

# THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Arataki Visitors Centre,  
Monday 17 March, 2003**

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

I am pleased to present the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society.

The past year has been, if anything, busier than previous years. A combination of working with a newly-elected Council in Waitakere City to resolve District Plan appeals, making submissions to many hearings on local and regional issues, gearing up our advocacy campaign, introducing publicity initiatives, and many other matters have really been quite a challenge to the committee. At times we have felt under-resourced, more in terms of time than money, and this has led to considerable pressures on the executive to find time in their already busy schedules to commit to Society matters. It becomes a case of truly believing in the vision of the Society, knowing that others have worked hard for thirty years to get us to this point and believing that we must continue to pursue our vision and never give up. But the Society's work must also be sustainable in terms of human resources. I say this to remind you that we are a volunteer organisation, which requires members of the executive to make real personal commitments to further the aims of the Society. If we are to continue at this level of commitment it can only be with a very strong mandate and support from our members.

We are aware that in almost every case we take on we are the last line of defence between the inappropriate development and the conservation of the Ranges. So often the Society is the "last man standing", and even although this is very difficult place to be, we can be proud that over the past year we have found the necessary resources to remain true in the pursuit of our vision of permanent protection for the Ranges. And over the year we have achieved some very positive outcomes.

We congratulate the WCC for finally making the District Plan operative after its notification in 1995. There are still a number of appeals to which the Society is a party, and these are being resolved at present through mediation and litigation. For the past year we have worked on the Titirangi-Laingholm subdivision appeal which has required over 30 meetings attended by Douglas Allan and myself to attempt to reach a settlement between the many appellants. To date the parties have agreed on a set of draft rules which recognise some of the development aspirations of landowners in this area which, while inside the MUL, is known to have severe constraints on development posed by geotechnic, stormwater, landscape and ecology. It has been a difficult process but I believe that the Society has been fair and has shown a great amount of willingness to resolve the issues, many of which go back for at least 30 years.

The introduction of structure plans for subdivisions in the eastern flanks of the WR has taken considerable effort for the Society to contain. We are opposed to SPs in principle, as they are ultimately just another round of subdivision. However, if such development is to take place then

it is imperative that those catchments are protected from further development by the introduction of prohibited activity status for all subdivision exceeding the DP provisions. This is the only way that landowners can be certain of the future.

There has been the usual number of non-complying resource consent applications on which the Society must make considered submissions and usually speak to those at hearings. And there are the perennial cases that move along very slowly and take an enormous amount of time and thought. We enter into mediation as often as possible and attempt to avoid environment court hearings if at all possible.

We support the R F&B initiative for marine protection of the west coast. Sue Turner has been our representative on this committee. It is important for the working party to receive feedback on the discussion paper that is now circulating, and I urge all of you to contact Ken Catt at Waitakere F&B and make your comments known as soon as possible.

We are also pleased that the Ark in the Park project is finally taken a form that we can support, and with the signing of a MOU between AitP and ARC this conservation program can now proceed in an area of 250 ha on the western slopes of Pukematekeo. Our concerns with the original proposal were found to be justified by the ARC, and the pilot project will be assessed annually before it is expanded. It is now of a similar size to various other pest eradication programs that are being conducted in the ranges such as the Lone Kauri and the La Trobe forest restoration initiatives at Karekare which the Society fully supports.

Over the past two years Jane and Simon have represented the Society on the West Coast Plan Liason Group. These meetings of community representatives from throughout the ranges are very valuable as it is rare for such a wide group to come together to discuss conservation matters. Jane and Simon have indicated that they wish to stand down this year and they deserve our thanks for the contribution that they have made.

Jane also coordinated our submission to the ARC on canyoning and adventure tourism in the CMP. Such commercial concessions have become an issue for the Society as more people want to make financial gain from recreation in the Park. We have noted with concern the increase in the number of tourism operators in the CMP over the past years, and have an assurance from the ARC that a visitor impact study will be undertaken and a visitor strategy developed to address these very real impacts.

The Society keeps a watching brief on developments at the Te Henga quarry, the water quality issues at Lake Wainamu, and the weed eradication program in the Waitakere Valley wetlands. Thanks go to our representatives on these various committees. One great success that we can acknowledge is the creation of the largest scientific reserve in the Auckland region. The Society has long advocated for the permanent protection of the accreted sand dunes at Whatipu, and we are pleased that this year 820ha have been designated a DOC scientific reserve and placed under management of ARC. We can now look forward to a comprehensive management program that will address the many weed, pest, and human issues in this very special area. The Society supports the PAM eradication program. The consequences of the caterpillars getting into the Ranges are very serious. We also support WCC in its attempts to have MAF release the spray recipe to medical personnel in the city so that prevention and treatment of spray-related illness can be more effective.

We have almost completed the payments for 71 Turanga Rd. There is still approximately \$10,000 to be repaid to WCC on their interest-free loan. As this loan is not registered against the title, we are proceeding with the conveyancing documentation to allow us to gift the land unencumbered to the ARC for inclusion in the Park. This will be our 30<sup>th</sup> birthday present to the people of Auckland, and we thank all those members and friends who so generously donated the \$72,000 to purchase the land. Unfortunately we have not been able to purchase 14 Turanga Rd due to a lack of funds, and the land has recently sold and will be built on by the new owners. The Society will monitor the development and make the WCC and the new owners aware of our concerns for this special piece of virgin rain forest. I would like to acknowledge the considerable contribution made by Jessica Beever to both these properties. Had it not been for her great grandfather Wesley Spragg we would not have Spragg Bush, and had it not been for Jessica's enthusiasm, we would not have purchased 71 Turanga Rd. She has been a wonderful representative for the Society with her exacting scientific information and her tenacity, and it has been a real pleasure working with her.

Throughout the year we have worked hard to progress the concept of a Heritage Area encompassing the whole of the ranges. We are at present in discussion with WCC, ARC and the local MPs as to the best way to achieve this permanent protection. The Society is a minor sponsor of the EDS Protected Landscapes Conference to be held 25 and 26 July at the Sheraton Hotel. Speakers from NZ and UK will present papers on why we need to protect areas of high scenic value and how to best achieve this in NZ. I urge as many of you as possible to attend this conference and get involved in the debate that will lead to a bill going before parliament in the near future, which will result in the Waitakere Ranges and other threatened areas of NZ getting the permanent protection they need.

Most of you by now will have visited the *Ranges of Inspiration* art exhibition at the CEAC. The Society is very proud to be associated with so many fine artists and you will agree that that a visit to the exhibition is as good as a walk in the ranges. Artists have been a keystone of the Society since its inception, and we are very grateful for the effort that all the artists made to produce a fine art work inspired by the Ranges. The auction of the art works will be held at the Corban Estate at 4 pm on Sunday 30 March. This is a wonderful opportunity to support the Society by coming along and joining in the excitement of bidding for your special choice. All profits from the auction will go to the Society's land acquisition fund. Thanks to the exhibition sponsors WCC, ARC, Watercare and Ecowater we were able to produce a beautiful colour catalogue.

Bruce and Trixie Harvey have taken firm editorial control of the WR book that had languished for so long. Most chapters are now rewritten and are being edited and photography commissioned. This book is going to be the definitive work on the Waitakere Ranges for some time to come and it is very important that it is authoritative while being accessible to a wide audience. We plan to print 3000 copies and will shortly be offering a special pre-publication price to members. These funds, together with the money raised by grants and donations will contribute towards the \$70,000 we need to publish a 300 page book of very high quality. Sale of the books directly to public and through retail outlets will eventually return a small profit to the Society.

As part of our advocacy for the ranges we have produced a new brochure and stickers this year. Thanks go to Paul and Yvonne at Aura for the design and to Ted Scott for the photography. You will note that the membership fees have gone up slightly for the first time in four years. At \$25 for

a single and \$35 for a family this is still very reasonable, and the small increase will help us expand our programs.

The Society T shirts continue to sell well and I remind you that they are available for purchase tonight, together with various postcards and posters. By buying these you not only contribute to our fundraising campaign but also spread the word about the Society by wearing the T shirt proudly where ever you go.

Our new improved newsletter has added to our advocacy very well, and thanks go to our editor Kath Dewar who makes each newsletter informative and attractive. The website continues to be developed by webmaster Mike Nixon. Internet presence is an essential tool these days for the Society as we can ensure that it has the most up to date information about our work, and I recommend you all start to use it on a regular basis. As the amount of information on the site increases it becomes a real resource for students and visitors who want to know more about the Ranges and the Society.

We gratefully acknowledge a grant this year of \$5000 from WLT towards the production of new publicity material, and also \$700 from WCC Wellbeing Fund towards collating archival material from the past 30 years.

Thanks go to the many experts who prepared evidence for us in the past year as part of our submissions. I especially need to mention two people who constantly find time to give the Society their very best professional advice. To Douglas Allan and Gary Taylor the Society owes a great debt for their generous *pro bono* contribution to our cause.

There are many people who have worked so hard for so long to achieve the Society's vision. Many of you are here tonight, and you will know others who have worked tirelessly to get us to this point. I acknowledge you all by saying that without each individual's contribution we would not be achieving the way we do.

I would like to ask the outgoing committee to stand up. These people are your elected committee who have given 100% over the past year. It has been a pleasure working with you all and I would like the meeting to join with me in showing our appreciation for their efforts on our behalf. Most of them are standing again, but I would like to especially mention Jane Alexander, who will be standing down this year as VP. We have all been encouraged by Jane's enthusiasm and her precise science. Special thanks also to Linda Godfrey, our secretary for the past five years, who is standing down to work with another community group. Thanks also to Christine Shepherd, standing down as treasurer, who has kept us fiscally responsible over the past year. The honorary audit of the Society's books this year by Martin Bailey of McGregor Bailey Ltd is gratefully acknowledged.

Remember this is our 30<sup>th</sup> year. We plan to celebrate with a series of events over the next year. Please join us for the celebrations. These events will all be notified in the newsletters and an enthusiastic turnout will be much appreciated. We begin with the Art Auction on 30 March, Arbor day tree planting 7 June, and our 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday party at the Waitakere Hall on 27 July.

Thanks again to all members for their support and encouragement over the past year. I can assure you that the next year is going to be even more exciting as we get close to achieving our vision of a Heritage Area that will give the Waitakere Ranges the permanent protection they need to survive the vagaries of local body politics.

John Edgar

President  
Waitakere Ranges Protection Society  
March 2003