

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

7pm Monday 29 August 2022 by Zoom

Annual Report of the Executive Committee

THE WAITAKERE RANGES PROTECTION SOCIETY INC.

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Executive Committee of The Waitakere Ranges Protection Society Incorporated.

This Annual Report is for the year ending 31st March 2022. A decision was made in March that due to the Covid Omicron outbreak that the AGM would be deferred until the peak of the outbreak had well passed. It was further decided that, in the likelihood that Covid-19 is still prevalent in the community, it would be held by Zoom in August.

We apologise to those of our members who are unable to access this technology and welcome those of you who have joined us for this video conference.

The President's Report and the Audited Financial Report will as usual be included in the next newsletter and posted on the WRPS website. You can request copies of these documents by emailing or phoning us.

The past year has been another difficult year with Covid continuing to make life challenging. The WRPS Executive Committees' work has continued despite this in this 'new normal' with monthly meetings proceeding via Zoom.

As mentioned at last year's AGM the Executive Committee undertook our housekeeping and progressed a review of both the Society's rules and the Strategic plan. This review was timely as it was the first time the rules have been fully reviewed in over 20 years and the Strategic plan since 2019. Both documents were discovered to be in good health but the rules are also required to be brought up-to-date in light of the new Incorporated Society Act and the Strategic plan needed some additions to make it more robust and comprehensive.

The updated Rules will be presented to members for approval at a Special General Meeting to be held by Zoom at a date to be announced later in the year and the updated strategic plan will be uploaded to the website.

In summary the review has given us more clarity around our vision and our role. As we have strengthened our structure so we can move forward with confidence. It is obvious that to achieve our 2050 Vision of an **Ecologically Flourishing Waitakere Ranges**, A Taonga of Tāmaki Makaurau where The natural ecology of the Waitakere Ranges is respected and managed in perpetuity as a genuine taonga for Aucklanders, and for all New Zealanders that we must be ready to **identify the significant threats to the ecological health of the Ranges adequately and promptly address them.**

Certainly if we look generally at the submissions we have made and the issues we have been involved in over the last twelve months it gives us a good idea of the most pressing threats. Without listing the submissions here, we were involved in Freshwater, housing rules, the Regional Parks management, freedom camping, climate change, and the quarry. Lurking in the background although still very much in the forefront are kauri dieback, myrtle rust and discussions involving Anzac valley property development, plus the Huia WaterCare Dam Treatment plant plan.

Two other essential Council documents were reviewed as part of our consideration. The State of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area report 2018; and, The Auckland Council State of the Environment 2020 report.

Thanks to Eva for her expert summaries of these reports. Note that the next State of the WRHA report which is due every 5 years, is due next year, 2023. WRPS will be providing feedback on any issues we would like to be included in that report.

Both these reports as well as the issues addressed in the submissions made over the past 12 months reveal the Waitakere Ranges are just as vulnerable as ever. Even though the Waitakere Heritage Area Act 2008 has given us a sense of security that there is legislation in place, the number of threats has not diminished at all. The threats remain the same.

The Committee met for many extra meetings to discuss these documents apart from the monthly meetings. I acknowledge the commitment this took the Committee over and above our work as usual and the time and effort that was involved. It was a worthy exercise and that has renewed our focus.

I acknowledge the entire Executive Committee and the work you have done for the Society over the past year. We are all volunteers and I thank each one of you for the time and effort you have contributed to the Society over the past year.

Special thanks go to our multitasker Deputy-President and Treasurer and Acting-Secretary Sandra Jones for the exceptional work she does. We have some good news to share with you later on about the role of the Secretary.

We welcomed aboard Susie Vincent after the AGM last year and we thank her for the sterling work she is doing on the Society's behalf. Likewise our sincere thanks to Tim OShea, Robin Taylor and Heather Tanguay. Your contribution, big or small is invaluable and essential to the functioning of the Committee and to the Society.

During the year Mike Sweeny resigned from the Committee due to other commitments. We were sad to see Mike go and wish him all the best.

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.

Thanks also go to Jenny Taylor who has maintained our membership database and coordinated mail-outs for many years.

The Society relies on professional consultants to prepare submissions and evidence for us on a range of legal and planning matters. Over the last year we have had professional expert advice from James Hook, planner and Melean Absolum, Landscape Architect and Simon Chapman, Ecologist.

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.

In 2019 we appointed Eva Wrassky-Bulmer to the role of Heritage Area Coordinator. Eva has been a great asset to the Society and her work has been invaluable. Unfortunately for us Eva is moving on to look after her growing family. We will miss you a lot Eva and we wish you all the best for this next phase of your life. We will be appointing a new HAC in the next few weeks.

Eva has continued her excellent work over the past year and wrote a number of submissions that include:

Implementing the NPS for Freshwater Management in Auckland
Waitipu - Waitakere Park Service Outcomes Plan
Proposed changes to the Auckland Unitary Plan: the Government's new housing rules
Regional Parks Management Plan
Freedom Camping in Vehicles
Managing our Wetlands
Driving on Muriwai Beach
Climate Change Commission draft advice to government

Just a final brief word about myrtle rust and kauri Dieback

We have heard anecdotally that myrtle rust is now having a devastating impact in some areas around Auckland, including Chelsea sugarworks reserve and on Awhitu Peninsular, and that pohutukawa were being severely affected in those areas. We have not had that confirmed.

On Kauri Dieback

Auckland Council has released its 3rd survey. Remote sensing was used to detect kauri trees over 15 metre tall. Results of the survey can be found online, on our website and in the newsletter. In summary, the results supported the precautionary approach taken in 2018.

Special thanks to Te Kawerau a Maki for their strong leadership up to and following the rahui and for their exceptional submission on the Regional Park Management Plan.

It has been my honour to be President and to chair the executive committee over the past 18 months despite the difficulties of the last two years. 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 in the spirit of John Edgar's passion for the protection of the Waitākere Ranges. I will mention here that I see this role with an Expiry date of 2024 and am committed to finding someone else to take on this role.

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. In conclusion it is never more important for WRPS to be involved in Protection of the Ranges. We must join with our allies and friends keeping a watchful eye and presence and be ready to move in defence of the Waitakere Ranges. 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.
29 August 2022