

# NZWWA SWANS-SIG

## NEWSLETTER No.1 May 2003

### EDITORIAL

Welcome to this first Newsletter of the Small Wastewater and Natural Systems Special Interest Group (SWANS-SIG) of NZWWA.

SWANS-SIG has been set up to represent the interests of NZWWA members involved in research, practice and administration in the small wastewater flows area. It encompasses interest in all aspects of on-site through to small community wastewater servicing, and includes the use of natural systems such as waste stabilisation ponds, constructed wetlands and land treatment processes in managing wastewater within the environment. Following the call for expressions of interest in the SIG sent out to NZWWA members in 2002, some 170 persons have registered their interest in the Group. This provides a strong base from which to generate a programme of activities.

At this stage there is no formal management committee. The setting up of SWANS-SIG has been developed through to this point via a steering group comprising Ian Gunn, on-site wastewater specialist of Auckland UniServices, Auckland, Rob Potts, small community wastewater specialist of Glasson Potts Fowler, Christchurch, and Dr Chris Tanner, wetland systems researcher and specialist from NIWA in Hamilton. A further member of the steering group is Peter Carroll, Hynds Environmental, Auckland, who is heading a special project on the production of an "On-site Wastewater Systems" community information booklet. It is intended that this steering group be expanded over the next several months, and that the formal process of setting up a management committee be undertaken during the NZWWA Annual Conference in Auckland in September.

This first Newsletter thus outlines some of the background to setting up the group, and provides detail of several information sources related to group interests. The NZWWA office in Wellington is providing support services to SWANS-SIG, with Deli O'Leary of Events and Business Support acting as Group Liaison. Any communications with the Group should be via Deli at <delio@nzwwa.org.nz>.

Ian Gunn  
Interim Editor

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### SWANS-SIG PARTICIPATION in NZWWA CONSULTATIONS with SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

During January NZWWA held one-on-one meetings at its new headquarters in Wellington with representatives of the 13 special interest and industry sub-groups within the organisation. SWANS-SIG was represented by Ian Gunn of Auckland. On the agenda for our group was a wide range of topics for discussion, including:

- management of the group,
- newsletters and publications,
- workshops and seminars,
- training courses,
- research activities, and
- relationships with other SIGs, and organisations outside of NZWWA.

Agreement was reached on the way forward in a number of areas. The current steering group would be expanded by taking on a few more people (to be selected from volunteers), with a formal process of setting up a management committee carried out at the first AGM meeting during the NZWWA annual conference in Auckland, 17 to 19 September. Contact with group members would be established via a newsletter, which would initially be on an occasional basis until the appointment of an Editor is made at the AGM. Issues related to workshops, seminars, training courses and research would be taken up and explored as opportunity presented itself. The fact that a biennial on-site wastewater conference programme was already established in Australia (with good NZ participation) every odd year was noted. There may well be opportunity to complement this programme with a NZ on-site wastewater seminar programme in even years.

In addition, it is expected that workshops in each strand of SIG activities (on-site, small community, natural systems) or on a combined basis may become adhoc or regular activities of the SIG. These could be associated with NZWWA annual conference, or be set up as stand-alone events. As for training courses, NZWETA (NZ Water Environment Training Academy) can provide support in developing training courses once the SIG has worked out priorities for training in the group's areas of interest.

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### **EXPANSION of the STEERING GROUP**

The SWANS-SIG Steering Group is looking for volunteers to assist in formulating an activities programme for the group over the next several months. Key areas for volunteer portfolios include newsletter/publications production, seminar/workshop planning, research liaison. If you have an interest in assisting with the management of the group, please contact us via Deli O'Leary at NZWWA. We will short-list the offers of help and approach you to confirm your coming on the steering group. We hope to make the management team representative of both geographical areas and 'technical' interests.

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### **NZWERF**

The NZ Water Environment Research Foundation has already sought input from SWANS-SIG re future projects. The possibility of undertaking a national "small wastewater survey" has been discussed. The concept involves looking at community needs in small wastewater servicing and establishing priorities for information gathering and research activity. The survey programme is still in the process of formulation.

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### **SWSS – MINISTRY of HEALTH SANITARY WORKS SUBSIDY SCHEME**

This scheme was introduced by the Government last year with the aim of improving wastewater servicing for small, largely rural communities that are unable to fund the necessary upgrades to meet public health and resource management requirements. The scheme commences on 1 July this year, although applications were being received from 1st January 2003.

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## ON-SITE NEWZ

“On-Site NewZ” is a quarterly newsletter produced since 1996 for the on-site wastewater industry in New Zealand. Currently it has a subscription list of some 210 readers through NZ, with 35 in Australia and 10 in the USA. It was introduced in 1996 to provide updated information on design practice and new technologies as a support service to users of TP 58, the Auckland Regional Council’s 1994 design manual for “On-site Wastewater Disposal from Households and Institutions”. As well as producing four issues of the newsletter each year, On-Site NewZ has provided from time to time a range of ‘special reports’ dealing with summaries of conference proceedings/discussions, and on technical issues related to on-site wastewater servicing practice. In 2001/02 On-Site NewZ ran a seminar programme around NZ on the topic of the new joint on-site wastewater Standards for Australia and New Zealand. Over 700 persons attended the 14 one-day seminar events. Discussions are underway with NZWWA to eventually incorporate On-Site NewZ activities within SWANS-SIG so that the newsletter and other services are available to members specialising in this area.

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## FINDING COMMON GROUND with IMPROVED WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Apanui Skipper and Chris Tanner of NIWA in Hamilton have successfully bid into the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology’s new *Dialogue Fund* with their project entitled **Finding common ground – improved wastewater management systems that address Maori cultural and spiritual values.**

Maori traditionally consider human wastewaters to be spiritually defiled (waikino or waimate) until cleansed by passage through the earth (Papatuanuku or ‘earthmother’). This makes discharge of human wastes into aquatic environments, even after substantial treatment, generally unacceptable to Maori. The two-year grant from the *Dialogue Fund* will facilitate constructive engagement of iwi and scientists on this important issue, which is frequently a sticking point in resource consent applications for wastewater discharges. The study, supported by NIWA’s Maori Research and Development Unit, **Te Kuwaha**, focuses on developing and testing a pilot dialogue process between Maori communities, and scientists and engineers involved with wastewater treatment systems and water quality. It aims to build a common understanding from which innovative solutions for waste treatment can be developed that better address Maori perspectives and needs.

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## QUESTIONS and ANSWERS on TECHNICAL ISSUES

The following issues have been raised by SIG members who would like to see some feedback and discussion through the newsletter.

### Sub-surface drip systems and high watertable conditions

Has anyone got any experience with subsurface drip following high quality small community treatment where groundwater is at times less than 600mm depth? Would disinfection prior to discharge generally satisfy Council concerns over pathogens in this environment?

## **High annual cost of small community systems**

Some Councils are concerned about the high annual costs of small systems, particularly when they have to subsequently take them over and add in depreciation and overhead charges. How can we address this issue as a group?

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## **SWANS-SIGNET**

The Internet provides a massive information resource for professionals in the small wastewater and natural systems areas these days. We intend to provide regular updates on web-sites we consider useful to SWANS-SIG members, and this issue hatches our fledging offering of *NET* items.

(a) Status of treatment wetlands in NZ	<a href="http://www.iees.ch/EcoEng021/EcoEng021_F4.html">www.iees.ch/EcoEng021/EcoEng021_F4.html</a>
(b) Guidelines on the use of constructed wetlands for farm dairy wastewaters	<a href="http://www.niwa.co.nz/pubs/no8/dairywaste2/constructed.pdf">www.niwa.co.nz/pubs/no8/dairywaste2/constructed.pdf</a>
(c) MfE “Sustainable Wastewater Management: A Handbook for Smaller Communities”	<a href="http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/waste/content.php?id=93">www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/waste/content.php?id=93</a>
(d) Ministry of Health Sanitary Works Subsidy Scheme (SWSS) – Effective from July 1, 2003	<a href="http://www.mfe.govt.nz/moh.nsf/30ad137c772c883e4c25665c002c4198/34c17e03c52bb2d2cc256c93006c0ba9?OpenDocument">www.mfe.govt.nz/moh.nsf/30ad137c772c883e4c25665c002c4198/34c17e03c52bb2d2cc256c93006c0ba9?OpenDocument</a>
(e) Wetlands for wastewater treatment	<a href="http://www.pdp.co.nz">www.pdp.co.nz</a>
(f) New Zealand Land Treatment Collective	<a href="http://www.forestresearch.co.nz/topic.asp?docid=1466&amp;contenttype=summary&amp;topic=NZLTC&amp;title=The%20New%20Zealand%20Land%20Treatment%20Collective">http://www.forestresearch.co.nz/topic.asp?docid=1466&amp;contenttype=summary&amp;topic=NZLTC&amp;title=The%20New%20Zealand%20Land%20Treatment%20Collective</a>
(g) USEPA National Small Flows Clearinghouse. A resource to help small communities meet their wastewater treatment needs	<a href="http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/nsfc/">http://www.nesc.wvu.edu/nsfc/</a>

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## **CONGRATULATIONS**

Congratulations to Peter Carroll of Hynds Environmental who was recipient of the IPENZ Entrepreneurial Award for 2003. This award “recognises an engineer or team of engineers who have identified and developed a significant new business venture”, and is sponsored by ALSTOM New Zealand. The citation for this year’s award states that “Peter observed a growing need for stormwater treatment systems to comply with the RMA and Regional Council Plans. In response he created a new company, Hynds Environmental Systems Ltd, which showed a net profit of 11% within 12 months”. It should be noted that Hynds Environmental also provides an aerated wastewater treatment system for on-site wastewater treatment applications.

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