

Sustainable Land Use Initiative

What is SLUI?

Following the devastation of the February 2004 storm Horizons Regional Council held a meeting with a wide range of community representatives to discuss what could be done to reduce hill country erosion and flooding of the region's plains. The result was the formation of Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI). SLUI aims to provide a 'mountains to the sea' approach to wise land use by developing and implementing Whole Farm Plans with individual farmers.

Who is funding SLUI?

Currently SLUI is entirely funded by Horizons' rating system by way of a Uniform Annual Charge of \$15 per property. A new request for Government funding is being lodged and if successful, regional and central government money will jointly fund the overall programme.

Who is running SLUI?

The group of community representatives who initially met developed a smaller management group called the 'Governance Group'. This group has worked with Horizons to develop the overall focus for SLUI and to gain support for the initiative at regional and central government levels. The implementation (delivery of farm plans and work programmes on the ground) is the responsibility of Horizons' Environmental Management Group.

Who is the Governance Group?

The Governance Group meets regularly and is made up of a broad representation of interested parties including:

Ruth Rainey	Federated Farmers
Alec Mackay	AgResearch
Alistair Polson	Landowner
Garrick Murfitt	Chairman Horizons Regional Council

What does SLUI hope to achieve?

Horizons has

- Produced 45 Whole Farm Plans in 2006/07.
- Is set to produce 80 Whole Farm Plans in 2007/08
- Produce 1500 Whole Farm Plans within 10 years
- Work towards sustainable land use on half of the hill country at greatest risk of erosion by 2015.

What is a Whole Farm Plan?

A Whole Farm Plan is a tool developed specifically for SLUI that identifies on-farm opportunities for sustainable resource management and sustained business growth.

It contains the following elements:

- an assessment of the land (soil and rock type), water, living heritage and farm production resources
- list of environmental issues (including erosion) and threats to production
- recommendations on best practice solutions
- a review of the existing farm business using benchmarking
- integrated long-term business and work plans

A tailored Whole Farm Plan will be produced for each farm.

Who prepares the Whole Farm Plan?

There are two professionals involved - a land management expert and a farm consultant. They work alongside the farmer to develop a business and works plan that incorporates resource management into the farm business. This is a private conversation. Until the work programme is signed off, the farmer can withdraw from the process.

Bench marking

A rural consultant works through various production and economic indicators to assess the 'health' of the farm business and compares that against the industry average and top 10%. This can be used to identify opportunities for improving the production and environmental performance of the farm.

Who pays for and who owns the Whole Farm Plan?

SLUI will pay for the Whole Farm Plan. While Horizons will retain the underlying resource information (soils, vegetation, water), the business information will remain the property of the farmer.

What sort of works will the Whole Farm Plan identify?

Each farm plan will be developed to meet the needs of the individual property, so work plans may recommend;

- space planting of willow or poplar poles
- afforestation of eroding land with a suitable production tree species
- retirement and possibly assisted re-establishment of indigenous cover on unproductive land
- pest control
- reviewing and/or upgrading tracks and stream crossings
- stream bank retirement

Who pays for these works?

We aim to share the costs on a scale that reflects whether it is the farmer or the Region that gains the most benefit from the implemented works. For example, where the benefits are mainly regional such as mud into streams, the Region will pay a larger share.

Are they compulsory?

Whole Farm Plans are voluntary, as are work programmes. Our aim is to work alongside farmers to decide how best to implement any suggested programmes. We see SLUI as a non-regulatory approach to addressing environmental issues and an opportunity for farmers to head-off possible regulation in the future.

Who should get a Whole Farm Plan?

We encourage all farmers to get a Plan. As part of SLUI we are aiming to have 50% of all plans covering land with the highest erosion potential and where downstream benefits will be greatest.

How do I get a Whole Farm Plan?

Contact your local Horizons Environmental Management Officer (soils), Grant Cooper (SLUI Manager),
Phone 0508 800 800 or email SLUI@horizons.govt.nz.