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Media Release

Quarry industry earns praise for environmental work

Cement producer Holcim has won an environmental excellence award for work over more than 20 years rehabilitating the quarry supplying lime to its cement factory at Cape Foulwind near Westport.

Former Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr Morgan Williams and Institute of Professional Engineers president Jeff Jones announced the annual MIMICO award in Wellington on Friday, (July 13) concluding the annual conference of the nation's aggregate and quarry industry.

The judges said the work at Cape Foulwind was an excellent example of a company taking long term responsibility for the restoration of all the land associated with a major cement manufacturing facility.

“ It was entirely self motivated and has involved many of their staff and the local community and DOC. They sought scientific input at an early stage and the company now fund ongoing research to quantify their ecosystem restoration.”

The judges said that Cape Foulwind was a complex restoration project because the Holcim team had set a goal of restoring indigenous forest and wetland, similar to what existed prior to human arrival.

Finding sufficient quantities of the native trees and other plants indigenous to the area saw the establishment of a nursery which grows up to 50,00 plants on contract for Holcim and also for sale to the local community.

A Masters thesis study on the restoration was ongoing, thanks to a Holcim research grant.

“This will ensure full documentation of restoration goals, and thus beneficial environmental impacts, while making a major contribution to our understanding of the complexity and time scale of such restorations,” said Dr Williams and Mr Jones.

They said a great strength of the project was that it was entirely voluntary, motivated over twenty years ago by the company's desire to be a good corporate citizen in an area with many important ecological features.

The Mimico Environmental Excellence Award is designed to encourage the aggregate & quarry industry to establish and implement programmes of environmental importance.

The incoming president of the Aggregate and Quarry Association, James Boyce, said the award entries are another example of an industry that is fully committed to being a responsible player in communities across the country.

“The theme of our just-concluded conference was sustainability. We do need access to rock and stone resources to keep New Zealand growing, as little can be built without it. But these awards show that we can leave land better than when quarrying began.”

There were four entries for the 2007 Award, including Holcim’s winning entry from Cape Foulwind.

Ravensdown Ltd’s rehabilitation of the Balfour quarry in Southland was judged “an excellent example of creative and quality fulfilment of resource consent conditions.” The original resource consents required the area to be restored to pasture. Water table levels precluded this option, giving rise to the idea of a recreational lake. The decision to utilise quarry staff and equipment to do all the work was a good one, said Dr Williams and Mr Jones. “ It gave those that had ‘mined’ a chance to return the area to a restored landscape and water body.” The lake brings benefits for people and wildlife and being close to a main highway it is visible to many people, including international visitors.

Winstones Aggregates entry saw reductions in carbon emissions through efficiency gains from the vehicle fleet serving its Waikato and south Auckland quarries. The judges said this was a good example of the cost savings and environmental benefits, that can be achieved by harnessing the skills and experience of staff and through implementing relatively simple operational changes. They said many other businesses could probably emulate the ‘win-win’s’ achieved by Winstone Aggregates.

Oamaru Shingle Supplies Ltd had entered the Mimico Awards after learning lessons from the operation of the ‘Old’ South Quarry and the ‘New’ North Quarry in Oamaru. The judges said this was a good example of some first steps that over time can lead to a more ambitious restoration programme for the whole of a quarried area plus amenity plantings within the working area of the quarry.

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