

THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,
Arataki Visitors Centre, Monday 20 March, 2006**

Annual Report of the Executive Committee

I am pleased to present the 32nd Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

The past year has seen the executive working at full capacity on a number of issues, some of which have been on the Society's agenda for many years. Not only have we progressed the day-to-day activities of our core business, but we have also seen through a few huge projects to very satisfactory conclusions.

When we met at last year's AGM, the Councils were about to go into round three of the consultation on the Waitakere Ranges protection project. That round was completed and there was considerable community support for the project. Drafting of the bill took sometime but was successfully completed by about September, and went through the statutory notification period. It was not a smooth passage and boundary disputes in Rodney District delayed the tabling in Parliament until February 2006. But it was a great day when on 22nd February 2006, MP for Waitakere Lynne Pillay, the member responsible for the carriage of the bill through Parliament, moved in the house that the bill be read for the first time and opened the debate with a forceful speech on the history and purpose of the bill. It was then debated by members from each party and voted to go to select committee by 61 votes to 60. Support came from Labour, Greens, Maori and Progressives. The Local Government and Environmental Select Committee has now called for public submissions on the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill to be received by Friday 21st April 2006. Lynne will be reporting tonight on the stages that the bill will go through before it comes back to the house to be enacted.

After two and a half years of hard work, editors Bruce and Trixie Harvey brought the Waitakere Ranges Book successfully to press in March. Two weeks ago I attended the printing of part of the book at PrintLink in Petone, and it was wonderful to see the dream of so many people become reality as the pages rolled off the press. I would like to thank our designers Paul Nicolai and Graeme Leather for their patience and diligence with the 540 pages, the 50 or so authors of the essays, the artists who donated images of their art, the sponsors who gave substantial financial assistance, the printer Printlink and paper merchants Spicers who gave us a good price including a part sponsorship of the book that enabled us to print in New Zealand rather than China. The book is being bound at present and is due for delivery by the end of this month. We are planning a launch on the 7th May and this will be your opportunity to buy this definitive book on the ranges and support the work of the Society. We cannot thank Bruce and Trixie enough for the huge effort that they have made on this project. They

have accepted no payment for the hundreds of meticulous hours that editing a book like this takes. They were prepared to go to any lengths to get the best results, and the finished product will be a great tribute to them, and to all those people who worked so hard to make this book a reality.

The Swanson Structure Plan that has been in our sights for perhaps eight years finally went to the Environment Court in November for a three-week hearing. This makes it one of the longest and most complex appeals to which the Society has been party. Thanks to Douglas Allan, Gary Taylor and planner Adrienne Young-Cooper we were very well represented and we await the decision of the court. This court's decision is very important because it will determine if structure planning will be used again in the foothills of the ranges.

In March 2005 the Society was involved in the hearings at the ARC on the Watercare Services consent applications for the five Waitakere water supply dams. These consents are for 30 years, and so it was important to get the conditions right. The Society successfully argued that continuous compensation flows must be made, and that flushing flows must be used at regular intervals to clear downstream sediments. Thanks to Douglas Allan and our expert witnesses, Clinton McCullough and Mels Barton, the Society achieved an acceptable outcome and we resolved our differences by consent notice after mediation and thereby avoided going to the Environment Court to appeal the decision.

As is the case so often, one issue is only just resolved when another two appear. Since October we have been closely involved in the ward boundary review being undertaken by Waitakere City. This is a statutory requirement under the Local Government Act. At the end of last year, Council signalled that they were starting the process, and had an external planner carry out a survey of the current boundaries. The planner's recommendation was a three-ward system, now known as Option 1, which does away entirely with Waitakere Ward, its councillors and community board, and would see the ward and the Waitakere Heritage Area divided into three sections from north to south with each section becoming part of a northern, central or southern urban area. On March 15 Council decided to go forward to formal public consultation with the three-ward option, and written submissions are due by 26th April. Following hearings, Council will make its recommendation to the Local Government Commission, to whom the public can make further submissions. Only those people who have made written submissions to Waitakere City's formal consultation can make submissions to the LGC. The Society will be making extensive submissions but I urge each one of you to exercise your democratic rights and make a submission before the 26th April.

To compound our workload, Waitakere Ward Cr Pat Booth resigned due to ill health in January and a by-election is currently underway. Nominations from five candidates have been received and postal voting closes on Friday 21st April. Executive member Denise Yates who was previously a councillor from

2000 to 2004 is standing as an independent with the Society's support and we wish her every success.

We have had a substantial input into the long-anticipated Waitakere Ranges Visitor Study that has now been drafted by ARC and WCC. Our main cause for concern is the provision for a trial study of mountain biking in the park. We have for years opposed vehicles in the park, and this trial is most alarming in the message it sends to off-road bikers about the ranges. In the past the rationale for permitting activities in the park has been more about providing recreational opportunities than conservation of the environment, and we have a real battle ahead to restrict the more extreme recreational activities like mountain biking and canyoning.

The Society keeps a watching brief on developments at the Te Henga quarry, the water quality issues at Lake Wainamu, and the weed and pest eradication programs throughout the ranges. We are particularly concerned with the granting of exploration licences for sea bed mining on the west coast. Over the past year we have made complaints about excessive tree trimming under powerlines by Vector Energy and Treescape and we welcome the opportunity to work with them to develop a long-term strategy. We always have on our books a number of resource consent applications, some of which are easily solved to the satisfaction of all parties, and other which become protracted and a real burden on our resources. In spite of this it is essential that the Society remains an interested party on all notified applications in the ranges. Our professionalism and our fairness are always acknowledged and it is satisfying to know that the Society is held in great respect by friends and foes alike. Thanks go to our representatives on these various matters.

The Society has been present at a number of festivals and events throughout the year. This is an important aspect of our advocacy but it is dependant on committee members being prepared to give their weekends up to promote the work of the Society. Thanks especially to Anna and Mels for their enthusiasm which has ensured that we continue to have a presence at these events.

During the year Anne Poulsen resigned from the committee due to the demands of her PhD studies. In the short time on the committee Anne made a substantial contribution to our Oral History project. This project has now been taken up by new member Carole Shone and we anticipate extending the oral history project to include quite a number of members of the Society. Thanks are also due to Robyn Mason from Waitakere Libraries who has given us expert advice and encouragement throughout this project

The executive note with great sadness the death of our friend and colleague John Hadwen in September. John had been on the committee for two years, and was beginning to make an important contribution with his diligence, wisdom and wit. His death from cancer at the age of 53 is a great loss to us personally and professionally, as he was a person who would give hugely of his expertise

once he committed to a project. We are lucky to have known him and terribly sad to lose him. Our condolences go to his wife Eileen and his children Ben and Rebecca.

Thanks to our editor Kath Dewar, our quarterly newsletter contributes greatly to our advocacy. Contributions from members are always much appreciated. Our website continues to be developed by webmaster Mike Nixon. Internet presence is an essential tool for the Society as we can ensure that it has the latest information, and we recommend you visit the website regularly. Over the next year the website will be completely rebuilt and we acknowledge the *pro bono* contribution of Craig Tyler, Mike, Anna, Kath and Mels to see this through.

Throughout the year the Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of matters. As always, we especially need to mention two people who always find time to give the Society their very best advice. To our legal counsel Douglas Allan and resource management consultant Gary Taylor the Society owes a great debt for their extremely generous *pro bono* contributions to our work. There are also many other people who have worked for the Society, and we acknowledge them all by saying that without each individual's contribution we would not be achieving the way we do.

I want to acknowledge the dedication of your executive committee. This outgoing committee is certainly the best that we have had recently. The expertise on a wide range of subjects is formidable, and the high level of debate at our monthly meetings is always stimulating. During the year we co-opted Greg Presland and Denise Yates on to the committee and their contribution was immediately valuable. The committee requires a huge commitment from each person and there are at times when we are under considerable stress, but the shared vision, the professionalism and the friendships that have developed have carried the day on so many occasions. Thanks also to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and we are grateful for her administration skills.

I would like to ask the outgoing committee to stand up. These people are your elected executive who have given the Society so much over the past year. It has been a pleasure and an honour 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.

I want to especially mention Colleen Pilcher who will be standing down this from the committee this year. All of you will know the dedication that Colleen has given to the Society since it was formed. She was a recipient of one of our honour awards in 2003 and as a conservationist and a friend we hold Colleen in the very highest regard. Having served in various positions on this committee since 1973, she has earned a well-deserved break and we wish her all the very best in her time out from the committee. I have no doubt that we will see

Colleen back on the committee again in the future. Please join us in thanking Colleen for her outstanding contribution over the past 33 years.

Very special thanks go to our treasurer Sandra Jones who has brought a new level of professionalism to the Society. She has negotiated the GST registration of the Society, and at a time when there has been more money than ever in the accounts due to the grants for the printing of the book, such care is much needed and appreciated. The audit of the Society's books this year by our honorary auditor Martin Bailey of McGregor Bailey Ltd is gratefully acknowledged.

We especially want to thank Kath Dewar, our secretary, who always takes the initiative and who generously gives the Society her valuable time and considerable expertise on so many issues. She has given me great support throughout the year by sharing the work load that would otherwise get quite overwhelming. She stood in the general elections last year for the Green Party in Te Atatu and showed her commitment to making a difference. We wish her and Tony a well-deserved holiday in Nepal over the next few weeks.

Thanks also to our Vice President Anna Fomison who has been active in event management, pre-publication of the WR book, and the new website design over the past year. She deputised for me last May when I was overseas and the protection project was at a very crucial stage.

Finally we want to thank all the members and friends who have supported us. Generous donations to the Society continue to come. We could not achieve as much as we do without this financial support and it is very much appreciated.

We can assure you that the coming year will be at least as busy and definitely more exciting. We hope that when we meet for our AGM in a year's time the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill has been enacted. We are so close to achieving this great vision, and yet there is still so much that needs to be done to ensure that the ranges are truly saved. Please do not relax your vigilance. In the coming years we will need your support more than ever for I cannot see the Society ever becoming redundant.

I move that the Annual Report be received.

John Edgar
President
Waitakere Ranges Protection Society