



8. Sustain and Improve the Environment

8.1 Desired Outcome

“We work together to protect and enhance our distinctive natural environment”.

8.2 Background

The SmartGrowth partners have undertaken a number of pieces of research and other assessments of environmental matters since the inception of the Strategy. These pieces of work have set the scene in recent years for natural environmental protection and enhancement to be embedded in strategies, policies, plans and work programmes. The information available has enabled the Regional Policy Statement and the Tauranga City Plan and Western Bay of Plenty District Plan reviews to give effect to key environmental outcomes identified in the SmartGrowth Strategy. Views and visual corridors for coastal landscapes have been protected, water quality improvement programmes have been put in place, and there have been significant efforts to protect biodiversity and encourage restoration through the work of Coast Care and Estuary Care programmes and to reduce sedimentation of the harbour through catchment management. A water quality monitoring programme is undertaken by the Bay of Plenty Regional Council as part of its NERMN programme (Natural Environment Regional Monitoring Network).

There is still work to be done on establishing groundwater availability and assessing water demand, establishing monitoring indicators, providing incentives for biodiversity protection on private land, and focussing on energy efficiency.

8.3 Issues

A. The need to promote sustainable energy and resource use

There is a strong relationship between urban form and energy consumption. Growth and development increase the demand for energy, including electricity. Given the considerable demand for energy, the sub-region needs to promote sustainable energy and resource use. SmartGrowth supports the implementation of the Bay of Plenty Waste and Resource Efficiency Strategy which takes a collaborative approach to waste management with a vision of working together for a resource efficient region. Resource efficiency covers a wide range of activities from waste avoidance through to disposal.

B. The need to protect, restore and maintain the unique amenity of the western Bay environment

In the marine environment, a number of significant features combine to create the unique and spectacular amenity which draws people to live, learn, work and play in the western Bay from headlands to the harbour, wetlands, estuaries, surf breaks and beaches. There are also a number of competing uses including water sports and recreation, tourism, commercial shipping, commercial and recreational fishing and research. These uses need to be balanced so that the amenity of the western Bay is protected and it remains a great place to live, learn, work and play.

On land, managing the effects of growth and development on the environment is a key issue for the Strategy. The current SmartGrowth Settlement Pattern provides an overarching framework to sustainably manage growth. Within this framework development is contained within a series of urban limits which reduce market pressures for new development in undeveloped areas, promote a more compact urban form

and reduce the impacts of uncoordinated growth on the environment.

C. The need to protect and enhance Tauranga Moana (Tauranga Harbour)

The declining water quality of Tauranga Harbour (Te Awanui) is one of the most important issues for the sub-region to address in the next 10 years. Historically, land-use within the Tauranga Harbour catchment has increased rates of sedimentation which has resulted in shallower navigation channels, degraded habitats (such as sea grass, shellfish beds and spawning sites), degraded water quality and mauri and has altered the harbour environment to favour rapid mangrove growth. Mangrove proliferation has resulted in a reduction in amenity and reduced access to the harbour in many areas.

Managing these impacts requires a catchment based approach which recognises the inter-relationship between land-use activities and their cumulative adverse effects in waterways and ultimately the marine environment.

D. Managing competing uses for water

Competing uses for water in the sub-region affect both water quality and quantity. There is a need to better understand future water demand against available water resources. Taking an integrated and sustainable approach to long-term land use and water supply and distribution is an essential component for implementing any land use strategy.

Water quality is an on-going issue for the sub-region's harbours and estuaries. SmartGrowth is challenged to ensure that the remaining areas of high natural character values in Tauranga harbour are protected through avoiding land use or development that contribute to water quality degradation, especially through sedimentation. SmartGrowth needs to find ways of improving water quality where possible.

E. The need to protect and enhance biodiversity

There is a scarcity of indigenous ecosystems particularly in the coastal plain and harbour edge. It is important that existing ecosystems are protected and that degraded areas are restored. Greater ecological protection is required, especially through key ecological corridors and linkages along rivers and streams.

F. Adapting to the impacts of climate change

A challenge for the SmartGrowth Strategy is to remain adaptable and resilient to changing circumstances, particularly those around the impact of global warming and climate change. Many of the Strategy's desired outcomes and actions are aligned with reducing the subregions carbon footprint such as a compact urban form, improved roads, less congestion, increased rail freight and improved walking and cycling infrastructure. However climate change could potentially result in more intense rainfall and flooding for the sub-region which may require more focused adaptation methods. While SmartGrowth has no mandate to formally commit to carbon footprint reductions, the Strategy needs to ensure that it can respond to these challenges.

G. The need to build environmental capacity in the community

There is an increasing reliance on the efforts of volunteers in our community to facilitate social and environmental outcomes. Significant areas of our unique environment are being actively restored through the efforts of volunteers in particular through established Coast Care, Land Care and Estuary Care groups. These groups have made significant progress restoring degraded areas including coastal dunes, Esk Street Reserve (Merivale), Uretara Stream and the Kopurererua Valley and cleaning up the beaches of the western Bay following the Rena disaster.

Under the Care Group model Councils provide administrative support and materials and the community donates their labour. On-going effort is required to provide administrative support, recognition and incentives to the restorative efforts of the community.

I. The need to monitor the state of the sub-region's environment

It is important that there is a sound platform of information on which to base environmental policy development. We need to understand the state of the sub-region's environment through regular monitoring and reporting. This allows us to have up to date information and to respond to issues that may emerge over time.

8.4 Principles

- I. Significant indigenous habitats and ecosystems are maintained, enhanced and restored.
- II. Energy efficiency and sustainable resource use is promoted.
- III. Future use of water is planned for while maintaining water quality and promoting efficient use.
- IV. Potential climate change impacts are accounted for.
- VI. SmartGrowth supports the implementation of the Regional Waste and Resource Efficiency Strategy.

Actions: Sustain and Improve the Environment

Funding Key

	Action identified as a priority
	Able to be resourced using partner staff resources or within existing work programmes
	Not able to be resourced within existing SmartGrowth budget commitment. Requires additional resources
	Priority action which requires additional resources
	Potential for partner funding/resources outside SmartGrowth partnership
***	Investigation may result in consequential cost to implement recommendations
###	Implications for partner councils strategic policy work programmes

Timeframes

<i>Urgent</i>	Completed 1 year after adoption
<i>Short</i>	Completed 3 years after adoption
<i>Medium</i>	Completed 5 years after adoption
<i>Long</i>	Completed 5+ years after adoption

8A. Promote sustainable use of resources	Lead Agency Support agencies	Resourcing			Measure of success
		Time	Staff	\$\$\$	
1. Low resource use for building and renovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop sub-regional aspirational goal for low energy use Develop best practice guidelines for building and renovation to cover low resource use and resource storage including opportunities to preserve water, to achieve the aspirational goal Implement the guidelines through education and awareness Prepare user friendly cost benefit analysis/tool for householders to assess low resource technology during building process Investigate incentive opportunities. 	SBN ECCA TCC WBOPDC	<i>Short</i>			Guidelines developed and implemented Assessment tool developed, promoted and widely used
2. Water availability and demand Building on the Water Sustainability Strategy, complete an assessment of likely future water demand against available water resource including an assessment of competing uses	BOPRC	<i>Short</i>	###		Assessment completed and recommendations adopted as appropriate
8B. Protect, restore and maintain the amenity of our unique environment					
1. Marine legislation Advocate central Government for oceans policy to be completed	SGP	<i>Ongoing</i>			Oceans policy entrenched
2. Biodiversity on private land Develop ways to provide ongoing advice, support and resources and other measures to protect biodiversity on private land	BOPRC TCC WBOPDC	<i>Ongoing</i>			Increased amount of biodiversity protection on private land
3. Recreational Fishing Reserve Investigate opportunities and issues associated with inshore recreational fishing reserve (commercial fishing exclusion zone)	BOPRC Tourism BOP P1 CTWF CFCT	<i>Medium</i>			Feasibility study completed. Recommendation made
4. Regional Coastal Park Conduct a sub-regional stocktake of recreational facilities on DOC and council land to determine whether a regional coastal park is and camping ground is likely to be required during the SmartGrowth time horizon.	BOPRC TCC WBOPDC	<i>Short</i>		***	Investigation complete and recommendations adopted where appropriate

Actions: **Sustain and Improve the Environment** (Continued)

8B. Protect, restore and maintain the unique amenity of the western Bay environment <i>(Continued)</i>	Lead Agency Support agencies	Resourcing			Measure of success
		Time	Staff	\$\$\$	
5. Tauranga Moana (harbour) and its catchments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In partnership with tangata whenua, finalise and implement a new Mountains to Sea Plan for Tauranga Moana (arising from Treaty Settlement legislation when enacted) Implement the Tauranga Harbour Programme with a focus on sustainable land use and maintaining and improving water quality Investigate the need for a marine spatial plan for Tauranga Harbour to assess and balance recreational use, commercial use, ecological preservation and cultural significance 	BOPRC SGPF	Short			A Mountains to sea plan, or equivalent, has been approved. The Tauranga Harbour Integrated Management Strategy is reviewed and actions undertaken in accordance with strategy requirements. Scientific monitoring shows no overall decrease in the quality of Tauranga Harbour.
6. Environmental community capacity building Empower the community through information and coordination to identify and act on initiatives to improve the environment. Current examples of these initiatives include Estuary Care, Coast Care and Kaimai Catchment Forum	BOPRC SGPF	Short			The length of open-coast under active "care" group management does not decrease and levels of engagement with all care groups remains the same or increases.
7. Improving Water Quality In collaboration with industry, landowners and other relevant agencies and in response to central Governments Freshwater Reform process and priorities, investigate opportunities to improve water quality across the sub-region.	BOPRC SGP SGPF FF Hort NZ CTWF Dairy NZ,	Urgent			Opportunities investigated and recommendations made to governance
8. Kaimai Catchments Project Support Kaimai catchments project with government and stakeholder agencies, including land use, pest management, and ecological restoration work.	BOPRC SGPF	Short			Kaimai Catchments Forum formed and providing broad advice to the relevant agencies.
9. Environmental Restoration of the Kaituna River Progressively review and implement the Kaituna River and Ongatoro/Maketu Estuary Strategy with partner agencies, iwi, and community groups.	BOPRC CTWF	Ongoing			Key strategy outcomes are progressed as per the strategy.
10. Climate Change implications for the western Bay Undertake a literature review to identify impact and opportunities of climate change on our sub-region (including implications for horticulture and infrastructure ie stormwater network).	SGP EF	Short			Literature review complete. Recommendations made to governance
8C. Environmental monitoring					
1. Agreed indicators Investigate collective approaches to how the partner councils can deliver on required national indicators and RMA monitoring requirements	SGP	Ongoing		***	Monitoring indicators are agreed and used to measure progress against vision for sustaining the environment
2. SmartGrowth Environment Forum Establish the SmartGrowth Environment Forum and facilitate outcomes arising from it particularly around setting environmental aspirations for the sub-region and identification and implementation of desired projects highlighted by the community.	SGP EVH				Forum established, Terms of Reference agreed

