



Winter/Spring 2015

Spring has sprung and for those who have recently completed winter plantings you'll be proudly observing the spring growth starting to show through. For those more interested in animal pest control this new cycle of growth is an early reminder to gear up for the coming season. The latest edition of the Northland Animal Pest Control Guidelines is available from our website for anyone needing a refresher, www.landcare.org.nz

Go with the Flow

Go with the Flow is the new name for the Kaipara Catchment restoration project initiated by Reconnecting Northland. It addresses the themes of ecological restoration and sustainable land use through a partnership approach. It also recognises that the catchment is economically important and seeks to include environmental restoration projects that also have commercial potential such as honey production or timber harvests.

Kaipara catchment farmers participate in the Land & Environment Plan workshop.

The last 6 months was a busy period, engaging landowners, identifying inanga spawning habitat and preparing sites for planting. In late March several farmers from the Maungaturoto area participated in a Land and Environment Plan workshop. The event was organised by Alison Whiteford, local extension manager for Beef + Lamb NZ with participating farmers completing a customised farm plan and one lucky participant receiving a riparian planting spot prize worth \$4000. Further Land & Environment Plan workshops are planned for 2016.



The search for native fish spawning habitat was successful with an inanga spawning site identified on the Wairau River in the vicinity of the Fonterra processing plant at Maungaturoto. Staff at the plant got behind the opportunity and together with students from Maungaturoto School planted up the area as a first step towards improving the habitat. The event was coordinated by the Whitebait Connection and the plants supplied by Otamatea HarbourCare. "Its great to be a part of this community project" said Fonterra Maungaturoto Environmental Lead, Steven Gale.

Dry stock farmer Royce MacBeth realised his vision of creating a wetland at his Taipuha Station Road property. The intention is to create a wetland that can be easily replicated across Northland farms i.e. taking a low cost approach with activities that comply with Northland Regional Council's permitted activity rules. Over the past few months Royce has been busy contouring areas of boggy, unproductive pasture and installing a new fence line. Pioneer plants have been planted along the fence line to buffer the wetland and kahikatea and ribbonwood planted on the wetland "islands" that Royce has created with the farm digger. Further work will include controlling the water level in the wetland in effort to control willow weed and infilling with more plants next winter.

Otamatea HarbourCare Society really blazed a trail this winter. Six riparian restoration sites were created accommodating more than 10,000 plants and included a celebrity planting event with Te Radar. Overall the Go with the Flow project has facilitated the planting of nearly 50,000 plants at hotspots around the northern Kaipara including Hikurangi Swamp, Motatau and Kaimamaku Stream as well as Otamatea Harbour. Planning is underway for the 2017 planting season and we are keen to hear ideas on how to grow the project further.

Further information about this and other Reconnecting Northland projects is available from www.reconnectingnorthland.org.nz



The MacBeth wetland.

Community Respond to Catchment Project

After three successful years NZ Landcare Trust's Waitangi River Catchment: Farming for the Future project ended in May. One of the final project tasks was to survey the farming community and the results suggest that there has been a positive response to the water quality and catchment management challenge.

There appears to be a high degree of optimism and resilience amongst catchment farmers and this is reflected in on-farm investment for a range of farm practices. Perceived barriers such as of a lack of time and financial means are not the hurdles they were thought to be when first identified back in 2012.

Farmers in the catchment are continuing to implement stock exclusion fencing and carry out small scale planting projects and importantly they are prepared to invest in 'big ticket' farm infrastructure, such as water reticulation and effluent disposal, to drive water quality improvements.

The survey also found that Farm Environmental Plans are popular amongst farmers with over half the survey participants having completed one. Over the duration of the project it is estimated the land area now covered by these plans exceeds 7,500 hectares, more than a quarter of the catchment's land area. More tangible improvement include more than 22 kilometres of stream and wetland fencing completed since 2012 along with several native tree planting sites. The establishment of an additional water quality monitoring site on the Waiaruhe River was another milestone for the project that will aid future management.

The focus of the effort now shifts to the wider community as farmers take their seat at the table as part of the Waitangi River Catchment Collaborative Stakeholder Group. Initiated by Northland Regional Council, the group, which comprises a range of interests, is tasked with developing recommendations for the management of the catchment via a statutory process. The farming community now enters these discussions with 'runs on the board' as a result of its participation in the Farming for the Future project.



It's timely that NIWA has recently completed their latest sediment source tracking investigations. Commissioned by NRC, the research identifies chemical "tracers" in the catchment's soil and tracks their movement as they become mobilised and deposited within the Waitangi River and Bay of Islands as sediment.

This research is likely to have practical applications for land and river management. It goes beyond the earlier Ocean Survey 20/20 work, giving greater insight into how soil is eroded and the proportions of sediment each sub-catchment generates relative to land area. It shows that while sediment from pasture grazing is still a major source of sediment, the earlier research had overlooked the significant contributions made by a single large earth flow in the upper Waitangi River and the stream bank erosion occurring in the lower reaches of the river. Another fascinating insight of the study was the effectiveness of the large wetland area around Pakaraka-Oromahoe to sequester sediment from the upper Waiaruhe River

Overall NIWA's research lends a forensic approach to the processes and drivers of soil erosion in the catchment and will provide an evidence base for the Collaborative Stakeholder Group to develop appropriate responses and solutions to improve catchment water quality. Further information about the project is available from www.landcare.org.nz/waitangiriver

Farmers take to the water – river catchment workshop April 2014.



Northland Pest Control Workshop

This year's workshop was held at the Barge Park Showgrounds near Whangarei. Ten years on and these workshops are still attracting a range of people actively involved in native biodiversity enhancement programmes throughout Northland.

Key speaker Dr Helen Blackie from Boffa Miskell, presented on a new pest detection system being developed called Print Acquisition for Wildlife Surveillance (PAWS). Dr Blackie explained that the PAWS device can recognise a wide variety of paw and body prints, from tiny millipedes to large feral cats. Trials have proven that the device is far more successful at monitoring pest animals than traditional options such as tracking tunnels, wax blocks or chew cards. Further work is needed to perfect the devices but it is hoped that they will be available next year.



Pukenui Forest Trust present at this year's workshop

Northland Regional Council's Graeme Weavers updated the audience on the Kauri Dieback programme. Graeme explained that unfortunately new sites of infected kauri have recently been confirmed. There is still no cure for this fatal disease so he urged everyone to thoroughly scrub boots before and after entering forests, taking care to remove all traces of soil so as to prevent further spread of this disease. Graeme also spoke about the two main funding options available from the Council for private landowners and community groups, namely Community Pest Control Areas (5 years support can be received) and BioFunds (3 years of pest control resources).

Mike Camm explained how the Tutukaka Landcare Coalition signed up for support using Community Pest Control Area funds in 2013 to increase its trapping network to cover an eventual project area of 10,000ha. Along with kiwi, pateke/brown teal are also on the increase in eastern Northland as the trapping effort expands and intensifies.

Landcare Ambassador Todd Hamilton along with Martin Hunt presented on Manaia Landcare and the hugely successful 2014 community-led 1080 operation that saw around 76 people involved. The operation was such a success that monitoring after the operation found only a single wax tag chewed by a possum – an almost unheard of result! Clearing Mt Manaia of animal pests has seen local trap catches drop dramatically and a bumper year for kiwi chicks is now expected.

Max Hutchings and Mark Dudley from the Pukenui Forest Trust outlined how they are removing animal pests in order to help the native forest and its wildlife thrive once more. Their latest work includes using trail cams to uncover evidence that kiwi remain in the forest. However recent footage only picked up images of stoats, reinforcing the fact that more work is needed!

The workshop was rounded off with practical sessions that included demonstrations on how to use a variety of traps. The knowledge shared through these practical sessions translates into amazing results on the ground, as individuals and community groups making a huge contribution to biodiversity enhancement work in the region.

Kiwi Coast

Momentum continues for the Kiwi Coast with around 60 community groups, projects, iwi/hapu, forestry companies, government agencies and organizations now involved. This includes new groups and projects as well as well established projects getting involved. A total of 78,425ha is now under active pest control management by groups and projects involved in the Kiwi Coast.

This collaborative approach saw over a 1,000 people attended Kiwi Coast supported events, workshops and 'Kiwi Experiences'. These people came together to celebrate kiwi as a taonga, build skills and deepen their understanding about how to help kiwi thrive.

Last year 500 predator traps were purchased and strategically located amongst groups and projects to reduce gaps in the trapping network. The result is that the kiwi populations at Whangarei Heads, Mt Tiger, Whanui and Tutukaka are now close to being linked by a continuous trapping network across a series of different projects.



Likewise, inland Bay of Islands' projects are working more closely together to progressively close gaps between trap lines. The Kiwi Coast provided extra predator traps to assist with these linkages. However, the success of the Kiwi Coast is not based on the number of participating groups alone, or the number of traps on the ground. The 2014 Kiwi Coast Call Count Report showed that where good management is in place kiwi populations are enjoying a slow and steady increase. This is a stark contrast to the declining kiwi populations on Northland's west coast, and the trend identified by the Kiwis for kiwi Trust in 2014 of a 2% decline per annum in kiwi populations nationwide.

The Kiwi Coast is in its infancy and it does not seek to claim these results as its own success but rather seeks to ensure the upward trend continues. Collation of animal pest control data from across the Kiwi Coast area highlights the strength of a collaborative approach when attempting to reduce animal pests at a landscape scale. With a further 36,040 animal pests removed by groups and projects involved in the Kiwi Coast in 2014, popular phrases such as 'predator free' begin to become a lot more meaningful.

The operation of the Kiwi Coast continues to be possible through both its partnership with the Reconnecting Northland programme and the unflagging determination of the people-on-the-ground working hard to ensure kiwi populations continue to slowly but steadily increase in eastern Northland.

You can catch up with the Kiwi Coast at the Bay of Islands Show on 14 November and the Whangarei Summer Show between 5 and 6 December or visit www.kiwicoast.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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Contacts...

Jon Hampson, Northland
Regional Coordinator
jon.hampson@landcare.org.nz

Ngairé Tyson, Biodiversity
Coordinator
ngaire.tyson@landcare.org.nz

Ph 09 430 0954

PO Box 3026, Onerahi
Whangarei 0112
0800 526 322
www.landcare.org.nz

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