

Kaikoura 100% Committed

Highlights of the Kaikoura District's commitment to sustainability.

Background

Kaikoura District Council is the territorial authority representing the community of Kaikoura on the South Island of New Zealand. The District of Kaikoura, on the east coast between Christchurch and Picton, covers an area of 2,048 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 4,810 residents (Preliminary Census figures 2006). The current Kaikoura District Council was formed following local government restructuring in 1989 and is the smallest local authority on mainland New Zealand, with full time equivalent staff of 24 (2006).

Geographically, the district is extremely mountainous with the township of Kaikoura situated between the Seaward Kaikoura Ranges (rising to a height of 2,600 metres) and to the east, only 500 metres from the shore, the Pacific Ocean drops 1,200 metres into the deep sea trench known as the Kaikoura Canyon.

The dramatic height of the mountains and the depth of the sea are extremes that make Kaikoura unique geographically, and influence the native flora and fauna. In particular, sperm and humpback whales frequent the deep canyon all year, a wide variety of other marine creatures – dolphin, orca, shark, seal, penguins and numerous species of fish also attracted to the nutritious environment of the Kaikoura Canyon. The iconic bird known as the *Kaikoura Kiwi*, more accurately, the Hutton Shearwater, nest in the alpine environs of the Kaikoura Ranges and nowhere else in the world.

The community has a distinct vision for Kaikoura. That vision is a sustainable future with tourism providing both economic benefit and enhancing local amenities, but not at the expense of the natural or social environment.

While tourism is crucial to the economic health of the district, a significant environmental issue facing Kaikoura is the ever increasing visitor numbers. Research conducted by Lincoln University estimates approximately 1 million tourists visit Kaikoura each year and this number is predicted to increase annually by 14%. Although tourist numbers bring significant economic returns by contributing to at least 30% of the district's employment, such a large number of visitors also place significant pressure on the district's infrastructure, natural environment and community.

In response to this issue, Kaikoura District is becoming well known, both locally and internationally for it's commitment to reducing impacts on the environment, that may result from the growing visitor and resident populations. Such a reputation has been developed through a number of programs and initiatives that will be outlined in the following report.

1. Green Globe

The international program, Green Globe came about following the United Nations Earth Summit (1992). The program sets out a framework that challenges travel and tourism communities, industries and businesses to lessen their environmental impact. This is accomplished by measuring various environmental indicators (Benchmarking) and an annual commitment to reduce the negative environmental impacts highlighted by these indicators.

Kaikoura's involvement in Green Globe aimed to overcome some of the specific issues that the high tourist numbers have created and to safe guard Kaikoura's future as a tourist destination. Kaikoura District Council was the first community in New Zealand to achieve Green Globe Benchmarking in 2002, and then became the first community in the world to be Green Globe Certified in 2004.

Measuring and managing the impact of our community

Green Globe is used as a tool by Kaikoura District Council to measure and reduce the impact of the community on the environment. Each year measurements are taken for the following areas:

- Energy use
- Greenhouse gas production
- Solid waste production
- Air quality
- Water consumption and quality
- Resource conservation
- Biodiversity
- Social well being

Every resident, business and visitor in Kaikoura has an impact on the environment, all using energy, and creating CO₂ and waste. Once the impact caused by the Kaikoura community and visitors is calculated – it can be managed and reduced, working towards sustainability.

Benefits of Kaikoura's involvement in Green Globe

Green Globe has provided an umbrella under which the District's achievements can be listed and a brand to demonstrate that the district cares about the environment and is working to protect it. To date the benefits have been considerable.

As recently as the 1980's the Kaikoura District was only a convenience stop as people drove through, travelling to another destination. Few people would have thought to ask the community's advice on sustainable practises and tourism, but recently council staff and elected members have been invited to make conference presentations and attend meetings in New Zealand and further afield to explain and discuss Kaikoura's pathway towards sustainability.

Globally, people are starting to sit up and ask what is going on in Kaikoura? Why can't we be like them? And the community now finds Government Ministers, Councils, university researchers and visitors enquiring about our environmental policies and programs.

Specifically benefits realised from involvement in the Green Globe program can be considered as a triple bottom line approach: focusing on social, economic and environmental benefits.

Economic

The district's economy has benefited through an increase in tourism and the town's competitiveness as a destination. Overheads are lowered and costs reduced as new efficient methods to decrease waste are adopted. These methods have a direct economic benefit to business and residents directly through reduced dumping costs and indirectly through eliminating the need to either ship waste to landfill or create a landfill site. There is significant marketing potential from Green Globe as our communities sustainable approach is promoted. The Green Globe program provides Kaikoura with a brand that international tourists are becoming more aware of and seeking out.

Environmental

While the environmental benefits are perhaps more obvious, Green Globe addresses the major environmental issues facing the planet. Through Benchmarking, information is provided to the community about the communities own environmental impact, this identifies where actions are required to reduce this impact. Specifically Green Globe has assisted in helping the Kaikoura Community become more sustainable by reducing environmental impacts.

Such improvements include:

- efficient use of resources
- efficient use of energy
- improved habitat conservation

Reductions include:

- greenhouse gas emissions
- air and water pollution
- solid waste production
- water use

Social

The social benefits associated with Green Globe involve the collaboration of the Council, tourism operators and other members of the Community working together, participating in issues they care about. Green Globe has assisted the improvement and strengthening of relations between local businesses, Council Iwi and government agencies. The Kaikoura District also benefits through Green Globe marketing which assists with increasing employment in various sectors that include and support tourism in the District.

Actions under the Umbrella of Green Globe

Communities for Climate Protection (CCP)

CCP is an international program encouraging and enabling councils to reduce their green house gas emissions working through a milestone based program. Kaikoura is currently paving the way forward for Councils involved in CCP in New Zealand, being the first local authority to set up an action plan for the Council and community to work towards reducing green house gas emissions.

In order to measure and reduce Kaikoura's green house gas emissions the Kaikoura District Council joined CCP-NZ in 2004 with the intention of achieving the following five milestones:

1. Establishing an inventory and forecast for key sources of greenhouse emissions in council and the community,
2. Setting an emissions reduction goal,

3. Developing and adopting a local greenhouse gas emissions action plan to achieve those reductions,
4. Implementing the local action plan,
5. Monitoring and reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and implementing actions and measures.

Having achieved Milestone 2 in early 2005, Kaikoura District Council agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the Council by 100% by 2020 and reduce the community emissions by 60%.

To achieve these aims a staff and Councilor Working Group developed Kaikoura Greenhouse Action Plan in March 2006. This action plan outlines possible directions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within Council and throughout the community. To ensure the community and council action plans can be delivered effectively with support and clarity of the goals, consultation for each identified action will take place individually over the upcoming years.

Conservation volunteer groups

Since 2002, Kaikoura District Council have benefited immensely from coordinating Conservation Volunteer Projects throughout the District in conjunction with other agencies, including: Innovative Waste Kaikoura, Te Runanga O Kaikoura, Environment Canterbury and Department of Conservation.

The contributions of Conservation Volunteer Groups have proven to be invaluable in enabling the small community of Kaikoura to succeed in working towards sustainability. The volunteer groups have the added benefit of combining global experiences and expertise relating to environmental conservation. Volunteers spend time working on a variety of conservation oriented projects throughout the District which assist the community to succeed in major environmental initiatives, such as Green Globe 21, Trees for Travellers, Communities for Climate Protection and Zero Waste.

Involving Conservation Volunteer Groups has allowed for various programs and projects to progress more rapidly simply due to the 'man hours' on the ground. Due to the small numbers of staff and limited financial resources available in a District as small as Kaikoura, Conservation Volunteer Groups have been able to complete tasks that are of great benefit to the community and the environment for very limited outlay (time and finances). Practical benefits of developing relationships with conservation volunteer organisations can be seen through the implementation of components of the Districts Coastal Management Strategy, the progressive development of a walking track network throughout the township, planting trees, clearing exotic plants, assisting in the colonisation of endemic Hutton's shearwaters and much more!

Trees for Travellers

Trees for Travellers is a local Kaikoura initiative where the purchase of trees and shrubs is promoted to offset the emissions that result from every day living and in particular travel. The initiative is focused towards tourists and the significant impact travelling has on increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

The initiative came about as a result of a report produced for Kaikoura District Council that outlined the amount of greenhouse gas produced in Kaikoura and identified the need for 2 million trees to be planted throughout the district to off-set greenhouse gas emissions. Trees

for Travellers program is managed by Innovative Waste Kaikoura and involves collecting seeds from local native trees and shrubs and growing them in compost produced from the District's greenwaste at the Resource Recover Centre. The trees are then available for purchase and planted on sites throughout Kaikoura. The purchaser is then able to check the growth of their trees through a GSP link on the Internet. Volunteer groups have contributed significantly to the Trees for Travellers project, assisting in the preparation of sites and planting the purchased trees.

Zero Waste

In recent years there has been a global shift to consider environmental sustainability in many different industries. Following the Rio Earth Summit 1992 and the development of Agenda21 it became clear that the earth could no longer be used as a limitless source for our resources and a sink for our wastes. In 2002 New Zealand became the first country in the world to adopt a vision of Zero Waste. The New Zealand Government (Ministry for the Environment) published The New Zealand Waste Strategy "Towards Zero Waste and a sustainable New Zealand".

Even before the national Waste Strategy was published, some local authorities went ahead and adopted Zero Waste targets. Kaikoura was one such authority, adopting the Zero Waste policy in March 1999. It was the third community after Opotiki and Christchurch District (both in 1998). At this time Kaikoura had a solid waste management plan from June 1992 but already the Districts waste management was well ahead of the plan's contents.

Kaikoura's landfill has a limited life span- after which waste will be transported from the District. This would be at significant cost to residents and the environment. Consequently the Council and the community are working to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill- this is why Kaikoura has a weekly kerbside collection of recyclables and do not collect rubbish destined for landfill.

Currently, the local landfill has capacity for 6 more years of rubbish and our community are working hard to stop useful resources ending up in the landfill. The Kaikoura District are currently re-using 65% of items that come through Resource Recovery Centre gate – and with plans to introduce a kerbside organic collection, this diversion is expected to reach 90% or greater. Once the million or so visitors are fully involved Kaikoura will really be well on the road to achieving Zero Waste

2. A District Plan that Promotes Sustainable Practices

Since the implementation of the Resource Management Act in 1991 a development has been able to proceed if it meets the requirements of “minimising direct adverse effects on the environment”. The Kaikoura District Council tries to maintain the superb natural environment and promote development that is sustainable in terms of maintaining Kaikoura’s values. The protection of Kaikoura’s natural landscapes, it’s largely unmodified coast and the open space and character of the rural environment has been identified as important to residents, iwi and the tourism industry. This is central to developing an ecologically sustainable future, providing a good quality of life and amenity for both residents and visitors and to maximising Kaikoura’s competitive advantage as a tourist destination. Consultation during the development of the District Plan indicated a widely accepted view that land use planning must become more consistent and more rigorous than in the past, in order to retain our high environmental quality of life. The Proposed Kaikoura District Plan seeks to achieve this by setting the boundaries for sustainable management of Kaikoura’s resources. These values include landscape values, energy efficiency, zero waste and complimenting the natural and cultural environment around Kaikoura.

Regulatory requirements

In the past, the Kaikoura District Council has focused on taking a step further than sole reliance on regulation. Since the release of the Proposed Kaikoura District Plan, in 2001, the Council is more able to work closely and openly with the developers to achieve sustainable development, in accordance with the objectives of the Resource Management Act. During the preparation of the Proposed Plan consultation was undertaken with the general public, government agencies, Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, and special interest groups. The Council's primary mechanism for consultation was the publicly released "Kaikoura District Resource Management Issues & Options" document, upon which written comments were received. These submissions and the results of other consultation undertaken have, where possible, been considered and incorporated into this Plan.

The Kaikoura District Council’s role in managing the District’s natural and physical resources is prescribed by section 31 of the Resource Management Act. The District Plan outlines the significant resource management issues within the Kaikoura District. These issues have been identified through the consultation process. Following issue identification, objectives (broad statements of a desired outcome), and policies (statements of intent which set out how the objectives for each issue will be achieved), which relate to these issues are outlined.

Working with developers to achieve common objectives, the District Plan aims to achieve:

- a cost effective (economically viable) development,
- a development that is easier to sell and more pleasant to use (social advantage) and
- a development that has less impact on the environment.

Methods to achieve objectives and policies are also outlined in the Plan. These methods include the provision of rules in the District Plan, but may include non-regulatory methods. The anticipated environmental results of implementing the objectives, policies, methods and rules are also included. The Council has developed zones which recognise that different areas of the District have different resources, characteristics, levels of amenity, and different environmental outcomes which the community desires for these areas. The zones provide opportunities for future development in keeping with the character and amenity sought for each area. Any particular activity must comply with the rules applicable to the zone in which

it is situated, as well as the general rules covering a range of matters such as subdivision, heritage values and transportation.

Non-regulatory requirements

The non-regulatory methods used by the Kaikoura District Council include sustainable initiatives which are suggested throughout the Proposed Kaikoura District Plan. The Proposed Kaikoura District Plan aims to gather buy-in from developers towards sustainable approaches, it is an advocacy and educative approach rather than regulatory. The following paragraphs outline some of these initiatives and the methods used by the Kaikoura District Council.

During this planning process, Council specify the potential advantages a developer may realise by complying with the sustainable guidelines outlined in the Proposed Kaikoura District Plan, while allowing development to precede at a (economically) desirable pace. These guidelines include waste management and landscape suggestions: such as effective subdivision layout and building design. Throughout the planning process, Council aim to prevent the often inevitable standoff, resulting in a hearing or environment court situation. The down side of relying on guidelines may be that the Council trusts the good-will of developers to work towards achieving sustainable outcomes. However, most developers coming to the District are keen to protect Kaikoura's unique natural features and are ready to accept alternative approaches that assist in reducing environmental impacts.

A less regulatory approach was used in formulating the District Plan as Kaikoura District Council use this unique approach throughout its planning processes. For activities not listed in the District Plan as permitted, a developer is required to apply for resource consent under Section 88 of the Resource Management Act. In Kaikoura the process to obtain resource consent is not necessarily onerous or over regulated. The Council use the resource consent process to increase developer's awareness of sustainable development and the value of Kaikoura's unique natural and cultural environment.

A flexible approach may seem idealistic, however, Kaikoura District Council has rules throughout the District Plan that ensure the protection the distinctive characteristics of Kaikoura. Kaikoura's agricultural history relies heavily on the rural sector for economic viability, but the recent growth in tourism has resulted in the increased rate of residential development throughout the District. For continued economic, social and environmental viability, Kaikoura can not afford unsustainable development. Therefore, to achieve sustainability, development has continually heightening thresholds with which to comply.

The structure of planning team of the Kaikoura District Council aims to allow an interactive and informative approach to be adopted when working with developers. The interaction begins prior to a building or resource consent application. Kaikoura has developed *Green Packs* which are given out at the time of enquiry for any new development. *Green Packs* are simply an amalgamation of sustainable information, some relevant nationally and some specific to Kaikoura. Developers are encouraged to refer to the information discussed at the pre-application stage and present a application that is acceptable and includes sustainable alternatives, such as solar advantage, rainwater re-use, promotion of indigenous vegetation for water conservation, to name a few.

Summary

So has Kaikoura District Council got it right? The Council have used a mix of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches that make it possible to work towards achieving sustainable development, and to date, has allowed for the preservation of the coastal village setting within Kaikoura's outstanding natural environment.

The question is with a District Planning process that is restricted to a ten year review period, how do District Council's keep abreast of changes? Kaikoura District seeks to achieve this through the mix of regulatory and non-regulatory approach discussed above. Kaikoura District Council is able to be flexible and offer convincing alternatives for developers to achieve more sustainable developments. The Proposed Kaikoura District Plan standards are subjective and arguable with the less onerous activity status and this allows for new developments to be peer reviewed by experts in the field and audited for sustainability using sustainable guidelines such as the landscape and waste management guidelines.

To achieve this, Council staff are constantly aware of national and international initiatives such as Communities for Climate Protection, Green Globe and Urban Design Protocol. These initiatives are introduced in preliminary discussions with developers, allowing for the evolution of increasing awareness, acceptance and inclusion of sustainable practises. In the long term, this should provide a platform from which to build a sustainable community, and retain the values that make the Kaikoura District unique.

Significant Natural Areas Program

Throughout the Kaikoura District, there are numerous areas of land protected as reserve or conservation area status. These protected areas include a wide range of habitats from coastal scrub to alpine vegetation. The Seaward Kaikoura Ranges contain the largest area of protected land in the District. As a District once reliant on primary industry, Kaikoura also has a well established agricultural industry, based mainly on dairy, beef and sheep farming - consequently a significant amount of land is held in private ownership.

The land held in private ownership throughout the District, is the focus of the Significant Natural Areas (SNA) program, as a large amount of the districts significant biodiversity is contained on private properties.

Under Section 6(c) the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991, Councils throughout New Zealand have a responsibility to recognise and provide for the protection of areas of “significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna” as a matter of national importance. The protection against recognised threats to habitats is a problem in the Kaikoura District, with many habitats under threat from human activities, plant and animal pests, fire and natural hazards. Through the development of the SNA program the Kaikoura District Council is acting on its commitment to the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.

Through the RMA, specific rules exist to manage the clearance of indigenous vegetation on wetlands, dunelands, coastal lowland forest, river and lake beds, rocklands, alluvial land and limestone substrate. These ecosystems are relatively small, discrete and distinct compared to the indigenous ecosystems on hill country and mountain lands which make up the bulk of the Kaikoura District. This hill country and alpine mountain environment exhibits unusual physical characteristics, which in turn provide habitats for distinctive communities of plants and animals. Many of these species are so specialised that they are completely confined to specific habitats found in Kaikoura, for example the Marlborough rock daisy (*Pachystegia minor*) on bluffs in alpine areas.

Such unique habitats allow many of the threatened flora species found in Kaikoura District to have developed strongholds. Plants that have developed strongholds include the swamp nettle (*Urtica linearifolia*) in lowland wetlands.

Numerous threatened plant species, endemic to South Marlborough, have been found to survive only in locations in the Kaikoura District. Such endemic plants and their preferred habitat include:

- weeping tree broom (*Carmichaelia stevensonii*) & pink broom (*Carmichaelia carmichaeliae*) on rocklands and riverbeds.

The importance of these varied ecosystems for the District’s natural biodiversity is obviously disproportionate to their relatively small size.

As part of the District Plan development process, the Council formulated a working party to discuss an appropriate process for managing these special areas. Through working party discussions, a “partnership arrangement” was considered the best method for the management of such areas. It was agreed that areas of significant indigenous flora and fauna should not be formally identified in the Plan and that they should not be subject to a more stringent set of rules than for general vegetation.

It is critical to gain community and landowner co-operation to the protection of such valuable ecosystems and the Council considers that this is more effectively achieved through non-regulatory means. The Council acknowledges and respects the private property rights of landowners and aims to raise community awareness of the value of areas of significant indigenous flora and fauna, highlighting the contribution they make to the amenity and environmental quality of the district.

Hence the Significant Natural Areas Project

Issue - Loss and destruction of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna as a result of human activities, plant and animal pests, fire and natural hazards.

Objective – To ensure that areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna are protected from threats.

One policy in particular - 22.4.2 (section 22 of the Proposed Kaikoura District Plan) - To promote the protection and management of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna through partnership agreements with landowners, a non-statutory register of confirmed significant sites and other similar mechanisms.

Historically ‘potentially significant’ sites were identified and collated into a report through predominantly a ‘desk top exercise’; gathering information using old reports, aerials & topographical maps, and very little landowner contact. Since that time (1997) no further work was carried out on the project through one reason or another and the information lay dormant.

However in 2003 Kaikoura District Council employed a half time Biodiversity Officer to action the SNA Project & raise awareness of biodiversity throughout the district. This position was gratefully supplemented for two years via the Biodiversity Advice Fund (funded & administered by Ministry for the Environment & Department of Conservation). Kaikoura District Council has been actively implementing this project, with landowners to volunteering their interest and commitment since 2003.

The development process

The project began by establishing a SNA Landcare group to assist the Biodiversity Officer in implementing the project. This group consisted of representation from Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury, local Runanga, QEII Trust, landowners, East Coast Community Group, Federated Farmers and Kaikoura District Council staff

A further funding application was made to the Biodiversity Condition Fund (as above, funded and & administered by Ministry for the Environment & Department of Conservation) to contract an ecologist to conduct site/species surveys with willing landowners. The surveys enabled the historical information collected in 1997 to be confirmed and updated and retained as an accurate record of the biodiversity held in private ownership throughout the district. More importantly the surveys provided the landowners with valuable, property based, ecological and botanical information. Many landowners were not aware of the biological significance of their property and they surveys provided a starting point to consider in terms of planned or potential ecological restoration works. The ecological surveys are based on the

voluntary participation of landowners, and in accordance with the project outline contained in the 'Rural Zone' of the Kaikoura District Plan.

The SNA group initially selected landowners whom it was believed would be receptive to involvement in the SNA project. By selecting landowners who were likely to be involved was intended to result in a 'snow ball' effect, reliant on promoting the achievements and benefits to other landowners, resulting in further interest.

Initially introductory letters were sent to a number of landowners along with a Q&A sheet of expected questions that landowners were likely to have. Contact calls were made to ascertain levels of interest and determine whether site visits could be arranged. Where site visits were supported by the landowner, an ecologist was commissioned, site visits undertaken and SNA property reports created. Landowners were offered assistance to manage issues such as pest and weed control, protection measures, funding opportunities etc.

The process will continue until all interested landowners with 'potential' SNA's are approached, surveyed and assisted with biodiversity related outcomes.

Achievements

The figures below outline the progress and success of the SNA through until August 2006:

- 34 landowners have been approached about the project
- 19/34 properties have been surveyed
- 10/34 not interested in being surveyed
- 1/34 still to be surveyed
- 4/34 unable to be contacted or need follow up
- 2 QEII covenants in the pipeline as part of SNA project or through the landowner's own initiative.
- 4 fully registered covenants in the district varying from 0.577ha to 863ha.
- 'Biodiversity Bulletins' (SNA update newsletters incorporating other biodiversity related happenings from around the district) – sent out to all 'potential SNA' landowners and to those that have been surveyed already.

Summary

Kaikoura District Council believes whole heartedly that the voluntary approach to identify SNA's on private land throughout the District is a successful formula. This approach creates sound relationships, empowers the landowners with valuable knowledge, encourages them to restore and protect areas known to have valuable biodiversity. Where practical the SNA program provides assistance for landowners to put into place actions to conserve these valuable areas, such as providing assistance relating to funding opportunities – aiming to achieve a win/win for the landowners individually, our community and the local environment.