centres / Partnering with Community Enterprise: *focus* – Palmerston North City Council resource plaza concept, planning, development and management.
6. Environmental Education: Focus –further local program development. *Key people from Wastebusters, EERST, Enviroschools models.*
7. Environmental legislation: Extended producer responsibility, Container deposit levies, Landfill taxes and other green (e.g. plastic bags) taxes, local licensing.
8. Construction & Demolition:
9. *Event Recycling, tertiary education, institutional zero waste programmes, ‘Green Globe’ for regional tourist operators.*

The mission of the ZWA is to develop “a ‘centre of excellence’ for training, education and research of zero waste principles and practices needed for a sustainable future.” The ZWA considered that coordinating a series of zero waste awareness forums, funded by RTWAF, would be an opportunity to progress a number of strategic ends. While meeting the requirements of the RTAWF by gathering experts in particular waste related fields and up-skilling and educating the general public and local authorities, it also provided an opportunity for ZWA to document this shared knowledge. The ZWA would catalogue the information as presented, clarified and expanded through public and local authority discussions and translate it into teaching and planning tools for future reference and dissemination. This would become the feedstock for the NZQA accredited training and education programs, which have been initiated in both the University and Industry Training spheres.

Via the ZWA’s representation on the recently established resource recovery sector advisory group (SAG) this forum series has the potential to link in with formal industry training development overseen in this instance by the extractive industries training organisation, the designated Industries Training Organisation that covers "waste metal recovery, resource recovery, waste management (excluding water), recycling, and zero waste industry”.

Cost sharing at a regional level meant that the individual local authority sponsorship was manageable and provided exceptional value for money whilst disseminating high quality readily accessible information. There was a conscious decision not to charge an attendance fee for the forums, reflecting the desire to promote and enable participation from all sectors of the community.

Hazardous waste was selected as the first priority subject for the region. This culminated in Hazardous Waste Forum, held on Friday, August 20th at Massey University's Palmerston North campus. The invitation to the forum was extended into the Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Wellington regions with the intention being to encourage widespread dialogue and momentum. It was envisaged that this would lead to the development of hazardous waste and other environmental programs that are sensible, cost effective and provide the best possible protection to the environmental health of future generations.

The objectives for the forum were:

1. To facilitate awareness and understanding of hazardous waste programmes and profile current New Zealand best practice for the benefit of Council and Community planning.
2. To facilitate an opportunity for the Council waste managers in the Manawatu-Wanganui region to engage with experienced hazardous waste practitioners for the benefit of ongoing collective program development.

The forum consisted of presentations by experienced hazardous waste program developers, private operators and a consultancy involved in hazardous waste staff training, and an overview of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. This was followed by a closed workshop session between the ZWA, RTAWF members and the presenters.

The presenters and their respective discussion topics were as follows:

- Patricia Blutner – Auckland Regional Council. The 'Hazmobile' success story -a high profile integrated community collections, processing and disposal system.
- Dominic Salmon -Hasting District Council. Transferring the Haz-mobile program into the Hawkes Bay
- David Stagg -Environment Waikato. Partnerships -The Waikato network of permanent collection points.
- Darren Patterson -Environment Canterbury. A Southern regional perspective on cooperation and outcomes from the 'Haz-waste working party'
- Geoff Hemm –MacKenzie District Council Solid Waste Manager. The positives and challenges to a rural territorial authority of collective action.
- Rachael Larkin and Sara Clarke –URS Consulting. HSNO perspectives and staff training for Haz-waste programs
- Boyne Drummond –TREDI NZ Ltd. The New Zealand company with a global perspective.
- Ray McGregor –R & S McGregor Ltd. The insiders guide to successful hazardous waste programs.
- Peter Reid –Enviropaints Ltd. A Kiwi success story of environmental problem solving and innovation.



Figure 1: Public session seminar format



Figure 2: Closed session discussions

The audience included elected councillors, local authority staff, Army personnel, private waste and recycling operators, consultants, UCOL, ITO, Massey staff, government support staff, Midcentral Health, agrichem service providers and interested public. Attendance came from as far a field as Hawkes Bay, Taranaki, Wairarapa, and Christchurch. Formal feedback from the audience indicated:

- 93% of the respondents found the forum to be informative, useful and interesting
- 79% of the respondents felt that the presenters adequately answered questions and that there was sufficient discussion time provided
- 86% of the respondents rated the forum as either “fine” or “ok” and made no comments for improvement
- 95% of respondents rated the speakers presentation content, style, knowledge and experience as either excellent, very good or good
- 91% of respondents were interested in attending future forums.

Thanks to the input and effort of the speakers who generously provided their time, the region now has an insight into the programs and systems that have worked successfully elsewhere. The forum has generated awareness of best practice and provided a platform from which the seven territorial authorities and HRC can jointly develop a hazardous waste program that builds on the shared experience of others.

Conclusion:

The significance of the two initiatives described in this paper is that they represent a renewed level of cohesion and cooperation between HRC and the local authorities in the Manawatu-Wanganui Region, in response to the launch of the NZWS in March 2002.

The regional Stock Take enabled HRC to gather waste and waste minimization information for the region into one document, preparing the local authorities for informed policy decision-making and for on the ground initiatives.

While the full potential of the Stock Take is yet to be realized, the Manawatu-Wanganui regions’ community can be confident that there is now as much information as possible at our finger tips for improved and more informed decision making on regional waste issues.

The Stock Take also provides information that can now be used to assess where the region sits with respect to the targets in the NZWS. In the review of targets in the NZWS, it is noted that the “development of regional approaches to waste management planning” is both encouraged and viewed as a “welcome initiative” (MfE, 2004).

ZWA’s coordination of the Hazardous Waste Forum, as the first subject in the series of forums, has enabled the territorial authorities and HRC to provide a new approach to waste education by increasing their own awareness on waste, and that of the public’s, through one mechanism. The ZWA was an ideal partner organisation in achieving this outcome. The adoption of the two-phase approach for the forum series proved to be an effective strategy, which generated awareness at a detailed and holistic level. It is hoped that the forum has also led to a more informed community who can more effectively participate in decision making processes on these types of waste issues.

The HRC, in its role as a coordinator/facilitator for the region, has together with the ZWA adopted an innovative and knowledge led approach. Information from the Stock Take and the increased awareness generated via the hazardous waste forum can be used to further develop the zero waste forum series and aid in the RTAWF planning.

References:

Ministry for the Environment (2002) The New Zealand Waste Strategy: Towards zero waste and a sustainable New Zealand

Ministry for the Environment (2004) Review of targets in the New Zealand Waste Strategy