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Environment Canterbury, 58 Kilmore Street, Christchurch 8013

Marion joins Amberley Office

Landing a biosecurity job not far from her Greta Valley, North Canterbury home was a coup for Marion Rhodes late last year. She no longer has to trek long distances for her chosen conservation career.

"In my previous job at the Department of Conservation I was away all of the time around the South Island, up to nine days a fortnight in summer."

Now focusing on biosecurity issues closer to home, Marion says in the five months she's been with Environment Canterbury she's learning all the time.

Her work this summer included efforts to identify and eradicate Nassella Tussock and the Chilean Needle Grass. Towards the end of the season she changed focus looking for Old Mans Beard, Gorse and Broom.

Marion is one of five Biosecurity Officers based at Environment Canterbury's Amberley office targeting plant pests throughout North Canterbury. Two further team members are based in Cheviot and one in Kaikoura.

Being part of a small team at Amberley has its rewards. Team members all



Marion Rhodes

have responsibilities for areas of North Canterbury and get to spend most of their time outdoors.

"I like being out in the field. I don't think I could do a job where I had to sit in an office all day."

Marion has been given Waimakariri hill country including Lees Valley to look after; an area of North Canterbury she doesn't know well. "It's interesting meeting the landowners and getting to know the place. It will keep me happy for a while yet."

Previously Marion worked on Raoul Island east of New Zealand, Lord Howe Island off the east coast of Australia and on Mauritius, an island state south east of Africa.

Amberley Office

Environment Canterbury's Amberley office boasts eight staff including five biosecurity officers and one TB management staffer. Team Leader for Biosecurity at the office, Laurence Smith says most of the time staff can be found in the field, anywhere from the Waimakariri River to north of Kekerengu and inland to the Southern Alps.

With 96 noxious plants to focus on, the team is kept busy and Laurence says a stronger regulatory approach is bearing results.

"While encouraging people can be effective we find regulation works a lot faster with landowners. We are accountable to the community and we have to be consistent in our approach."

"One of the messages we are trying to get across to land owners is it's your Regional Pest Management Strategy, it's a community strategy. It's not something we have made up."

Out of Africa

Moving to New Zealand with a 16 month-old baby, Jill Atkinson never imagined 10 years later she would be employed as one of Environment Canterbury's senior managers.

The South African mother of two was appointed Director Regional Programmes last September.

The position itself is new, created in response to Environment Canterbury's organisational design review. "The scope of Environment Canterbury's responsibilities makes it a complex organisation. Integration and coordination across its vast range of activities is vital as is the introduction of a more strategic focus to the way we work. The Regional Programmes Directorate is key to achieving these things".

"I do a lot of gluing things together and keeping my eye on the big picture!"

Jill began her career with a Masters in Regional Planning gained from a South African University. She then worked in transport policy development before immigrating with her husband and infant

son. "Ten years ago we decided to give it (New Zealand) a go and have never looked back. It's the best thing we did."

She began work with Environment Canterbury on a short term contract in the public transport section, and then gained a full time position as public transport operations planner. Jill says the organisation has provided her with numerous opportunities to grow in her career, from supporting her training in business management to appointing her to acting Director roles at various times.

She is enthusiastic about the support offered to staff who want to extend themselves and try different things within the regional council.

"Environment Canterbury provides many opportunities for staff. You just have to grab them."



Jill Atkinson

Joining what is essentially a new leadership team at Environment Canterbury six months ago was "a brilliant opportunity". "I'm inspired by my colleagues around the directorate table and am looking forward to being able to make a contribution to the leadership of this organisation."

"Our people and their passion is what makes Environment Canterbury a great place to work."

Transporting people

Seeing people move towards more sustainable forms of transport is one of the most satisfying parts of Robert Woods' job.

The Programme Manager Transport at Environment Canterbury had always hoped to make an impact with his work and Robert believes the regional council gives him that opportunity.

"You have really good access to councillors here compared to other places I have worked. You are able to brief them and move things forward."

Robert joined Environment Canterbury 16 months ago as lead Transport Analyst, moving into the Programme Manager Transport role last November, when his predecessor was promoted.

He manages the transport planning team and has an overview of all transport activities occurring within the regional council. "It's quite challenging and varied work. There's a lot happening at the moment."

Among Environment Canterbury's priorities are encouraging people to walk rather than use cars, smarter use of buses, moving freight off trucks and onto rail and ships, "the whole module shift effect, to get people to move around in more sustainable ways."

After only a short time at the regional council, Robert says he's happy to stay on for quite some time because Environment Canterbury is an organisation that looks after its people.

"They generally treat staff really well. It's a very pleasant place to work from a job satisfaction point of view."

Staff development is taken seriously and Robert has found management to be "very responsive in changing circumstances."

"They are very aware of the environment in which we are working at the moment with the change of Government. There may be some staff who have concerns and they are being very proactive in managing this."

Robert says another bonus is the Environment Canterbury building itself in Christchurch on Kilmore Street.

"The actual building itself and the environment is very conducive to working. There's a staff gym and the location is close to attractions in the central city. It's a good place to work."



Rob Woods