



# Waikato Biodiversity Forum Report

## Monday, 29 June 2009

### Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park

#### Purpose of the day

The key outcome of the day was to discuss the Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park and develop solutions for maintaining the momentum of this project.

This Forum was also an opportunity to:

- have fun and share ideas with others who undertake conservation related work
- establish ongoing partnerships/contacts for biodiversity restoration
- visit the Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park and examine management issues of the site
- contribute to developing solutions for advancing the project
- publicise the project to the wider community
- highlight the projects of community groups in the area
- provide collective Forum expertise for the WNHP.

All powerpoint presentations are available from Moira Cursey, email [m.cursey@xtra.co.nz](mailto:m.cursey@xtra.co.nz).

#### Introduction to the Forum day

This Forum was held at the very comfortable Wintec Centre for Sport and Exercise Science. The day got underway with morning tea and a greeting by Helen Ritchie who skillfully facilitated and managed the presentations and workshops. Approximately 70 people attended the day with four presentations and four workshop topics. After Moira introduced the day, the attendees donned warm coats and footwear to carpool to the Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park a short distance away.



Wiremu Puke speaking to participants.

#### Field trip

Various speakers including Bruce Clarkson, Toni Cornes and Kemble Pudney spoke about the plantings at the site and plans for the future. Toni explained the research plots which have had different techniques applied to the plantings such as mulching to see what will be the most successful growing methods for the plants.

#### Presentations

Wiremu Puke gave a presentation about the history of the area. Waiwhakareke means 'plunging a pole into water'. The area was known as an important food resource with kereru plentiful. Baverstock Road has been constructed on a Maori walkway which led to the Waipa River and was also used by war parties. The berries of the kahikatea and puriri trees were gathered and considered a delicacy by Maori. There were kokopu in the lake and inunga. Evidence from pollen sampling indicates that forest fires were lit in the area to assist hunting moa and promote growth of the bracken fern. Raupo from the lake edge was used to thatch houses and the reed was ground down to make bread.

Bruce Clarkson detailed the context of the WNHP and explained the importance of the project in relation to reconnection with nature which is lacking in most cities in New Zealand and the world. Eighty seven per cent of people live in cities and are disconnected from nature. The ecosystems of the Hamilton area are dominated by birds, bats and invertebrates. The WNHP is an intergenerational project and it will connect with other projects across the Waikato region including Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust (MEIT). Hopefully tui from MEIT will visit the park in the future.

Emma Coleman from the University of Waikato presented on the successional framework and target ecosystems for (WNHP). In summary her presentation covered the following points.

- The WNHP project is a reconstruction.
- Target ecosystems are used as templates for ecological restoration and reconstruction.
- Successional theory provides a framework to assist in planting the correct species at the correct time.
- The WNHP has 5 target ecosystems based on historical knowledge of Waikato's dominant forest types (they include kauri, tanekaha, rewarewa ridge crest forest, tawa, rimu hillslope forest, kahikatea, pukatea semi-swamp forest, lake margin/swamp vegetation and the lake/aquatic ecosystem).
- All target ecosystems have been planted with the aim of 'speeding up' natural vegetation succession without sacrificing ecosystem function.



The Lake at Waiwhakareke Natural Heritage Park.

Ian Duggan from the University of Waikato focused on the lake. He raised the following points.

- The major problem is high nutrients causing algal blooms – this can be addressed by revegetation.
- The native fish species in the lake include mainly shortfinned eel and common bully.
- There are non-native fish in the lake. The removal of small fish such as mosquitofish is just about impossible. Prevention of future introductions is important.
- There are non-native aquatic plants present in the lake. Waterlily need to be removed and it is also important to prevent future introductions of exotic species.

Aaron Fleming from the Hamilton City Council presented on the infrastructure and benefits of having the WNHP in the city. He raised the following points.

- WNHP has been recognised as a world class restoration project.
- The infrastructure components of the project include the creation of an education centre in association with Hamilton Zoo to act as the main entrance to the park.
- The development of a publicly accessible walkway network within the site and a walkway/cycleway around its perimeter.
- The park will also provide important Maori cultural links – both historical and with the regeneration at the site.
- The park will provide the public with an opportunity to explore nature and take part in recreation in a beautiful natural environment.

## Workshops

### Funding

The following points summarise the funding workshop.

- There are problems facing environmental groups applying to funders. It seems easier to obtain funds for set up and development than for ongoing operations. There are shrinking local sources and great competition for funds.
- To be successful groups need to know in detail what they want, know the funder – their aims and objectives, have a good proposal-one with merit, fill the application in as simply and clearly as possible-make it short and concise and finally the application has to be persuasive and well organised.
- Change political priorities by targeting next local body election.
- Lobby the community and politicians for support for the project.
- Lobby individuals on trusts that have not funded environmental projects.
- Visitor charges – problematical because it's a resource people expect for free.
- Explore international sources of funding.



Keith Thompson preparing recommendations from his workshop.

- Never giving up – keep trying.
- Accepting some risk, for example, getting operation funds after capital investment for development.
- The importance of community buy in especially the number of volunteers.

### Education and publicity

The following summarises the points raised from the education and publicity workshop.

- Reconfirm the Zoo and WNHP work in together to provide educational facilities.
- Develop educational resources for school groups who will visit the park in the future.
- A Ministry of Education contract could be obtained to fund visits to WNHP.
- Develop a resource which details the significance to the park.
- Get information about the park out into the media on a regular basis – website, newspapers, local radio.
- Forest and Bird will place an article about the park in their newsletter or magazine.
- Develop Friends of Waiwhakareke.
- Encourage people especially those living close to the park to plant more native trees in the area to support the vegetation of the park.
- Put more signage up about the park.
- Include aspects of cultural history of the area in resources.
- Te Kauri Bush Reserve Education Kit resource is a valuable resource. See [www.tekauri.org.nz](http://www.tekauri.org.nz) for this resource.
- Learn from the successful gully restoration programme.

### Community nursery

The following points were raised in the workshop about setting up a community nursery.

- Hamilton City Council have supplied the plants to date.
- The purpose of a nursery needs to be defined.
- A community nursery may speed up to process of planting although a community nursery only produces a limited amount and plants would need to be accessed from commercial nurseries as well.
- A community nursery is important if the project wants to involve the community as people like to be doing something positive and planting trees is seen as a useful activity.
- An onsite nursery would mean minimal transport cost, provide a focal point for local involvement, provide an educational resource for local schools and compliment the Hamilton City Council nursery.





Participants at the Forum day.

- There are costs of setting up a nursery with the provision of a toilet and lunch room, for example plus ongoing supervision commitment costs.
- Integrate nursery with education centre (although a few years ahead).
- Work initially with existing community nurseries, such as Tamahere Community Nursery.
- Portable nursery to go around schools – this nursery would have an educational purpose.

## Sustaining Community Groups

The Sustaining Community Groups workshop highlighted the following key points.

- Leadership is important and both local and regional support, important to identify key person/s to lead the project.
- Develop a shared vision and good planning.
- Give a variety of tasks which provide a sense of responsibility/ ownership help to retain enthusiasm among participants and share the load.
- Fun – keep it fun, involving all age groups.
- Set short and long term goals which are achievable and realistic.
- Highlight benefits of the project to the community and what is being achieved by the project – regular articles in the newspaper, flyers in letterboxes in the area.
- Document achievements.
- Develop partnerships for funding.
- Generate momentum by giving tasks straight away.
- Identify key people with skills needed.
- Target community groups who maybe keen to be involved, such as service groups, grey power. Retired people may like to become a core team of volunteers to act as guides in the future.

## Recommendations

The Waiwhakareke Advisory Group (WAG) will examine the points raised from the Forum day and develop actions for implementation. The Friends of Waiwhakareke had already been formed and Tui 2000 Inc. has written a newsletter with notification of a working bee for planting at the end of August. The newsletter will be emailed to 'Friends' in early August and a letterbox drop of the newsletter made to residents in the area. It is noted that the Forum recommended that at present the Friends of Waiwhakareke work with existing community nurseries.

For a copy of all the detail of the day's discussion points email Moira at [m.cursey@xtra.co.nz](mailto:m.cursey@xtra.co.nz) or phone 0800BIODIV (246348).

Kemble Pudney talking to participants on the field trip.

