

THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Arataki Visitors Centre, Wednesday 30 March, 2016

Annual Report of the Executive Committee

I am pleased to present the 43rd Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

A year ago we reported our concern about the closure of the Te Henga quarry and Auckland Council's proposal to use it as a clean fill dump. This was successfully opposed. The quarry operator, Perry Resources Ltd. ceased quarrying in April and began the restoration of the site by contouring using the overburden and some imported clay and they will begin planting native trees this autumn and keep up a maintenance and weed control program. Our concern now is with the final designation of the quarry. We will work to see that it becomes part of the Regional Park with which it is contiguous, rather than a local park.

After many meetings with Council and the community, we were pleased with the final version of the Te Henga Local Area Plan, and the Local Board have said that there will be no new Local Area Plans instigated until the current ones are well progressed.

MPI and DOC have continued to carry out eradication of *Salvinia* in the Te Henga wetland, and they have been successful in this using ground and aerial spraying. They have been diligent in their consultation with the community, and we are hopeful of complete eradication of this very invasive perennial aquatic fern.

Kauri in the ranges are infected with the pathogen *Phytophthora agathidicida* and there is no known cure. A year ago 13% of kauri in the ranges were infected, and 65% of these trees were along walking tracks, an indication that track users are spreading the disease. To quarantine areas showing no dieback, 27 km of walking tracks in the ranges remain closed to the public but compliance has been poor. Preliminary results from the most recent five-year ground and aerial dieback survey indicates that the disease is continuing to spread, and that some very old trees in the ranges have now been infected. We will report in full on this in our next newsletter.

In 2014 Council granted a three-year consent to the Hillary Trail Ultra Marathon from Arataki to Muriwai involving up to 675 participants each year. We are not convinced that the conditions imposed on the event will stop the spread of kauri dieback, the greatest occurrence of which is along the Hillary Trail. It has become clear that the trigene footbaths that the runners run through at intervals along the trail are not 100% effective at killing the pathogen carried in the mud on boots and shoes.

Following the resignation last year of our Heritage Area Coordinator Christine Rose who began work for Council as their Kauri Dieback Community Coordinator and who remains on our committee, we advertised for a new coordinator and in August we appointed Katherine Russell to the role. As a geographer, Katherine has excellent qualifications and she has taken on a many of the research and submission writing tasks, which has reduced the workload for committee members.

The Society has spent considerable time submitting on the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan (PAUP). The complex hearings process has been a challenge for our legal and planning team, but they have represented the Society to the highest standards. The hearings will be completed in the next few weeks when the Independent Hearings Panel will release their recommendations followed by Council's decisions in August.

Over the past year we have made submissions on various matters including the Auckland Council Annual Plan, the Resource Legislation Amendment Bill, the Marine Protected Areas Act, the Environmental Reporting Regulations, the Regional Pest Management Plan, the Heritage Area design guidelines, the Rating of farm and lifestyle properties and West Coast Water Safety signage.

The Oral history project that began in 2004 has been postponed for the time being, although we are always open to suggestions of people to be interviewed. To date, 27 interviews have been conducted and we thank Anna Fomison for her diligence in this project. Her recorded interviews are very important for our archives, and are also lodged with the Auckland and Turnbull Libraries.

Our new website is working well to disseminate information and allow people to purchase merchandise and join the Society. Once again thanks to Anna for keeping the website up to date. And thanks to Katherine, we are regularly using our facebook page to promote the Society, advertise events and post the latest news.

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. During the year we have used some of our reserves to fund our submissions on the PAUP. We have also been working to comply with the Charities Reporting Standards that come into force in 2017, and we considered it prudent to prepare for this in advance. Thanks to Sandra, Katherine and Joanna for their work on this.

We are grateful to have received a grant of \$10,000 from Foundation North to fund the Heritage Area Coordinator, and will be making a new grant application during the coming months to ensure continuous funding for this position.

We are also aware of the Incorporated Societies Bill that is likely to be tabled in the House later this year. As drafted, it will change some requirements for societies especially in areas such as officers' obligations, conflicts of interest, dispute resolution and winding up provisions. It is most probably that we will need to change our constitution in 2017 to meet the new requirements.

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., Robert Enright from Kirkland Enright, 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 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 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 with them 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. 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 eighteen years. I want to thank Society members and my family and friends for their support that has enabled me to better serve the Society.

In October, our secretary Lynda Williams resigned due to ill health. Lynda had been on the committee for twelve years. She has been our secretary and made many successful grant applications. Her commitment to the Society and her friendship will be greatly missed. Trixie Harvey is also standing down from the committee after twelve years. She and her husband Bruce edited the Waitakere Ranges book published in 2006 and wrote "Saving the Ranges", the 40 year history of the Society which was published in 2013. We would like to thank Trixie and Bruce for their dedicated support over many years.

Sadly, during the year some long-time members of the Society died. We remember the support of Angela Almond, Dorothy Butler, Ros Rothschild, Ann Guy and Marin Segedin, and offer our condolences to their families. Karekare resident Harry Turbott, architect, conservationist and the designer of this Arataki Visitors Centre, died this month. And sadly Sandra Jones is not with us tonight as her husband Bryn died last week, and our thoughts are with Sandra and her family in their bereavement.

The Society is forty-three 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. 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, proposed changes to the RMA if adopted will reduce the number of notified consent applications, and will limit our ability to be recognised as an interested party in resource consent matters. Your support in the coming years will be more important than ever.

John Edgar ONZM
President
The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.