

## THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Arataki Visitors Centre, Monday 31 March, 2014

#### Annual Report of the Executive Committee

I am pleased to present the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

In 1973 when the Society was formed, few of the activists who opposed the proposed rubbish tip in the old Duck's Quarry in the Waitakere Valley would have thought that 40 years later the Society would still be active. But just last year we celebrated our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and there is a strong resolve in the current committee and membership to take the Society forward. To achieve that, we need to be recruiting new members, especially young people who love the Ranges and want to contribute to their conservation and protection. To celebrate our 40-year milestone, the Society commissioned Trixie and Bruce Harvey to research and write the history of the first 40 years of the Society, and the book was published in July 2013. In 168 pages it tells our story with a special emphasis on the issues, the campaigns and especially the people involved; those members who tirelessly gave of their time and expertise to advance our cause.

It was great to see so many members and friends at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on the 7<sup>th</sup> July. The Waitakere Village Hall where the Society held some of its first meetings was filled with people, many of whom had not seen their friends for some years. The Society presented Honour Certificates to Dave and Barbara Harre, Geoff Davidson, Graeme Ramsay, Peter Maddison, Graeme Murdoch, Lynne Pillay, Dorothy Wilson, June Henderson and Ted Scott for their outstanding contributions to conservation in the ranges. Since 2003 we have presented 32 certificates. Many volunteers helped to make the afternoon a success, and the enthusiasm and good company of all those who attended showed that the Society is in a strong position to ensure our next 40 years are even more successful.

Over the past year the Society has spent considerable effort working on the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (PAUP) which was released for public submissions on the 15 March 2013 when the Society made initial submissions. Following that a draft of the PAUP was notified on 30 September 2013 and since then our planning and legal team has worked hard to prepare our submissions which were lodged on the 27 February. We have also made submissions to the Auckland Council and the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Annual Plans, the Te Henga Local Area Plan, the Visitor Management Plan and the west coast Marine Mammal Sanctuary.

The number of non-complying resource consent applications have been few in the past years and on the advice of our planning and legal team, they have been able to be resolved by consent order. Most notably was Plan Change 36 which provided for non-residential activities in the WRHA to enhance the social, cultural, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people and communities. After lengthy mediation in the Environment Court with all parties, the Society was able to make a number of amendments to the plan change prior to it becoming operative in October.

April last year marked five years since the WRHA Act gained assent, and the Waitakere Ranges Local Board commissioned a five monitoring report to find if the objectives of the Act are being met and how human activity and the actions and decisions of Auckland Council and its council controlled organisations are affecting the area. That report is available online from the Auckland Council website.

The RMA Reform Bill and the Housing Accord Bill have been of great concern. Our submissions on these matters were not accepted by the Select Committee, and both bills were enacted. We are currently considering the discussion document "Improving our Resource Management system" released by the Ministry for the Environment in February 2013, which proposes further changes to the RMA that we consider will have negative effects on the environment, conservation and protection of the ranges.

Kauri in the ranges are infected with the pathogen *Phytophthora taxon Agathis* and there is no known cure. Scientists estimate that currently 13% of kauri in the ranges are infected, and 65% of these are along walking tracks, an indication that trampers, runners and animals are spreading the disease. The Society welcomed the closure of 27km (10%) of walking tracks in the ranges in 2012, and these closures of areas where there is no sign of kauri dieback will provide scientists a benchmark to study the spread of the disease. Funding for research and management of the disease runs out this year and to date there has been no assurance from the Government that funding will continue. In January, with no public consultation, Council approved the Hillary Trail Ultra Marathon from Arataki to Muriwai involving up to 500 participants. We are not convinced that the conditions imposed on the event in March will stop the spread of kauri dieback, the greatest occurrence of which is along the Hillary Trail.

News this month that kauri dieback has been detected for the first time on the Coromandel Peninsula in the 319 ha Whangapoua Forest/Hukarahi Conservation Area is of concern. This detection of the disease is in a forest with no public tracks and little public use other than pig hunters. The Minister for Conservation has issued a Notice of Closure for the entire area to contain the disease and to reduce its spread.

Our Oral Historian Anna Fomison has progressed this project well. In the past year three new interviews have been completed and lodged with Auckland and Turnbull Libraries, and three more are currently underway. To date 24 interviews have been completed and we will apply for further funding later this year. Anna and Tim have also worked on our new website which is being designed by Think Red, and should be operative in the next month. This new website will make it much easier for members and the public to access information about the Society and the ranges.

Together with the Royal Forest and Bird Society we are currently involved in negotiations with Auckland Council and the Te Henga quarry operator on the rehabilitation plans for the quarry when the current lease expires. We started working on this last year to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved for future public access to and enjoyment of the area. However, we have recently heard that Council may seek to extend the quarry lease and make new areas adjacent to the existing quarry available for quarrying, which will set back any rehabilitation plans. We will be watching this very closely.

Our congratulations to the successful candidates in the local body elections in October. Penny Hulse and Linda Cooper were elected as councillors for Waitakere Ward, and the

Future West team of Sandra Coney, Denise Yates, Greg Presland, Neil Henderson, Steve Tollestrup and Saffron Toms won all six positions on the Local Board. Penny is Council Deputy Mayor, and Sandra Chair of the Local Board.

When Saffron Toms was elected to the Waitakere Ranges Local Board she resigned her position as our Heritage Area Coordinator. In February the Society appointed Christine Rose to this position. Christine has a political background, with 15 years in local and regional government. She has been Deputy Mayor of Rodney District Council, Deputy Chair of the Auckland Regional Council, Chair of the Auckland Regional Council's Transport and Urban Development Committee, and Deputy Chair of the ARC's Parks and Heritage Committee. We are privileged to have her working for the Society. This position is funded by a grant from the ASB Community Trust supplemented by tagged donations from members, for which we are very grateful.

In February Te Kawerau a Maki signed a deed of settlement of historical treaty claims with the Crown in a very moving ceremony at Makaurau Marae. Te Kawerau a Maki are the tangata whenua of Waitakere area, and they hold customary authority or manawhenua. Te Kawerau a Maki descend from the earliest inhabitants of the area, and have been a distinct tribal entity since the early 1600s, when their ancestor Maki and his people conquered and settled the district. Today Te Kawerau a Maki live throughout the west and wider Auckland region and maintain a close relationship with the Waitakere area.

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 Joanna van den Bergen from Ellis Gould Ltd., our resource management consultant Gary Taylor and the Environmental Defence Society is invaluable. Thanks also to James Hook at Envivo Planning who has advised and represented the Society on various planning matters. And once again our thanks go to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and coordinated mail-outs for many years.

The executive committee has met on the second Tuesday of the month. 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 their efforts on our behalf.

Special thanks go to our Vice-President Anna Fomison, Secretary Lynda Williams and Treasurer Sandra Jones. Sandra has also edited our quarterly newsletter. The Society currently has three Patrons, Emeritus Professor Dick Bellamy, the Rt. Hon. Jonathan Hunt and Lynne Pillay. It has been my honour to be President and to chair the executive committee for the past sixteen years. I want to thank Society members and my family and friends for their support which has enabled me to better serve the Society.

As you will hear in the financial report, the Society remains in a strong financial position. The majority of the reserves have accumulated from sales of the Waitakere Ranges book and these funds are currently tagged for future publications.

During the year five long-time members of the Society died. In June Andrew Channings died. He and his wife Ann had a life membership since 2000. And in September David

Fowlds died. His wife Violet will remain a member of the Society. In January, Daphne Blackshaw, Colleen Pilcher's sister died. Dr Colin Little, QSO MBE FNZIAS MSc DPhil. who joined in 1995, died in February in his 101st year. Colin's last communication with the Society was a letter in 2009 suggesting a possible treatment for kauri dieback disease. Owen Lewis, headmaster of Selwyn College 1966-1979, died in March aged 92. Owen was a foundation member of the Native Forests Restoration Trust and had a property in Mountain Road until 2010. Our condolences go to their families.

The Society is forty years old. To the members and friends who were there when the Society was founded in 1973, and the many others who have since joined we would like to express our thanks for your support over the years. The Society has a proud history, but our work is not done. While the Heritage Area Act has made some matters more certain for both landowners, developers and the Society, recent changes to the RMA will have adverse effects on the landscape and environment of the ranges. Your support in the coming years will be more important than ever.

Thank you.

I move that the Annual Report be received

John Edgar  
President  
The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.