

# Annual Report of the Executive Committee

## THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Arataki Visitors Centre, Wednesday 25 March 2019 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.

As you well know, 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 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 since 2012. In some areas of the ranges, for example the Piha catchment, up to 60% of trees are infected.

The Rahui placed by Te Kawerau a Maki in 2017, led to Council closing the majority of tracks in the ranges, and budgeting \$100M over 10 years for Kauri dieback management. The Society has worked with Council, Waitakere conservation groups and local communities to see that this fund is used to ensure that tracks are upgraded to dry foot status before they can be opened again. Two audits of track conditions in the past six months have been carried out by volunteers organised by the Tree Council and the results have been forwarded to the Auckland Council. Special thanks to Te Kawerau a Maki for their strong leadership up to and following the rahui.

Myrtle Rust continues to spread in the North Island and upper South Island. **900** infected sites have been reported since May 2017. There are 179 sites in Auckland region with confirmed infection, mostly in Remuera. To date there are no confirmed infection sites in the ranges. In 2018, the Government invested \$14 million into new research into kauri dieback and myrtle rust.

Following our successful High Court appeal in 2017 regarding prohibited activity status in the ranges, parties who had submitted on this matter to the Proposed Unitary Plan Topic 75 were able to appeal to the Environment Court. Only two parties did this and together with Council we are currently in court-assisted mediation. As the matter is sub judice, I am unable to discuss the details of the case.

Mischa Davis, our Heritage Area Coordinator for the past two years will be resigning from the role at the end of March, while she takes maternity leave. We wish her and husband Nick all the very best as they start their family. We also want to thank Mischa for the exceptional work that she has done for the Society, researching and writing submissions on a wide range of matters, and also making a number of successful funding applications. We have appointed a new Heritage Area Coordinator, Eva Wrassky- Bulmer who will take over from Mischa on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Over the past year we have made submissions on Rates Remission and Postponement Policy, WRHA Local Parks Design Guide, Kauri dieback management programme, Draft Regional Transport Plan and Regional Fuel Tax, Waitakere Ranges Greenways Plan, Local Government (Community Well-Being) Amendment Bill, Pest Free Piha Draft Strategic Plan, Mandatory phase out of single use plastic bags, National Kauri Dieback Management Plan submission, Crown Minerals (Petroleum) Amendment Bill, DOC Biodiversity Convention draft report, Public Safety and Nuisance Bylaw, Regional Public Transport Plan, Predator Free 2050 discussion document, Proposed Freedom Camping Bylaw, National Biodiversity Strategy 2020, and the Waitakere Ranges Track Plan.

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. The Society is a member of the Community Liaison Group that meets monthly with Watercare. As a group we have tabled a mitigation package to offset some of the damage to native flora and fauna on the site should the project proceed. The resource consent application is due to be notified next month.

The Society has commissioned a history of the Heritage Area Act 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 will soon go to the designer and will be published as an e-book.

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 \$7826 from The Trusts Community Foundation and \$3500 from the Waitakere Ranges Local Board towards the Heritage Area Act history book, and \$3900 from Foundation North towards HAC work. We were a finalist in the Trusts Million Dollar Mission, and raised \$5655 towards our work on kauri dieback.

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 that has 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. Special thanks go to our vice-president Anna Fomison, secretary Joanna Silver and treasurer Sandra Jones. The Society 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 21 years. I want to thank Society members and my family and friends for their support that has enabled me to better serve the society.

Unfortunately, Joanna Silver is not standing again for the committee. We thank her for the work that she has done to give the Society a more professional approach to strategic planning, cloud-filing systems, taking excellent minutes and being proactive on many issues. We will certainly miss her input.

Sadly, during the year four members passed away. Past president John Lewis is remembered for his vision and commitment to the ranges conservation and leading the restoration of historic Winchelsea House at Karekare. Committee member Trixie Harvey (2002-2013) and editor together with husband Bruce, of two major publications for the Society; her contribution to the Society will be greatly missed. Foundation member Dave Harre, historian and activist, was involved in the protests against the Te Henga tip that started the Society. And John Lusk, long-time supporter and husband of Barbara who is here tonight with her friend Bobbie Woodward. Our thanks to these four 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







