In addition to the practical outcomes of the research, it is also providing an opportunity for scientists to test their level of understanding of stream ecosystems and their functioning. The project is expected to act as a stimulus for new ideas and theories, thereby contributing to the science of aquatic ecology.

And the practical side of the Whatawhata project is a significant contribution towards mitigating the adverse effects of agriculture on our waterways. The foreword from *Towards Sustainable Agriculture* puts it thus:

"Water quality is a very sensitive and accurate indicator of environmental health. As New Zealand actively seeks to develop more sustainable agricultural systems and practices, it is increasingly important that all involved in the management of our resources - landusers, regional authorities, Iwi and others - have the necessary information to help them make wise decisions on matters which impact on water as well as on other national resources." ■

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"BNZ": a tool for catchment planning

Bryce Cooper

A recently-developed computer model holds promise as a management aid for integrated catchment planning.

INTEGRATED CATCHMENT PLANNING is by no means new in New Zealand. Before the formation of Regional Councils, Catchment Boards (set up as part of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1941) had responsibility for devising water and soil management plans for large rural areas in their respective regions. Today, with an increasing amount of scientific information available, documenting and predicting the impact of sediment, contaminant and nutrient inputs into inland and estuarine waters, within the context of integrated catchment planning, assumes a new importance.

A very large proportion of New Zealand's land surface is given over to pastoral farming. This has created problems arising from both point-source and non point-source inputs into drainage waters. It is a major challenge for management agencies to implement measures to reduce the impact of such inputs. This situation is brought sharply into focus given the onus placed on today's Regional Councils, via the Resource Management Act, to promote sustainable use of natural resources.

Implementing catchment-wide management plans can be expensive, but with full information, it is possible to optimise cost-efficiency. Therefore, before making any decisions on strategies, it is important to be aware not only of the impacts of pastoral/agricultural activities, but also of all the "control" options and their associated benefits.

BNZ: Basin - New Zealand

NIWA has developed a catchment-scale simulation model, as an aid to water resource planning. Basin - New Zealand (BNZ) predicts the relative benefits of various options to control the effects of runoff. It has the potential both to realise cost savings, and to provide a rationale for justifying expenditure on the chosen option.

Several physically-based mathematical models have been designed specifically to predict the impact on water quality of land management practices. One of the most frequently used is the Chemicals, Runoff and Erosion from Agricultural Management Systems (CREAMS) model. This was developed by the United States Department of Agriculture to provide a basis for deciding on "best management practices". Modified versions of CREAMS have been developed as catchment-scale pollution models. However, the specific water management needs of New Zealand require a model with greater capabilities.

The first step in BNZ's evolution was to select the CREAMS-based model most appropriate for New Zealand conditions. A model was required that could predict water, sediment and nutrient losses from pastures, together with the impacts on these losses of management practices such as grazing density, buffer strips, and soil fertility. In addition, it had to be capable of producing useful results at a catchment scale, and accommodating inputs from point sources, riparian nitrate removal processes, nitrate leaching from septic tank seepage and fields, and stream attenuation processes.

A model was selected which uses CREAMS to generate spatial runoff of water, sediment and nutrients within a catchment.

Before testing the model, the hydrology and nutrient submodels were modified, and a

Structure of BNZ model.