

THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Arataki Visitors Centre, Wednesday 26 March 2018

Annual Report of the Executive Committee

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

150 years ago logging of the mighty trees in the ranges was the greatest ecological threat. Since the logging ended, the forest has regenerated. Now the greatest threat to the ecology of the ranges is kauri dieback, caused by a microscopic pathogen *phytophthora agathidicida*. There is no cure - every infected tree will die. The five-year survey results released in 2017 showed that on average 18% of kauri were infected, almost doubling from 10% in that five-year period. In some areas of the ranges, for example the Piha catchment, up to 60% of trees are infected. The Society has worked with iwi, Council and Waitakere conservation groups to ensure that every thing possible is done to protect kauri from this pathogen. Following the placement of the rahūi by Te Kawerau a Maki in December 2017, Council moved in February to endorse the rahūi with closure of all tracks in the forested areas of the ranges, and a work program to begin upgrading tracks to dry foot, which once done, will allow the tracks to be re-opened to the public. We want to thank the Tree Council, Forest and Bird and Friends of the Regional Park for their hard work to push for these closures, and especially Te Kawerau a Maki for the strong and unrelenting position they have taken since placing the rahūi. Without this iwi leadership, I doubt that we would be in this position.

The rapid spread of myrtle rust is most alarming, as is the decision by MPI to stop trying to contain it in Taranaki with a Controlled Area Notice under the Biosecurity Act. The spores are moved by the wind, and also by plant movement and human and animal contact with infected plants. To date there are no reports of it in the ranges.

Following Council's decision in the Proposed Unitary Plan to replace prohibited activity status with non-complying in some planning zones in the ranges, the Society appealed this to the High Court and we were successful in overturning the decision. Council accepted this ruling and reversed their decision. That allowed parties who had submitted on this matter to the Proposed Unitary Plan Topic 75 to appeal to the Environment Court. Only one party did this and together with Council we are currently in court-assisted mediation with the Strategic Property Advocacy Network.

Katherine Russell, our Heritage Area Coordinator has continued to provide very valuable input into research, reports to the committee, and drafting of submissions on many different matters. Katherine has been a valuable member of our team and we are very grateful for her diligence. However she is currently on maternity leave and we wish her and her husband James the very best as they start their new family, with Emma Annabelle Russell born on 15 March. We welcome Emma as the youngest member of the Society. While Katherine is on leave, we have employed Mischa Davis, a highly-qualified environmental lawyer and she is currently working on submissions for the Long Term Plan, The Auckland Plan, and the Regional Pest Management Plan.

Over the past year we have made submissions on the Draft Threatened Species Strategy, the Karekare beach access boardwalk resource consent application, the Taitomo Draft Policy and Concept Plan, the Waitakere Ranges Local Board Plan, the Amendments to National Policy

Statement on Freshwater, the Air Quality draft bylaw and the Auckland Council Annual Plan discussion document.

We continue to be involved as a stakeholder in Watercare's consultation to replace the Huia Water Treatment Plant in Woodlands Park Road. The chosen site is Manuka Road, adjacent to the existing plant. We are a member of the Community Liaison Group that meets monthly with Watercare. This group has commissioned an independent review of the geotechnical data by Dr Bruce Riddolls and an independent ecological survey by Shona Myers. Once these reviews are finalised, Watercare engineers will consider if and how the new plant can be built on the site.

The Society has commissioned a history of the Heritage Area Act to be written by journalist Wayne Thompson who was a senior environmental reporter for the New Zealand Herald at the time leading up to and after the passing of the Act. The manuscript has been delivered to the publisher, Oratia Media, and it will be available as an electronic book before the end of this year.

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. We are grateful to have received grants of \$5000 from Foundation North and \$8000 from the Waitakere Ranges Local Board towards the Heritage Area Act history book.

Facilitated by our secretary Joanna Silver the committee has prepared a five-year strategic plan that will give us a better focus on our objectives and allow us to regularly assess our performance and achievements. Joanna will report on the plan this evening.

The Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of legal and planning matters. The *pro bono publico* contribution of our legal counsel Douglas Allan from Ellis Gould Ltd., and RMA consultant Gary Taylor from EDS is invaluable. Thanks also to James Hook at Envivo Planning who has advised and represented the Society on all planning matters. And our thanks go to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and coordinated mail-outs for many years.

Anna Fomison keeps our website up to date and it is working well to disseminate information and allow people to purchase merchandise and join the Society. Orhan Er is editor of our quarterly newsletter and we always welcome contributions from members. The executive committee meets on the second Wednesday 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 volunteer time over the past year. It has been a pleasure to work together and I would like this meeting to join with me in showing our appreciation for their efforts on our behalf. During the year, Christine Rose resigned from the committee after a year as our Heritage Area Coordinator and 3 years as a committee member and Janet Thomson will not stand again for the committee this year. Special thanks go to our vice-president Anna Fomison, secretary Joanna Silver and treasurer Sandra Jones. 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 twenty years. I want to thank Society members and my family and friends for their support that has enabled me to better serve the Society.

Sadly, during the year five members passed away. Dr Graeme Ramsay who was on our committee for 18 years was our senior scientist and a very enthusiastic and committed

member. Lynda Williams was on our committee for 10 years, the last three of which she was our secretary. Local Board member Denise Yates was on our committee for 9 years resigning in 2010 when she was elected to the Local Board. Margaret Jenkinson and Jack Kingston, long time members of the Society, also passed away. Our thanks to these five members for their support and our condolences go to their families and friends.

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. The Society has a proud history, but our work is not done. Your support in the coming years will be more important than ever.

John Edgar ONZM
President
The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.