



# HDC NEWS



## Water and its Cost



In determining the cost of water for future years and what should be included in the budget to go out in the draft Hauraki Community Plan, Council had lengthy discussions and developed numerous possible scenarios before fixing on one to propose in the draft plan.

As we have reported before on this page there is a huge amount of capital work that we are supposed to do on our water supplies to bring them up to the standards that are at present required by the government. The cost of these measures would put the cost of water up enormously over the next few years. The other issue is that if the price of water goes up too much there is a likelihood that some farmers that use Council supplies on the Hauraki Plains will switch to their own bore water supplies and we will lose customers. This means that the fixed costs of water supplies, which are a large portion of the total, will have to be shared by the rest of the consumers putting the price up even more for domestic use. At present farms are paying a disproportionate amount of the fixed costs of the supplies.

The cost of water in the Hauraki District is very low in comparison to most other councils so we have some room to increase prices but not to the extent we would need to if we do all the work required by the drinking water standards immediately.

Council's decision to include in the draft Hauraki Community Plan is that we will delay some of the capital projects and do only those of high priority. The fixed charge component of your water bill will go up \$10 a year as will your charge per cubic metre of water but there will be a lesser charge for rural users than urban users. Even with these increases our water supplies will still be making a loss but if the increases continue each year they will eventually break even.

## HDC Set to Appeal Region's decision

Hauraki District Council put in submissions over Variation 6 – Water Allocation of the Proposed Waikato Regional Plan. These submissions have not resulted in significant changes to the original proposal in the decision released by the Regional Council and have huge potential consequences to the Hauraki Plains water supplies.

Variation 6 is about who has priority in water takes from rivers. While takes for municipal and domestic supply are afforded a significant level of priority through the Variation, there is concern that the definition of 'municipal and domestic supply' in the Variation now specifically excludes that component of such a supply that is for industrial and agricultural use.

It is not difficult to understand that where a supply covers both domestic and agricultural use, as on the Hauraki Plains, in times of drought the amount the supply can take could be cut to only the amount that supplies houses. As there is no way to separate these two uses all consumers would suffer.

Hauraki has therefore resolved to appeal the decision.

## Children's Day

Children's Day for this year falls on **Sunday March the 1st.**

Some events are planned for both Paeroa and Waihi this year so if you have children or grandchildren make sure you get along to these.

In Paeroa you need to get along to the Skate and Leisure centre at 1.00pm where there will be plenty of music games and fun along with the promotion of healthy food.

In Waihi, Gilmour Lake is the place to be for a fun filled afternoon for the children. If it is wet, which unfortunately it has been for the last few years for this event, the fun and games will be held in the Events Centre.



## Land Drainage Access Problems

During December to March most of Council's land drains are sprayed to control vegetation. In this period in each of the last five seasons, an average of 80% of the total drain length of 670km has been sprayed, and approximately 20% of the machine cleaning programme (approx 27kms) has been completed.

Unfortunately, this time of year coincides with the maize growing season, and maize crops planted close to the drains are causing difficulty in gaining access for maintenance tasks. Council's drainage bylaw restricts some activities within 15m of a public drain without prior written approval from Council, including plantings, building construction, farm races etc. The 15m distance may be relaxed, but generally not less than about 8m, which is the minimum to allow for the passage of drain maintenance equipment such as spray tractors and hydraulic excavators.

Council staff and drainage committee members are well aware of the landowners' need to maximise their pasture and cropping areas, but the restricted access hinders drain maintenance, possibly resulting in flooding in the wet season due to blocked and overgrown drains.

Council has previously advised landowners of the clearance requirement but it is possible that contractors may be unaware of the requirement, and are planting crops to the full extent of the apparently available ground without knowing the status or existence of Council drains. Council will be contacting owners and contractors to bring the bylaw provisions to their attention. In the meantime Council staff will endeavour to avoid damage to crops by delaying the drain maintenance programme, at some risk of adverse effects later in the season due to inefficient drainage channels, pump weed screen blockages and potential surface flooding. In addition, delay often incurs extra costs which translate to increased rates charges to the drainage ratepayers. In a worst case scenario, some damage to a crop to gain maintenance access may be unavoidable.

If you have any queries about the drain maintenance programme, or need further information regarding the Land Drainage Bylaw, please contact Council.

The Customer Services team will be pleased to help you.

## PENSIONER HOUSING

Pensioner housing is often a highly emotive issue in some councils, particularly when large increases in rent are sought. Our council's policy is that while the pensioner housing division of council should not be making a profit, it should not be a drain on ratepayers either. Rents are designed to cover the costs of running the units including maintenance and depreciation. Council also has a policy that rents should not be more than 85% of market rental for a similar property in the open market and that they should not go up more than \$6.00 per week in any one year. Rents have not gone up since 2006 and market rentals have increased substantially in that time. Add to that a deficit that has accrued in running the pensioner flats over the past few years and it is easy to see that rents will need to be increased in the coming year. Even with a six-dollar increase this would bring a single bedroom unit to a rental of \$86 per week, which is well below the 85% of market value.

Full details of these proposed fees and charges and those of other community facilities such as libraries, swimming pools and parks and reserves will be detailed in the draft Hauraki Community Plan 2009-19. If you are affected by any of these proposed changes it will certainly be a good idea to have a good read of all the details and if you disagree or even if you agree put in a submission to Council. Details of how to do this will be publicised when the proposed plan is put out for public consultation in April.



## Elected Members Diary

Meetings for the week: Wednesday 25th February to the 3rd March 2009

- Wednesday 25th February – Full Council Meeting

## Public Notices



### DISTRICT WIDE RESTRICTED FIRE SEASON UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Due to the dry weather conditions the ban has been replaced by a district wide restricted fire season covering all land in the Hauraki District.

A restricted fire season means that a fire permit must be obtained for all fires in the open air.

Permits can be obtained by applying to the Service Centres. Each permit will be considered on its own merit.

Permits will still be considered for cooking fires at this stage.

The restricted fire season does not apply to gas fired barbecues and at this stage does not apply to solid fuelled proprietary barbecues, solid fuelled permanent brick-concrete barbecues and fires in concrete or brick incinerators that are fitted with spark arrestors, but please take the following safety precautions:

- To be at least 5m from buildings, timber fences, trees or other combustible material.
- Not to be lit during strong wind conditions.
- Pressure water system with hose to be available nearby.
- To be supervised by an adult.
- To be extinguished on completion.

Should weather conditions cause the fire risk to increase to an unacceptable level, solid fuelled barbecues and incinerator fires may need to be more strictly controlled.

## WATER RESTRICTION

Notice to Residents of the Hauraki Plains (which includes Netherton, Kerepehi, Turua, Waitakaruru, Ngatea, Orongo, Kopuarahi, Pipiroa, Maratoto, Hikutaia, Tirohia), Waihi, Waikino, Mackaytown and Karangahake.

Due to the current spell of dry weather, water demand has risen significantly and water levels are low. It would be appreciated if residents could conserve water where possible. At this stage it is necessary to impose a restriction on the use of lawn and garden sprinklers. Only hand held hosing will be permitted until the situation improves.

Unfortunately it may be necessary to impose further restrictions on water use if the dry weather continues. Your co-operation and efforts to conserve water now ensures that water is available for essential and emergency needs. For further inquiries please phone (07) 862 8609 or 0800 734 834 (from within Hauraki District - no cellphones)

## RATES REMINDER

A reminder that all second instalment rates remaining unpaid after the close of business on Wednesday 25 February 2009 will incur a 10% penalty.

L D Cavers  
Chief Executive  
Hauraki District Council



Garden Watering

- When using a sprinkler, fit a tap timer to make sure you don't water too much. If you don't have a tap timer, put on the oven timer to remind you when to shut off the sprinkler. Leave the water running too long and it can waste as much as 1,000 litres an hour.