

1 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) recognises that sustainable resource management requires an understanding of environmental perceptions and issues of people who live in the region (as specified by the Resource Management Act 1991).

To explore trends in community views, a number of surveys have been undertaken including the Environmental Awareness, Attitudes and Action (EAAA) Survey and the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) survey.

As a result of a recent review, it was recommended to combine both surveys into one. The EAAA survey has been reviewed in consideration of relevance and monitoring of existing indicators. Information from both the EAAA and NEP surveys contributes to the monitoring of indicators for the Waikato Regional Council's Long Term Plan and the MARCO (Monitoring and Reporting Community Outcomes) indicator website.

Specific uses include:

- Provision of indicators of the current state of people's environmental awareness, attitudes and actions with comparisons to the 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2006 surveys. Indicators are reported through the WRC and the MARCO websites
- Provision of information to assess the potential for, and barriers to, undertaking environmentally beneficial behaviours for programme design and implementation.

The NEP survey has been kept in its entirety within the combined survey. The NEP scale is one of many tools developed to measure people's environmental attitudes and underlying ecological worldviews. This tool has become one of the most widely-used measures of environmental concern in the world and has been used in more than 100 studies globally.

The overall aims of the surveys discussed in this report are to:

- Track public views, attitudes and priorities about environmental issues over time
- Explore raising awareness of the impact and effects of people on natural resources
- Anticipate public response to environmental policies and programmes
- Evaluate current policies and programmes
- Help Council gain a greater understanding of the underlying worldviews of the public to determine the level of ecological support in the region and the drivers of that support, or lack thereof
- Explore the underlying perspectives of the broader population who may not actively contribute towards making submissions or attend public meetings
- Provide information that is potentially useful to agencies such as district and city councils
- Gather public opinion on environmental issues that contribute to policy development.