

Upcoming Project Events

October: Jan Derks will present the 14 Aorere environmental farm plans to those involved and discuss the overall project and potential for expansion of the approach with the Aorere Management Group.

October: The Aorere Catchment Management Group will meet with the Collingwood shellfish harvesters to discuss positive water quality results and the need to keep communication channels open.

October: The NZ Landcare Trust and Aorere catchment management group will meet and discuss priorities for action during the final 6 months of the Sustainable Farming Fund project.

Autumn 09: A whole of community field day will be held in the Aorere (hosted by the dairy community) to celebrate the beauty and ecosystem values of local waterways. A brochure will be released as part of this day and can be used for tourist and wider community promotion.

For information on free riparian plants, planting and maintenance contact the Golden Bay Streamcare Group: Robyn Jones, 524 8266.



For information on assistance with riparian fencing materials call the Tasman District Council: Andrew Burton, 03 5438446.

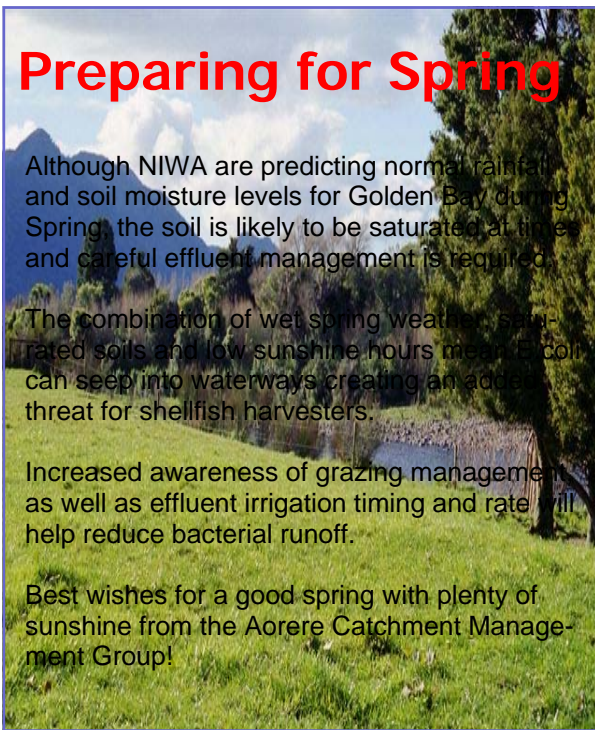
Preparing for Spring

Although NIWA are predicting normal rainfall and soil moisture levels for Golden Bay during Spring, the soil is likely to be saturated at times and careful effluent management is required.

The combination of wet spring weather, saturated soils and low sunshine hours means effluent can seep into waterways creating an additional threat for shellfish harvesters.

Increased awareness of grazing management as well as effluent irrigation timing and rate will help reduce bacterial runoff.

Best wishes for a good spring with plenty of sunshine from the Aorere Catchment Management Group!



Get free seedlings planted at your place!



For further information please contact:

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Sustainable Farming Fund

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
Te Manatū Ahuwhenua, Ngāherehere



NZ Landcare Trust
landcare action on the ground



Aorere Catchment News

DAIRY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2008

This issue Includes:

- Update on farm plans
- Sue Brown's new Dairy NZ role
- Riparian Planting Update
- Positive results for shellfish industry
- National water quality directives
- Upcoming events

Environmental Plans for 14 Aorere Farms

Over the past few months West Coast based Jan Derks has been assisting Aorere farmers to develop practical plans for healthy waterways.

Jan has been hugely impressed with the enthusiastic uptake and believes the Aorere dairy community is setting itself up well for a productive, sustainable future.

The farm plans have been funded as part of the Aorere Catchment Project's Sustainable Farming Fund Grant. Jan has developed a voluntary system incorporating only those actions endorsed and supported by the farmer. "To achieve any real support, the plans must be realistic and practical with appropriate timeframes".

Jan's extensive work in the Aorere involves:

- Developing an interview format and template for farm planning with the key aim of reducing E. coli runoff to waterways.
- Collating aerial photos for farms volunteering for the farm planning scheme.
- Spending a day on each property conducting interviews and getting out in the paddock (Rhys Barrier has also been included in 5 visits).
- Collecting information gathered in a visual format on aerial photos.
- Drawing up the environmental farm plan on behalf of the property owner.
- Preparing maps of planned areas for attention.
- Visiting each farm in October to deliver the final farm plans.

Jan will also attend an Aorere Management Team meeting. If the process is deemed useful, the NZ Landcare Trust and other local catchment groups will discuss ways to extend this approach and endeavor to seek funding.

"It has been extremely positive working in 'The Aorere' due to the understanding of environmental issues and the willingness to commit time and resources to addressing what farm owners see as strategic planning activities. My feeling is that the actions agreed for individual farms will have a very high rate of implementation". Jan Derks



Ross Riley discusses plans for this stream section



Brian Nalder talks over the farm plan with Jan Derks



Ross Riley, Rhys Barrier and Jan Derks go over farm aerial photos



Jan Derks' West Coast experience offers practical solutions for farming in wet conditions



Nursery Brings Free Trees to Farms

Golden Bay Streamcare Group are offering volunteer support with riparian planting on farms. As many local farms have fenced off their streams already, they are welcoming the streamcare group's support with site preparation, planting and the follow up site maintenance work.

Recent planting days in the Aorere have received wide community involvement from the shellfish industry, white-baiters and school children.

For those looking for assistance with streamside fencing materials should ring Andrew Burton of the Tasman District Council - 03 5438446.

For assistance with riparian plantings ring Robyn Jones - 524 8266. The children of Collingwood Area School have plants available from the school nursery so do support this wonderful initiative!



Local Leadership For Dairy Action Team

Congratulations to Sue Brown on her new position as 'Top of the South' Dairy Action Team (DAT) chairperson. DATs are a DairyNZ initiative enabling Sue to offer a leadership role, promoting constructive environmental dialogue between dairy farmers and rural professionals. She will also be involved in developing a more cohesive national approach between DATs.

Sue hopes to share some of the lessons she has learnt from her involvement in the Aorere Catchment Project. She believes taking a catchment based approach is the best way to address local environmental issues. She also believes it is important dairy farmers are able to feel proud about their surroundings and their role in maintaining and enhancing waterway health. She acknowledges this is a challenge and will take knowledge, effort and resources. For this reason she believes the support of an independent organisation like the NZ Landcare Trust is very important. "Practical, non-judgmental assistance at a catchment/community level as well as an individual on-farm level is crucial to raise understanding of impacts, ensure environmental management choices are wise and to maintain motivation".



Positive Results Please Shellfish Industry

Helen Smale of the Marlborough Shellfish Quality Programme writes about recent water quality results.



Between 2003 and 2007 marine farms in the Collingwood area have faced progressive tightening of their harvest criteria, due to bacterial contamination of surrounding waters. This resulted in farms being closed 50% of the time (182 days/year). However, in October 2007, because of the improvements in the water quality, the harvest criteria was relaxed and shellfish are now able to be harvested 79% of the time. This has had very positive impacts for harvest management on farms and in processing factories.

While there is no concrete evidence indicating why water quality has improved (climatic/rainfall variability plays some part), undoubtedly the actions taken by the Aorere dairy farming and coastal communities in upgrading their effluent systems and practices will have contributed significantly.

The marine farmers congratulate the dairy community for confronting the issue and showing a high degree of leadership through its catchment approach. The Aorere Project has provided a community owned approach without heavy handed tactics and destructive arguments between friends and neighbours. The whole community is the winner from the best management actions taken already and those that are in the pipeline. This is great news and hopefully the start of a positive trend. It's important we continue to communicate and work together as a community to maintain these great results.



Is Water Quality Just Another Craze?

As farms look to future-proof their increasingly large investment in land and infrastructure, we are right to ask 'is water quality a real and lasting issue, or is it just an overreaction?' As we dig deeper, we find that indeed water quality is a real national problem and something that is being taken very seriously. The following presents key directives that will see all New Zealanders taking a long term interest in our water quality.



Aorere dairy farmers address water quality as a community

Draft National Policy Statement www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/central/nps/freshwater-management

The draft National Policy Statement on freshwater has been released by the Ministry for the Environment (MfE). This proposed document would override all district legislation/plans (which will need to be altered to fit its intent). It requires local government to ensure all NZ waterways are swimmable and do not deteriorate. It also requires District Councils to undertake landuse planning to stop the adverse effects of landuse on water quality. Comments are invited on the document which can be downloaded or requested from MfE.

Primary Sector Water Partnership

Collaboration between key primary sector organisations has resulted in the release of a draft plan of action for water. The initiative includes: Federated Farmers, DairyNZ, NZ Forest Owners Association, NZ Farm Forestry Association, Horticulture NZ, Meat and Wool NZ, Irrigation NZ, Fonterra, and Fertiliser Research. The plan includes specific actions to be undertaken by each industry over the coming years to improve waterway health and is available on the internet.

Dairy NZ Initiatives

A number of water initiatives are funded through your levies. The Regional Dairy Action Teams are a component of this effort—see Sue Brown for more information.

Environmental Court Action

Everyone has read of the increasing number of prosecutions and fines for activities that potentially damage water quality. For example 24 dairy farms are being prosecuted in Otago with several having already received fines around \$20,000 for issues such as effluent ponding and discharges to waterways. Environment Court Judges are currently sending a strong message about waterway impacts.

The Aorere is a healthy river supporting a thriving ecosystem. It does however have its challenges in terms of faecal bacterial discharges and runoff. Local dairy farms are undertaking farm plans and implementing best management practices that will put the catchment in good stead. Implementing best management practices can be a win-win situation. What's best for water quality is often also operationally and economically best for the farm. For example, greater ability to store effluent and apply it at a lower rate, means effluent is applied in optimum soil moisture conditions (making better use of nutrients and avoiding waterway contamination). It also allows greater flexibility for time off! Well done to the Aorere catchment; showing leadership by practically and positively rising to the challenge. It is making a difference!