

## Environment Waikato

# Integrated Catchment Management

# Newsletter

## Welcome...

...to the winter installment of Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) news. After a busy summer and autumn farm planning, the team is now tidying up farm plans with second visits and seeing what changes people have made, or are going to make in the near future.

We have also been undertaking another round of evaluation to provide us with information on what your views are of the project work and how we can continue to improve it. From this research it seems most people are happy with the way we are going about our work and are happy to be involved in the programme.

One point that was raised during the evaluation is the need to clarify the future of ICM. People have heard mixed messages regarding Environment Waikato budget cuts to many programmes and want to know what this means for the ICM programme.

The ICM programme will continue for the next seven years as planned under our Long Term Council Community Plan. However, there have been reductions in proposed budgets across a wide range of programmes including ICM, Clean Streams and Biosecurity. Such cuts will impact our future staffing levels as we move into the much larger Upper Waikato catchment area so we are going to have to make adjustments to the way we work.

For this reason we are now developing stronger working relationships with the fertiliser industry and the primary sector (Dairy NZ, Fonterra and Meat and Wool NZ) to ensure field teams are maximising overlap in work areas and aware of each other's programmes. One initiative about to start with these organisations is building on the ICM case study work and taking this wider to identify what makes a farm nutrient efficient at a range of farm intensities and to test the profitability of nutrient mitigation.

Continued overleaf

## Update

### ICM Field trip – Herd Homes and Organics

On 14 April the ICM team held a field trip just outside the Little Waipa catchment to view Herd Homes and organic farms. In total 23 people attended and enjoyed a very nice day off farm to have a look at two very different farm systems. These farm systems were chosen by the ICM team as they both have lower than average nutrient losses, and provide options for farmers to increase nutrient efficiency on farm.

The first stop was at Hank and Jacqui Weijers Herd Home. Hank and Jacqui took over the farm just off State Highway One, 17 years ago. Hank describes the farm at that stage as the worst in the area but with a lot of potential. It has always been a wet farm with two thirds of the farm in waterlogged flats meaning winter is always difficult to manage. As with many farmers, the Weijers went through typical steps from feeding in paddock, to using races and then all the way through to putting in the Herd Home after other steps created more headaches than they were worth.

The Herd Home went in two years ago. With this came increased feeding of supplement, increased stocking rate and the ability to calve spring and autumn and winter milk. These benefits mean that payback on the cost of putting the Herd Home in should be relatively short term. Other benefits on farm have included less pugging and trampling damage, the ability to more actively manage pasture quality with the herd, and more control on animal intakes.

While environmental protection was not the key driver for putting in the Herd Home, nutrient losses on farm have decreased and fertiliser spend is down with the Herd Home bunker effluent material cutting out autumn fertiliser requirements on the flats. This Herd Home solution does not lead to water related issues like feedpads may (too much water to land apply in winter) as it separates storm water and allows for spreading of effluent from the system at optimal times of the season. Overall the Weijers have been happy with their investment for numerous reasons.



Inside the Herd Home animal shelter. Note the slatted floor over the effluent bunker. Shade cloth keeps the herd cool in summer and is drawn back to keep cows warm in winter under the clear roof.

