



Waikato Biodiversity Forum held on Tuesday 15 November at the Pirongia Hall

Purpose of the day

- Share information with others who are managing Significant Natural Areas (SNAs)
- Learn about indigenous forestry for commercial return
- Workshop on controlling animal pests, particularly possums and rats
- Workshop on controlling weeds
- Get assistance and advice on planting streams, wetlands and bush blocks

Setting the scene

Seventy people attended the information/workshop day at the Pirongia Hall. It was a great opportunity to mix with others interested in learning more about protecting rivers, streams, lakes and forests and improving the biodiversity of the Waipa district and the wider region. We had planned to visit the site on Sainsbury Road where the Waipa District Council is planning to develop a Reserve with conservation and recreation values but the day was very rainy so we agreed to stay indoors. There was plenty to hear about and discuss so we filled the field trip time slot without any difficulty. **Tony Roxburgh from Waipa District Council** provided an overview of the changes experienced in Waipa district over the past centuries, including the clearing of vegetation from riverbanks and forests. He highlighted the damage that introduced animals have had on the indigenous species, for example the absence of kokako in the district.

He showed graphs of biodiversity conservation achievements of the past 25 years and what is needed to halt the decline of indigenous biodiversity. He also showed maps of the remaining natural heritage and how these might be linked up through corridors along rivers and streams, peat lakes and forests. Dispersal from core areas in the district such as, Mt Pirongia and Maungatautari is around 40kms. Incentives offered by Waipa District Council to landowners to protect significant natural areas include Environment Protection Lots in which Council will provide a right to sub-divide a title (<5.000m²) off a property, assisting landowners financially with on-ground protection costs – survey, fencing, management via “Heritage Fund”, providing rate relief for sites protected by a covenant, purchasing land with landowner agreement and assisting with planning and restoration advice. Finally, Tony described the concept plan for the reserve on Sainsbury Road which is owned by the Waipa District Council.

Tāne’s Tree Trust

Warwick Silvester from Tāne’s Tree Trust covered the indigenous forestry for commercial return. Warwick started his presentation with some history on the growing of native timbers including the research to find out about growth rates and the management techniques needed to have millable timber between 40 - 80years. He also covered the MPI and Forests Act requirements for sustainable management of forests, such as the forests' unique plant and animal life, and their ability to replenish through natural means, the requirement to be protected through control of pests and weeds, protection of the soil and maintenance of water quality.

Owners of indigenous forests on private land have several options if they wish to harvest and mill their trees: sustainable forest management (SFM) plans, sustainable forest management (SFM) permits and personal use approvals for the harvesting and milling of indigenous timber.

Warwick concluded with highlighting the advantages of native forests, including that they are best grown using systems which don't need clearfelling, thus giving superior water and soil protection, they encourage the invasion of other native plant and animal species, so improving biodiversity, they evolve to a multi-tiered structure that will probably sequester more carbon, and most New Zealanders regard their landscape qualities as better than exotics. Below are links for more information. Tāne's Tree Trust are available to give advice. Ian Brennan talked about the work he has carried out on his property and showed a video clip which was a really valuable way of seeing the changes he has made on his farm to enhance biodiversity.

Tāne's Tree Trust website www.tanestreetrust.org.nz

Ian Brennans's Youtube link www.youtube/ck173Xyaky8

Audio files [Warwick's Tane's Trees Trust presentation](#)

Plant Pest Management Workshop

The participants attended three workshops. The plant pest workshop was facilitated by Ben Elliot from the Regional Council. His presentation consisted of information about common pest plants in significant natural areas in the Waikato Region, for example wandering jew, moth plant, privet and woolly nightshade. There were samples of many of these pest plants in plastic bags to help with familiarity and identification. Also, there was a hand out for everyone called 'Controlling Weeds in Riparian Margins' (see link below) which contained the most common pest plants and the best control methods. Major pest plants and why they are pest plants were discussed. For example, wandering jew (*Tradescantia*) is an ecosystem changing pest plant, that if left unchecked prevents regeneration and sets a bush block on the road to destruction. Control methods were covered, including cutting and pasting, broadcast spraying and hand pulling, and the useful products available and when best to use them. For example, some products like Brushkiller are very good at killing woody pest plants but can translocate to other desirable plants while some other products won't. Ben has offered to visit people on their property to discuss issues and formulate control plans for pest plants. He's already followed up with several landowners.

<http://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/PageFiles/3599/weeds%20and%20riparian%20margins.pdf>

Audio file [Weed control workshop](#)

Principles of Restoration Planting Workshop

Wayne Bennett covered restoration planting, starting with an introduction to the important principles to be aware of, then moving on to details of how to achieve those principles based on an understanding of how each plant contributes to a community of plants. Wayne focused on the following principles:

- **Achieving resilience**, sustainability and durability.
- **Natural patterns and processes** - achieving authenticity and protecting biodiversity
- **Cutting corners** - a cautionary tale of Ngaroto and others.
- **Best practice**: recreating a plant community - reference ecosystems and planting guides

The following plants were highlighted for planting in the Waikato District:

1. **Colonisers** - karamu, kanuka, manuka, cabbage trees, harakeke
2. **Mid-successional species** - manatu/ribbonwood, houhere/lacebark, rewarewa
3. **Canopy trees** - kahikatea, pukatea, matai, Swamp maire, pokaka, titoki, totara, tawa, rimu, kauri, miro, kohekohe
4. **Understorey** - coprosma species, melicytus micranthus, turepo, kaikomako, mahoe, porokaiwhiri, melicope simplex, nikau, rangiora, heketara, kawakawa,
5. **Climbers** - parsonsia, passiflora, kiekie
6. **Epiphytes** - *Astelia* species

7. **Sedges** - Machaerina species, Carex species, Gahnia species
8. **Ground ferns** - Rasp fern, thread fern, hound's tongue fern, hen and chicken fern

Wayne also covered off the use of planting guides to plan a plant community, and arranging the plants in space and time. During the workshop, he referred to the Waikato District planting guides. Here is a link to them which might be useful for some people.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/run-a-project/restoration-advice/native-plant-restoration/local-planting-guides/ecological-restoration-in-the-waikato/>

Alternatively you can open the doc.govt.nz home page, search for planting guides and open "ecological-restoration-in-the-Waikato". You may also be interested in www.forestflora.co.nz which has guides to different habitat types here in the Waikato, and photos of all the plants listed.

Audio file link [Native plants workshop](#)

Animal Pest Management Workshop

Dave Byers from the Waikato Regional Council highlighted animal pest management including different traps for a range of situations, and where and when to place them. He had a variety of different traps for participants to view including the Good Nature A24 and A12 traps and the DOC 200s. He discussed the reasons for doing pest control, and the importance of looking at the overall restoration of an area and what the goals are for the whole site, not just animal pest control. He highlighted the importance of a monitoring programme to measure achievements of the project and talked about monitoring methods such as tracking tunnels and chew cards. Finally, he covered compliance with the Animal Welfare Act and funding opportunities.

[End of day Q&A and wrap-up](#)

Summary

It was a very rewarding day and we had plenty of time to workshop and make sure people's questions were answered. It is always inspiring being in a room full of people passionate about improving our biodiversity. Thank you to all of you who attended and for the enthusiasm and knowledge you brought with you.

Moira Cursey

Waikato Biodiversity Forum Coordinator