

Annual Report of the Executive Committee

THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Arataki Centre, Saturday 1 May 2021, 4pm

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.

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the death of John Edgar on 3rd April 2021. As you know John was our WRPS President for 22 years and led the Society with clarity of vision and great determination and huge energy. Many of the current achievements and successes of the Society are to a large extent due to him.

For many of us we have not only lost our fellow President but we have also lost our friend John and there won't be many of us here who cannot recall having a good laugh with him over something.

John was a tireless, dedicated and unmatched champion for the protection of the Waitākere Ranges. He was a force of nature and he will be deeply missed. It is hard to find sufficient words to acknowledge and to thank him for his contribution. He was our Superhero with special powers in protecting the Waitakere Ranges. All I can say is a huge heartfelt thank you.

The Society's sincere condolences go to John's family and friends.

The AGM in 2020 was twice cancelled due to Covid-19 lock downs and was finally held by Zoom in October which was only six months ago.

This Annual Report is for the year ending 31st March 2021.

Kauri Dieback continues to be the greatest ecological threat to the mighty trees in the Waitakere Ranges since logging ended 150 years ago. As you know the regenerating forest is under attack from the microscopic pathogen *Phytophthora agathidicida*.

In 2017 Te Kawerau ā Maki placed a rahui that led to Council closing the majority of tracks in the ranges, and budgeting \$100M over 10 years for Kauri dieback management. The majority of this funding from the NETA (Natural Environment Targeted Rate) fund has gone to upgrading the tracks. There are 68 track projects in total in local parks across Auckland city. By the end of the 2021 calendar year they will have completed 40 of these projects with another 4 major projects completed early next year.

There are 14 track projects in Waitakere Ranges Local Board area. By the end of 2021 calendar year 50% of the Waitakere Ranges Local Board (WRLB) track mitigation programme will be completed.

New tracks have been opened on the Hillary Trail which is almost all open now. Te Kawerau ā Maki have gifted a new name to the Hillary Trail, Te Ara Tūhura which means Pathway of Discovery. A small amount of funding was also given to Kauri Rescue.

MPI's Kauri Research programme has been managed by the National Science Challenge and MPI's Kauri Dieback unit, after being shut down, has recently appointed a new manager and has begun recruitment.

The National Pest Management Plan which was introduced by the Government last year has opened the door to new options such as kauri sanctuaries for healthy areas, fencing off areas on private land and taking a consistent approach nationally.

Special thanks to Te Kawerau a Maki for their strong leadership up to and following the rahui and to Kauri Rescue who are actively involved in managing the disease.

Myrtle rust has now been found in the Waitakere Ranges at Karamatura near Mount Donald McLean. It has spread across the West, the wider Auckland Area and elsewhere across the country wherever the climate is compatible with the disease.

It is caused by fungus spores that are spread by the wind.

Myrtle Rust is a serious biosecurity threat and there is the possibility that some native tree species could become regionally extinct.

A trans-tasman research collaboration has almost completed the genome for the fungus that causes myrtle rust. This will mean that specific control strategies can be developed.

Information is urgently required on the whereabouts, hosts and intensity of this disease. We urge using the iNaturalist website to report Myrtle rust as this will provide valuable information to researchers.

In 2019 we appointed Eva Wrassky-Bulmer to the role of Heritage Area Coordinator, and Eva continues to be a great asset to the Society. She has written a number of submissions over the past year that include Reducing waste: a more effective landfill levy, National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity,

Regional Parks Management Plan,
Waitakere Ranges Local Board draft plan,
North Piha lifeguard tower,
Marine Mammal submission,
Auckland Council Emergency Budget 2020/2021,
Auckland Council Annual Budget 2020/2021
Climate Change Commission submission

The Society continues 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 one of the five members of the Community Liaison Group. As a group we 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 has been notified and is currently before the commissioners. A survey of kauri on the proposed treatment site was commissioned and found the kauri dieback organism everywhere, putting the entire project in doubt due to Watercare's assumption that they can contain the pathogen or that it doesn't matter if they can't and as well as a flawed site selection process, all of which threaten the entire catchment.

At the reconvened Hearing held at the beginning of April the combined groups tabled 10 expert witnesses including Te Kawerau ā Maki to show that the proposal would breach the Biosecurity Act, would breach tikanga and rāhui and would have more than minor impacts beyond the site. Our thanks to Douglas Allen for writing our submission and to Robin Taylor for presenting it. Council experts including the Reporting Planner recommended declining consents. We are awaiting a decision.

The Society's e-book, "Making a Stand", the history of the Heritage Area Act, is in the final throes of production with Oratia Media. This commissioned work was 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. We are currently updating the e-book with a tribute dedicating the publication to John. Grants for this work from The Trusts foundation, Foundation North and from the Waitakere Ranges Local Board are gratefully acknowledged, as is a generous donation from the Hanna family. John had been instrumental in sourcing many of the images so many thanks to John, and Sandra Jones for her editorial assistance and to Carolyn Lagahatau and Peter Dowling from Oratia Media.

Later on we'll be showing you a preview of the e-book and we are intending to launch it at a later date.

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 is invaluable. Our sincere thanks to the exceptional Douglas Allan for his legal counsel.

The Society has three Patrons; Emeritus Professor Dick Bellamy, the Rt. Hon. Jonathan Hunt and Lynne Pillay. The executive committee meets on the second Wednesday of the month.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the entire Executive Committee. Last year was a difficult year for the Committee and we pulled it together as a team. Thank you all for your effort, commitment and support.

Special thanks go to our Deputy-president and Treasurer and acting-Secretary Sandra Jones. I cannot thank her enough for her support and the exceptional work she does. Special thanks also to Orhan Err who has been the editor of our quarterly newsletter for several years and to Mandy Patmore. Mandy and Orhan are not standing again this year. Our thanks to both of them for their effort and commitment. We are sad to see them go and wish them well in their new endeavours.

Thanks go to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and coordinated mail-outs for many years. We welcome back Tim O'Shea to the committee and welcome aboard Robin Taylor who among other things has offered to keep the website up-to-date.

It has been my honour to be President and to chair the executive committee over the past six months despite the difficulties of the year. I joined the Executive Committee in 2003 and became Depute President in 2005 and over the past 18 years have worked as Newsletter Editor, Website editor, Public Relations, Oral Historian and worked on the e-book. In the process not only did I work alongside John but I gained an in-depth understanding of what the Society is about and how it works. My commitment is to work cooperatively with my Deputy-President Sandra and my Committee to create a sustainable Society and to carry on the Society's work to the high standard that John always achieved. We are planning on undertaking a Strategic review in the next few months to clarify our direction and priorities. At the moment the Committee is missing a Secretary and an editor for our quarterly newsletter. Please consider joining the committee to help us in our work. We would welcome anyone who feels they could contribute.

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.

Thank you. I move that the Annual Report be received.

Anna Fomison

President, The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Inc.

1 May 2021