



**Waitakere Ranges
Protection Society Inc**

news

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Issue 145 May 2010

Your President's Report



I have kept rainfall readings at Karekare for the past sixteen years. Lower than average rainfall over the past months has provided a rare opportunity to observe the ranges in very dry conditions. January (93.0mm) was about average, February (16.5mm) and March (22.5mm) were the lowest monthly readings that I have ever recorded, and April (80.5mm) was well below average. Many shrubs and small trees in exposed areas like the steep cliffs died, and larger trees showed signs of stress from dehydration. So it was some relief when the rains started gently and began to build up soil moisture levels slowly so that there have been few slips to date. It will be interesting to see what the longer-term effects of such low rainfall are.

The news last week that kauri dieback disease has been found in Waipoua forest within 500 metres of Tane Mahuta is most concerning, since we know that this disease can be spread at an alarming rate by people, pigs and water. Members who attended the AGM in March when we were addressed on kauri dieback disease by Dr Nick Waipara from the ARC, will be aware that the disease is now endemic in quite a few areas in the ranges. Nick described Maungaroa ridge above Piha as an "entrenched PTA site moving towards a Pakiri type infection zone which is the worst I've seen". Trees of all ages and conditions are susceptible. For some time the Society has been asking for track closures to quarantine areas to no avail. In the meantime, we are working with the ARC to ensure better education of track users.

As if attack by microscopic pathogen was not enough, the three plan changes (35,36,37) notified by Waitakere City are alarming in their permissiveness, proposing unprecedented development opportunities on private land throughout the ranges. It was good to see that many submitters opposed the plan changes and sought that they be withdrawn. Plan Change 36 has wide ranging implications for the ranges communities, the majority of whom were never consulted on this "economic wellbeing" package.

On Wednesday June 9 we will be calling a Special General Meeting of the Society to discuss the new draft constitution. All members will receive official notification shortly, and a good turnout would be much appreciated.

More information on these and other issues is contained in this newsletter.

John Edgar
President

2010 Subscription Final Reminder

The 2010 subscription renewal notice was sent to all members in February. Most members have renewed their subs, but there are still a number outstanding. If you are one of these could we urge you to do pay your sub as soon as possible. If you aren't sure whether or not you have paid, feel free to email me at kemsdale@ihug.co.nz (or phone 817 2788) to check. I'd rather that you did that than pay twice.

Sandra Jones
Treasurer

Annual Report of the Executive Committee

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Arataki Visitors Centre
Monday 29 March, 2010**

I am pleased to present the 36th Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

The past year has been so busy for the Society that I scarcely know where to begin. It hardly seems credible that the Royal Commission report on Auckland governance was released only a year ago. As we now know, the government ignored the majority of the recommendations and proceeded to reform Auckland with three local government bills that will very effectively disenfranchise the citizens, weaken democracy and will in all probability expedite privatisation of some of Auckland's essential assets and services. The Society has made submissions on aspects of the bills that affect the ranges, and we are pleased that at least there will be a Waitakere Ward with two councillors and a local board that largely incorporates the Heritage Area, but that is one of the few positive gains that we have had. We need to thank Mels Barton, our Heritage Area Coordinator, for her diligence in keeping us all well-informed of developments over the past year.

For the Ranges, the transition has been exacerbated by Waitakere City which has initiated unprecedented changes to the Heritage Area using the instrument of Local Area Plans (LAPS). A year ago the Long Term Council Community Plan was for two LAPS a year for the next seven years, but this timetable has been brought forward with LAPS for Oratia, Waatarua and Titirangi being already notified in Plan Changes, consultation with Henderson, Opanuku and Te Henga Valleys being rushed through with the respective communities, and a Plan Change providing for Rural Activities, Social, Cultural and Economic Wellbeing across the whole of the Heritage Area having far reaching consequences for the future of the Ranges. The Society has made submissions on all these Plan Changes, and hearings will be held in due course, but I can signal now that we regard many aspects of these Plan Changes as having serious implications in their scope and permissiveness.

The Swanson Structure Plan proceedings in the Environment Court are continuing but are now focusing on the detail since the Court issued very helpful substantive decisions last year. Parties who are wanting to change the rules that apply to their sites have filed evidence and the Society along with other parties is entitled to lodge evidence of its own if it wishes to fight those battles. In general, the Society has been taking an active part only where the actions of parties have threatened the integrity or certainty of the Court's substantive decision and has left it to locals to fight about individual lots. The hearing on all but one of the remaining issues is to be held in May. The last issue relates to Mr Healy who has this week been granted a rehearing with regard to the number of lots to be provided on his site. This issue should be finalised before the end of the year.

The Society has been heavily involved in the Environment Court appeals relating to changes to the Auckland Regional Policy Statement and the Waitakere District Plan pursuant to the Local Government (Auckland) Amendment Act 2004. We have been working very closely and successfully with Waitakere City on this matter and the positions taken by the two organisations have been closely aligned. Consent documentation on some elements subject to the Society's appeals

has been finalised and the first consent order was issued by the Court last week. Other matters continue and we may need to attend an Environment Court hearing later this year on a number of related issues. In general, however, the Society and Waitakere City's strategy of seeking to have the Waitakere Ranges provisions separated from the general provisions applying to rural areas has been successful and there seems to be little opposition to our efforts to clarify the provisions governing the Ranges.

The simplifying and streamlining of the RMA in the last year has made it more difficult for the Society to appeal. This means we must be more attentive to all consent applications, which places a bigger workload on our planners and legal team. It is however a relief that some of the more draconian amendments were not passed.

We were relieved when Waitakere City Council withdrew its Plan Change for a Whenuapai Airport Special Area, which means that a commercial airport at Whenuapai is off the agenda for some time. This was in part due to the very effective opposition of the community groups but in the end a decision by the government that the air force would not be vacating Whenuapai resulted in a withdrawal of the Plan Change.

With some reservations we support the Auckland Regional Council's opening of the Hillary Trail, a four-day walk through the Ranges from Arataki to Swanson. National and international promotion of this walk will undoubtedly lead to increased visitors numbers, and we are concerned that without a visitor management strategy there will be environmental effects that will be hard to quantify in the short term and which may well lead to cumulative effects that are difficult to mitigate. The ARC do not envisage the commercialisation of the walk, but already tourist operators and other commercial interests are seeking concessions in association with the walk. We have recently completed submissions and hearings on the Regional Park Management Plan, and we supported the ARC's position on this matter and it was pleasing to see that the vast majority of submissions opposed any further commercialisation in the Ranges. We await the Council's decision.

The Society supports the three Council's in their effort to remove the remaining willows from the Te Henga wetland. The last trees are so inaccessible that they must be poisoned by aerial spraying. This has proved controversial and one Te Henga resident took out a High Court injunction just days before the annual programme was to begin, and this has apparently set the programme back for a year. We have it on very good authority that the spraying is a last resort, and that the spray programme is in the control of highly skilled operators and will pose minimal threat to other aquatic life.

Our gift in 2009 of the 11 hectare Big Muddy reserve to the ARC for inclusion in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park was well received and the land was gazetted together with all other Waitakere Ranges Regional Park land and is now protected by Order in Council. The Society made submissions on the third Local Government (Auckland Law Reform) Bill which amongst other matters proposed the repeal of Clause 77 of the Local Government Act (2002). Clause 77 gave the Regional Council ownership of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park but its repeal without provision for the ownership to be transferred to the new Auckland Council means that ownership would transfer by default to the Crown. This is unacceptable for many reasons including the fact that the bulk of the parkland was gifted to the people as the Centennial Memorial Park to celebrate 100 years of settlement in the region. This Society has been instrumental in purchasing and gifting over 1000 hectares of land to the park over the past 36 years, and we believe that the park is an asset that must stay in the ownership of the new Auckland Council. We await the select committee's recommendations on this matter.

The most insidious threat to the Ranges is the microscopic pathogen *Phytophthora* taxon *Agathis* (PTA). We reported on this at the last AGM and since then there have been a number of developments. The government has allocated a fund for research into the disease to be shared between various agencies. In the Ranges, ARC have put in place a management strategy involving signage and boot disinfectant baths but to date have not been prepared to quarantine any areas to prevent the spread of the disease. This is something that the Society considers necessary. We regard this disease that is killing kauri in most areas to be of grave concern, and so this evening we have asked Dr Nick Waipara from the Regional Council to address us on the research and management program.

After 36 years the committee think it is time to review the past and begin to collect the stories of our influential Society. Stage three of our Oral History project has been completed by Carole Donaldson. She interviewed Geoff Scholes, Mary Woodward, Dave McKay, John Lewis, and Tony Randerson with assistance from Mels Barton as sound recordist. All digital recordings and transcripts are archived in the Waitakere and Turnbull Libraries. We will be applying for funding to continue this important work, and would welcome any suggestions of people we should interview who have been instrumental in the conservation and protection of the Waitakere Ranges. In conjunction with this project we have asked Bruce and Trixie Harvey to write a history of the Society, and they have agreed to do this *pro bono* and for that we are most grateful. They have begun by researching the Society's archives, and will be talking to many past and present members about their role in the Society in due course.

We were successful in our grant application to Creative Communities for partial funding of a painted mural in the

Henderson CBD. However two subsequent grant applications have been declined, and the future of this project is now in doubt. If we cannot raise the full funding to proceed, we will have to refund the grant money received.

There are now less than 180 Waitakere Ranges books in stock, and at the present sales rate these should last another two years, during which time we will consider a second edition.

The greatest change in the Society's function has been the employment of Mels Barton as the Heritage Area Coordinator, made possible by a grant from the ASB Community Trust in 2008. Mels has reported regularly in the newsletter on her activities, and her commitment and diligence has contributed hugely to our work programme, and she has certainly taken a considerable part of the workload off myself and other committee members. However, the grant money has now been used up, and we hope that we will be successful in an application we made last month to The Trusts Charitable Foundation. If not, then we will have to seriously rethink our strategy as a Heritage Area Coordinator has become indispensable to our effectiveness as an advocate for the Ranges. We will not use members' subscriptions or donations to fund this activity unless specifically instructed to do so. At the conclusion of this report, I will ask committee member Tim O'Shea to put to the meeting a funding strategy that the committee has discussed and endorsed.

Thanks to executive member Kirstin Howard we have completed a final draft of a new constitution that is acceptable to the executive and we hope to bring it to a special meeting of the members of the Society in the next few months for approval so that we might qualify for charitable status with the Charities Commission.

Throughout the year the Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of matters. The *pro bono publico* contribution of our legal counsel Douglas Allan and resource management consultant Gary Taylor is invaluable. We acknowledge the work that James Hook has done for us on various resource consent matters. Thanks also to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and coordinated mail outs for many years. Owing to changes to the law, the Society is now faced with having to pay for our annual audit from a registered auditor.

The Society is well-served by an executive with a wide range of professional talents. The committee meets on the second Wednesday of the month and our meetings are always well attended, with strong and stimulating debate and good friendship. Members are always welcome to attend and bring matters to our attention. During the year Mike Nixon resigned after he moved north to live in Kohukohu, and we thank him for his years on the committee when he managed our website and for the work he did in the Ranges, especially with pest eradication for the Karekare Forest Restoration Trust. Kirstin Howard is also standing down as a committee member. I would like to ask the outgoing committee to stand up. These people are your elected executive who have given the Society so much of their time over the past year. It has been a pleasure to work with you all and I would like this meeting to join with me in showing our appreciation for your efforts on our behalf.

Special thanks go to our Vice-President Anna Fomison, Treasurer Sandra Jones, and Secretary Mels Barton. Mels and Anna coordinate our presence at events and festivals. Sandra has taken over as editor of the quarterly newsletter but we would like to find someone to either help her or to take on this task as she has already plenty to do as the treasurer. It has been my honour to be President and chair of the executive committee for the past twelve years, and I have enjoyed it very much. I want to thank committee members and my family and friends for their support which has enabled me to better serve the Society.

Once again we chose not to raise our membership subscription rate this year, and this was recognised by many members who paid their subscription and added a donation. When Sandra Jones gives the financial report this evening, you will note that the Society is in a strong financial position. The majority of this money is in tagged funds such as the reserve fund for land acquisition, the Book reprint fund, and the Neil and Jean Smith fund. Large reserves are our hedge against the recession to ensure that we can continue to operate at the highest standards.

We have sent our condolences to Margaret Topzand and family on the passing away of husband and father, Hajo. They both attended our AGM every year for as long as I can remember and always sat in the front row, and their support was much appreciated.

The Society was saddened to hear that Mary Dobbie died aged 95 in June 2009. She had been a member of the Society for many years until she had to leave Piha due to ill health. Mary will be remembered as a community-minded person who worked tirelessly for the people of Piha. She established the Piha News and edited it for many years. She helped to build up the Piha Library and was a founder member of the Environmental Group, which was later superseded by Coast Care, as well as being actively engaged in the Neighbourhood Watch network and the Residents Association. Last month the Society was honoured to receive a legacy from Mary's estate of \$1000 towards our work in protection programmes.

We send our best wishes to Ross and Jessica Beever as Ross recovers from surgery. As one of the leading researchers on

Kauri dieback, Ross would have shared the address this evening with Nick Waipara, and we wish him a full and speedy recovery.

We consider that the Society is in a very strong position which is absolutely necessary if we are to weather the unprecedented changes that are coming as a result of a government that is not committed to conservation, and whose objective would seem to be the privatization of assets and the exploitation of resources. The new governance structures of Auckland will test our resilience over the coming years and the Society will need increased support from its members and friends as we struggle to adapt to the new order. Be assured that your executive remain committed to serving the Society to ensure that the Ranges that we all know and love will remain safeguarded forever.

Thank you. I move that the Annual Report be received.

John Edgar,
President
Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.

Notice of Special General Meeting **Arataki Visitors Centre, Scenic Drive** **7 pm, Wednesday 9 June 2010**

The purpose of the meeting is to consider an updated constitution with a new constitution. Our current one was written in 1973, and at 37 years old is in need of revision. It is also not acceptable to the Charities Commission which, when we registered, advised us that our current constitution would not allow the Society to qualify for charitable status under the Charities Act 2005. A notice of the meeting, with copies of our current constitution and the proposed updated constitution enclosed, has been recently sent to members under separate cover. If you did not receive a copy please, contact the Secretary.



Clematis forsteri Photo: Sandra Jones

Although not common in the Waitakeres, the “small white clematis” is found in scattered coastal sites along the coastal edges of the Waitakeres and on rocky areas inland. It flowers throughout November and a good place to go looking for it is at the northern end of the Waitakere Tramline Track.

Heritage Area **Coordinator's Report** **March – May 2010**

Submissions / Advocacy:

District Plan Changes

This quarter has been dominated by our campaign to encourage submissions on the three proposed changes to the District Plan (35, 36 and 37). The campaign included a YouTube video, which was very successful for raising awareness of the issues and explaining the complex details in a simple way. We will certainly consider using this medium again. The campaign was very successful and generated 100s of submissions to Council on all three plan changes. Due to the

large numbers of submissions we have successfully lobbied for the deadline on making further submissions to be extended to 4 June. No hearing date has been decided as yet, but we continue strongly to oppose all three plan changes.

Auckland Governance

The Local Government Commission announced the final boundaries for the wards and boards and we were delighted to see that all the submissions have paid off and we will have a Heritage Area Local Board.

We collected almost 1000 signatures on our petition regarding the changes affecting the Ranges proposed in the Government's 3rd Super City Bill. It was presented by Lynne Pillay to the House of Representatives.

ARC Regional Parks Management Plan

I went with John Edgar to present the Society's submission to the ARC, which was very well received and there were quite a few questions. The final report is currently being prepared and will be released soon.

WCC / ARC Notice of Requirement

I assisted with the preparation of our submission on this formality to include land acquired relatively recently into the Regional Park before the amalgamation.

RMA Changes – Tree Protection

I have continued asking where Waitakere City Council have got to in seeking a judicial ruling from the Environment Court on whether the "Managed Natural Area" maps that are currently in the District Plan and cover Titirangi and Laingholm, count as "individually identified groups of trees in a District Plan". If the ruling says that they are (we live in hope) then all these trees will retain their current blanket protection. If not we are in deep trouble. However it seems this is not progressing very quickly and is with the lawyers at present.

Facebook Group

The membership of our Facebook Group has increased to 105 members! You can join here:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=156550153926&ref=ts>

EcoDay 2010

I helped with the WRPS stall at this year's EcoDay. It was a great event and we collected a large number of signatures for our petition to the Government on the issues affecting the Ranges in the 3rd Super City Bill, including those of Mayors John Banks, Len Brown and Bob Harvey!

Newsletter Articles

I wrote an article for the Piha newsletter.

Consultation:

Kauri PTA

I continue to lobby Waitakere City Council regarding enhancing their approach to PTA. They inform us they have increased the information for staff and contractors, but we believe there is still more that could be done considering how rampant the disease is, especially in places like Titirangi. The Council's continued promotion of commercial concessions on the Hillary Trail and the development of the Foothills Walkway present a high risk of spreading the disease still further in our view with insufficient precautions available on WCC tracks at present.

LAPs

Due to staff shortages the LAP for Anzac Valley and Te Henga will only reach the draft stage before the council amalgamation takes place. However the Henderson Valley LAP continues at pace.

Foothills Walkway

I attended the presentation regarding the outcome of the feasibility study into developing a cross-foothills walkway to a number of fora and have heard a number of concerns from locals. These included surprise that Council can find funding for such a "nice to have" project when communities' ongoing requests for footpath enhancements for safety reasons have been ignored for many years. The Society is also very concerned that such an overtly tourism focused trail for the foothills will attract large numbers of people for which the infrastructure does not currently exist. Assuming that everyone will use public transport to access the trail at Titirangi or Swanson and walk all 21km when it is being promoted as a soft option for those unaccustomed to bush tramping seems unrealistic. The question by a Community Board member of where everyone would park their cars to access the trail does not appear to have occurred to anyone at Council. When combined with Plan Change 36 to encourage cafes and gift shops in the foothills it is easy to imagine where this proposal could lead for those communities and where the infrastructure of carparks, public toilets and wider roads will inevitably follow.

Are you on our email list?

If not please email Mels at mels@waitakereranges.org.nz to be updated on taking action and important issues affecting the Ranges.

Mels Barton

May 2010

Four new brochures for the Waitakere Ranges

The ARC has produced four new brochures, which offer detailed introductions to these parts of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Parkland:

- Cornwallis, Huia and Whatipu
- Piha, Karekare and Anawhata
- Te Henga (Bethells) and Cascade Kauri
- Scenic Drive

Information is included about the history of the Auckland Centennial Memorial Park and of the particular areas, things to see and do in the park, and some of the popular walking tracks. They have new easy-to-read maps of the areas covered. The ARC says it hopes that “they will help educate visitors to the park on the ecological and heritage aspects of the Waitakere Ranges and encourage an ethic of stewardship.”

Copies of the brochure are available at the Arataki Visitor Centre or by phoning the ARC on 366 2000.

Events at Auckland Museum

Have you visited these exhibitions yet?

Illustrated Leaves: an exhibition of florilegia from the 16th to 21st centuries, opened 2 October 2010. Illustrated Leaves presents six centuries of plant anthologies and explores the evolving intentions behind their production. No charge.

Lucy Cranwell - Walk on the wild side: investigates how Cranwell, one of New Zealand's first female scientists, earned international acclaim for her groundbreaking work on the reconstruction of ancient botanical landscapes of the southern hemisphere. No charge.



Anawhata Beach & Keddle House Photo: Sandra Jones

Financial Report to the AGM

NOTES:

Bank accounts:

00 Account – operating account.

The 2009 balance included an instalment of \$10,000 from an ASB Community Trust grant to support our Heritage Area Coordinator. This grant has now been spent. \$24,000 is also held in Short Term Deposits.

01 Account – Reserves (land acquisition) fund.

\$46,000 is also held in Short Term Deposits.

03 Account – Publications fund.

\$128,800 is also held in Short Term Deposits. This is being accumulated to cover the costs of a possible reprint (or second edition) of the *Waitakere Ranges* book in the next few years.

Fast Saver Account - the Neil & Jean Smith Fund.

The executive's intention is to retain the donation (\$20,000) as capital and employ the interest earned (currently \$3,639) for special projects.

Stock on hand – value \$5,310.

This consists primarily of residual copies of our book *Waitakere Ranges*.

Fixed Assets - value \$5,641. Equipment purchased in the previous year from NZ Lottery Grants Board and ASB Community Trust grants (laptop computer, data projector and screen, digital recorder, mobile display unit).

Total Trustees Funds combines \$228,461 carried

forward from previous years, with \$10,930 excess income over expenditure in the current year. As noted in the President's Annual Report (see above), the majority of this money (\$199,000) is held in tagged funds – the Reserves fund for land acquisition, the Book reprint fund, and the Neil and Jean Smith fund.

Operation Possum Blitz

[*Editor's note:* Last year, June Henderson of Titirangi (commonly known as “the ginger lady” for her dedicated work on weed control in her local area) decided that she needed to focus on a new project. She turned her attention to possums and here is her report on the first year of operation.]

It is good to report on a successful project. Perseverance is the answer. To be open ‘all hours’ even at weekends is convenient to the would-be ‘trapper’. We all know possums are a pest, and recent figures from 2006 show they cost New Zealand \$101,000,000. People with fruit trees and vegetable gardens know only too well the damage caused by possums, and the unpleasant task of cleaning possum poo from roofs and decks.

Operation Possum Blitz has been in action since 2009, resulting in about 100 traps now working for our environment. Over 150 possums have been reported caught. We appreciate getting feedback from the trappers but unfortunately not everyone phones back with the numbers.

A family who recently arrived in New Zealand called in for a Timms Trap. Whilst making out their receipt in “Possum Headquarters”, I felt something moving on my head. They had brought the family parrot along as well! Just before going to press, a young man from Blockhouse Bay called in. He told me of 6 possums in the backyard, sitting on the fence, the grass and the deck, eating apples. Leaving my house with a Timms Trap, he promised to let me know about this “gang” of possums, hopefully trapping them one by one.

It is important to set your trap every night with fresh bait, such as apple and cinnamon to increase your chances of success. However, over Easter a Laingholm trapper caught two possums, using hot cross buns, and dried apricots!

For Timms Traps contact:

Ph: June 817 8315 or Linda 817 4338

Email: op.possumblitz@hotmail.com

\$35 to purchase a Timms Trap

\$25 refundable bond for short term loan

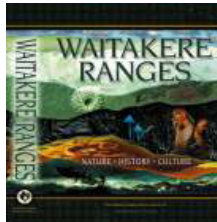
Best time for trapping? Anytime!

June Henderson
Titirangi

Your Committee

**Committee meetings are held on the
second Wednesday of the month**

President: John Edgar 812 8555
jedgar@iconz.co.nz
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“WAITAKERE RANGES”

First edition almost sold out.

Cost to members: \$85.00 incl p&p

Name: _____

Address: _____

Number of **“Waitakere Ranges”** (\$85 ea): _____

Phone number or email address (in case of queries):

PAY ONLINE:

- (1) Email your order information to the Treasurer at
kemsdale@ihug.co.nz
- (2) Make online payment to Kiwibank
account number 38-9010-0379887-01

OR

PAY BY CHEQUE:

Please send your order and cheque to:
Waitakere Ranges Protection Society
PO Box 15668, Waitakere City, 0640.

PIHA – THE WAY IT WAS

SANDRA CONEY
shows nostalgic images of the
changing landscape of Piha

Sunday 6th June 2010

8 pm start for talk

Entry free/koha

at Piha Surf Club

Fish & Chips \$10

Bar/kitchen open 6 pm

Brighten up Queen's Birthday with a fish & chip meal and enjoy a trawl through SANDRA CONEY's collection of old images of Piha. From her extensive image library, Sandra has selected photographs that show the changing foreshore, the forested hills, Piha's earliest buildings and some of the departed personalities of Piha.

This was a hit first time around, so if you missed it, here's your chance! Not only are the landscapes of interest, but also the events and personalities caught in these images.

Organised by Protect Piha Heritage
Ph 8152 414 PO Box 3 Piha
Email protectpihaheritage@xtra.co.nz
www.piha.co.nz/heritage



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