

THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Arataki Visitors Centre, Wednesday 27 March, 2017

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.

A year ago we reported on our concerns about the closure of the Te Henga quarry. Since then, the rehabilitation and replanting program has started. Our concerns are now for the survival of the native species planting and the efficacy of weed control program. We are working with Council on the final designation of the quarry to ensure that it becomes part of the Regional Park with which it is contiguous, rather than a local park, and that safe public access and facilities are provided.

The greatest threat to the ecology of the ranges is Kauri dieback. Regional and Local Parks together with the Biosecurity team of Council continue to manage the disease with measures including track closures, monitoring disease spread, health survey of kauri trees within ten meters of tracks, maintenance and operation of hygiene stations and tree maintenance through boardwalks and raised pathways. Auckland Council's Biosecurity team is tracking expansion of kauri dieback using methods such as aerial surveying and ground-truthing. This is undertaken on a 5-year cycle with the last cycle completed in 2016. The results of this survey have provided the first opportunity in this disease management program to identify 'rate of spread' and have reaffirmed that the disease is a widespread biosecurity issue within the parkland. Comparison of Kauri health survey data between 2011 and 2016 shows the distribution of *Phytophthora agathidicida* has risen from 8% to 19% of the complete kauri area. In terms of scale, the Waitakere Ranges regional park represents the most heavily Kauri dieback infected area in New Zealand. Nearly a quarter of the total Kauri area within the Park is potentially affected by kauri dieback and over half the substantial Kauri areas contain symptoms of infection in them.

Council's Biosecurity, Biodiversity and Parks departments are currently reviewing all management options for Kauri dieback disease in time for inclusion in the Long-term Plan 2018-2028. Over the summer at all main track entrances there were Kauri Ambassadors in place to educate and remind people to use the hygiene stations.

The hearings on the Proposed Auckland Unitary Plan concluded last year. The Society reviewed the recommendations by the Independent Hearings Panel and the subsequent decisions of Council, and appealed to the High Court the decision to remove prohibited activity status for subdivision in some areas of the ranges. This matter is proceeding and we are hopeful that a High Court hearing will not be necessary. We are also party to two appeals in the Environment Court and are in agreement with Council that these appeals are out of scope and therefore should be struck out.

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 is a valuable member of our team and we are very grateful for her diligence.

Over the past year we have made submissions on the Karekare Surf Club access causeway consent, the New Marine Protected Areas Act consultation document, the Resource Legislation amendment Bill, the Annual Budget consultation document, the consultation on Next Steps for Freshwater, the Wildlife (power) Amendment Bill, the Trans-Tasman Resources Limited consent for seabed mining on the west coast and the Piha Gap Concept Plan. We have also written letters and made requests for information on Watercare shotcreting of the Waitakere Tunnels, the Friends of Regional Parks 50-year Vision Document, the Auckland Council Kauri Dieback Program budget cuts, the Maui dolphin signage at Te Henga, the oil and gas Block Offer 2017, and the Ministry for Primary Industries Kauri Program.

We have been involved as a stakeholder in Watercare's consultation to replace the Huia Water Treatment Plant in Woodlands Park Road which has been operating for 90 years. The four shortlisted sites for a new plant are the existing site in Woodlands Park Road, another off Manuka Road adjacent to the existing site, and two sites in Parker Road, Oratia. There have been a number of public meetings recently which we have attended, and the Society has provided feedback to Watercare on the shortlisted sites.

As part of the celebrations next year of the 10th anniversary of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act (2008) the committee has commissioned a history of the Act to be written by journalist Wayne Thompson who was an environmental reporter for the New Zealand Herald at the time leading up to and after the passing of the Act. We are currently applying for funding for this project which when completed will be made available as a digital e-book. In addition to this we are in discussions with the Waitakere Ranges Local Board about other events around the 10th anniversary such as an art exhibition and a conference on the Act and its first ten 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. Katherine Russell regularly posts on our facebook page to promote the Society, advertise events and communicate latest news. Orhan Er is editor of our quarterly newsletter and we always welcome contributions from members.

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 a grant of \$10,000 from The Trusts Community Foundation to fund the Heritage Area Coordinator. The Society was pleased to be able to make a donation of \$30,000 from our land acquisition fund towards the purchase of the 37 hectare Matuku Link property at Te Henga. This land will be an ecological link between Forest and Bird's Matuku Reserve to the north-west and the Waitakere Valley wetlands and Ark in the Park to the south-east.

2017 is the first year of the new reporting standards under the Charities Act (2005). While this requirement has involved the committee in more work, in doing so it has led to a clarification of how we achieve our purposes and objectives. Having established this baseline document we expect that reporting in future years will be easier. Facilitated by our secretary Joanna Silver the committee has begun work on a five-year strategic plan which when completed will give us a better assessment of our performance and achievements. We continue to monitor progress of the Incorporated Societies Bill in the House which will change some requirements for societies especially in areas such as officers' obligations, conflicts of interest, dispute resolution and winding up provisions. Once passed it is probable that we will need to change our constitution to comply with the Act.

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 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 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 nineteen years. I want to thank Society members and my family and friends for their support that has enabled me to better serve the Society.

Lynda Williams who resigned from the committee in 2015 due to ill health was named a Member of the Order of New Zealand for her services to women's health and we congratulate her on her achievements. Paul Walbran is standing down this year after six years on the committee due to other commitments. We will miss Paul's extensive knowledge of regional and local body politics and know that we can always call on him for advice.

Sadly, during the year two members passed away. Mr Rae West, a long time member of the Society died and his widow Lilian, aged 90, wrote to us and said that she wanted to continue to support the Society. And Joan Brock, a member since 1981, died in September. Joan was one of our members who contributed monthly to the Heritage Area Coordinator account.

At 44 years old the Society is very much alive and well. 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.