



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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President's Report

Kia ora koutou

Welcome to the last issue of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Newsletter for 2021. As we head towards the end of 2021, perhaps thankfully, I am mindful that since our last Newsletter in June, we have all been very much challenged by the need to adapt to the demands of the pandemic which seems to be still very much in full swing. For those of us in Auckland it has certainly been a long haul as we waited for vaccination rates to rise but we can be justifiably proud of New Zealand having the lowest Covid-19 death rate in the OECD.

The WRPS Executive Committee demonstrated admirable flexibility as we continued with our work with online monthly Zoom meetings, making progress with our review of both the Society's Rules, and updating the strategic plan which took much of our attention over these last lockdown months. Both documents are worthy and comprehensive but evaluation is always needed to keep us up-to-date in the light of current priorities. Any proposed changes will be shared with members at next year's AGM. Thanks to all the Committee for your mahi during this challenging year and for your ongoing commitment to the Society's work.

As you will have noticed we have moved the newsletter online, to the Mailchimp format. We hope you enjoy it. For those of you receiving our printed version please let us know (wrps@waitakereranges.org.nz) if you would like to go on our email list. Thanks to Susie Vincent and Sandra Jones for their contributions and Rob Taylor for putting it together and to Jenny Taylor for the mailout.

In August, Sandra Jones and I attended the Environment Defence Society's (EDS) annual conference held in Christchurch "Transforming Aotearoa: The Government's Environmental Reform



Photo: Ted Scott

Agenda". It was very stimulating and challenging. The conference papers are available on EDS website and if you would like some great summer reading, I urge you to take a look. (www.eds.org.nz/our-work/eds-conferences/2021-conference). There is a lot happening in this space and a lot to keep up with. Many thanks to Susie Vincent for her excellent review and summary of the Government's Reform agenda in this newsletter.

Susie Vincent is our newest Committee member. She joined us in June 2021 and you can read her bio in this Newsletter. Welcome Susie and thank you for joining us. We are very fortunate to have your experience, enthusiasm, and expertise. We are also very fortunate to have Heather Tanguay QSO on our Committee. Heather received her QSO award earlier this year and we have a brief article about her bio in this Newsletter as well. Congratulations Heather.

Eva Wrassey-Bulmer has continued with her exceptional work for us as our Heritage Area Coordinator. As well as making submissions on MfE's "Managing our wetlands: A discussion document on proposed changes to the wetlands regulations" and on Auckland Council's Freedom Camping Bylaw, Eva has summarised the "The health of Tamaki Makaurau/Auckland's natural environment in 2020, Auckland Council's State of the Environment Report" and "The State of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area 2018

Report". These documents are of huge significance to us and these summaries provide crucial information to keep us focussed on our ongoing priorities.

Issues that continue to be in the spotlight recently are the ongoing High Court Appeal relating to the Huia Watercare Treatment Plant. We are a section 274 party to this Appeal and it has been held over until next year. Also there are more issues arising from the increasing pressure from Auckland's growth, both in subdivisions on the Heritage Area boundaries and the number of minor dwellings proliferating in the WRHA.

Some welcome good news is that work is being undertaken on a pamphlet designed to educate residents about what it means to be living in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (WRHA). This project is being led by Pestfree Waitakere who recently conducted a survey that revealed a staggering lack of knowledge of the WRHA and the Act which is a concern. In the meantime if you would like some information for anyone you know who is living in the Ranges or who has an interest in the WRHA then we have a brief document on our Website that is informative. Under the heading "Heritage Area Newsletters" www.waitakereranges.org.nz/latest-news/heritage-area-act Newsletter 1 (Waitakere City Council).

After the stresses of this year, it seems more important than ever to find the space and time to relax and recharge within our traffic-lit freedoms this summer. For those of you in Auckland or who are intending to visit, remember that the Waitakere Ranges are a place of beauty and solace. Maybe consider a night-time visit and avail yourselves of the dark skies found in the Waitakere Ranges. Susie Vincent's "Dark Skies" article is an excellent reminder to us all of this precious aspect of the WR heritage. We are so fortunate to have them right here and available to us.

Thank you all for your interest in and support of our work. If you would like to consider a more active involvement with us, we are looking for assistance in the role of secretary and webmaster.

May you all have a relaxing and enjoyable summer and all the best for 2022. We value and appreciate your interest and ongoing support and let's carry on our good work.

As John Edgar said "This place is a treasure that needs ever-vigilant guardians" (Waitakere Ranges Protection Society, 2006)

Anna Fomison, President



Volunteer help needed

Secretary

We have been without a secretary for nearly two years. We would love to hear from anyone who is interested in becoming our new secretary. Administrative skills and proficiency in Microsoft Word are essential, and some knowledge of Excel and PowerPoint would be helpful – and, of course, a passion for the protection of the Waitakere Ranges. Ability to work collaboratively with a small team but to take the initiative when appropriate are necessary. If this role is of interest to you or if you want more information, please email our president Anna Fomison president@waitakereranges.org.nz.

Webmaster

WRPS' website has recently been upgraded but we need a new webmaster to take responsibility for keeping it up to date. Knowledge of WordPress is essential. The person may wish to stand for election at the next AGM and, if elected, join the committee as a full member or s/he may be co-opted to this role for the sole purpose of managing the website and reporting to the committee at regular intervals. If this role is of interest to you or if you want more information, please email our president Anna Fomison president@waitakereranges.org.nz.

Resource Management Reforms – will they get it right?

Within the next few years, the 'RMA' will no longer exist, and right now, WRPS is keenly following the process of its reform.

In July 2019, Minister David Parker appointed a very talented panel to completely review our resource management

legislation. Hon. Tony Randerson QC was its chair, with Rachel Brooking, Dean Kimpton, Amelia Linzey, Raewyn Peart and Kevin Prime also on board. In June 2020 they presented a weighty report, which strongly influenced the Government's first cut, in June 2021 of a new **Natural and Built Environments Bill**. WRPS, naturally, submitted, and an Environmental Select Committee reported on the draft to Parliament on November 2nd. The Government's response is due on 16th February, 2022.

So, what was wrong with the 1991 Resource Management Act?

One could say, basically, not a lot – though it is not necessarily fulfilling its intent. It was a radical and noble law, born out of the fourth Labour Government's vision, championed by Geoffrey Palmer, and nurtured into life by Simon Upton, Tony Randerson, Guy Salmon and others. It created one integrated framework to replace a plethora of fragmented resource management regimes. Significantly, it made 'sustainable management' an explicit purpose for a regulatory framework - which was probably a 'world first'.

Yet, 30 years later, we're using natural resources unsustainably: biodiversity, freshwater, marine and coastal environments are declining or under real threat. Numerous amendments to the RMA have made it unwieldy and complex to navigate, and have seemed to tie everything up with red tape. But there have been changes too in New Zealand.

Our massive urban growth hasn't been managed well enough to provide affordable housing, workable traffic flow or control pollution. Climate change brings an urgent imperative to change our land and resource use patterns to mitigate and adapt to its effects. Our resource management must support our commitments to reduce emissions.

Maori also need an effective role that reflects the principles of Te Tiriti. The RMA never lived up to its promise of opportunities for shared management of the environment and Maori have been left out of critical decision-making.

What's new?

Rather than attempt to mend the RMA, the Review Panel concluded that it should be repealed and replaced with a framework of new legislation. The Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) will retain some of the RMA's core principles, but it aims to create more durable solutions, and express its purposes and effects in a simpler, more workable statement.

What's also new, and overdue, is that rather than focus on managing adverse environmental effects, the NBA aims to benefit the environment, by promoting positive outcomes. These will apply to both natural and built environments and prescribe environmental limits for resource use and development and ensure adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated – or so we greatly hope.

Alongside the NBA, the Panel also recommended a Strategic Planning Act that will make long term spatial planning mandatory in Aotearoa. This could properly integrate land and resource planning with infrastructure planning, and avoid some of the poor decisions and compromises we've often seen. The Auckland Unitary Plan was a massive effort to embed intelligence into how development and protection are prioritised, but consenting can so easily nibble away at the best intentions. To mandate long term spatial planning nationally could be very positive, and mana whenua will sit at the table in decisions.

The Act would also recognise the concept of *Te Oranga o te Taiao*, a major new direction. This contains several elements: the health of the natural environment and the interconnectedness of all its parts; the intrinsic relationship between iwi and hapū and the environment, and the essential relationship between the health of the natural environment and its capacity to sustain all life. There is a strong focus too on how activities under the new Act must give effect to the Treaty. Among other outcomes, the draft specifies that the relationship of iwi and hapū and their tikanga and traditions, with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu, and other taonga, be restored and protected. It promotes ways for each iwi & hapū to participate effectively in processes, and recognises and provides for their authority and responsibility to be exercised in protecting and sustaining environmental health and well-being.

The new legislation is huge and ambitious. Right now, the cogs and wheels of democracy are turning, civil society is lobbying its expertise into the process as best it can and a legal framework is being crafted, line by line, via a consensual group process – probably one of the most laborious things that humans can do. It's our hope that this new Act will reinforce the purposes of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act under one rule to bind them all.



Dark Skies



One of the heritage features that the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act is purposed to protect is *'the quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges and the coastal parts of the area'*.

It doesn't seem long ago that pretty much anyone camping beyond the city limits felt as one Texan did when visiting Takapō (MacKenzie District) - *'standing beneath the great bowl of the heavens, bathed in starlight and emotion'*. We have three sites in New Zealand that are designated Dark Skies Areas by organisations who accredit such things.

Most people who live in the world's cities may have no sense of the stars at all. Pollution from lights left on all night is increasing fast. For 80-90% of those in the USA and Europe now, there is no Milky Way. Artificial lighting is so ubiquitous that we wonder whether humans think the core purpose of darkness is to be lit with LEDs.

But things get worse: many studies are linking light pollution to failing health in people and wildlife. Essential life-processes like breeding and migrating are cued by natural cycles of light and darkness, in everything from sea turtles to birds. And night lighting may be contributing tragically to the catastrophic decline of insect populations, significantly moths and other pollinators.

The famous German study reported in 2017, found a "seasonal decline of 76%, and mid-summer decline of 82%, in flying insect biomass over the 27 years of study". Media responded with headlines such as 'Insect Armageddon'. In New Zealand because we have never counted our insect population, and apparently, entomologists themselves are getting rarer in our world.

Many causes have been studied, but one that is showing up unchallenged is the impact of artificial lighting. While research shows that the most important thing of all is to minimise night lighting, there seem to be findings around the colour of lights, and those that are white or blue may have the most detrimental effect. LEDs range in intensity and colour, of course.

Driving through our Waitākere villages at night, instead

of the soft, orange, low contrast sodium lighting, the brilliant white glare of the new LEDs is almost dazzling. Is there no longer any confidence in headlights, we wonder? Artificial lighting experts are hired to illuminate our gardens and shared spaces. Does this parade our evolution as a species? We'd like to challenge this mindset, and encourage everyone to consider the other sentient beings who share our world. Perhaps we could revert: rather than eliminating the magical darkness of night, and the wonder of the stars, this summer, might we celebrate these?

Stars

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
That aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
Stately and still,

And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

– Sara Teasdale

Susanne (Susie) Vincent

Susie joined the WRPS Committee in June, having lived in the Waitākere Ranges for about 30 years. Her background



includes about 25 years in organisational consulting, and almost as many in the voluntary sector, including seven years as chair of Amnesty International NZ, and over a decade

working on community group committees in the Ranges.

She describes herself as a fulltime superannuated activist, and feels privileged now to be working with WRPS.

Heather Tanguay, QSO



Good news is especially welcome in these troubled Covid times, so we were delighted to learn that WRPS committee member, Heather Tanguay, was awarded a Queen's Service Order in the Queen's Birthday Honours this year. Her award was in recognition of her services to local government and the community.

Heather has been a committee member since May 2019 and, although she and her husband Jerry moved to Auckland only 6 years ago, she has already made her mark in her local and wider communities in a number of ways.

Not least of these was in the restoration of their badly neglected local reserve, Milan Bush Reserve in Glen Eden, for which she and her husband Jerry were finalists in the Mayoral Conservation Award and received a "Love Your Place" Rata Award from the Waitakere Ranges Local Board.

Congratulations, Heather. We are delighted to see you receive this well-deserved Honour.

Heritage Area Coordinator's report

There have been two submissions over the past few months:

Freedom Camping in Vehicles Bylaw (Auckland Council) and **Managing our Wetlands** (Ministry for the Environment).

The submission on the **Freedom Camping in Vehicles Bylaw** reiterated much of what WRPS has submitted on previously regarding this issue, with a strong emphasis on no camping within the Heritage Area. Currently there isn't effective management of increased visitor recreational use of the WRHA, including campers, and the impact that increased freedom camping would have is a huge threat to the environment. Visitor numbers are growing and there is growing concern that unless appropriately managed may be to the detriment of

other heritage features; ecosystems, wilderness, historic heritage values.

The health and wellbeing of the Heritage Area, its ecological importance and fragility, must be prioritised over recreational use such as freedom camping that poses a significant negative impact. The concerns around the negative impacts of freedom camping have been consistent over the years and have not improved.

The submission on the **Managing our Wetlands Discussion Document** was a very important one.

The proposal has far-reaching implications for wetlands across NZ. It could enable dumps to destroy wetlands, urban development to drain our waterways, and hundreds of quarries and mines to bulldoze through fragile native ecosystems. The current proposal would exclude many significant wetlands from protection. We must listen to the Climate Change Commission's advice and keep carbon in the ground by stopping wetland destruction. Given the widespread loss of wetlands, policies protecting them needed to be robust.

Changes to the national freshwater planning regime in 2020 significantly restricted development in wetlands. This was a commendable and progressive move. The National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) includes policies to avoid the loss of natural wetlands, and the National Environmental Standards on Freshwater (NES-F) set standards, including prohibiting activities likely to result in drainage of a wetland.

However the current proposed changes to the NPS-FM and the NES-F, which seek to redefine what a 'natural wetland' is in order to limit the protection offered by the NPS-FM and NES-F, as well as offer concerning '*consenting pathways*' to enable landfills, mining, quarrying and urban development nearby wetlands. These proposals effectively strip wetlands of any meaningful protection, are contrary to the express requirements of section 6 of the RMA and the NZ Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS), and must be rejected.

There is concern that the proposed changes to the wetlands regulations would dilute the protection the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 currently offers.



WRPS Merchandise

We have a range of quality merchandise, ranging from a high quality reference book to t-shirts, tea towels, uniquely hand-crafted mugs & bowls, a Don Binney poster print and bird prints by Mandy Patmore.

For more details of the Society's merchandise, or to make a purchase, please refer to the WRPS online shop at: <https://www.waitakereranges.org.nz/shop/>

Thank you for your continued support.

YOUR COMMITTEE

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