

# Rural Report

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## Forestry and the Rural Community Board



By Marcus Buddo

Board member, Poukawa subdivision

The landscapes of our beautiful rural district are defined by the way private landowners use their land. Whether this is sheep and beef, forestry, horticulture or dairy; the makeup and relative value of each land use has huge flow on effects for our communities and spaces.

Over the last term, the Rural Community Board has been very aware of the rural community's keen interest in forestry and its effects on our district. Many of you have expressed your concerns to us about the forestry growth within our district, and the accelerating rate of harvesting trees planted in the 1990s, bringing forestry impacts more into the spotlight.

The impact on roading has been a particular focus – the higher volume of heavy traffic in a very short time period with the forestry harvest is a huge challenge for our roading team.

Dealing with the potential increase in costs to maintain the road, and then 'who should pay?' has been difficult. We know that rating is an imprecise tool, and establishing what the difference is between the roading impact over 25 years of a sheep and beef farm vs forestry over a similar time is very important. This would let us apportion roading costs more appropriately. The forestry industry has shown itself willing to work with us and is keen to do its fair share.

Hastings District Council uses the independent valuer Quotable Value (QV) to value all property within the district and then rates are calculated on land value. Values are often based on relative sales nearby. Currently, forestry companies are willing to pay very big money for farmland. This drives up the valuation of nearby farms, which may increase the rates they pay. In comparison, due to QV valuation procedures, the land value under the new forest actually falls in value, reducing the rates bill for the property.

This isn't something the Rural Community Board, or Council, can directly change, but we are in contact with QV to address this issue.

Carbon forestry is a very different issue to tackle. Obviously, climate change is relevant and needs to be addressed, and there is land that is appropriate to be permanently planted in trees. But huge tracts of fertile, food producing land being locked up indefinitely to capitalise on an artificial market, while providing no jobs and no future for our district is a major concern. We are currently discussing the best approach to carbon forestry that considers the national framework, the impact permanent forest may have, whether it be native, pine or another species, while preserving the ability of private landowners to decide the best use of their land. This will not be an easy topic to tackle.

The Rural Community Board is very concerned about the forestry issue in our district and we are looking for viable, equitable and impactful solutions. If you have anything to add to the debate around this (or any other) topic, we encourage you to get in touch with us!



Photo: Above Hawke's Bay

## Try the drought app



Last month Hawke's Bay Regional Council launched a new app to help with planning and build drought resilience in the community.

It's the first of its kind in New Zealand, supported by funding from Ministry for Primary Industries and in partnership with the Hawke's Bay Rural Advisory Group.

The tool shows a 'traffic light warning system' for drought based on live rainfall, soil temperature, soil moisture, and evapotranspiration data from the council's 50 climate stations around the region.

It is intended to take the hassle out of accessing regional climate data for our farmers, and for them to be able to go to one place and get a live view of climate conditions.

Hawke's Bay Rural Advisory Group chair Lochie MacGillivray says the drought indicator is a fantastic tool that will support farmers to make decisions early and plan for drought.

To access the drought web app, go to [hbrc.govt.nz](http://hbrc.govt.nz) and search #droughtapp



## Drinking water regulations update

Government has introduced new regulations for drinking water across the country as part of its Three Waters Reform programme.

The new Water Services Act (2021) is asking more of councils and private water drinking suppliers. The legislation also changes who is classified as a drinking water supplier, with it extending over a far greater number of water supply systems than the previous requirements.

- At least once every three years, councils will be required to identify private water suppliers in their communities and undertake drinking water supply assessments to determine water supply demands, safety, quality and any potential risks associated with supplies.
- By 2028, all currently unregistered drinking water suppliers, including rural, marae and papakainga will need to meet the new Water Services Act and the future drinking water standards, as well as rules that Taumata Arowai may release. These requirements will also include acceptable solutions that a supplier could use to comply.

Hastings District Council, Napier City Council, Wairoa District Council, and Central Hawke's Bay District Council have got together to proactively prepare for the changes under the new regulations. The councils will be starting a pilot project to collaborate with a sample of community private water suppliers to establish the best way forward help us all meet our new obligations under the Water Services Act.

We will keep you updated as our work continues in this space.

## Taihape Road sign damage

In September there was a spate of incidents where signs were intentionally damaged by being pushed over by a 4WD vehicle. The safety implications of signs being mowed down are obvious, but the costs mount up and last month Council spent \$3,400 repairing these signs. That's \$3,400 that can't be spent elsewhere on proactive works for preventative maintenance. If anyone sees any activity like this please call 111 and report it, including the licence plate if possible as the costs can be recouped if the culprit is found.



## Rural community crime prevention/detection camera trial

A trial of a security camera on Taihape Rd next to the recycling facility has been abandoned after the camera gear and solar panels that powered them was stolen.

Initially installed in December last year, it was used about three times by the solid waste team between then and May this year to review instances of inappropriate dumping in the recycling bins, but because of the limited range of what was in view was unable to provide conclusive information in all cases. Police did not submit any requests to view footage during the time it was operational.

With its isolated location and the ongoing risk of theft and/or damage, along with the cost of replacing the camera that had limited results, the rural community board decided not to replace this one, but acknowledged there was still a desire in rural communities to have CCTV in their areas.



## Rural recycling update

Several requests have been received from the residents in the **Maraetōtara** community to have access to a recycling service/facility year-round. The road reserve on Maraetōtara Rd near the intersection of Waimārama Rd has been highlighted as a location for a 12 month trial.

After a 12-month trial the **Waipātiki Beach Community** recycling site will be reviewed and a longer-term solution considered at next month's rural community board meeting.

The **Te Pōhue** site resource consent application is currently on hold due to submissions provided by the adjacent property owners. Once the community has formalised its Community Plan, this application may be revisited with a view to either mitigate current concerns or look to find an alternative site.

## Rural Community Board Members



**Nick Dawson**  
Chair | Kaweka

nick.nicky@xtra.co.nz



**Sue Maxwell**  
Board | Tūtira

suemaxwell@gisborne.net.nz



**Jonathan Stockley**  
Board | Maraekākaho

jonathan.kereru425@xtra.co.nz



**Marcus Buddo**  
Board | Poukawa

marcusbuddo@gmail.com



**Tania Kerr**  
Councillor

councillor.kerr@hdc.govt.nz



**Sophie Siers**  
Councillor

councillor.siers@hdc.govt.nz