

The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated



News

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The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc. is a registered charitable entity in terms of the Charities Act 2005. Registration No. CC46103

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Your President's Report



The past few months have seen the Society involved in Environment Court facilitated mediation on Plan Changes 35, 36 and 37 with Auckland Council and other appellants. Progress has been made on all of these matters, and PC 37 (Titirangi village) has been resolved in full by consent notice which was signed by all parties in June. PC 35 and 36 are still being progressed through the mediation process.

The Society has made a submission in opposition to the proposed annual running event on the Hillary trail known as Lactic Turkey 2013. The consent application to Auckland Council is to have up to 500 runners running all or some of the trail over one day. Our concern is that events like this add appreciably to the risk of spreading kauri dieback disease and even with boot washing stations along the trail, mud containing pathogen spores will be carried and spread from diseased trees. In 2008, because of concern with kauri dieback disease a similar annual event that had been held at Piha since 2002 was cancelled. Since 65% of diseased trees in the ranges are along walking tracks, we are asking Council to take a precautionary approach and decline the consent application.

As previously reported, we have made submissions to MAF and DOC on "Interim set net measures to manage the risk of Maui's dolphin mortality" (discussion paper 2012/13). We are pleased that the Minister for Primary Industries has decided on interim set net restrictions in the Taranaki area, from Pariokariwa Point to Hawera, to protect Maui's dolphins. The restrictions will stay in place while the Maui's dolphin component of the Hector's and Maui's Dolphin Threat Management Plan (TMP) is reviewed and the nature of future possible measures is decided. Time is running out for this small population of west coast dolphins and we will be looking for further ways to ensure that the set net restrictions areas extend further north to include the Kawhia to Kaipara area.

Anna Fomison, our Oral Historian, has just completed ten interviews of key conservationists in the Waitakere Ranges. These interviews were funded by Lotteries Environment and Heritage Fund. They will be lodged with the Auckland and Turnbull Libraries. We intend to make a funding application for further oral history recordings shortly.

I will be away in the United Kingdom during August installing a sculpture in Windsor Great Park, a gift from the patrons of the New Zealand plant section of the Savill Gardens to the Crown Estate. In my absence, Vice President Anna Fomison and Treasurer Sandra Jones will be taking care of Society matters.

As always, thanks to all members and friends for your continued support. Together we give a stronger voice for the ranges.

John Edgar ONZM
President

Heritage Area Coordinator's Report June – August 2012

Submission: Opposition to application to hold a large scale running event along the Hillary Trail, "the Hillary Trail Challenge"

WRPS's points of opposition included:

- Approval of the application would contravene several statutory documents including the Long Term Plan and the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act, among others.
- The enjoyment of being in the midst of our unique and valued indigenous ecosystems should not be at the expense of those very ecosystems.
- Any increase in visitor numbers in the Ranges is an increase in potential vectors and the disease can be picked up and carried at any point along the tracks. The increase in visitor numbers would exceed the increase on event day because of the increased publicity and these extra visitors cannot be guaranteed to receive any education on PTA.
- Though the applicant claimed support of the event by the Hillary Family, we submitted that erring on the side of caution regarding the health of the beloved kauri would be consistent with mountaineer and conservationist Sir Edmund Hillary's vision.
- It would be inappropriate to make decisions that affect the future health of the Ranges' keystone species and ecosystems before researchers have reported back with effective disease control and management programmes.
- The increased risk from the proposed LTE event would be compounded by looming budget cuts to weed and pest management which were signalled in the Draft LTP for Auckland. Now more than ever, extreme caution is required in the management of the Ranges.

Oral Submission: proposed dog bylaws

Last week I represented WRPS in person on our submission on the proposed dog bylaws. I was told I would have "50 minutes to present [my] submission to the panel" so I prepared a presentation on this basis. However, on arrival I found that there were two tables of approximately 8 submitters and two Councillors each. Each group of submitters went through, point by point, a series of questions submitters were urged to consider via the Council's website.

As all of the other submitters at the table were advocating for more freedoms for dogs, the WRPS hard-line position of much stricter dog control in the Ranges was not popular with submitters. However, I argued our points and I feel our position was represented well.

Kauri Dieback

I visited the Huia sites of PTA-infected trees and received updates from Dr Nick Waipara, Auckland Council's Principal Advisor Biosecurity. See *Kauri Dieback Update* in this issue.

Social Media

If you haven't "liked" us on facebook yet, please check out our page and contribute to the discussion. Photos of your adventures in the Ranges, discoveries, etc would be greatly appreciated. We are "The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc." and we'd love to be connected.

Saffron Toms

Heritage Area Coordinator, WRPS

The History of WRPS – update (and a call for photo archives of historic WRPS activity)

Next year is the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Society and the history will be ready and published as a small book for this occasion. We have completed the first draft and are now adding pieces of information from the recent oral histories, photographs and memories from individuals who have been involved in the Society's activities over the past 40 years.

"We are putting out a call for members to look in their photo archives for anything that records a WRPS activity in the past."

Any photos would be very welcome. If in electronic form please send them to Trixie Harvey (brutrix@xtra.co.nz). If they need to be scanned we

can do this and will return them in good order to their owner. Please post the photos to the Society's PO Box (see newsletter banner above). The same applies to newspaper cuttings or anything else pertaining to the Society's activities from any period.

Some of the themes we are working on that we would like to expand are:

- The waste water /sewage proposals in the 1980s and 90s and the suggestions that the Society put forward at that time as alternatives to counter them.
- WRPS patrons. We have very little on Sir Harcourt Caughey who was one of our first patrons. What was his interest in the Waitakeres? And who

enrolled him?

- The legal challenges that the Society undertook.
- Who spoke to our submissions and who represented the Society in particular cases, especially in the early days?

We are finding the study of the Society's history very interesting and rewarding and will be highlighting in

the book the campaigns that have been undertaken, the successes and failures, and the people who have committed their time and expertise to help with the ultimate objective, the preservation and protection of the wonderful Waitakere Ranges where we live.

Trixie and Bruce Harvey

Hunua: Kauri Dieback Update

Progress for Hunua inspired by Waitakere Ranges management efforts

We must “respond to emerging threats which pose risk to our natural heritage, such as kauri dieback. Unless a stronger focus is given to controlling at source those activities and elements that cause environmental harm, Auckland will not achieve its vision.”

(The Auckland Plan 2012, pg 177)

Following recent developments and progress in the protection of the few remaining PTA-free stands of kauri in the Waitakere Ranges, this month Auckland Council's Regional Development and Operations Committee endorsed a recommendation from the Parks, Recreation and Heritage Forum to create kauri protection zones in the Hunua Ranges.

With no current signs of PTA infection in the Hunuas, this initiative has been fast-tracked to allow implementation of the new protection zones to begin on 1st September 2012. Management will be implemented based on five different classification zones:

1. Non-kauri zones – kauri dieback phytosanitation measures in place.
2. Intensive kauri management zones – strict recreation management, intensive phytosanitation, high quality track maintenance and high levels of public education.
3. Kauri protection zones – quarantine zone, permit-only entry and strict phytosanitation for essential park work.
4. Kauri buffer zones – recreation limited to track-only with strict monitoring.
5. Waytemore Forest Reserves – no public access.

Former ARC parks management and staff, with the support of WRPS, advocated track closures for 3 years before Council closed 27km of tracks in the Waitakere Ranges in July this year (detailed in our May Newsletter). Closed areas in the Waitakeres are those

which do not show signs of infection, indicative of the reluctant acceptance that already infected areas would need to be abandoned due to lack of funding and resourcing and the already high infection rate of the stands.

DOC has indicated that the protection measures in the Hunuas will be observed for 5 years, though Council has indicated they will be reassessed in a year's time. Here in Waitakere, we'll see a review of the track closures in July 2013, one year after the closure, to see how the quarantined areas are responding.

This is necessary due to the reliance of visible symptoms to diagnose a tree's infection status. For example, in the block of PTA-infected kauri in the Ranges at Huia there are trees that are completely dead yet showed no signs of infection in initial surveys in 2006. WRPS commends the Council in showing initiative in the Hunuas, but we are concerned that efforts to keep kauri alive and healthy in the Waitakere Ranges must be stepped up.

As Dr Nick Waipara says, soil hygiene should be observed at all times. This could be a cost-effective way to manage current and future threats from known and unknown soil-borne pathogens. “Just as the ‘check, clean and dry’ mantra is promoted for the control of didymo in water, basic soil hygiene should be implemented to stop the spread of soil-borne pathogens, including kauri dieback disease,” says Dr Waipara.



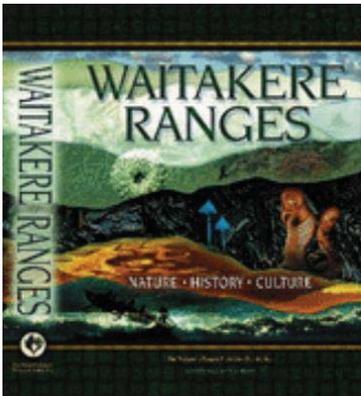
Huia Kauri continue to die at the one of the first sites in the Waitakere Ranges to be identified as being infected with kauri dieback disease (photo: Saffron Toms, August 2012).

YOUR COMMITTEE

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Committee meetings are held monthly, from February to November, on the second Tuesday of the month.



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