

Greater Wellington Regional Environmental Awards

1. Introduction

In 2005 Councillors raised the possibility of a Greater Wellington awards scheme as a way to reward and recognise members of the community for their contribution to the care of the environment and the management of our recreational facilities. Officers from the Environment Management, Catchment Management, and Water Supply, Parks & Forests divisions have investigated this question and developed a framework for a Greater Wellington Regional Environmental Awards scheme

As part of this process we have studied award schemes run by other agencies, e.g., Auckland Regional Council, and the Hawkes Bay Environment Awards, to understand the success factors, issues and time involved in running these programmes. In developing a proposed awards framework we have been mindful of the last time Greater Wellington ran environmental awards in the early 1990s. That scheme was open to anyone working to improve the environment and consequently became large and unwieldy. The scheme proposed here is much more narrowly focused.

2. Purpose

The aim of the proposed Environmental Awards is to publicly recognise and reward school groups, volunteers, individuals and others working with Greater Wellington to sustain the region's natural resources. To win an award, an applicant will need to be working with Greater Wellington or have a relationship with the Council. This focus has been chosen to ensure that our awards can be differentiated from and do not duplicate other award schemes already in place in the region, such as the Conservation Awards and Enviroschools Awards, to which anyone can apply.

3. Award Categories

Under the proposed scheme, awards would be made in three categories corresponding, in general terms, to the people and organisations working with Greater Wellington on environmental sustainability. These categories are:

- Schools, students, and teachers
- Community groups, landowners, individuals
- Consent holders

At this stage no award is proposed for businesses working with us to improve their sustainability through our business education and *Take Charge* programmes. This year the Council supported the Get Sustainable Challenge, the business awards programme of the Sustainable Business Network. This successful initiative raised Greater Wellington's profile with businesses and increased the number of businesses working to become more sustainable in the region. There is little point in duplicating this proven model which is already meeting our aims. For this reason, only businesses with Greater Wellington resource consents can participate in the proposed awards through the Compliance Award. Should the Council decide not support the Get Sustainable Challenge in future, an award for business sustainability could be added to this proposed award framework.

In a similar way, it would be possible to amalgamate the Weedbusters Awards with these awards so that they are promoted and presented at the same time and use the same administrative mechanisms. Weedbusters awards are currently co-ordinated by the Biosecurity Department in this region. However, the national Weedbusters organisation does not wish to pursue this option at this stage. These awards are made every two years and it is possible this may change before the next round of Weedbusters awards in 2008.

4. Eligibility and Criteria

The proposed awards and those who would be eligible for them are listed below.

4.1 Awards for schools, students, and their teachers

Sustainable Project Award

Open to: classes, syndicates or student groups within the region's primary and intermediate schools who have or have had a working relationship with Greater Wellington. One award would be made at each of the junior, middle and senior primary school levels.

The project must be sustainable in a broad sense and intended to continue for more than a year (i.e., have a long term environmental benefit). It might, for example:

- conserve water;
- reduce waste going to landfill;
- increase indigenous biodiversity;
- reduce stormwater pollution;
- promote sustainable practices in schools.

Judges would consider the level of class or school involvement and the degree to which the applicant has informed or educated other people about the project.

Environmental Leadership Award

Open to: all school staff, volunteers, or students associated with primary and secondary schools in the region. It would recognise individuals within a school community leading the implementation of education for environmental sustainability and behaviour change.

The criteria would be the same as the Sustainable Project Award.

4.2 Awards for Community Groups, landowners and individuals

Partners in Sustainability Award

Open to: groups or individuals who have a working relationship with Greater Wellington. This could include friends of parks groups, care groups, landowners, or individuals working with Greater Wellington on a project or activity to achieve a more sustainable region. It could also include groups or individuals working on transport related activities, or any other similar activity which contributed to sustainability.

Projects or activities would be judged according to the extent to which they:

- Benefit the natural environment;
- Are significant to the Wellington region;
- Involve the community;
- Benefit the local community/neighbourhood.

4.3 Awards for Greater Wellington Consent Holders

Compliance Award

Open to: individuals and organisations currently exercising resource consents issued by Greater Wellington.

The award would be judged on the extent to which the consent holder has managed the impacts on the environment of the activity to which the consent relates, including the steps taken to implement the compliance conditions relating to the consent.

5. Judging

The judging process for any awards needs to be impartial, efficient, and transparent. It is recommended there be three judges per category – a Greater Wellington officer, a Councillor, and an independent person from a relevant organisation, (e.g., an academic institution, government department, sponsor company).

The Greater Wellington officer could come from any part of the organisation but would most likely be from one of the three divisions mentioned above. He or she would be responsible for coordinating meetings between the judges and visits to nominated sites.

6. Ceremony and Prizes

The winner in each category would receive a certificate and small cash prize. It would be expected that the prize would go towards a specific project on which the winner was working (or, in the case of the Environmental Leadership Award, training or similar), as described in their application. Certificates would be awarded to up to two candidates granted a Merit Award in each category.

The awards would be presented by the Chairperson of the Council or his/her nominated representative at a ceremony at the Regional Council Centre.

7. Making the Awards happen

Experience gained from other award schemes shows there is a considerable amount of work involved in running such an exercise on an annual basis. This includes developing a timeline and managing deadlines, promoting the awards, handling and acknowledging applications, setting up and co-ordinating the judging and facilitating the award ceremony, and so on.

Based on estimates provided by other organisations, the programme is expected to require administrative support of around 200 hours over a period of approximately six months. It is expected that most of this time will be found from within existing staff resources in the Parks and Forests and Environmental Education Departments, although it may be necessary to contract some administrative assistance, depending on the level of uptake.

8. Timeline

This proposal assumes that the awards would be run annually with the ceremony to be held in November. This date has been chosen because it is the end of the school year (allowing for students to do long-term projects throughout the year), it does not conflict with the planting season, nor with other similar awards schemes, and there is time available to obtain media exposure for the winners and Greater Wellington.

Planning for next year's awards would commence immediately. This would allow for the preparation of application forms, web site promotion, the negotiation of sponsorship partnerships, judges to be determined, and the criteria and judging process agreed.

9. Budget

It is anticipated that the awards programme will incur the following costs (excluding staff time):

Prizes:	5,000.00
Administrative assistance	5,000.00
Associated costs (printing etc)	8,000.00
TOTAL	\$18,000.00

Sponsorship of the awards would be sought to offset some of this cost.

10. Promotion and marketing

This awards programme would present plenty of opportunities to promote Greater Wellington and the work of those receiving awards. The press looks very favourably on awards of this nature and gives them considerable coverage. Greater Wellington's awards would receive the same kind of coverage, keeping these aspects of the Council's work in the public eye. A marketing plan would be prepared.