



Report from the Waikato Biodiversity Forum

held in Te Kowahi on Tuesday 28 June 2016

Purposes of the day

- Share information with others who are managing Significant Natural Areas (SNAs)
- Hear and see what the McBride's have achieved over 30+ years with the protection of ancient forest through to the current regeneration programme
- Workshop on controlling animal pests particularly possums and rats
- Workshop on controlling weeds
- Get assistance and advice on planting streams, wetlands and bush blocks

Introduction

Forty people attended the information/workshop day at the McBride's property in Te Kowhai. Graham McBride set the scene by describing the work that he and Diane have carried out on their property at 'Carinya'. They have undertaken a 31 year programme of care and restoration of an ancient bush margin and incised wetland gully system.

When they purchased the property in 1984, they soon understood the implications of owning a bush that had been grazed by cattle and sheep for perhaps 130 years. It appeared fairly obvious that with the lack of natural plant recruitment and ongoing challenges from weeds and pests, that the old-growth forest canopy would eventually collapse. Their resultant restoration programme has seen the retirement and fencing of the area from 1985, the progressive re-introduction of >20,000 native plants (many home grown), an extended weed management programme and an intensive 11 year predator culling programme (at 20 August 2016, the cumulative tally was 5,215 culls).



Board walking in the wetlands

The information/workshop, using the two kilometre bush walking track and wetland board walks was an opportunity to demonstrate how natural areas can become an asset to a business (in a number of ways). It is also able to show how this natural area can provide environmental, social and sustainable benefits to the wider community.

Waikato District Council

The Waikato District Council described the process of identifying SNAs in their district and the feedback they had received from the consultation with landowners such as, "I am protecting the area already but this is expensive and I need help" and "I have no interest in clearing native bush". The Waikato District Council detailed incentives available for landowners such as Waikato District Council - Conservation Strategy Fund - \$30,000pa set aside to assist those with covenanted areas and, in part, for conservation/restoration efforts on private land, Waikato Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust, Waikato River Authority Clean-up fund, Waikato District Council support with landowner advice service and school plantings. The Council intends to amend mapping to incorporate the feedback received, undertake further desktop checks of line-work, carry out 50 site visits and process ecological reports and recommendations. This information will inform policies to restore, protect and enhance areas through the district plan review. Finally, the Conservation Strategy is being reviewed which will incorporate information on protection of SNA's.

Workshops

The participants attended three workshops. The plant pest workshop was facilitated by Hamish Hodgson 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 Zones' 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 a 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.



Graham McBride describing restoration planting carried out on the property



Dave Byers's animal pest management workshop in the comfort of the lounge

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 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, hounds tongue fern, hen and chicken fern



Wayne Bennett describing the "community of plants" concept for restoration planting

Wayne also covered off the use of planting guides to plan a plant community and arranging the plants in space and time.

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.



Hamish Hodgson talking weeds

Summary

It was a rewarding day and very informative for the attendees. After rainy weather leading up to the event we had a mainly sunny day to enjoy the walk around the property. A HUGE thank you to Diane and Graham for being such warm hosts and opening their home to us to enjoy a lovely lunch by the fire in their lounge and living room. I heard after heavy rain that the board walk was flooded for a few days after the event. Thankful for the window of sunshine.

Moira Cursey

Waikato Biodiversity Forum Coordinator



Examples of pest control in action on the McBride's property