



Report from the **Federated Farmers and Waikato Biodiversity Forum** partnership day held on Tuesday 21 June 2011 at Te Miro

Purpose

The purpose of this day was to:

- visit farms with protected areas and hear from farmers who have protected areas on their farms
- provide information on what help is available for protection of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) and discuss what incentives/mechanisms work for landowners to protect SNAs
- network and share ideas with others who have SNAs on their land.



Workshopping concerns.

Introduction to the Forum day

The Forum began at 10am with a welcome from facilitator Helen Ritchie. The 70 participants then settled into hearing presentations from three key Forum members on SNAs. Sally Millar, Regional Policy Advisor, kicked off with Federated Farmers perspective emphasising the importance of communication between landowners and councils. She stressed that the conversation is as important as the outcome – it's about sharing ideas, information and resources. Farmers acknowledge the importance of biodiversity as part of their identity as New Zealanders – being 'kiwi'. However, there is a 'cost' to protect and there needs to be recognition of this – not necessarily financial. Sally's last message was that it is important to communicate in person 'up the farm race', to understand the farming business and work with farmers to achieve their goals and as a result look after our biodiversity.

Tony Roxburgh from Waipa District Council reminded the Forum participants that acts, such as the RMA, require district councils to provide for the maintenance of biodiversity in district plans. Tony emphasised that maintaining biodiversity

today requires 'active' management – fencing, predator and weed control, connecting sites, dedicated habitat and species management. Waipa District Council presently offers Environmental Protection Lots, waiving of resource consent fees on Special Landscape Character Areas, financial assistance to land owners with on ground costs, such as, survey/fencing and pest control, providing rate relief for areas legally protected and providing advice and guidance. Tony suggested that there are other ways the council could assist landowners, such as, more advice and information on existing options, landowner council partnerships, assistance with farm plans, supplying plantings for restoration, assistance with survey and fencing, establishment of a Waipa District Council Conservation Fund and/or a joint Waikato Regional Council and Waipa District Council fund.

Finally Gerry Kessels (Kessels and Associates Ltd) presented information on the importance of biodiversity and the implications to New Zealand of our obligation to protect it under international conventions and national strategies and priorities. He also emphasised the importance of biodiversity to New Zealand's economy. New Zealand's biodiversity has been estimated by economists (in 1997) to be worth at least \$46 billion/year for land (Patterson & Cole, 1997) and \$183 billion/year for marine (Patterson & Cole, 1997) with a total of \$229 billion/year. Gerry then went on to highlight the SNAs work in Waipa district. A total of 840 sites have been assessed of which 585 sites were identified as SNAs, covering some 11,081ha. Four hundred and forty four significant sites, equating to 4,367ha or 39 per cent of the area of SNA, are not protected under statute or covenant. This includes both private and public land. A total of 73 nationally threatened species (24 flora species and 49



Workshopping concerns.

fauna species) have been recorded as being present within the Waipa district. The important habitats in Waipa include mature native forest remnants and mature kanuka scrubland, kahikatea dominated alluvial plain forest, gully wetlands and peat lakes and bogs including pasture dominated buffer margins. Scrubland and willow wetlands can provide habitat for many threatened fauna species, such as, long-tailed bats, lizards, black mudfish and threatened wetland plants. Gerry concluded with suggesting that there are successful models for protecting and restoring biodiversity in New Zealand, such as, QEII Elizabeth National Trust and Landcare groups which are based on the voluntary efforts and goodwill of rural communities.



SNA on Halls property.

Field trip

The field trip began at Wallace and Sally Hall's property on Gray Road, Te Miro. The first SNA visited on their property was originally well grown individual trees in a grazed paddock which the landowners thought had 'potential' for enhancement/regeneration. It is 1.4ha and was fenced 6-7 years ago. It is protected under a QEII covenant. Wallace indicated that he had seen an increase in bird life as the tree and bush health improved. The work in the area has all been undertaken by Sally and Wallace including planting, weed management and animal pest control. They have planted what they thought would grow well in area (tawa, rimu, mangeao) and others species, such as kauri. They have chosen some trees specifically for bird food. They had initial problems at the site with hare damage and destruction of young trees so they have used tree protectors. They mulch young trees with thick paper/cardboard layer or old carpet and release trees from weeds. QEII visits every three years to inspect fencing and provide advice. There is natural regeneration starting to occur in the area. Wallace considers plant pests are an ongoing battle and he sprays blackberry, inkweed and bracken fern. Wallace and Sally undertake their own animal pest control using bait stations and night shooting.

The second site visited was an unlogged area of approximately 15 acres. It was already protected as a Waipa District Council reserve when Wallace and Sally purchased property three years ago. It is recorded on the title and has a management plan. There is no ongoing council involvement so the Halls have used the QEII model for guidance. The issue of how protected areas should be valued and recognition in terms of rating was discussed. It was suggested that protected areas have a public worth and it is important that this is recognized. The property owner who set up the protection received the entitlements and there isn't necessarily anything 'in it' for subsequent property owners. Wallace said fencing bush areas makes it easier for stock management, provides shelter, assists with erosion control and provides a 'wintering over' food sources for bee hives. Stu Kneebone a councillor from the Waikato Regional Council gave a brief history of the Whitehall possum control scheme. The Waikato Regional Council has a possum control programme in the Te Miro, Whitehall and Te Tapui area. This is important pest control work and needs to continue.

The second farm visited was John and Jenny Adams. They have been on their property for 21 years. There are steep faces on the farm planted in pines some of which have now been milled and used on the property in fencing/buildings. There are other areas planted in native species and nearly all drains are fenced on both sides. The Adams have planted species like poplars and willows in some areas for bank stability. They have shade trees in most paddocks for stock and to maintain the aesthetic value of the property. The surrounding banks/faces of the farm consist of newer plantings with a range of species including larch, douglas fir and kauri. The Adam's house looks down on an area of well grown kahikateas which was originally a low lying boggy area open to stock grazing. This area has now been fenced and put into a QEII covenant. This area is full of natural regenerating vegetation. The Adams recognise the value of the stand of kahikateas and discussion centre on how best to recognise that value. One of the values is the visual/aesthetic appeal of the SNA when looking out on the farm from the Adams home. The Adams have received a letter from Waipa District Council stating the stand of kahikateas have been identified as an SNA. The issue of carbon credits (pine plantings) was raised.

SNA on the Adam's property.



Why protect natural areas? What are the benefits?

Benefits to farm	Wider benefits
Shelter and shade	Biodiversity maintained/increased
Adds value to property	Marketing for 100% pure image
Erosion and flood control	Aesthetics/landscape vistas/amenity
Helps water quality	Tourism and enjoyment of the public
Easier to control stock- safety and mustering	Flood and erosion control
Aesthetics	Community connections
Access to funding support	Protection of natural heritage
Public perception of farming improved	Regional pride
Adds \$\$ value to farm	Role modelling in community
Amenity value	Inspiration/motivation
Tourism homestay woofing	Encourage community buy-in
Social cultural	Catchment water quality improved
Biodiversity improved	Bee habitat/food
Improved animal health	Education fielddays/Enviroschools
Firewood –only if dead and dry	Reducing carbon footprint
Photosynthesis	Habitat for threatened species
Clean green image	Ecological services local climate
Microclimates	Localised rainfall
Timber	Heritage for future generations
Soil quality	Cultural harvest carving medicinal
Recreation –social hunting	Eco tourism
Cash cropping	Selective logging of carbon forestry
Environmental health	Buffering
Repair the land	Carbon cycle and storage
Develop stewardship of the land	Paint ball
Protecting waterways allows marine life to thrive	Bring communities together (care groups and possum schemes)
Personal satisfaction and enjoyment	Halo effect –developing corridors/networks for biodiversity
Economic benefits of animal pest control	Improve air quality and water quality
Preservation for the grandchildren	Promote health and wellbeing
Protecting a piece of heritage	Clean green image to district, region and country
Protection of underground water systems	Improved public water and water supplies
Fellowship with other “natural area owners” and linking with wider network of supporters	Providing employment
Keeping public works off property	Research opportunities
Pride and feel good factor	Restoration/re-introduction of species
Carbon credit trading	Cultural/iwi values and kiwi pride, identity and heritage
Subdivision incentives	Recreational for walking biking fishing
	ETS NZ’s obligations
	Product marketing overseas
	General health and wellbeing linked to healthy environment

SNA on the Hall’s property.



Summary of feedback from group discussions

For a copy of all the detail of the days discussion points email Moira Cursey m.cursey@xtra.co.nz or phone 0800BIODIV (246348).

SNAs on private land	
Concerns	What can be done (by whom) to address?
Restrictions and obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of communication and information – both ways (councils and landowners) one on one onsite. • Clear process of communication defined. • Opportunity to participate early in process. • Leave land in better condition than found it (kaitiakitanga). • Fair and reasonable regulations.
Encouraging active management with advice and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing bodies to provide advice. • Better explanations of reasons/drivers for SNA concept. • Wider range of communication options with same message, such as mailers, newspaper, internet, workshops, networks. • Use farmer role models more widely. • Industry groups to support message and encourage buy in.
Pest and weed control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted rate (driven by community) to pay contractors. • Funding sources available. • Landowner responsibility. • Success stories. • Council strategies. • Maintain the gains.
Public access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAs on private land need well controlled access rules. • Definitive statement from councils regarding public access to SNAs. • Excellent signage. • Distinct hazard warnings. • Develop public access sign-trails, OSH, close gates, public education, exclusion zones where there are threatened species. • Landowners rights must be respected. • Do not allow access to fragile bush.
Informing farmers of the value of SNAs and getting them interested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and communication -TV, schools, farming magazines, workshops, neighbourhood gatherings. • Provide financial support. • Tell success stories –role models in farming. • Information to come from central, regional and local government, vested interest groups, such as, Dairy NZ and landowners.
Costs of funding work and availability of financial assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to be made available to landowners as there are public benefits of the SNAs. • User pays. • Commercialisation of resource. • Funding from industry and central government. • Rating relief by area as opposed to by value. • One-stop-shop for funding information, such as Fundview. • Consents fees waived.
Stopping the decline –role of regulation in stopping biodiversity loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation is part of the mix. • Needs to be a balance between education and rules. • Provision of incentives and financial assistance to protect. • Local, regional and central government lead by example on public land. • Relationship between councils and landowners – communication important. • Rules must be enforceable.
The process of identifying SNAs and what comes next recognising farm context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correctly worded communication to farmers. • Public consultation is important workshops/meetings. • 20 per cent of area to be retained as protected – (nationally) LENZ. • Communicate to be on the same page. • Discussion with farmers once sites identified and before anything is finalised.

Where to from here?

Actions	Who
<p>Get the 'unconverted' landowners on board. Farmers with protected SNAs spread message of their value through telling neighbours about their value and taking message and information to farm discussion groups.</p> <p>Project Kahikatea and beyond.</p> <p>The Waikato Regional Council and district councils going to landowners and communicating with them on site face to face.</p> <p>More media releases to local papers.</p> <p>Making a SNA coveted (positive).</p> <p>Rates relief –incentives.</p> <p>Farmers showcasing to each other.</p> <p>Encouraging flexibility through dialogue within the rules.</p>	<p>Maira to follow up actions with key people, such as district council, regional council and Federated Farmers where appropriate.</p>

Detailed report and the full powerpoint presentations

For a copy of all the detail of the days discussion points and the ppt presentations email Moira Cursey m.cursey@xtra.co.nz or phone 0800BIODIV (246348).

