

**SOUTH COAST
ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY
Incorporated**

**STRATEGIC PLAN
2007 - 2012**



Adopted by the Society September 2007

Purpose

- The strategic plan developed by the South Coast Environment Society committee sets out the purpose and direction the Environment Centre will take over the next 5 years to the year 2012.
- It outlines the vision, mission and desired goals for the Environment Society and the Centre it manages.
- Under each strategic goal (outcome) are a series of objectives from which strategies, plans, timelines and resource allocations for achieving those outcomes can be derived.
- The strategic plan is intended to be dynamic and capable of being modified to respond to changing situations and to identify opportunities.
- The plan will be reviewed annually to evaluate performance and to ensure its relevance.

Our history

The South Coast Environment Centre has operated for eleven years as a non-profit institution under the auspices of the South Coast Environment Society.

Formation and first five years

In April 1996 a public meeting was held in Riverton to look at the feasibility of finding a base for the three environmental groups in Riverton:

Riverton Organic Growers Group - established Nov 1988 (still active)
Riverton Organic Food Co-op - established Feb 1989 (still active)
Riverton Estuary Care Group - established Jun 1995 (still active, now as a separate Incorporated Society).

It was decided to form an Umbrella Group to operate the 'Centre' so the groups above could continue to focus on their own activities, including the Drains for Rain project and the purchase and on-going maintenance of the Te Wai Korari wetland reserve.

The South Coast Environment Society Inc was formed and it opened the South Coast Environment Centre in June 1996.

Note: this was the fifth Environment Centre in NZ and it is now the oldest consistently running Centre in NZ. (Three of the four original Centres no longer operate, Nelson has recently reopened.)

For the first five years it was open from 15 - 30 hours a week over 7 days at 175 Palmerston Street, a previously unoccupied building next to Riverton bridge rented from Southland District Council for \$1000 a year. Several new environmental groups were formed in Riverton with the Society's support and encouragement. Most used the Centre and its facilities as a base for their operations:

Riverton Kiwi Conservation Club 1996 (still active, weekly educational programme for children)
Riverton Community Garden 1998 (now a Community Orchard)
Southland Seed Savers Network 1999 (still active)
Bellbird Group 1999 (replaced by Aparima Nursery Enterprise in 2003)
Longwood Line Restoration Group 2002 (still active).

Many other projects operated from this base that otherwise would have been difficult to facilitate: school educational programmes, Riverton Estuary Festival, Appropriate Technology workshops, hosting visiting organisations, speakers and talks, meeting venue for groups.

Funding was obtained from CEGS (2000) for the employment of a projects co-ordinator for one year.

Next 5 years (2001 – 2006)

With the introduction of new specific funding for Environment Centres from the Ministry for the Environment, the Centre's opening hours were extended to over 40 hours a week with both running costs and basic office staffing covered. In 2002 the Centre shifted to 154 Palmerston Street, an unoccupied commercial building in the heart of Riverton's main street rented on a long-term lease from an environmentally-minded local businessman. Several more environmental groups formed in Riverton with the Society's support and encouragement, most using the Centre and its facilities as a base for their operations:

- Aparima Pest Busters 2003 (still active)
- Aparima Nursery Enterprise 2003 (still active)
- Riverton Community Market Day 2003 (still monthly, now run by the community)
- Rivertonians for Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals 2005 (still active)
- Riverton Farmers' Market Jan 2006 (still weekly).

The Environment Society launched its own website (www.sces.org.nz) in early 2006. This was developed using online database technology, which has allowed active and regular updates by Centre staff.

Now (September 2007)

The Society is in a very strong position going into its 12th year of operation. Our achievements to date have earned Riverton a national reputation as a community that leads in innovative environmental education and action.

Ten of the above groups are still active and for most of them the Centre and its facilities are crucial to their continuing operations.

This year new projects have begun. In particular, the Heritage Orchard project has attracted interest from all over Southland, and also an urgent need has been identified to establish a Southern Seed enterprise to save our heritage and organic varieties of vegetables and multiply them for sale.

Education on all areas of sustainability is our strength and we are planning to expand our education programme to all Southland schools and develop a NZQA approved course in partnership with Aparima College. We are also hosting a prestigious Permaculture Design Course in Autumn 2008, the first in Southland.

Funding

The Ministry for the Environment set up a \$300,000 per annum fund for Environment Centres in 2001, with the aim of each Centre receiving up to \$50,000 per year. The South Coast Environment Centre received \$45,000 in the first year, but the total fund available has not increased to match the number of Environment Centres which have since opened.

Last year the Centre received \$25,000 and now the funding has been reduced to \$12,000 per year fixed for the next 3 years, with no promise of funding beyond that.

The last two years have seen a big cut back on the programmes we offer as we had to ensure our very loyal volunteers didn't burn out as we have had no funding for any education or project co-ordination work.

\$48,000 of annual funding is needed (over and above our contribution of 40 hours voluntary work and our own generated annual funds from non-food sales, fundraising and donations) to operate effectively and educate widely.

We will now apply to local funding agencies for support towards our \$36,000 annual shortfall (for three years) aiming to get back to the operating level of 2002-4 when we were active and effective educators.

The future

We strongly believe we are a valuable resource for Southland offering all the resources, skills and experience needed as we move towards a Sustainable Southland. Just as Riverton is recognised nationally as being a leading community, let's make Southland recognised world wide as one of the best eco friendly regions of the world!

Our Vision:

“Inspiration and Action”

Our Mission:

To create a ‘Sustainable Southland’

where community lifestyles and ecosystem enhancement set an example to the world of 21st Century best practice

- *By providing education about of the Southern Coastal region's natural ecosystems.*
- *By promoting sustainable lifestyles and eco friendly choices.*
- *By providing a venue for a wide range of local environmental groups who promote, protect or educate*
- *By providing information and resources for environmental education, action and advocacy.*

Overview:

In developing our new Strategic Plan we distributed our previous 5 year Strategic Plan for members and those interested from the community to assess.

1. What have we achieved over the last 5 years?
2. What do we do well?
3. What do we need to work on?
4. What do we keep doing?
5. What is no longer relevant?
6. Where to for our next 5 years?

We then had a lively and enthusiastic strategic planning meeting attended by a range of both committee members and members of the public.

1. We were amazed when we realised how many of our dreams had come to fruition over the last five years, as well as some new and diverse projects.

2. , 4. & 5. The resounding response from all was that we are on the right track and we should try if at all possible to cover the broad range of environmental topics and projects as they all continue to be increasingly relevant. We also need to continue to develop new projects as the need arises.

3. (a) We need to get more funding and involve more people from beyond our own group - get Southlanders and Southland organisations inspired to be involved in some way. Advertise effectively - source sponsors for advertising.

(b) We need to continue to lessen the volunteers' administrative load, as it takes a lot of time and energy which could be going on to projects. Get funding to employ a part time CEO !

6. Continue to build on the positive reputation we have built for the Society in Southland & throughout New Zealand. Support and grow the 'eco-generation' - continuing to make 'caring for the environment' relevant to the school students and young adults in Southland.

2020 - Where we would like to be!

Sustainable Southland a showcase to the world - a model for others to aspire to, at the same time future proofing our communities, buffering them from world wide crisis and changes.

Our region leading NZ in Environmental Education. People travel to our province for the educational opportunities we provide: alternative energy, self-sufficiency, organic farming, organic market gardening, seed saving and natural eco-system protection and enhancement. Eg, by 2010 Southland is as well know for sustainability education as Lincoln is known for conventional farming in 2007. Southland can grow steadily, as we are the place to be; at the same time, Southlanders' human footprints get smaller and smaller.

Of any region in the world we have the most potential to do this all we need is to inspire the whole of our province to get behind it and take action.

The following goals and associated objectives have been developed covering the following key areas of strategic focus.

Goal 1 Education and Advocacy

To provide effective learning experiences and information to empower others to become more environmentally active

Goal 2 Networking, Communication and Promotion

To increase Centre visitor numbers and community contact

Goal 3 Management of resources

To continue to be an efficient organisation that operates in a professional manner

Goal 4 Venues and Facilities

To continue to provide a venue for educational displays and activities, a base for environmental groups to work from and a network and communication centre.

Goal 5 Partnerships

To work together with the wider community to increase the benefit to our local environment

Goal 6 Sustainable Resources/ Our Sustainability

To develop some of our own consistent fundraising while supporting groups who provide sustainable resources

Goal 7 Tasks and Projects

Practical activities which increase environmental awareness and benefit the local environment

Goal 1 Education and Advocacy

To provide effective learning experiences and information to empower others to become more environmentally active

Key objectives:

- Provide a stimulating experience to involve, inspire and inform visitors to the Centre
- Provide a well conceived and visually attractive display design plan that excites the interest of the viewer and conveys the best information possible
- Provide relevant and exciting learning experiences for all ages: school age, young adults, families, elderly
- Busy monthly programmes so each of these ages have at least two events relevant to them.
- Varied educational experiences: practical workshops, talks, slide shows, working bees, fun activities etc
- Continue with Kiwi Conservation Club
- Start an environmental awards system for young people, and provide mentoring to assist them in achieving their goals
- Run the national Sustainable Living course at regular intervals
- Students educational programme linked to the Environmental Curriculum and the National Qualifications Framework
- Adult educational experiences to be on a wide range of environmental topics: coastline care, revegetation of native plants, organic vegetable growing, sustainable lifestyle options, waste minimalisation, resource management workshops etc.
- Make small information booklets on topics
- Complement the work in this area by other local groups – working in partnerships where relevant to achieve our goals.

Timeline (for larger projects):

2007

- Source funding for Permaculture Course Scholarships for Southlanders (course in Autumn 2008)
- Source funding to write up new sustainability units and get them registered with NZ Qualifications Authority (for local Eco Academy)
- Source funding for Travelling Environmental Educator programme for outreach to all Southland schools (similar to Life Education bus)

2008

- Permaculture Design Course - Riverton 12-27th April
- Start making educational pod-casts that can be accessed all over NZ
- Travelling educators running excellent sustainability programme to all interested Southland Schools (includes setting up and supporting school gardens, orchards)
- Preparation of Eco-Academy complete and advertised for 2009

2009

- Eco Academy senior student course operating
- 50 pod casts completed on all aspects of sustainability.

Goal 2 *Networking, Communication and Promotion*

To increase Centre visitor numbers and community contact

Key objectives:

- Increase community contact and promotion of the Centre throughout Southland through visitor centres, newspaper advertising and newsletter 'drops', etc
- Develop a media / communications strategy
- Continue to use modern technology to promote the Centre through the use of the Internet and web-page listing and associated web page sites; further develop and enhance the Centre's own website
- Develop closer links with Southland Kindergartens, primary and secondary schools through a quarterly mail out
- Maintain the distribution and frequency of our 'Coastline' Magazine
- Offer ourselves for talks at meetings of other organisations
- Increase local membership, including local businesses and organisations
- Network more effectively with other local and national environmental groups

Timeline:

2007

- Develop a communication strategy which may include a promotions officer to effectively communicate and network as outline above
- Update website to include a Q & A forum
- Fill up the Online resources on our web site with what we have researched already

2008

- Begin having a weekly radio programme and/or a weekly newspaper column for environmental promotion and education. Sponsor needed?
- Have our Coastline Newsletter coming out monthly online
- Publish an attractive brochure- one sided with a business card attached.

Goal 3 Management of Resources

To continue to be an efficient organisation that operates in a professional manner

Key objectives:

- Continued careful use of incoming funds to maximise the benefit to achieve our goals
- Annually prepare an operational budget as a guide to maintaining a low cost structure, trouble-shooting any overspending
- Focus more on fundraising from various sources to increase the resources and paid staff available for our goals
- Staffing - voluntary. Continue to provide quality training and management (environmental professional development). Find ways to make our voluntary staff feel valued e.g. social functions, honorariums for long term volunteers
- Staffing - paid. Continue to provide quality training and management. Increase their effectiveness by creating larger part time jobs
- Aim for the employment of a part time executive officer, instead of current volunteer role, for management of paid and volunteer staff, applications for funds etc
- Aim for the employment of educational and project co-ordinators.
- Continue to maintain and protect current equipment and fixtures, updating the inventory of all these resources annually
- Continue to develop and expand on our equipment, fixtures and educational resources to keep up with our needs

Timeline:

2007

- Replace old TV and video with modern TV, DVD & video (most resources now will not play on ours)
- Upgrade our computer (now 5 years old) keeping old one as a second one in the office.

2008

- Have enough funds to operate effectively and fully and create two more part time jobs (CEO and Education Co-ordinator)
- Buy a data projector for educational presentations

Goal 4 Venues and Facilities

To continue to provide a venue for educational displays and activities, a base for environmental groups to work from and a network and communication centre.

Key objectives:

- Continue leasing 154 Palmerston Street, until such time as an opportunity may arise to move to a sunnier, warmer building at a reasonable cost
- Carry out an eco-audit on current operational use of the building
- Look into installing a bicycle stand
- Revamp educational displays from time to time
- Update external signage to be more visible and effective

Timeline:

2007

- Replace old and defective zip with modern equivalent
- Sign writing on veranda front: 'Environment Centre www.sces.org.nz'

2008

- Put in a wheelchair ramp at the front door (wheelchair toilet built 2006)
- Install bicycle stand behind the building

Goal 5 Partnerships

To work together with the wider community to increase the benefit to our local environment

Key objectives:

- Maintain our strong partnerships with all Riverton environmental groups
- Continue to develop and strengthen our links with all Southland community and environmental groups
- Continue to promote and represent national environmental groups where they are relevant to the South Coast area
- Develop closer links with iwi - working together on common areas of interest, with their help develop a better understanding of our role in honouring the Treaty. Request their support and direction with this.
- Developing closer links with other community development groups and work together on areas of common interest. (Community Board, Concept Plan, Harbour Board, Riverton Promotions, Museum and Visitor Centre)
- Support our local high school in its interest to work together with us to offer an 'Environmental Academy' to Southland students linked to the National Qualifications framework
- Actively develop closer links with other South Coast organizations – inviting them to hold a meeting in our Centre. Inviting them to activities we are running that might interest them. Joint projects.
- Continue and expand on current educational links with Southland Institute of Technology
- Establish links with Lincoln University to set up a Permaculture/Sustainable Organics one-year course, based in Riverton

Timeline:

2007 – 2012

- Steadily build these partnerships when appropriate and at a pace that we can sustain them into the future.

Goal 6 Sustainable Resources/Our Sustainability

To develop some of our own consistent fundraising while supporting groups who provide sustainable resources

Key objectives:

- Investigate and obtain funding from a variety of sources for individual projects as well as the Society's activities as a whole
- Becoming a known resource base for Environmental goods and products - we either have them available or know where they can be obtained, e.g. merchandising books on sustainability, local wildlife, organics etc
- Providing outlet for local people and relevant national business groups to promote and sell their environmentally friendly products
- Encouraging Riverton Organic Food Co-op to continue to use the Centre as its base
- Continue to sell non-food goods which support our goals, e.g. materials and tools suitable for organic gardening
- Provide support as necessary for groups using the Centre as a base, so that their operations can continue during any periods of shortage of volunteers

Timeline:

2007

- 'Fundraise to survive' - basic running costs
- Research further eco products we should stock or provide information on
- Research more ways to generate funds without taxing our education time

2008

- Achieve secure funding for basic costs so we can then fundraise for specific projects to outreach into Southland

2009

- Start looking for a permanent base that we could own

2012

- Be in our own permanent base with overheads that we can sustain

Goal 7 Tasks and Projects

Practical activities which increase environmental awareness and benefit the local environment

Key objectives:

- Promote start-up of environmentally sustainable micro-businesses, and support existing ones
- Make up Information Starter Packs (cheap or free) on a variety of topics to do with environmental sustainability
- Encourage minimisation of waste, both household and community
- Develop Community Orchard into valuable community resource
- Continue with propagation of heritage fruit trees and vegetables
- Continue with propagation of native trees and shrubs
- Promote eco-tourism
- Promote environmentally-friendly transport and energy use
- Campaign for clean water
- Investigate and promote alternatives to artificial chemical use, particularly endocrine-disrupting chemicals
- Encourage the regeneration of native wildlife, both flora and fauna

Timeline:

2007

- Southern NZ Seed Enterprise established to save our heritage vegetable seeds and multiply them to the point they can be sold throughout Southland. The preservation of heirloom fruit and vegetable varieties is crucial to the development of sustainable local food growing enterprises that are not dependent on increasingly expensive and environmentally-degrading inputs, as well as reducing dependence on the supply of seeds being concentrated in the hands of a small number of overseas companies. Otago and Southland organic growers see this as a priority as no-one is doing it in Southern NZ. We have 3 offers of certified organic land offered for low rent or free rent for this and we have a young man passionate to start this as a micro-business.
- Victory Gardens Donovan Park Launch Nov 07

2008

- Sustainable Southland Schools Project
- Open Orchard Project wide spread
- Sustainable Living Southland-wide programme for adults
- Square metre Garden kit sets