

Sewage dumping major concern

An action group is urging people to make submissions to the Whangarei District Council's long-term council community plan calling for zero tolerance on sewage spills into Whangarei Harbour.

Save Our Harbour was set up after the council applied to renew consents allowing it to dump up to 24,000 cubic metres of untreated sewage a day — enough to fill 10 Olympic-sized pools — into the harbour in emergencies.

The council has asked people to make submissions to its plan, which sets out the district's spending intentions for the next 10 years — on what they want to do to deal with the sewage problems.

Save Our Harbour spokeswoman Louise Esse wants all Whangarei residents to make submissions "demanding zero tolerance to raw untreated sewage being discharged into our harbour and waterways.

"We must act now to restore the health of the harbour.

We can fix our sewage and stormwater systems but we can't replace our harbour."

Ms Esse said every time there was a sewage discharge the upper harbour was closed for a month for gathering kaimoana, which in the worsening economic times denied the community a major food resource.

"It is incredible WDC have acknowledged stormwater infiltration into the sewerage network is the key problem, yet none of the options outlined in the long-term plan involve reducing stormwater infiltration," Ms Esse said.

"In fact, council has proposed to reduce the budget for wastewater systems upgrades and inflow and infiltration reduction.

"There are funds available to prioritise this issue, with more than \$80 million identified as planned expenditure on sewerage in the plan.

"That must be focused on reducing stormwater infiltration. Funds earmarked for other projects should also be re-prioritised towards saving the harbour."

Save Our Harbour is holding a public meeting on May 4 from 5pm at AgFirst's conference room, 51A Norfolk St, to discuss the issue.