



LANDCARE IN THE NORTH

Summer
2014

Happy New Year!

We received a great Christmas present in December with confirmation of funding for our Northland Biodiversity project from the Biodiversity Advice Fund. Much progress has been made by Northlanders in recent years and the funding will help groups and landowners remain resilient to the challenges ahead. We are keen to hear your thoughts and ideas to ensure that our events, publications and workshops provide the support, knowledge and confidence that you are seeking.

Reconnecting Northland

2013 was an eventful year for the Reconnecting Northland programme. Much of the work occurred behind the scenes to build the foundations of a programme that our stakeholders will have confidence in. The year also welcomed in a third principal sponsor, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, through their HSBC Water Programme. This fund, together with support from the Tindall Foundation and the ASB Community Trust, provide a five year "window" to progress ecological restoration initiatives across the landscape and to ensure that mechanisms are in place to service these initiatives well beyond year five.

A significant milestone has been the formation of the Northland-based steering group. This group will be central to the governance of the programme and their first task was to draft the vision statement for the programme, which is: *"Our land and people flourishing together"*. With the governance and operational frameworks now in place, early 2014 will see a rapid phase of action planning completed that will give substance and direction to the programme in the coming years. Meanwhile, the inaugural pilot project Kiwi Coast continues to test the waters for large landscape restoration in NZ.

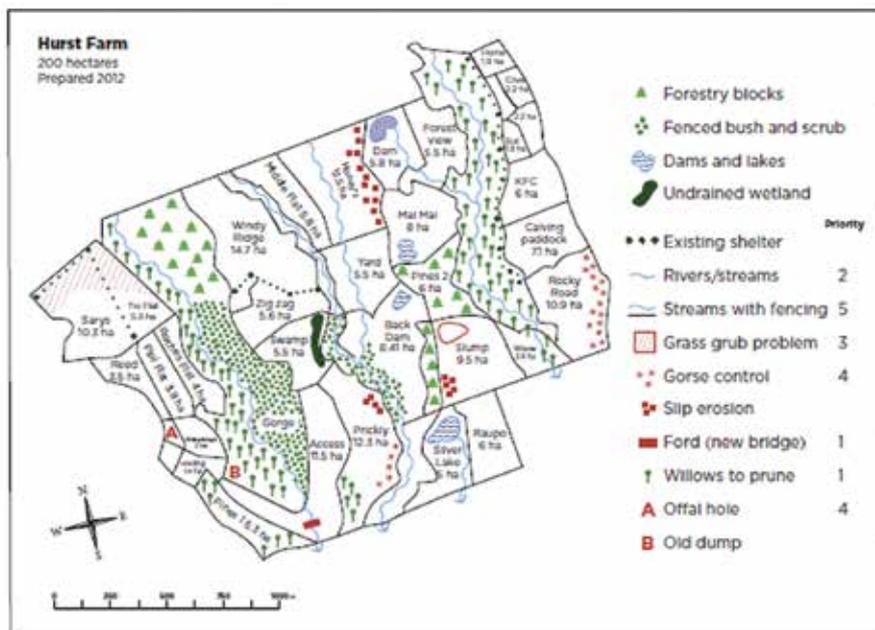
Reconnecting Northland Steering Group visit Tutukaka Landcare Coalition as part of Kiwi Coast fieldtrip. Photo: Malcom Pullman



Waitangi River Catchment project

On-farm support continues with farm consultant AgFirst Northland, preparing farm plans for a further three of the catchment's farms. If you are a sheep or beef farmer in the catchment and are keen to prepare a plan for your own property then support is available. We'll be partnering with Beef + Lamb New Zealand this March to deliver a free farm planning workshop in the Ohaeawai area. Those attending will be guided through B+LNZ's Land and Environment Planning Toolkit facilitated by regional extension manager Andrew Jolly. Having run a similar workshop in the Manawatu, Andrew says it's a great opportunity for farmers to get on top of the environmental issues that really matter to them.

The actions arising from last June's vision and strategy workshop continue to drive the project. The farmer steering group has agreed a vision for the project, *Farming for the future: Farmers leading positive action in the Waitangi River Catchment* and work is underway to showcase the environmental integrity that is at the heart of many of the catchment's leading farms. Stream fencing and riparian planting are important aspects of farm management but these often tend to steal the limelight and overshadow critical practices such as caring for the pasture and its soils. These are stories that need to be told as healthy pastures yield profitable farms as well as mitigating against soil loss and ensuring efficient nutrient cycling. It is when pastures are poorly managed that sediment and nutrients can become mobile and result in leaching or run-off to our waterways.



Example of Beef + Lamb New Zealand Land and Environment Plan.

Understanding the science is a critical step in managing the catchment and it is hoped that we can arrange for NIWA to present their Bay of Islands sedimentation research to the community over the coming months. We'll continue to liaise with the Northland Regional Council to make this happen and hope to post more details shortly.

Wiroa Holdings Ltd, Waitangi River Catchment: Feedpads are becoming a common sight on dairy farms offering greater flexibility for stock and pasture management. The concept is also being implemented on some beef farms.





Photo: Malcom Pullman

Kiwi Coast

The vision of the Kiwi Coast is spreading quickly from the southern biodiversity strongholds of Tutukaka and Whangarei Heads to as far north as Mahinepua. Over the past six months, considerable progress has been made developing strategic linkages between landowners, community groups and the southern strongholds. These linkages have been both physical and ideological with trapping networks extended and stronger ties between the parties involved.

A major scoop was the discovery of a previously unknown kiwi population in the DOC Maungatika Scenic Reserve on Mt Tiger. The reserve is used by NorthTec's Animal Pest Control students to hone their trapping skills and, while working a particular trap line, the students found a kiwi burrow. The burrow was fresh and further investigation revealed a male and a female kiwi. The kiwi were subsequently weighed, checked, identity chipped and banded, with the female appearing to be about five years old and pregnant. Her age is important as it suggests that not all wild kiwi in the locality are succumbing to predators. With a long life of breeding ahead of her (50 year +), keeping the pair and their offspring safe will be important for the Kiwi Coast.

Whangarei Heads' trapper, Todd Hamilton, presents on kiwi biology at the Kiwi Coast 'Caring for Kiwi' workshop hosted by Kaimamaku Landcare.



The Taheke Landcare group formed in August 2013. Their animal pest control work fills a strategic gap in the trapping network in the first Kiwi Coast focus area between Whangarei Heads and Whananaki South. A trapping workshop was organised with the local community in November to share skills and knowledge required to effectively control kiwi predators such as stoats and ferrets. Group member Ian Page points out, *"a glance at the map quickly shows how important the Taheke catchment is as a natural corridor. Predator free, it would allow safe migration of kiwi from the healthy populations that community groups have so carefully built and protected around us."*

Eventually, Taheke Landcare group may extend its work to cover the whole Taheke River catchment. With Taheke's strategic thinking and enthusiasm for action, this new group will be one to watch!

The *Caring for Kiwi* workshop hosted by Kaimamaku Landcare group just off the Old Russell Road received strong interest from local landowners. With good progress on their rat control project, group members Mick Kelly and Ian Beattie are excited about being part of the Kiwi Coast, and the prospect of establishing a trapping network from the inland hills right through to the coast.

Ian Page with the first stoat to be caught by Taheke Landcare group



Northland Catchments Community Forum

Akerama Marae was a superb setting for a korero on our region's river catchments in November. The Ngaruwahine Stream, which flows through the marae, was perfect for the Whitebait Connection team to guide us through a stream monitoring session later in the day. This included; where and how to set a fish trap, which fish and invertebrates are useful indicators of stream health and the various techniques for measuring the physical and chemical properties of the water.

Another highlight was hearing the progress that Bay of Islands group, Living Waters, is making at Tangatapu wetland beside the Whangamumu walking track. We first featured the group in the 2012 summer newsletter, documenting their evolution from chaotic start-up meetings to real progress on the ground. To hear that 3,600 native species were planted at Tangatapu wetland last June, closely followed with an animal pest control programme and talk of reintroducing pateke is fantastic news.

Nga Kaitiaki O Nga Wai Maori is another initiative that is progressing with vision and strategic purpose. Translating as 'caretakers of fresh water rivers and tributaries – a pathway to return the essence of life to the waterways' the project represents the interests of hapu in the headwaters of the northern catchments of the Kaipara Harbour. Borne out of the need to address the specific environmental effects of the Hikurangi Swamp hydro pumps, particularly the impact on eel migration, it now encompasses a much larger concern... the overall health of their waterways from the headwaters to the Kaipara Harbour. The strategic plan sets out actions for a five year period to January 2016. For more information visit: www.naumaiplace.com/site/ngati-hau/file/page/RMU/nga-kaitiaki-o-nga-wai-maori-plan-word-doc.pdf





Northland Biodiversity members exploring the mountain crater.

Without intervention climbing asparagus (*Myrsiphyllum scandens*) will dominate the forest understory.

Biodiversity Northland Forum

The forum members participated in a field visit to Maungatapere Mountain last November to look at the integrated plant pest control work underway in the forest. The mountain is a special place, easily accessed from SH14, the crater rim includes archaeological curiosities while the crater itself is a lost world of woody giants.

In this case the “integrated” component of the plant pest control relates to the joint effort to control the invasive weed climbing asparagus that had become established within the forest area. The main parties involved are the Maungatapere Mountain Trust (MMT) (comprising the owners of the covenanted land that covers much of the mountain), Northland Regional Council (NRC), QEII Trust and the Department of Conservation.

The *Community Pest Control Area* scheme administered by NRC has been a cornerstone of the work facilitating the initial spraying and removal of climbing asparagus as the dominant understory species. The work has now moved into a suppression phase and is undertaken by MMT volunteers spot spraying seedlings.

The challenge ahead is to create an effective buffer zone around the mountain to reduce the spread of the climbing asparagus seed which is dispersed by birds attracted to the red berries. The will take a concerted effort by all within the buffer zone.

Thanks to our guide Jim Kettlewell of the Maungatapere Mountain Trust.



A Focus on: Mangawhai Riparian Planting Group

The goal of the Mangawhai Riparian Planting Group is to replant the riparian margins of the Mangawhai Harbour catchment. The group began in 2012 planting streamside properties off Devich Road and the work continued in 2013 with willing landowners. The group were recently pleased to receive funding from the Kaipara District Council for the purchase of the plants.

Jane Vaughan, coordinator for the group, was amazed that most of the 2012 plantings had survived last summer's drought and believes this might be due to the carpet off-cuts that were placed at the base of each plant helping to retain moisture and suppress weeds. Currently they are looking into becoming a Trust or Society so they have better chance of accessing funding for future planting projects. The initiative will be of particular benefit to our native fish species that thrive in the cover and shade of streamside vegetation.



Coming up...

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| February | Biodiversity Northland at the North Kaipara A&P Show, Paparoa.

Reconnecting Northland Action Planning.

Biodiversity Northland at the Kaitaia A&P Show. |
| March | B+LNZ's Land and Environment Planning Toolkit. |
| April | Waitangi River Tour, Paihia Wharf.

Wetland Workshop, Kaiwaka. |
| May | Regional Trappers Workshop. |
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Further details will be posted on the Landcare Trust website: www.landcare.org.nz

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, or if you would prefer to receive future newsletters by email, then please drop Jon a line.

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