

## Comprehensive Plans

### Introduction

In Taranaki's eastern hill country, farms are a mix of stable land which can be intensively grazed, unstable slopes where pasture can be sustained by judicious planting of soil conservation trees such as poplar and willow, and very unstable steep faces where pasture growth and stock numbers are repeatedly depleted by erosion.

The Council is aware of the limited economic viability of many hill country farms under the traditional meat and wool scenarios. It advocates increasing the physical and financial sustainability of properties by diversifying and modifying farming practices to include such activities as forestry on faces which are uneconomic to sustain in pasture, planting soil conservation trees on the easier unstable slopes, and grazing dairy heifers or other non-traditional types of stock on the stable footslopes and valley bottoms.



*Sustainable land management including erosion control plantings, woodlots and bush retirement.*

### Purpose of a comprehensive farm plan

Comprehensive farm plans look at all facets of a farm's operation including land and stock management. If forestry is seen as part of the property's future viability, this plan also includes an agroforestry plan.

Land management issues that are tackled in a comprehensive farm plan include :

- Hillslope stabilisation
- Gully erosion control
- Farm woodlots
- Farm shelter
- Scrub and bush retirement
- Pasture improvement
- Fencing subdivision
- Track layout
- Drainage
- Wetland conservation
- Impact on stock numbers and farm income

The plan is supplied on a no-cost, no-obligation basis, because the Council believes it is a co-operative way to help landowners move towards more sustainable use of their land and better protection of the region's environment.

### Contents of a comprehensive farm plan

A comprehensive plan contains:

**Description of property** - after a brief summary of tenure, size and location, describes landforms, soils and vegetation; current stock numbers and grazing policy and fertiliser regime.

**Land use capability** - this section arranges different kinds of land on the farm, according to those properties that determine its capacity for permanent sustained production. They are categorised as 'land use capability units' (LUC units for short). An attached map shows where they lie, with respect to paddock fences, access tracks, and water supply. Stock carrying capacities and pine tree growth indices are given for each LUC unit. So is a general indication of the soil conservation measures that are needed - if any.

**Farmer objectives** - briefly states the owner's long-term aims e.g. continued base income from grazing stock; desired changes in stock type/number; supplementary income from woodlots or other sources e.g. cropping on river terraces; conservation of bush and wetland remnants; amenity development e.g. hunting blocks and duckponds.

**Sustainable land management recommendations** - outlines design of soil conservation measures which can help the farmer attain his/her objectives. Can include paired, spaced or close planting of trees in pasture; woodlot establishment; scrub, bush or wetland retirements; pasture renewal and fertilisation; fence re-alignment for better grazing control; drainage to increase utility of flats.

It is recognised that it will take many years to implement soil conservation measures across an entire farm. Accordingly, a five-year programme of works is proposed for priority areas. An attached map shows where the priority areas lie, relative to LUC units and paddock boundaries.

**Work costs and implementation** - Indicative costs may be included within the plan and priorities for implementation are indicated. Work programs are prepared annually in consultation with the landholder.

**How to do it** - technical advice e.g. choice of species, when and how to plant, and post-planting maintenance. This is appended as information sheets about each topic.

**Recording progress** - a form for keeping track of the plan's implementation. It covers annual plantings and other works, together with notes on any problems encountered that need to be fixed.



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