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Executive Summary

This is the First State of the Environment Report produced for the Matamata-Piako District. It identifies the key policy issues within our environment and presents information on some of these. It describes the state of the environment on some issues, and provides us with a baseline of information so that we can report on our progress towards the continual improvement we strive for.

This project has been completed in conjunction with developing a programme for monitoring our environment against the key issues for the District and as such further reporting will identify trends in relation to our aims.

The State of the Environment

The district has a reputation as a well established dairying, horse breeding and cattle fattening area. It is situated in the eastern part of the Waikato Region and has an area of 182,150 hectares of mostly flat land. The greatest impact on the district has been land drainage and clearance, which has enabled the development of rural industries which support the economy.

Rural Development



It is important to ensure that the productive potential of rural land is maintained to ensure the development and growth of the district.

Areas of highly productive soils within the district are slowly declining, mostly as a result of urban development. However, this development is occurring in areas that have been specifically identified for development. We are just beginning to gather information about rural development in relation to Council's policy and in future years will be able to identify development trends and assess how they may affect the future growth of the district.

Residential Growth



The district experienced a small decline in population between 1991 and 1996. This decline is likely due to recent industry closure and

removal of industry housing in the district. However, despite this small decline in the population of the district, the population within the three main urban centres of Morrinsville, Matamata and Te Aroha has steadily increased and the number of households within these areas is growing at a faster rate than the population.

Solid Waste



Council is continuing to improve the management of solid waste within the District and has implemented a

waste management strategy, which identifies long-term strategies for the management of solid waste. A recycling scheme has been in place for some time and along with the promotion of waste minimisation practices has helped to keep the average annual wastage per person well below the regional and national average. Reducing the amount of waste has also reduced the costs of waste disposal, leaving the Council more money to spend on other community projects.



Natural Environment

The natural environment of the district has been significantly modified through clearance and drainage. The wetlands surrounding the Kopuatai peat dome once extended far beyond the current boundaries and supported large stands of kahikatea. Some small stands of these trees remain in areas of the district, however they are threatened by a lack of protection from stock.

Much of the indigenous vegetation within the district is owned by the crown and administered by the Department of Conservation. Of the remaining indigenous vegetation, over 253 hectares is protected by QEII covenants.



Heritage and Cultural Values

Like the rest of New Zealand, the district has a relatively recent European history with the first missionaries establishing in 1833. However, the district has a number of historic buildings and places that are protected and have special status. Records are now being kept about the number of sites with heritage and cultural values within the district that are protected.



Natural Hazards

Most residents are probably unaware of many of the hazards within the district. Extensive flood protection schemes have been established and are closely monitored to minimise the impact of flooding. The 1985 flood in Te Aroha was one of the most devastating natural hazards that the district has experienced. While most people will be aware of the flooding risk, many will be unaware of other risks such as earthquakes, forest fire, wind, erosion and landslide. The Council, along with other agencies such as Environment Waikato, Emergency Management and Civil

Defence is working towards minimising the natural hazard risks within the district.

Towards the Future

This report shows that the district, while experiencing a minor decline in population growth, is at the same time seeing growth in housing and an increasing number of people shifting to the district's urban centres. Systems are being established to collect information about the district and future years will see trends begin to emerge in the development of the district. The community can be pleased that we are moving forward in such a way that future generations will thank us for.

