



Report

from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum held on Monday, 31 May 2010 at Tapapa

Purpose

The purpose of this Forum was to hear the findings of the State of the Environment report for the Catchments of the Kaimai Mamaku Range, suggest practical measures to enhance the bush and wetlands on land in the South Waikato district and provide feedback for the South Waikato District Councils District Plan review.

The Forum was an opportunity to:-

- enjoy and share ideas with others who undertake conservation related work
- establish on-going partnerships for biodiversity restoration
- highlight the projects of community groups in the area
- visit the significant natural areas on private land
- learn about practical measures to enhance bush, streams and wetlands on private land
- give South Waikato District Council suggestions on biodiversity protection for their District Plan review.

Introduction to the Forum day

The Forum began at 9.30am with an introduction from facilitator Helen Ritchie. The 75 participants were warmly welcomed by local tangata whenua Tom Smith and Waaka Gage. Robin Black replied on behalf of the Forum. All speakers referred to the importance of protecting the significant biodiversity of the Kaimai Mamaku Range and the importance of biodiversity on private land. Waaka spoke about the resources of the bush for rongoa which contributes to the health of people. Water quality in the Waihou has deteriorated and the koura and eels are not so plentiful. Sedimentation from removing pine trees is occurring. On top of the Kaimais is a wahi tapu site that is important to local tangata whenua. Tom Smith spoke about the involvement of Ruapeka Marae in the translocation of kiwi from a forest block near Opuaki to Mayor Island.

The following speakers gave presentation to inform participants of the issues which were at the forefront for the day. Kate Akers began with describing the Community Integrated Catchment Management Project-Tautanga Harbour and Waihou River which she is coordinating. The project is commonly known as the Kaimai Catchments Project (KCP). The project will work in partnership with landowners, the community



Presentation by Kate Akers

and resource management agencies in the Tauranga Harbour (Bay of Plenty) and Waihou River (Waikato) catchments along the Kaimai-Mamaku Ranges. The project will enhance landowner understanding of sustainable land management and biodiversity enhancement practices through Landcare Group formation and support, targeted workshops and supporting resource materials (e.g newsletters, web pages). Land sediment and nutrient run-off are two major issues. Current sediment inputs into the Tauranga Harbour alone are estimated by the recent NIWA study to be around 130,000 tonnes per year although this does not include stream bank erosion. The Firth of Thames receives an estimated 150,000 tonnes of sediment per year from the Waihou River which is threatening the integrity of an internationally recognised (Ramsar) wetland. These figures alone show that there is a need for measures in the upper catchment to reduce erosion and run off as well as stabilise stream banks. To facilitate this there will be real advantages in forming a Community Catchment Steering Committee, new Landcare groups, as well as supporting existing groups and landowners to carry out practical action on the ground (e.g. protection of existing indigenous vegetation and soil conservation and riparian planting).

Katrina Knill from the Department of Conservation (DOC) talked about the work that DOC, Environment Bay of Plenty and Environment Waikato have been doing together to explore options for coordinating their respective work programmes to protect the Kaimai and northern Mamaku catchments and receiving harbour and estuaries, and to engage iwi and local communities in this protection effort. The project framework proposes a catchment by catchment approach to ensuring efforts have been coordinated, and that community involvement in catchment protection work is maximized. For this purpose they have formed an inter-agency working group – the Kaimai Inter-agency Co-ordination Committee (KICC). The KICC and NZ Landcare Trust have signed up to a partnership agreement and secured \$350,000 of Ministry for the Environment funding over 3 years. This includes funding for the development of community forums to discuss and agree to catchment priorities, production of information resources for landowners relating to sustainable land management practices and biodiversity enhancement initiatives, and the facilitation of other opportunities for the Kaimai Mamaku communities such as field

Field trip Kaimai Mamaku Range in the background



days and workshops. This is a mountains to sea integrated catchment management project. The project aims to achieve land management and water quality improvements across 250,000 ha of land.

Willie Shaw from Wildland Consultants presented the State of the Environment Assessment for the Catchments of the Kaimai Range and Northern Mamaku Plateau. The significant biodiversity in the area includes representative examples of very good quality indigenous forest: lowland to upland sequences, floristically richest upland in Waikato (at least 467 indigenous taxa), avifauna – falcon, occasional kaka, kereru, kokako (Opuaki), common forest birds, invertebrates, e.g. Te Aroha stag beetle, aquatic habitats and fish, lizards and Hochstetter's frog. Animal pest management is a priority for the area to keep the forest cover in good condition and protect the fauna. It is also important to prevent stock encroachment, prevent further clearance of vegetation, carry out fire management and ongoing monitoring and weed management. In summary the situation at present is that: vegetation monitoring is largely in place although some expansion is desirable, fauna monitoring is patchy, some key areas are under active management, the Northern Kaimai forest is in relatively good condition, Mamaku forests are in relatively good condition, upland forest appears to be in a poor state, but largely climate-related, lack of birds are of concern, but declines are largely historical, key sites need greater recognition and more active management is required.

The SoE report is available online at:

<http://www.envbop.govt.nz/Knowledge-Centre/Kaimai-catchments-state-of-environment-report.aspx>

The South Waikato District Council (SWDC) is reviewing its District Plan and one of the issues under review is Landscapes and Significant Natural Areas. James Piddock from SWDC gave an overview of review process including the Landscape study, the Significant Natural Areas study for the South Waikato District which Environment Waikato has carried out, the Ecological study to identify top sites and the presentation of referred options which is taking place to the District Plan Steering Committee.

The current preferred option for biodiversity protection, includes a voluntary approach with incentives available to landowners protect areas. Other approaches that were considered include regulatory approach through the use of district plan rules, scheduling all 300 sites and a staggered approach in protecting high value sites through rules and lower value sites through voluntary methods with incentives. The Council has put together an issues paper discussing Landscapes and Biodiversity which will be available this month from the Council.

Rien van de Weteringh, Environment Waikato Land Management Officer, presented information on the current Waihou Catchment Management Scheme for flood protection on plains, river management and erosion control. He also detailed the Clean Streams programme for stock exclusion, fencing water ways and enhancement planting. He spoke about the sub-catchments review for Integrated Management which includes increasing integration of biodiversity, water quality, biosecurity and recreation, identifying opportunities to improve biodiversity on scheme land, increasing use of indigenous vegetation in riparian management, having a partnership with DoC for goat control and supporting community projects.

He ran through assistance with protecting forest fragments which included planning and costing work, possible funding arrangements -EW -35 % of landowners cost (fencing and planting), QEII - 50% of landowners cost (fencing only), Nga Whenua Rahui – subject to negotiation (Maori ownership), District Council – Some assistance for protecting Significant Natural Areas – depending on policy, DoC in some cases adjacent to the park boundary, DoC – Biodiversity Fund –

community projects and the South Waikato and EW - Environmental Initiative Funds

Field Trip

The first farm visited was John and Nellie Engels property which is a dairy farm on SH5 just past Fitzgerald Glade. They have tracts of bush on their property in the steep gullies and wet areas of the farm. They have planted and fencing areas of bush. They have also carried out weed control and planting in a wetland area at the back of the farm.



John Engels talking about bush protection on his farm.



Rosie Glover talking about bush areas on her farm.

The second farm visited was Claude, Rosie and Lindsay Glover's farm which backs onto the Kaimai Mamaku Range. They run dry stock and goats on the farm and have bush areas and a DoC reserve on their property. The reserve and the Mamaku Forest contain some of the best examples of dense podocarp stands remaining in the Tokoroa Ecological District. The reserve is of particular scientific interest because it contains the largest reserved area of rewarewa-kamahikanuka forest adjacent to virgin high forest.

Fitzgerald Glade

John Hobbs spoke about the flora in Fitzgerald Glade. He described the species in this reserve including tawa, mangeo, rewarewa, pukatea, kanono, wheki, hangehange and masses of young nikau, supplejack and the unusual jointed fern (*Arthropteris tenella*). Fitzgerald Glade is more or less a remnant of the forest which covered the Mamaku Plateau prior to the logging boom of the 1940s through to the late 1960s when basically the forest was logged for the most profitable species ie. podocarps – kahikatea, matai, miro and rimu. Later large areas were felled for tawa then clear felled and burnt for farming and exotic forestry. There are several young rimu on the southern side of the reserve.

Forum member updates

The following Forum members took the opportunity to speak about the work they are undertaking- Al Fleming and Eila Lawton from Forest and Bird spoke about the Kaimai Mamaku Campaign, Anabella Vidal spoke about the Rotorua District Plan review, Rachael Goddard and Katherine Hay reminded participants about the Environmental Expo in Hamilton, Robin Black detailed the work that Hancock Forest Management have been carrying out in wetlands, Chris Clarke spoke about Department of Conservation work in the area and Yuki Fukuda spoke about the restoration work that Conservation Volunteers carry out on public and private land.

Feedback from Group Discussions

Suggestions for practical measures to enhance bush and wetlands in the South Waikato district included:

- Start up local landcare/pest control groups
- Fence and plant the marginal areas of streams
- Contact and work with the NZ Landcare Trust
- Undertake Streamcare work
- Recognise and value what we have got in the district
- Understand what we are doing which impacts on the biodiversity we have got
- Influence the reluctant to care for the bush and wetlands - how?
- Inform people of advantages
- Work through the young and the women
- Use peer pressure landowner to landowner
- Use farming publications and national media to celebrate success stories
- Identify areas bush/wetlands/non-productive land and fence off from stock
- Seek assistance from agencies such as SWDC, EW and QEII
- Make landowners aware of the value of the biodiversity on their land
- Communicate with landowners what things/places that public value
- Don't frighten landowners off with "Big Demands"
- Change in perception of what "interest groups" are trying to achieve
- Biodiversity needs to be more applied
- Work with local encouragement identify possible enhancement potential
- More local support groups coordinated through official sources
- Left alone initial ideas can flounder lack of knowledge can be a stumbling block
- Feeling part of a wider group with resources/knowledge possible beyond owners expertise is way forward

The support that would be useful included

- Information and education e.g. Wetland Restoration put out by NZLCT
- Pest control information-when to target pests and which ones to target
- Funding assistance for fencing and planting
- Workers from the Justice System to do tasks like fencing as part of their sentence
- Conservation volunteers to do boundary weed control
- DOC providing bait stations or traps for pest control and ammunition
- Cost assistance for QEII areas 3rd shares with QEII Trust, EW and landowners
- Rates relief for areas protected
- Specialist help "expert advice" Environment Waikato, DOC, F&B Trees for Bees
- Federated Farmers to work with its members and Fonterra
- Decide on budget for biodiversity work
- Find voluntary help

Suggestions on how to protect and enhance biodiversity in the South Waikato under the new District Plan

- Money to fund education campaign
- Provision of incentives to protect
- Regulation
- Celebrate best practice
- Balance between voluntary and regulatory with effective mechanisms
- Gain more local knowledge of biodiversity spots
- Ground truthing important not just aerial maps
- More money for funding for biodiversity and SNA protection
- Rates remission attractive to landowners
- Money available for fencing and planting
- SWDC protection of the Redwood Forest Galaxy Rd as an invaluable genetic resource
- Protect trees of important biodiversity value
- Voluntary approach will only speak to the converted and the others will continue to ignore or protest
- Farm suitable areas of crown land as Farm Parks
- Bring inventory under District Plan

Closing of the Day

Waaka closed the day with a karakia and spoke about protection, prevention and participation as key ways of enhancing biodiversity.

Key Recommendations

Actions	Who
All the outcomes and recommendations from the workshops will assist the SWDC District Plan review, the Kaimai Mamaku Campaign and the Kaimai Catchment Project.	South Waikato District Council, NZ Landcare Trust and Forest and Bird

Detailed report and the full ppt 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).

For those of you who didn't attend the Forum day aspects of the above recommendations and outcomes will be relevant to other projects with which you are working.

Nardene Berry and Lesley Fitzgerald providing feedback from a workshop.



Hancock Forest Management biodiversity protection and enhancement work driven by Robin Black, Environmental Planner, based in Rotorua.



Tunnel Road wetlands. Small wetland with remnant kahikatea. Combination of aerial and ground poisoning of grey willow.

Europa Road Fen/Bog is on Mamaku South Road. Hancock Forest Management have felled the wildling pine and lifted the water level.



Lake Road wetland. Nationally significant Category 1 lake and forest remnant. Wildling pine removed and full animal pest control starting in July 2010.

Opareiti catchment wetland. Grey willow poisoned by round control. A rat and mustellid control programme initiated in 2009.

