

Regional Policy Statement Implementation Report

Geoff Skene, Manager

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1. Trees for Survival (Nigel Clarke)

On behalf of Trees for Survival, Nigel has successfully sought a \$500 grant from a State Insurance Community Fund for equipment to be used by school students on planting days.

This year's seedlings have been distributed to local schools in the last month. Nigel has also been giving Horizons MW and associated schools and service clubs advice on how to set up a Trees for Survival programme in their Region.

2. Waiwhetu Stream (Tim Porteous)

On March 10 a meeting was held to commence a process for cleaning up and enhancing the Waiwhetu Stream. The meeting was attended by many people who are concerned about, or have an interest in, the stream, the tangata whenua, and the relevant management agencies (such as the Hutt City Council and the Regional Council).

It was agreed that the preparation of a community Vision and Action Plan would be a suitable way to address the stream's problems, based on the success of the Pauatahanui Inlet approach. This will be managed by the Regional Council with the support of the Hutt City Council. Tim will be undertaking this work. He is currently identifying people and organisations who wish to be represented on the community group which will be set up to distil and articulate the vision and steps needed to make a real difference to the stream.

3. Horkiri Stream (Nigel Clarke)

This is another ecological enhancement project which has recently commenced. It involves the restoration of the small estuary where the Horokiri Stream (the stream running through Battle Hill) joins the Pauatahanui Inlet, one stream to the east of the Kakaho estuary enhancement. We estimate it will take three years to complete this work (primarily to allow for locally sourced seed to grow to an appropriate size).

Nigel has identified land owners, ordered the first lot of plants, and gained the assistance of the local Forest & Bird nursery in caring for the plants. He has also obtained the agreement of the Department of Corrections to carry out some of the work in the future.

4. Kaiwharawhara Stream (John Holmes)

All major commercial landowners along the lower Kaiwharawhara stream have been contacted and given a draft project brief for the stream clean-up and riparian planting project. Other businesses and local schools will be receiving a newsletter inviting their participation in the next few weeks. Meetings have also been held with some of the major players at the stream mouth (TranzRail, CentrePort, Transit NZ and DOC), and with the Trelissick Park and Ngaio Gorge Working Group, to discuss aspects of the project and get necessary agreements about their roles. Wellington City Council is carrying out an assessment of what is needed for clearing the stream of some of the larger debris, and has some funds available to help with the project.

5. International Landcare Conference (Geoff Skene)

At the beginning of March, I was fortunate to attend this conference in Melbourne. The conference dealt with the work of community “landcare” groups in dealing with Australia’s major environmental problems (included were groups dealing with streams, wetlands, native vegetation, salinity and sustainable agriculture generally). Speakers came from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain and several other countries. There were many lessons to be taken for our own future community care groups and environmental work but the major lessons are:

- The world is starting to see the environment as an “asset”, to find ways to “value” it (and its component parts), and to think of national economies as existing within a wider environmental framework. One speaker described the economy as a “wholly owned subsidiary of the natural ecosystem”.
- If the environment is a capital asset, sustainability can be understood as the ability of that asset to generate income but not decrease in value. At the moment we are spending our environmental capital as if it were income.
- A catchment based approach to resource management (which we are heading towards at Pauatahanui) is the preferred approach for much Australian environmental management.
- Catchment management is allowing an ecosystem approach to be taken but what this is still being developed and debated.
- The number of care groups in Australia now approximates 10,000. A review of the success of these programmes by the Federal Government last year gave a strong endorsement to the care group approach.

- There is much to be gained through the bringing together of major corporate enterprises and needy catchments or habitats. However, businesses need a “business link”, a reason for participating that fits with their corporate objectives (though not necessarily a money making reason).
- There is good scientific evidence that “participatory learning” (being in a care group) will help people change the way they think and act.
- Biodiversity is a word that only a few people really understand. To get farm or community buy-in to doing something about “biodiversity”, we must talk about the specific rare plant or animal that the land owner “owns” or cares for.
- Some of the most successful long term care projects in Australia have come about through the combination of a community care group and the local school. Each new cohort of children rehabilitates the community’s enthusiasm.
- The principal barriers to effective care projects in Australia include a problem we do not have to worry about – snakes!