

# **THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,  
Arataki Visitors Centre, Monday 2 April, 2007**

## **Annual Report of the Executive Committee**

I am pleased to present the 33rd Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

The past year has been very successful for the Society, seeing two of our long-standing visions become reality. When we met here a year ago, The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill had just had its first reading in the house, and was about to go to select committee. The Society and many of its supporters made submissions to the select committee hearings held in Waitakere City in April and after long deliberation, we understand that the bill will come back to the house for its second reading in May this year. Inevitably the committee will recommend some changes as a result of the submissions it received, and I have asked our MP for Waitakere and sponsor of the bill, Lynne Pillay, to speak to us later tonight about the progress of the bill.

Our second great vision was realised when we launched the Waitakere Ranges Book in May. Those of you who were at the launch in the Titirangi War Memorial Hall will recall what a wonderful afternoon it was. Prime Minister Helen Clark launched the book to a gathering of over 400 people, a hall bursting with people who love the ranges. This was such an exciting event, and the success was in large part due to the beautiful and long-awaited book, and the meticulous planning of your executive committee. We honoured the editors, Bruce and Trixie Harvey who received well-deserved thanks from all present for a well-researched and definitive book. Their refusal to accept any payment for their hundreds of hours of work was proof to me of the very special place that volunteers have in our society. From a print run of 3000 books, we now have less than 700 in stock, and sales continue to be steady. The book has been submitted in the environment section of the Montana Book Awards which will be announced in July.

Having talked of dreams that came true, let me move on to the recurring nightmares. The Swanson Structure Plan has been on the Society's books for at least eight years. The appeals went to the Environment Court in November 2005 and an interim decision was released by the court in June 2006 which addressed the court's jurisdiction to consider prohibited activity status for subdivision. A second interim decision was released in September 2006 giving land owners in the structure plan area an opportunity to submit on prohibited

activity status for subdivision on their land if their land was not given rights by the proposed Swanson Structure Plan. Following a number of procedural decisions from the court, and the public notification by WCC of the amendments to the Swanson Structure Plan, a three-week hearing has been scheduled for May. The Society will be represented by Douglas Allan and Gary Taylor.

Since October 2005 we have been involved in the electoral representation and ward boundary review being undertaken by Waitakere City. This is a statutory requirement under the Local Government Act. Following the Council's initial decision to have only three wards, public submissions in opposition convinced them to retain the four ward arrangement but with only one elected representative in Waitakere ward. The Society and others made extensive submissions on this decision in April to the Local Government Commissioners and we welcomed their decision recognising that Waitakere Ward must include most of the proposed Heritage Area and have two elected councillors. This is a victory for common sense and fair representation, and we are pleased that Titirangi is now part of Waitakere Ward, while the urban area of Western Heights becomes part of the Henderson Ward.

When Waitakere Ward Cr Pat Booth resigned due to ill health in January 2006 a by-election was held in April and Carl Harding was elected. Carl was previously a regional councillor from 1999-2001.

The Society is represented on the working party of the Waitakere Ranges Visitor Study that is currently being drafted by ARC and WCC. A cause for concern is the continued emphasis on the economic benefit of visitors to Waitakere City rather than environmental protection of the ranges. We have a real battle ahead to restrict the more extreme recreational activities like mountain biking and canyoning, and recently both canyoning license holders applied to renew their consents for the next four years with requests for increased numbers of participants.

We monitor developments at the Te Henga quarry, the water quality issues at Lake Wainamu, and the weed and pest eradication programs throughout the ranges. We support Waitakere City's proposal to control willows in the Te Henga wet lands by aerial spraying, but only as a last resort. We continue to be concerned with the granting of exploration licences for sea bed iron sand mining on the west coast.

Our Oral History project has now been taken up by committee member Carole Shone and we anticipate extending the oral history project to include a number of members of the Society. We were successful in our application for funding to the lotteries board and have recently contacted five early members of the

Society inviting them to take part in this project. The interviews and transcripts will be archived with Waitakere Libraries, and copies will be available to members.

The executive note with great sadness the death of Helen Ramsay, wife of our committee member Graeme. Throughout her long illness Helen made every effort to attend our meetings and always encouraged Graeme to keep up his work for the Society. The committee met for some years at their home in Kohu Road and more recently in Green Bay. Our condolences go to Graeme and his family.

Throughout the year the Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of matters. The *pro bono* contribution of our legal counsel Douglas Allan and resource management consultant Gary Taylor is invaluable. We also acknowledge the work that James Hook has done for us on the Whenuapai Airport Plan change, and McGregor Bailey who have been our honorary auditors for the past three years.

Without a doubt the success of the Society is in large part due to the dedication of your executive committee. The outgoing committee have been very diligent over the past year, when the demands of work and family have often suffered to ensure that the Society's goals are met. The committee's 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 Jacqui Reed on to the committee and her expertise as a water scientist with NIWA will be much appreciated. The committee requires a huge volunteer 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.

Special thanks go to our treasurer Sandra Jones who has brought a new level of financial accountability to the Society. Her meticulous financial reports are much appreciated, not just in the general and reserve funds, but in the book fund that has grown to over \$80,000 as the money from sales accumulates. This book fund is available should we decide to reprint the book.

I especially want to thank Kath Dewar, our secretary and Anna Fomison, vice-president for their support over the past year. Kath has taken on a large part of the workload that I previously did, such as writing submissions and networking with the many other environmental groups, and that has been a great relief and has made my contribution more sustainable. Anna has been active in event management, pre-publication of the WR book, the new website design, and is editor of our quarterly newsletter which contributes greatly to our advocacy. Our website continues to be maintained by Mike Nixon. Internet presence is an essential tool for the Society as we can ensure that the website has the latest information, and we recommend you visit it regularly. We are currently working on a complete rebuild of the website and it is hoped that this will be completed this year.

We want to thank all the members and friends who have supported us over that past year. Generous donations to the Society continue to come in. This financial support is very much appreciated, and is in fact essential for us to maintain our core activities. We chose not to raise our membership subscription rate again this year, and this was recognised by many members who paid their subscription and added a generous donation.

It has been my pleasure to be Society president and chair of the executive committee for the past nine years, and while it has been quite time consuming and at times difficult to sustain, I have enjoyed it very much. I want to thank my family, and especially my partner Ann for her support, encouragement and understanding which has enabled me to serve the Society better.

As I said a year ago, we hope that when we meet for our AGM in 2008 the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Bill has been enacted. We are so close to achieving this great vision. This legislation will not be an end, but rather a new and exciting beginning for the Society. For as the ranges become better protected from the current problems of visitor numbers and inappropriate development, new threats such as climate change will begin to have effects on the ecology that we must learn to recognise early if we are to ensure the long-term health of this wonderful forest.

Thank you.

I move that the Annual Report be received.

John Edgar  
President  
Waitakere Ranges Protection Society