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Issue 139 Nov-Dec 2008

Your President's Report



Photo Courtesy Tony Dunn

Following the parliamentary elections in November the political landscape of New Zealand has undergone some major changes. How this will affect the Waitakere Ranges is at present uncertain, but undoubtedly there will be new policies introduced by the incoming government that could have repercussions on the physical landscape of the ranges. Together with the local and regional Councils the Society will have a major role to play to ensure that the heritage area is safeguarded, and that will include working with the National Party and their coalition partners towards a better understanding of why the legislation was necessary.

Waitakere City have recently announced that the first Local Area Plan (LAP) will be conducted in Oratia. LAPs are provided for in the WRHA Act to promote the purpose of the Act and its objectives, and inform decision making processes that relate to the heritage area. For further information a plain english version of the Act has been written by EDS and is available on their website (www.eds.org.nz). Members of the Society who live in the Oratia valley are encouraged to attend the public meetings being held (the first was in November) and engage in the consultation process with Council.

The committee is considering making some changes to the constitution to bring it into alignment with the Charities Commission's

We were pleased recently to receive a grant from ASB Trust to employ a part time Heritage Area consultant to liaise with Council and the communities on all heritage area matters. We have appointed Dr Mels Barton and she is currently attending meetings, writing reports and submissions, and extending our advocacy for the heritage area.

We are currently investigating the idea of a mural depicting the ranges in the Henderson CBD, to bring a scene of the ranges into the heart of the city. We have identified some possible walls, had an enthusiastic response from young artist who is keen to be involved, and are considering how to fund this gift from the Society to the people of Waitakere in celebration of the heritage area.

On behalf of the committee I would like to wish all our members and friends a very happy Christmas, and I hope you will all get to enjoy walking in the ranges and on the coast over the summer.

John Edgar



Photo Courtesy Tony Dunn

Welcome to your Summer Newsletter
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from your Executive Committee.

This newsletter contains information about our new Heritage Area Coordinator and recent WRPS submissions and correspondence, great WRPS gifts for Christmas and our gift to the ARC.

WRPS SUMMER FIELD TRIPS 2009 The Structure of the Land



We are delighted to announce that Dr Bruce Hayward has kindly agreed to show us and discuss some of our spectacular coastal geology and world class features.

Join us for the first of our summer low tide walks and talks with Dr Bruce Hayward.

Muriwai
Photo: Courtesy Bruce Hayward

Those of you who attended our AGM earlier this year will remember Bruce's fascinating talk about the "Structure of the land" based on the chapter in the *Waitakere Ranges Book* which was also reproduced in our *May08 Newsletter*.

Where: Muriwai

When: Sat afternoon Jan 10th from 2pm.

Meet: In the Maori Bay carpark at 2pm.

Bring: footwear suitable for walking around beach and some slippery intertidal rocks.

What: The first half is relatively easy walking when the tide is low which is 0.5 m at 4pm

At Collins Bay there are some large boulders to walk over and these may not suit some participants, but you could choose to return at that point having already seen some of the best exposures.



Dike Feeding lava pillow
Photo: Courtesy Bruce Hayward

For more information contact Mels mels@waitakereranges.org.nz

KAURI KILLER – PTA UPDATE



The latest news on *Phytophthora* taxon Agathis as reported in Western Leader Tuesday 2 December is that six Government agencies have joined together to fight the Kauri Killer.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Conservation Department, Auckland Regional Council, Northland Regional Council, Environment Bay of Plenty and Environment Waikato have set up a team to identify the risks to kauri. To report any trees with signs of yellowing leaves, canopy thinning, dead

Your Committee

Committee meetings are held on second Wednesday of the month

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Waitakere City Council's Heritage Calendar

Our thanks to
Wally Thomas

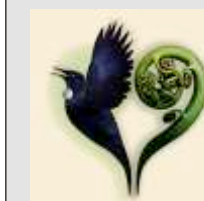
and his team from Waitakere City Council for the gift of the Waitakere Heritage Calendar for all our WRPS members.

This calendar celebrates and acknowledges the Heritage Area Act and as Mayor Bob says in his introduction, "It is wonderful that the magnificent landscapes in and around the Ranges are now formally recognised in law, and in a way that will ensure they stay that way indefinitely. ... The photographs in this heritage calendar are a stark reminder that the Waitakeres have served the people of Waitakere, Auckland and New Zealand well, in many ways, for centuries."

As well as the fascinating heritage photos of the Waitakere Ranges mainly from the Waitakere Central Library, the calendar also contains some very useful Council contact information including due dates for rates and Public holidays.



Whatipu from Te Ahuahu Photo: Courtesy John Edgar



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Heritage Area Coordinator's Report continued

Oratia LAP I attended the Oratia LAP public meeting hosted by WCC. This was very well attended and the audience was split into small groups to consider the following questions:

1. What do you like about Oratia?
2. What don't you like about Oratia?
3. How would you improve it?
4. What would you like Oratia to be like in 50 years time?

The detailed answers will be posted on the WCC website in due course, but in summary most people liked things the way they were and would like to see them much the same in 50 years time!

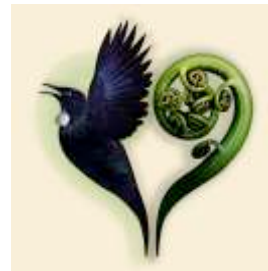
They liked their rural, green, open valley, their community feeling, school and heritage buildings and landmarks, they would like there to be better public transport and links to the train, less hoons, a pub and café, to be able to buy local produce and for people to live off the land again and use it. They didn't like urban sprawl, derelict sections, power lines, fast traffic, planning restrictions and lack of clarity in interpretation and uncertainty, loss of economic viability, no footpaths, lack of help with weeds.

WRPS and others who attended had some concerns about the WCC staff's drive towards branding the Heritage Area and creating denser village centres with more commercial uses. We didn't feel this was reflected in the comments made by the participants and that there was a degree of 'leading' taking place by facilitators and speakers.

Networking / Advocacy I have been getting out and about and talking to individual members about their concerns and ideas as well as with the following groups:

Green Drinks
 Environmental Defence Society re National Party's environmental policies
 Slow Food Waitakere
 EcoDay planning

For questions or discussion on Heritage Area matters contact Mels
 mels@waitakereranges.org.nz



WRPS letter published in Herald Oct 2008

The letter reproduced below was written in response to Brian Rudman's article in NZ Herald concerning the status of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act and Paula Bennett's recent comments about repealing it and replacing with a national park.

Dear Editor,

RE: HANDS OFF OUR WAITAKERES, MR KEY

Brian Rudman has it right. Hands off the jewel in Auckland's conservation crown, National. Seems strange that a party traditionally devoted to privatisation is now so keen on nationalising our greatest Auckland asset.

Obviously the not-so-subtle sub-text is that turning the Waitakere Ranges into a National Park rather than a Heritage Area would hand the fought-over foothills back to the developers on a plate.

Having spent 35 years campaigning to stop the incremental development, the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society will not give up on the foothills now.

The communities of that beautiful part of Auckland are currently speaking up about how they want to see their future via the new Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act's Local Area Plan process. Their voices are not calling for more housing, nor for a national park, but for their area to stay as it is now unspoilt, green, rural and spacious.

Local people voted 80% in favour of the Heritage Area Act, which is why local Councils and ARC supported it so strongly. National would do well to leave the ARC to continue its outstanding stewardship of the Waitakere Ranges and respect the views of the local people who live there and cherish its treasures.

Yours faithfully
JOHN EDGAR

ARC receives gift of land from WRPS



WRPS gifts land adjacent to Big Muddy Creek to ARC

WRPS purchased land As mentioned in May 08 Newsletter, in 1996 an 11 ha block at 490-540 Huia Road was purchased from Manchester Unity Friendly Society by WRPS with financial contributions from its members, and from Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, the Auckland Regional Council, the ASB Community Trust and the Parks & Wilderness Trust. This year, the block was formally gifted to the ARC and included in the Order in Council (Local Government (Auckland Regional Parks) Order 2008) that will give it protection, in perpetuity, from sale or disposal. It thus becomes part of the ARC-owned parkland generally known as Paruroa/Big Muddy Creek forest.

Location of the land If you stand in the little park at the end of the road at Armour Bay, Parau, and look across the estuary you will look onto the forested slopes of Big Muddy Creek forest, which includes the WRPS-donated block. In spring, when the many kowhai on the lower slopes are in full flower it is an especially lovely sight. The entrance gate to the block that was gifted to the ARC by WRPS is on the main Titirangi/Huia Rd on the left just before you reach the Lower Nihotupu Dam.

Of special interest A walk through the reserve will take you through areas of regenerating



Pohutukawa Flower
 Photo: Courtesy Max Pirini

kauri-kanuka, kowhai-kanuka, puriri composite forest types, with mangrove forest on the estuary edge. In the Waitakere Ecological District: Survey Report for the Protected Natural Areas (PNA) Programme (ARC 1993), it was designated a Priority Vegetation Site. "Of special interest is the uninterrupted sequence from mangrove forest to terrestrial forest. Sequences such as this would once have been common in the Auckland Ecological Region, and few intact examples remain." It is an excellent example, the best of the only two in the District.

Introducing your committee member – Mels Barton

WRPS Secretary and our new Heritage Area Coordinator



Background Mels was born in Nottingham, England and gained a degree in Physical Geography and Geology as well as a PhD in estuarine sediment transport processes before spending 10 years working for the Environment Agency in Wales. She focused on water quality issues and was the Consents Manager for Wales for 3 years before emigrating to New Zealand in 1999 with her partner and fellow water scientist Eric Darbyshire.

Mels and Eric formed an environmental consultancy and worked for ARC, WCC, ACC, Metrowater and City Design until Eric was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2000 and his health rapidly deteriorated. Needing to work entirely from home they began building and marketing websites for NZ businesses as Subliminal Ltd. At this time Mels joined the WRPS committee as there was no longer a conflict of interest with her work and was instrumental in gaining environmentally friendly consents for the Watercare dams in the Waitakere Ranges. Eventually Eric became too ill to work any more and Mels nursed him until his death in 2006.

2008 In February of this year Mels joined the team at Lopdell House Gallery working part-time as Public Programmes Coordinator and has put on a wide range of events in the heritage building including films, concerts, poetry evenings, photo competitions and talks on all sorts of subjects. She also runs her own business Glow Worm, putting on glow-in-the-dark parties for all ages and occasions, www.glow-worm.co.nz. In her spare time she is a trustee for the Weedfree Waitakere Trust and a committee member for the Titirangi Ratepayers and Residents Association. She somehow also finds time to ride and compete her two horses Johnny and Moose at local pony club events.

WRPS At the AGM in March 2008 Mels agreed to take on the role of Secretary from Kath Dewar who was standing for the Green Party in the New Lynn electorate and needed to free up some time to dedicate to that. Then on October 1 WRPS was awarded a grant by the ASB Trust for a part-time project officer to oversee the implementation of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act. The committee decided to appoint Mels to the role of Heritage Area Coordinator working 10 hours a week for the next 2 years. She will report her progress in this role in our newsletters from now on so we can ensure we're getting value for money!

Contact Mels – WRPS secretary and our new Heritage Area Coordinator

Mels has a new email address for WRPS business, and you can reach her on mels@waitakereranges.org.nz

Pohutukawa Flower
Photo Courtesy of Max Pirini



Pohutukawa Flower
Photo Courtesy of Max Pirini

Heritage Area Coordinator's Report October - December 2008

In the first 2 months in this new role for the Society I've been quite productive. Following is a brief summary of the things I've been working on.

Submissions

Auckland Regional Policy Statement Review--ARC ARC is planning to review the ARPS and have consulted prior to the actual review on the direction they are planning to take. WRPS made a comprehensive submission covering all areas of this important document.

Maxwell, Grendon/Landing Road walkway – WCC This sub-division proposal in Titirangi/Laingholm was previously taken to the Environment Court by WRPS. The conditions imposed on the applicant included the creation of a walkway linking Landing and Grendon Roads as well as handing over one of the lots as a public reserve. This would mean that South Titirangi and Laingholm and Woodlands Park would be connected again for the first time since 1952 when the historic road was closed by the Grendon Rd sub-division. The developer (Ralph Maxwell) recently submitted an application WCC to vary the consent and remove these conditions. WRPS made a submission opposing the application, as did over 100 other concerned locals and local groups. There were only 8 submissions in support. A hearing was eventually held and after some discussion the applicant agreed to undertake the work and give the reserve land to the Council. As long as a detailed agreement can be reached with Council staff the application will be withdrawn and the commissioners will not have to make a determination. It was great to see a common sense solution in this case at last!

Release of Grass Carp in Lake Wainamu – ARC ARC are proposing to release, tag and monitor a number of large grass carp into Lake Wainamu at Bethells in order to control the overgrowing pest weeds in the lake, which are severely affecting its ecology and health. WRPS was consulted on the detailed proposal before the formal application was made to DoC for the licence. We submitted a number of key points which have been discussed with the project officer and some modifications to the proposal made as a result. We will be kept informed of progress with this interesting project. The carp will be removed once the weeds are gone.

Titirangi RSA Consent – WCC Titirangi RSA and Bowling Club put in a consent application to repair the bowling green retaining wall on the corner of Park Rd and South Titirangi Rd in Titirangi. The application involves the removal of several heritage trees (kauri and rimu). WRPS inspected the site and studied the arborists' reports in detail before making a submission. We supported the application, since unfortunately it will not be practicable to do the work without removing the trees. New planting and weed control will be undertaken in mitigation and special conditions are in force to prevent the spread of PTA by contractors.

Correspondence – Letters have been sent regarding:

- Non-compliance of Watercare Services Ltd with their consents for the Waitakere, Nihotupu and Huia Dams – ARC
 - The continued operation of canyoning activities and the risk of them spreading PTA – ARC
 - Waituna Action Group in support of a funding application for weed control in a reserve – Weedfree Trust
 - Our concerns re the spread of PTA and what action the new Government plans to take on the issue – National Party
 - The status of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act and Paula Bennett's recent comments about repealing it and replacing with a national park, in response to Brian Rudman's article – NZ Herald

Consultation Local Area Plans WRPS met with WCC staff to discuss general progress and way forward with LAPs in the Heritage Area. West Coast Plan Liaison Group held their AGM and launched the Heritage Area Information Packs for households. These are available free from the Council and all libraries and contain a lot of very useful information.