



Waikato Biodiversity Forum

Ngā Kaihāpai Rerenga Rauropi o Waikato

Annual Report from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum 2021/22

Introduction

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum has been operating for 17 years and has a current membership of approximately 450. The Forum's membership is comprised of research and management agencies, iwi groups, private landowners, community groups and individuals who work towards improving indigenous biodiversity in the Waikato region. The Forum believes that the combined synergies of people working together provide a valuable contribution to improving biodiversity across the region. The Forum speaks on behalf of biodiversity. However, it does not necessarily reflect the views of all Forum members on every biodiversity issue.

The Forum operates independently of its constituent organisations. It is run by a part-time coordinator who receives support and guidance from a Focus Group. The Forum's work includes:

- Engaging with agencies groups and individuals to network, share ideas and work together to protect and enhance biodiversity
- Acting as a referral agency for Waikato biodiversity information and contacts
- Organising forums to discuss biodiversity issues and focus on local projects
- Organising workshops for community and agencies on a variety of biodiversity topics and activities
- Disseminating relevant local and national biodiversity information and notices through the Forum's website, facebook, email and local media sources
- Providing support to community initiatives which protect and enhance biodiversity.
- Advocating for the development of sound policy to enhance biodiversity protection at national, regional and local levels

Acknowledgements

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum would like to acknowledge and thank the following organisations

for their financial support: Waikato Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Waikato District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and South Waikato District Council.

The Forum would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the work of the coordinator's roles. Their advice and guidance provides a valuable contribution to the success of the Forum.

Finally, the Forum would like to thank the staff from Forum member organisations and community groups for their contribution and expertise during Forum events, workshops, and the on-going exchange of information with the public and other Forum members. This collective expertise makes the operation of the Forum a success and is valued by Forum members and the public.

Waikato Biodiversity Forum Events

Because of COVID19 lockdowns and restrictions, the 21/22 year was only able to host one Forum event. The event took place on the 27th of April 2022. This event was another collaboration with Land Care Trust. The event was titled the A,B,C's of riparian corridors. The location was the stunning Ecoquest education centre, in Whakatiwai, Miranda. Our first speaker Dot Dalziel from Herenga ā Nuku, Walking Access Commission Aotearoa is the government agency protecting and enhancing public access to the outdoors for everyone in New Zealand — walkers, mountain bikers, anglers, horse riders, landholders, trail runners and more. They work with communities to create new connections to and across the whenua, resolve disputes and care for the land and the people who live, work and play on it. Herenga ā Nuku provides leadership on outdoor access issues and administers a national strategy on outdoor access, including tracks and trails. It maps outdoor access, provides information to the public, oversees a code

of responsible conduct, helps to resolve disputes and negotiates new access. Dot spoke about all the ranges of land designations that are given for public and private land. Then she detailed what options can be used to open up public access. Public access can be beneficial to a riparian zone for a range of reasons. From making areas more accessible to maintenance, to opening up recreational and tourist potential. The Hauraki rail trail is one such example of this. The biggest take away was that the Walking Access commission are resourced to help the public with any inquiries about opening up public access to land and navigating the tricky processes of land designations and negotiation process for both public and private land.

Next was Sean Weaver from EKOS. EKOS work to create self-sustaining forest carbon projects and programmes. Many of the projects start with developing a financial model that drives regenerative capability and self-sustainability. They are all locally owned, developed collaboratively, and as much as possible, locally delivered. They receive support from public, private and philanthropic organisations to develop these new approaches, with the understanding that once sufficiently developed and piloted they will be replicated and scaled up through impact investment. Sean went through the background and logistics of creating carbon accreditation opportunities, which are highly complex. He then went over the potential of gaining carbon accreditation for riparian margins. Firstly they would need to be at least 30 metres wide average to qualify and even then, with current models it would be a lot for work to gain accreditation for something at this scale unless there was a large collection of landowners operating together to create the viable scale. Sean said they are constantly working on ways to make the process more simple, more encouraging of biodiversity (opposed to monoculture) and more accessible to smaller scale landowners. Last to speak Ric Balfour from Landcare Trust who spoke about the biodiversity and ecological considerations for riparian planting. Ric firstly spoke about planning in consideration of appropriate widths to create potential habitat, to insure access for maintenance as well as any other future use is considered before site work starts. Plant species selection was also an

important consideration - the appropriate plant for the appropriate place in both ecological and spacial senses. For example not planting flaxes close to moving water, as they can pull down stream banks when flooding occurs. Or not planting certain species to close to fence lines, as they may quickly comprise the fences integrity. Diversification of species was also encouraged by Ric, in order to best suit different ecological zones of the area and to ensure greater resilience and ecological values of riparian zone.

After lunch the group split off into 2 groups to view two riparian sites. One on a farm on private land and another on private and public land with full public access. The groups both looked at the unique ecological and access considerations at both sites.



Field Trip to Kaiaua riparian area, which was created with a partnership between Bay View Hotel, NZMCA and Local Council

Advice, Referral and Networking

The Forum network continues to provide a link for community group members and management agencies through dissemination of information and communication, with individual members to answer queries or refer them to other sources of information. A resource person register is maintained so that Forum members can be put in touch with the right person for advice and assistance. The Forum coordinator has a list of Forum members who can act as "Biodiversity Champions" on particular issues.

The Forum coordinator operated the 0800 BIODIV line and email service who meets the needs of inquiries or refers them to an appropriate person. 87 inquiries were responded to over 2021/22, mainly from Forum members, through the 0800 line and email. The inquiries continue to range from funding, weed and animal pest management, details of community group projects, volunteering on projects and planting information.

The Forum coordinator organized, chaired, and took minutes for 5 Biodiversity Forum Focus Group meetings.

Community Group Database

The Forum's database and map of community group projects was maintained which continues to highlight the contribution that these groups make to biodiversity protection and enhancement across the region.

Support for Community/Agency initiatives and events

Including the many webinars attended, the Forum Coordinator also attended in person and supported the Online workshop for collective models for ecosystem regeneration (18/10/21), Collective impact update meeting (01/11/21), WDC Conservation strategy consultation (03/03/22), Collective Impact Workshop (27/04/22), In-depth interview for Bio Heritage Challenge.

Media

The Waikato Biodiversity Forum connect to public primarily via direct email contact through Mailchimp to more than 450 subscribers. Also via the Forum [Facebook](#) page and website.

The Forum members received four newsletters (Summer, Spring, Winter and Autumn editions) containing updates, findings, and stories from biodiversity projects across the Waikato Rohe. [Click here to see all editions of the newsletters.](#)

16 Mailchimp emails were sent out over the 21/22 year to approximately 450 Waikato Biodiversity Forum Members to inform them of relevant biodiversity events, dates, notices and information.

03/03/22 & 08/06/22 Raglan Radio interview to discuss and promote Waikato biodiversity issues and events.

Summary

The Forum has continued to involve itself in advocacy, networking and advice to organisations and groups across the region. It has worked with other organisations and groups to support biodiversity work and provide opportunities to add value to the work of member organisations, groups and individuals. Sam, on behalf of the Forum, would like to acknowledge and commend the work that agencies, community groups and individuals carry out to improve biodiversity. They would also like to thank the Focus Group members for their support and contribution to the Forum's work.

Sam Mcelwee, Forum Coordinator

