

July 2018

WHANGAMATĀ: HEALTHY CATCHMENT, HEALTHY HARBOUR

PŪAHA ORA, RIU WAI ORA

Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato

Photo: John Barren

TĒNĀ KOUTOU!

Another year has gone by and in that time there has certainly been a lot of great catchment work carried out by various agencies and community groups. Our newsletters have taken a bit of a hiatus due to staff changes, but we've been busy in and around Whangamatā.

There's been fantastic work by local care groups to enhance biodiversity values, and increased restoration works which have included new sites. Our predator control programme has been extended, we've undertaken mangrove removal, and we've also been particularly busy with river management and flood mitigation work.

Weather patterns continuously challenge us, especially storms, and this past year has been no exception. The severe storms in March and April 2017 impacted the Te Weiti and Waikiekie streams, in particular. Other waterways, such as Otuwheti Stream and Wentworth River, were affected to a lesser extent.

Please take the time to read more about some of our many activities which contribute to the implementation of your harbour and catchment plan. If you have any questions or comments, please get in touch with one of the team. Our contact details are on the back page.

Ngā mihi

Hauraki Coromandel Integrated Catchment Management team

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WHANGAMATĀ HARBOUR AND CATCHMENT PLANS IMPLEMENTATION

It's hard to believe it's been 11 years since the Whangamatā Harbour and Catchment Plans were written. These plans continue to be an integral part of our works programme as they set the direction and priorities for what we do.

The Whangamatā plans evolved due to mangrove removal discussions. That's why they're in a different format to the other harbour and catchment management plans.

The intention is to review these plans and integrate the Otahu Estuary and associated catchments. This is currently scheduled to occur in 2021. In the meantime, we have revisited the catchment, and the findings and recommendations are detailed further below.

Want to refresh yourself with the plans? Check out waikatoregion.govt.nz/hcmp.

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

TARGETING THREATENED HABITATS

Over the next month we'll be rolling out a 'harbour scale' ecological restoration plan targeting threatened habitats around the Whangamatā Harbour. This is exciting as it will build on historic and existing restoration

works, while also mapping a way forward for new works with the potential to include more predator control, pest plant control and restoration planting. While rewarding, this work requires many hands to keep it going and to ensure success. We'll soon be talking to key community groups about opportunities for their involvement.

TRAPPING RESULTS

To date, 378 target animal pests have been removed from the local environment through trapping around Papa Maire Island since September 2015 and the upper reaches of the Moanaanuanu Estuary since November 2016. These traplines complement predator control work managed by Whangamatā Harbour Care across the wider Whangamatā area. The predator control helps protect threatened birds such as the banded rail, Australasian bittern and New Zealand fernbird.

EXCITING WETLAND STUDY RESULTS

We have some exciting results from a recent wetland bird study. Four acoustic recorders were set up to detect cryptic wetland bird species at Papa Maire Island last October. Nationally at risk North Island fernbirds were recorded in reasonable numbers. Adding to this, our staff and contractors have also sighted critically endangered Australasian bitterns at the site on numerous occasions.

BIOSECURITY NEWS

PRETTY PEST

Please keep an eye out for the invasive aquatic plant water hyacinth (*Eichornia crassipes*).

A small infestation in a pond in Onemana was eradicated last year following its discovery by a keen-eyed member of the public. Just over 170 plants covering an area of a few square metres were pulled out of the pond.

Water hyacinth grows fast, forming a dense mat that reduces water quality, changes water flows and increases sediment buildup. It is a threat to our native plants and animals because it alters ecosystems, destroys habitats and blocks waterways (and irrigation systems).

It is often found in dams, ponds, drains, lakes and some slow moving waterways.

Water hyacinth plants have a free-floating rosette of shiny rounded leaves with thick masses of feathery roots which hang in the water. The roots are dark in colour and can reach 2.5m in length. The plant produces a cluster of mauve-blue flowers on a single stalk.

If you've seen water hyacinth or think you've seen it, please contact the Ministry for Primary Industries on freephone 0800 80 99 66.



Water hyacinth flower



Water hyacinth leaf

TAONGA TREES UNDER THREAT

Kauri dieback is a soil-borne organism which is threatening the wellbeing of this mighty native tree.

In 2014, the disease was detected in the Coromandel Peninsula in Whangapoua and Hukarahi. A comprehensive aerial survey to check for other possible cases was completed last year, and following soil sampling confirmed a new kauri dieback site near Tairua. Our biosecurity team is working with the landowner and close neighbours to prevent the spread of this disease. While the disease is not widespread, there are lots of areas to be kept disease free to protect our kauri.

Our catchment management staff continue to work with landowners to help protect kauri. This has involved activities such as fencing off stands of kauri, while our biosecurity team helps manage feral animals and promote on-farm biosecurity such as good cleaning of machinery.

Meanwhile, the Department of Conservation has been carrying out ground truthing at priority sites on public conservation land.

DIVING FOR PESTS

Marine pests are species which are not native to New Zealand and are harmful to our natural environment and our aquaculture industries.

Their principle pathway, or means of spread, is via biofouling on vessels. Unfortunately, Auckland is home to many of these marine pests and home to many of the vessels visiting the Coromandel Peninsula over summer.

Last October a vessel was turned away from Whitianga after being found with Mediterranean fanworm on its hull. Another fanworm-infested vessel that arrived in Whangamatā for Beach Hop in March was also turned away.

WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY

It's important we all play our part protecting kauri.


Some simple things you can do when bush walking are:

- making sure you clean your gear before and after going on a track
- keeping to the tracks
- checking with landowners if you're accessing private property.

How you can protect kauri on your property:

- Fence stock out of bush areas.
- Ensure contractors clean their gear before coming onto and leaving your property.
- Undertake pest and pig control.
- Keep people out of your bush or off the ground near your kauri.
- The less soil you move on and off your property the better.

 kauridieback.co.nz

 0800 800 401



As part of our marine surveillance programme, we hire the Bay of Plenty Regional Council dive team to inspect a number of sites around the Coromandel (including marinas, moorings, structures, common anchoring bays) each year. Earlier this year the Whangamatā Marina was surveyed and its structures, moorings and vessels were found to be free of marine pests.

If you have a vessel on a mooring or in a marina, make sure it's cleaned and antifouled before heading away.



COLLABORATIVE PREDATOR CONTROL

Waikato Regional Council supported a Department of Conservation (DOC) led 1080 drop in Otahu and iwi-owned land in Mataora Bay late last year.

In accordance with industry best practice, we contracted possum control in about 4500 hectares of privately owned farmland east of the block. Predator control on the farmland acts as a buffer and will stop reinvasion of rats, possums and stoats into the conservation estate, and promote a corridor for kiwi.

The council possum control contractor, Feracon Ltd, has completed its first round of control and expects all work to be finalised soon.

Possums eat native vegetation, eggs and fledglings, and compete with native animals for food. Rats and stoats eat native lizards, frogs, birds and eggs. The 1080 operation will allow forest habitats to recover and give our native species a break from predation.

The Otahu block is home to Archey's and Hochstetter's frogs, which benefit greatly from 1080 and surrounding farmland predator control.



OTAHU GOAT CONTROL

Goat control has resumed in the Otahu block, including Wentworth Valley, as part of a four year maintenance programme to keep numbers down.

We helped DOC with a big \$180,000 sting to eradicate goats in the block two years ago. At the time, goats were doing significant damage to the forest by ring-barking trees and eating the understorey. This removal of vegetation can make the ground unstable, contributing to flooding damage during wet weather events.

The number of goats found seeking refuge in the central steep rocky areas, where they are safe from pig-hunting dogs, have been higher than expected. In August and October last year, as part of the maintenance programme, hunters shot 83 goats in 300 hours.

Another 400 hours will be dedicated to culling goats this year.



MANGROVE REMOVAL UPDATE

More than 19 hectares of mangroves have now been removed from the Whangamatā Harbour.

Consent was given to remove just over 22 hectares of mangroves, with the remainder due to be cleared in August this year or April 2019.

Our contractors have been clearing mangroves from several locations in stages over about five years, most recently about two hectares at area G north of Durrant Drive and Area E in the Moana Anu Anu Estuary.

As part of the consent, we must make sure there is no adverse environmental impact from the removal of the mangroves. Therefore, every clearance area has to be monitored for environmental trends and triggers for one year before we can progress to the next stage.

Importantly, results continue to indicate that we are meeting the performance criteria within the consent and our removals are not having an adverse impact on overall harbour health.

The mangroves are cut by chainsaw, removed from site and turned to mulch for use on council reserves.

We'd like to acknowledge the input and support of Whangamatā Ratepayers Association, Whangamatā Harbour Care, iwi, Department of Conservation, Forest & Bird and others who have helped with this process.

Whangamatā Harbour Care members have been helping with the mangrove seedling removal part of the consent, and they manage trap lines around the estuary.

MANGROVE BILL AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

A commitment remains through the Statement of Intent with Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) for a 'plan change' that will be delivered by way of a review of the policy settings currently in place for mangrove management on the Coromandel.

This work remains on hold pending the outcome of the TCDC and Hauraki District Council local bill on mangrove management.

If you have any questions around mangrove management at Whangamatā, please call zone manager Dean Allen.

MONITORING THE ENVIRONMENT

Last summer, we reactivated a water quality monitoring programme at seven east coast and two west coast beaches, testing to see whether faecal bacteria levels were within suitable levels for contact recreation, such as swimming and surfing.

It was the first such testing since 2009 and the re-activation was part of a council drive to gain better information about what's happening in our coastal waters and to provide a community service. The programme has continued throughout this summer.

Results are updated between November and March.

 waikatoregion.govt.nz/coastalresults

RIVER MANAGEMENT

Before the March and April floods last year, we had a successful summer of river works. River management and improvement was undertaken on the Wentworth River and Waiharakeke Stream at multiple locations.

The 2017/18 summer was also a successful period for river works. Again, works were undertaken on the Waikiekie Stream and Wentworth River at several locations. These included obstruction removal and erosion protection works.

River works are ongoing and further works will be planned for the 2018/19 summer in the Whangamatā catchment.

We hold resource consents authorising in-stream works such as obstruction removal, gravel management and erosion protection. If you are aware of river issues then please contact your local river management officer.



1 Several large willows growing across the Wentworth River were cleared over a 100m stretch in January 2017. Local reports indicate that this mitigated the extent of flooding in March and April. **2** Before: Waikiekie Stream bursts its banks due to a blockages. **3** After: Blockages have been removed but the riparian strip is still clogged with forestry debris. **4** Forestry debris blocks the entire Te Weiti Stream channel, upstream of the SH25 bridge – the channel has been cleared and cleanup continues. **5** The Te Weiti Stream flood plain was heavily impacted by forestry debris and a stream flowed through farmland, upstream of SH25 bridge – the stream is now flowing in its channel and cleanup continues. **6** Erosion protection works undertaken in February 2018 using imported rock spall, live tree tying and gravel management.

WET AND WILD

Cyclones wreaked havoc on the Coromandel Peninsula in March and April last year. As you'll be aware, roads were closed and homes and businesses were damaged.

The waterways ran at full force, causing severe flooding. Sediment and vegetation blocked waterways and roads, and damaged farms, private and commercial properties and coastal marine areas.

Forestry material had the biggest impact on the catchment. Te Weiti and Waikiekie streams were heavily impacted by swept away slash from logging during the March 2017 event. The obstructions caused both streams to flow outside of their channels and through neighbouring farms. We worked with Broad Spectrum (the NZ Transport Agency's contractor at the time) and Rayonier to remediate damage and reinstate the streams.

Other waterways, such as Otuwheti Stream and Wentworth River, were affected to a lesser extent and river works in both were undertaken to remediate erosion and obstructions.

Our staff were kept incredibly busy at the time. The river issues that were reported were assessed, and where river management was the solution

they were resolved. Some river works had to be programmed for the 2017/18 summer and these have been completed, too.

MARITIME SAFETY NEWS

MARINEMATE FOR YOUR SMARTPHONE

Heading out, but not sure where the closest boat ramp is, what the local rules are, what time low tide is, or which VHF channel you should tune into! You can have all the important boating information available in the palm of your hand. MarineMate is a FREE smartphone app that gives you access to information to help you navigate safely on our waters. The app is updated regularly to take account of feedback.



YOUR LOCAL REGIONAL COUNCIL CONTACTS: PHONE 07 866 0172

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HE TAIAO MAURIORA HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
HE ŌHANGA PAKARI STRONG ECONOMY
HE HAPORI HIHIRI VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

For more information call
Waikato Regional Council on 0800 800 401
or visit waikatoregion.govt.nz

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