

Dunes could be solution to a seemingly never-ending problem

Laurel Stowell

An annual spend of \$50,000 to shift sand around on Castlecliff Beach is "dumb" and people who want it changed should tell the Whanganui District Council, councillor James Barron says.

The long-time problem of wind-blown sand at Castlecliff Beach became a focus for the Coastal Restoration Trust conference's free workshop Working with Nature this week.

Before leading the 70 participants out into the dunes, Castlecliff Coast Care co-ordinator Graham Pearson said the council spent about \$40,000 a year on shifting sand and driftwood off the swimming area by the Surf Club, only for westerly winds and longshore drift to bring it back.

The sand was pushed into the sea or taken away, and removing driftwood left splinters and nothing for people to sit or leave beach towels on, he said.

"It seems to me there's things that could happen differently."

What's been suggested is dunes planted in native spinifex coming out in a pincer shape and collecting the sand, or a thin line of spinifex planted on the sand side beside the seawall on the carpark boundary.

Coastal scientist Jim Dahm told the workshop that managing windblown sand was difficult without a dune.

"Native plants in the dune, spinifex and pingao, trap the windblown sand.

"Most of it travels close to the ground. Those plants slow the wind down, and the sand drops out. The plants trap that sand and build a new dune with it."

Using spinifex dunes to capture windblown sand has been a known method for 30 or 40 years, he said. Castlecliff had enough space for some, and they would be easy to start. People's desire for views and

access have been the main hindrance to dunes being allowed in other places.

"I'm hoping there's someone here from council to explain why it's so complex and why they haven't built a dune in the past," Dahm said. Deputy mayor Jenny Duncan and

Barron were at the workshop.

Barron suggested people with strong views make a submission to the council's long term plan, and hinted that people interested in coast care will like what it contains.

Duncan said a conversation with stakeholders about the matter is

planned. Dahm has been involved in coastal planning across New Zealand.

He said implementing a report from a consultant without talking to local people would be a waste of money.

"You have got to get people around the table, and come up with some-

thing that works for everybody."

Contractors clear sand from the carpark at Castlecliff Beach in December.

Photo / Bevan Conley

Riddle of the shifting sand



resource consent in 2004.

At that time it gave a five-year consent and required the council to come up with alternative ways to deal with the sand by 2007.

Horizons has been asked what consent the district council now has for beach grooming.

Beach grooming was done for 30 years before the district council applied to Horizons Regional Council for