

March
2010

Waikanae Estuary Care Group Inc.



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Chairman's report

Well summer has gone (did it ever really come?) and autumn is upon us. Unseasonal NW winds have dried the ground out fast.

Unfortunately the weeds had already grown with the help of summer rains, so we have lots of weeding to do before we start on winter planting. Please get involved with the upcoming working bees – see below for details.

We have just filed an application for environmental funding for three years from the Lotteries Grants Board to replace our Ministry for Environment ("MfE") funding which expires 30/6/10. This is the funding we use to purchase all plants we cannot grow ourselves, and planting materials – approximately \$15,000pa so it is quite critical.

A lot of effort has gone into this application – particularly from Eric Stone and Lisa Clapcott from the Department of Conservation ("DoC"), and Kerryn Penny from Greater Wellington – our application included a full eastlight folder of supporting material! So thanks to all concerned.

The outcome of this application won't be known until July, so we are also considering other funding sources to cover the possibility of being unsuccessful – unfortunately our current government is cutting a number of funding sources (eg. MfE's Sustainable Management Fund and DoC's Community Conservation Fund), putting considerable demand on other sources.

Jeff Eaton

Plant nursery / shade house update

The shade house and adjoining nursery areas are busting at the seams at the moment with thousands of large healthy plants ready to go into the estuary this winter. We are already potting up seedlings for planting in winter 2011, and this year have collected more seed varieties than ever before which have been sown, awaiting germination and will also be ready for planting in winter 2011.

Seed ecosourced locally includes hardy standards such as : cabbage

trees, flax, toe toe, coastal tree daisy, and other species such as *Coprosma acerosa*, knobby club rush and *Coprosma propinqua*, five finger, *Carex secta*, *Carex virgata*, *Carex littorosa*, *Libertia peregrinans*, saltmarsh ribbonwood and sand tussock.

Seed contributions from Matt Ward (KCDC), Isobel Gabites (ecologist), Robyn Smith (Greater Wellington) and Pat Menzies (Caregroup) have been gratefully received.

Deb Finn



Plants 'hardening off' outside the shade house at the Care Group plant nursery

Rodent monitoring update

Hi folks.

Care Group volunteers, DOC and Kenakena school got some interesting results from the tracking tunnel rodent monitor which we ran on February 25th. Tunnels have been placed in the Scientific Reserve on the South side of the river and the Recreation Reserve on the North side. These tunnels use bait and inkpads to record the tracks of various creatures. The results were:

Rats: 10%

Mice: 50%

While we were specifically interested in rodents, there were also a lot of insect tracks of various types, but no wetas. There were no lizard tracks.

In a bush environment (including estuaries), as a general rule it's accepted that a rat population over 10% will have a detrimental effect on vulnerable species (nesting birds, native snails, lizards etc). 10% is what we strive to keep rats under in those reserves where rodent control is undertaken.

Waikanae Estuary arguably attracts more birds than any other place in the Wellington region, including some

very rare species. Unfortunately they are threatened by rats, cats and mustelids (stoats / ferrets / weasels), all of which are capable of taking out adult birds. Eggs are an easy target. Mice compete for food resources with and are predators of native lizards and insects.

This is the first of several rodent monitors which we will complete this year. It is also planned to monitor for mustelids with tracking tunnels in the very near future.

Currently rabbits are the only animal we control in the Scientific Reserve. Based on the results of these monitors it may be decided to implement further control of either mustelids or rodents or both, if they are deemed to be of sufficient numbers to justify it. Further information and discussions on the pest animal theme will be part of the Waikanae Estuary Care Group Open Day on 29th of May.

This is a great start to our monitoring project. Many thanks to all involved for the help.

Eric Stone
Biodiversity Ranger
Department of Conservation

Win an overnight stay on Kapiti Island

It is wonderful to have the support of a very special local business for our Open Day once again this year. Thanks to Kapiti Island Alive, two lucky locals will experience an overnight stay at the lodge on the north end of Kapiti Island.

This spot prize includes accommodation for two adults, meals

and an evening guided kiwi spotting tour. This spot prize has a value of \$530.

You've got to be in to win! So, we'll see you at Open Day this year for a chance to experience Kapiti Island in a very special way.



Eric and Mick setting up monitoring tunnels with peanut butter on the Waikanae side...



ERMA volunteers help weed

Friday 26 February was a nice and warm day with very little cloud or wind. We had Lisa and Eric from DoC, Kerryn from GWRC, Matt from KDCD and 7 of our own members. While we waited for the bus to arrive with the ERMA volunteers we set up chairs, tables, hot water urns, cups etc and a display board. (A very big thank you to Lyn, Anne and Kerryn).

Our ERMA volunteers arrived and I noticed that most of them were wearing jandals, but the message did get through, they had good footwear in their bags.

Our mission was to release plants at the Hadfield Place entrance to the gravel path (RPS 3 & 3.5) and around the edge of Manly Street (RPS 4). The plan was to split the 50 plus volunteer workers from ERMA

into groups of 5-8 people.

After a brief introduction and a safety talk by Eric we got into our groups and attacked the weeds. In no time at all it was morning tea and what a great spread of food they provided (no good for my waist line). Then we were back into making the weed heap grow until 12.45 pm when they all rushed back to their bus and cars and headed away for a picnic lunch at the beach. Our faithful members then packed up and went looking for lost tools under the piles of weeds.

Yes, ERMA did make quite a difference to a large area of planting and they were a well organized group with a lot of their own equipment, including a hired Port-a-loo. I would like to thank everyone involved on doing such a superb job.

Mike Hardiman



Update on progress for a Waikanae Estuary Restoration Plan 2011 - 2016

A local contractor has been asked to draw up a Restoration Plan for the next five-year period. This contract will be managed by the Department of Conservation.

The objectives of the contract are:

- To guide participating agencies and Waikanae Estuary Care Group with further restoration work and operational planning
- To ensure restoration work, threat management and recreational asset planning is complementary

The agencies and groups identified as being a part of this process are:

- Waikanae Estuary Care Group
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Kapiti Coast District Council
- Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai

- Department of Conservation

This plan may include:

- Maps detailing what work has gone on so far and what direction that work should take from here on
- A five year working plan
- A review of existing restoration efforts – successes and challenges
- A map of current vegetation – indigenous and introduced
- Potential new or threatened species to introduce

This plan will not only verify what has worked so far, but also give us a solid direction to work towards together from this point forward. The new plan should be ready for the new financial year beginning in July.



Eric Stone(DoC), Isobel Gabites and Deb Finn discuss plantings at the estuary

New members are most welcome. Why not bring along a friend to the next working bee...

www.gw.govt.nz/waikanaeestuary

Up-coming working bees

Unless otherwise stated, working bees are carried out between 9am and 12 noon. Morning tea is provided. Please ensure that you wear sturdy footwear and come prepared with appropriate clothing for the weather on the day.

If you have your own gardening gloves and favourite tools please bring those along too, spare gloves and equipment are available to borrow.

Saturday 10 April

Weeding at RPS 2. Meet on the bend of Manly Street, Paraparaumu.

Saturday 24 April

Weeding at RPS 14 on the north side of the river. Meet in the second car park at the end of Tutere Street, Waikanae (alongside the Waikanae River walkway).

Saturday 8 May

Weeding at RPS 3. Meet at the shade house at the end of Taranui Place (off Kotuku Drive), Paraparaumu. Go through the wooden barricades to meet at the shade house at the far left of the empty sections.

Saturday 29 May – OPEN DAY

The first planting day of the season. Meet at Manly Street entrance, opposite Hadfield Place, Paraparaumu. Planting, guest speaker, BBQ, spot prizes!

Planting season just around the corner

It's hard to believe that we're already thinking about winter and planning this season's planting days, but seeing as late autumn and early winter is the best time to plant it's time to start talking!

If you have been walking around the estuary in recent weeks you will have noticed large areas that have been cleared and are nearly ready for planting. Site preparation plays a huge role in the success of any restoration planting as we need to ensure that our new plants are given the best possible chance of survival. Due to the estuary being public land, all site preparation and use of sprays is contracted out to experts with the necessary 'Growsafe' qualifications.

Resources have been ordered in for the planting season and these include stakes, fertilizer and mulch. Staking new plants is not usually necessary for support but are most useful for locating plants at a later date when weeding and 'releasing' plants from competing plants that inevitably find their way back. Due to our harsh (sandy) growing environment plants often need a helping hand to get started. We usually use a 12 -18 month slow release fertilizer on planting days.

We have noticed a real benefit of using mulch in the estuary at appropriate sites. Mulch helps keep the weeds away from the plant while also retaining moisture in the soil beneath the mulch. When applying mulch it is important to leave a 'donut' circle around the plant to ensure the mulch doesn't burn the plant as it breaks down.

Planting details will be available in our next newsletter but as a rule they are every fortnight, starting on Open Day on 29 May. We look forward to seeing you out there this winter!