

JUNE 2022

COROMANDEL ZONE

KI UTA KI TAI

HEALTHY
CATCHMENT
HEALTHY
HARBOUR



Tēnā koutou

Lots has been happening across the Coromandel Zone (north from Tararu on the Thames Coast to Whiritoa on the east coast of the peninsula) since our last newsletter in December 2021.

We are continuing to work alongside tangata whenua, iwi trusts, landowners and communities to undertake new works across the peninsula and deliver on the Shovel Ready projects that got funding from the Government as part of its economic recovery response to COVID-19.

The purpose of these newsletters is to tell you about some of the work we are doing, or are involved in with others, to help improve our environment. We encourage you to contact our team if you have a wetland, bush, or stream enhancement project in mind, want to carry out river work or weed control or need help to connect with your nearest environmental care group who strive to have our native bush predator free. Please also contact our team if you have an environmental project you want to share with our readers in the next newsletter.

Your Integrated Catchment Management team is a wealth of knowledge, and we also offer financial help for restoration works, soil and stream management, and animal and plant pest control.

Mauri ora.



Three generations watch as a new wetland scrape gets created for wading birds at the bottom of their property.

Waitekuri catchment project complete

A three-year project with landowners to minimise soil erosion and improve wetland habitat in the Waitekuri catchment near Whangapoua has been completed.

The project has seen over 5500 native plants put along waterways and into two wetland areas, the creation of a wading bird habitat and the construction of a sediment trap.

Catchment Management Officer Elaine Iddon says it was quite challenging trying to establish native plantings and create wetlands in two years of record drought and COVID-19 restrictions.

“But we got there in the end with everyone’s help,” says Elaine. “This project has been a real team effort, with many players. From the landowners who have been very generous with their time and land, Te Rerenga School students who helped do some of the planting to encourage back the birds and lizards, and all our funders.”

Summit Forestry (formally Earnslaw One) and Project Kiwi worked together on predator control at the Waingaro Wetland, which students from Te Rerenga School regularly check. This 35-hectare area is the most significant wetland in the Colville Ecological District and is home to rare matuku (Australasian bittern), pūweto (spotless crane) and mātātā (fernbird).

A total of \$18,000 was raised to help buy plants using crowd-funding platform Million Metres Streams. New Zealand Motorhome and Caravan Association also contributed \$3000 from its Greenfund for local grassroots environmental and conservation projects.

The catchment was chosen because of the high risk of sedimentation to the Whangapoua Harbour from the Waitekuri Stream catchment.

“All the work that has been done here allows

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CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

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us to demonstrate good practice in soil conservation, habitat enhancement and water quality improvement,” says Elaine.

Crack and grey willow were controlled at key sites.

“A soggy, bottom paddock was retired and fenced from grazing. That’s allowed the area to revert back into wetland with a mix of open water and planted areas, and it’s incredible to see how quickly the native wetland species have returned to the more open water areas.

“We’re also trialling a constructed wetland sediment trap which allows sediment to drop out of the water as it heads downstream. The first year of monitoring showed it had collected a 10-centimetre-deep layer in the pit.”

Arthur Hinds Scholarship

Third year Bachelor of Science student Nikita Russell has returned to Otago University “incredibly motivated” after spending time as a summer student in the Coromandel Peninsula with Waikato Regional Council and the Department of Conservation.

Nikita won the Arthur Hinds Scholarship in honour of the notable Whenuakite conservationist, working with the council’s integrated catchment management team and DOC staff based in Whitianga.

“The opportunity to gain work experience with both the Waikato Regional Council and Department of Conservation through the Arthur Hinds Scholarship this past summer has been truly amazing,” says Nikita, who is majoring in ecology.

“I am more driven than ever. It was incredibly motivating to be able to experience some of the variety of career paths that I am studying towards. Especially getting to work with others who are knowledgeable and passionate, both WRC and DOC staff, and local landowners.”



Nikita Russell helping with the kauri phosphite monitoring programme (see story on page 3).

Nikita says what she enjoyed most was that no two days were ever the same and her role was largely field based.

“I got to apply new knowledge in a practical manner and met an amazing range of people while doing so. It was also great to get a better understanding of the work that the council and DOC do locally across the peninsula. This scholarship is a special opportunity which

I would strongly encourage other students passionate about the environment and conservation to apply for.”

For more information on the Arthur Hinds Scholarship go to [waikatoregion.govt.nz/arthur-hinds-scholarship](https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/arthur-hinds-scholarship). Applications open late August-early September.

Hill country erosion funding

In 2019, the council secured \$3.7 million from the Ministry for Primary Industries’ Hill Country Erosion Fund (HCEF), over three years.

This enables the council to work with landowners on hill country erosion management, including funding support for activities that reduce and potentially treat soil loss, such as fencing off and planting erosion prone land.

Landowners are encouraged to contact the Coromandel catchment management team to see if they are eligible for a funding subsidy and to find out more.

Clean Streams 2020

The final planting season for Waikato Regional Council’s Clean Streams 2020 programme is about to start.

Funded \$1.998 million by One Billion Trees (Te Uru Rākau, Ministry for Primary Industries) as part of the Government’s economic recovery response to COVID-19, the Clean Streams 2020 project has enabled landowners in priority catchments across the region, who permanently retire a stream, wetland or seep from grazing, have the retired area planted in native plants at no cost to them.

For the 2022 planting season, 264,551 mixed native plants have been provisionally allocated to eligible sites,

including 19,000 for the Coromandel area – 15,000 into the Whiritoa catchment and 4000 at Colville. Last year, nearly 60,000 plants went into the ground at Papa Aroha, Whenuakite and Hikuaui.

Depending on the weather and ground conditions, planting is due to start in June. By the end of August, it is anticipated that 353,641 mixed native plants would have been planted on 89 hectares of retired land and along 71 kilometres of streambank across the Waikato region as part of this project.

The plantings are undertaken by contracted service providers, thereby creating new jobs.

KAURI PROTECTION

Whangapoua phosphite monitoring

A phosphite trial for kauri with kauri disease caused by *Phytophthora agathidicida* (Pa), in Whangapoua, is showing the injections are helping to stop gum bleeding.

Over 4800 trees were injected with phosphite between 2019 and 2020, with the trees being monitored over the past two years to see the effect of the treatment.

Kauri Protection Lead Kim Parker says the phosphite injections were like a shot to give sick kauri an immunity boost. “We know, in the short term, it stops some of the disease symptoms, including reducing bleeding and, in the medium-term, improving canopy health.”

Phosphite has been used since the 1970s to protect crops like avocado, pineapple

and cocoa against diseases. Dr Ian Horner, from Plant and Food Research, has been researching its use to protect kauri for several years and said phosphite had shown great potential as a tool against kauri disease.

“Without treatment, a lot of these trees will die a lot sooner,” says Kim. “While phosphite injections don’t permanently cure kauri of the disease, the treatment does temporarily stop or reduce its harmful effects, and give the tree a chance to recover. This is great news for these kauri.”

Monitoring includes using drone photos and videos to look at the condition of kauri canopy and on-the-ground tree health assessments. Pa is spread through the movement of contaminated soil. The best

way to protect kauri is by stopping soil movement.

“The Waikato has lots of kauri across the region and the largest area of kauri undetected for this organism, and we definitely want to keep it this way.”

In the Waikato, kauri disease caused by Pa is currently only found in Whangapoua, Hukarahi Reserve and Tairua.



Genavee Rhodes, from BioSense, delivers initial phosphite injections in 2019.

Long Bay walk helps families connect with kauri

What would you wish for if an ancient kauri tree could grant wishes?

For kauri protection track ambassador Samantha Mills, the answer is easy: to keep these majestic giants standing.

Samantha spent up to six days a week educating people who entered the Long Bay Kauri Reserve about kauri protection.

The track has a 1200-year-old kauri so, for families, Samantha threw in a story she made up for her own children when they were young – about te kauri “the magical tree” which grants wishes.

“I’ve watched many families drag their children into the bush who have then enjoyed their experience and marvelled at the cool big kauri,” says Samantha, who gave advice on using cleaning stations and showed people how to ensure their gear was dirt free going in and out of the track near Coromandel town.

“Visitors to the bush all know about kauri disease but don’t seem to understand how serious it is or how they can help stop the disease spreading.”

Long Bay Kauri Reserve is a 24-hectare significant natural area that has many kauri, including three ancient trees.



Samantha Mills on the job over summer.

“We have to look after these mighty trees. Protecting them also has a flow on effect to all the wildlife that surrounds these amazing trees,” says Samantha.

The wellbeing of kauri is under threat by a microscopic organism, *Phytophthora agathidicida*, which is spread by the movement of potentially infected dirt.

Samantha’s message to walkers was “always stay on the track – don’t go off the track even if you’re tempted for a selfie”.

The Kauri Protection Track Ambassador programme was a joint initiative between Waikato Regional Council and Thames

Coromandel District Council (TCDC), with funding from Biosecurity New Zealand.

Waikato Regional Council, working with landowners and TCDC, has also fenced off areas of the reserve from adjacent private land to protect kauri from possible wandering stock.

For more information on kauri disease visit kauriprotection.co.nz.



Wetland welcomes back threatened birdlife

North Island fernbird are now a common sight at a Pauanui pine forest wetland, and there are increased sightings of Australasian bittern and banded rail.

Rayonier Matariki Forests (RMF) Bay of Plenty District Forester Rob Schoonderwoerd says the native wildlife at Duck Creek Wetland, located within Rayonier Matariki's Tairua Forest and the adjacent Lakes Resort Golf Course in Pauanui, is increasing as the number of predators decrease, thanks to a trap line put in the forest last year.

Predator control is also being done within the Pauanui Lakes Resort residential area and at the golf club, since April 2020.

RMF, in collaboration with Waikato Regional Council, set up 40 traps. The trapline is being serviced by volunteers and a local

contractor. Over 1000 pests (rats, possums, mice, weasels, stoats, ferrets and feral cats) were caught in the first nine months. A local pig hunter has also been brought in to catch wild pigs.

“As well as constant sightings of some of the at-risk birds we’re trying to protect, there has also been an increase in ruru, tūi, bellbirds, fantails, grey warblers and kingfishers,” says Rob.

“These are good indicators that the collaborative trapping across the wider area is having a positive effect. We’re in the early stages of the project, so it will be exciting to see what the future holds.”

RMF has also been actively managing pest plant species since 2019, with control programmes for wilding pines, pampas, gorse and royal fern.



North Island fernbird with chicks

Marshwort attacks

A pest plant that can block waterways and cause flooding is being eradicated from two sites in the Coromandel Peninsula.

Marshwort, a water lily-like perennial aquatic plant that is an exclusion species in the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan*, was found in 2020 in two small ponds on private land at Te Kouma.

It is extremely difficult to control, and this is the only known occurrence of marshwort in the Waikato region.

Marshwort grows rapidly, colonising shallow water and forming dense mats that impede drainage and shade out other aquatic plants, block access to water and interfere with recreational activities. It is spread by creeping stem growth, fragmentation and deliberate planting, and is incredibly hard to get rid of, requiring ongoing monitoring and control.

Bright green, heart-shaped leaves up to 10 centimetres across grow just beneath the water surface, with the plant's roots

suspended in deeper water. Its flowers have five bright yellow petals with fringed margins.

Marshwort is from Australia. It once was sold in the aquatic trade and used in aquariums. It is banned from sale in New Zealand, and people are also banned from growing it and moving it around.

If you think you have marshwort on your property or have seen it, please phone the council's biosecurity team on 0800 800 401.



Wilding pine control continues in peninsula

Waikato Regional Council has started wilding pine control in new locations in the Coromandel Peninsula.

The control work in Ōpito Bay and Whenuakite is part of operations on the peninsula that received funding through the Ministry for Primary Industries' wilding pine control programme, with work already completed at Black Jack Reserve and on Ahuahū/Great Mercury Island. Control work continues on the Matarangi Bluff Scenic Reserve.

The funding for the control work in Ōpito Bay and other parts of the Kūāotunu Peninsula was applied for by Kūāotunu Peninsula Trust with support from the Opito Bay Ratepayers Association, Project Kiwi Trust and Rings Beach Wetland Group. In Whenuakite, the control sites are on a total

of about 108 hectares of private land in Boat Harbour Road.

The targeted areas have sparse to dense mature coning trees which will be controlled by drilling and filling with herbicide or chainsawing. Seedlings and smaller trees will be hand pulled or hand sawn.

Wilding pines are a threat to biodiversity and the primary sector and, if nothing is done to control them, within 30 years they will have taken over significant parts of New Zealand's iconic landscapes and natural habitats.

Wilding pines spread prolifically from seed and grow fast to form a dense canopy which shades the forest floor, killing and preventing the growth of all other plant species and displacing the habitat of native animal species.

The control sites have been surveyed for the presence of Coromandel brown kiwi, kākā, long-tailed bats and kauri, with strict procedures put in place where they exist.

No wilding pines will be felled where kākā or kiwi are nesting or bats roosting – control will be by drill and fill – and clean hygiene protocols for kauri protection will be carried out by contractors working near kauri.

The Government in 2020 allocated funding of \$100 million over four years to expand the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme. This funding is managed by Biosecurity New Zealand, which is a business management unit of the Ministry for Primary Industries.



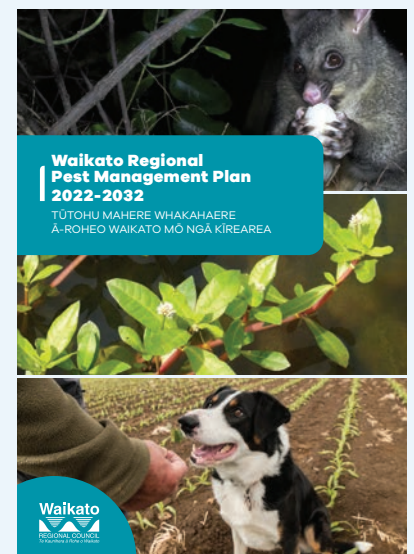
New regional pest management plan (RPMP)

A new rulebook for managing pest animals and plants has been adopted by Waikato Regional Council and was notified at the end of May.

Pest incursions are one of the biggest threats to our region. Livelihoods and ecosystems can be destroyed by pest animals, plants and diseases.

This RPMP, our fifth since 1996, focuses on species where a real difference could be made in the protection of our environment, economy and cultural and social wellbeing.

It can be viewed at waikatoregion.govt.nz/rpmp.



Waikato Regional
Pest Management Plan
2022-2032

TŪTOHU MAHERE WHAKAHAERE
Ā-ROHEO WAIKATO MŌ NGĀ KĪREAREA

Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri
Te Kaitiaki Take Kōwhiri

FLOOD PROTECTION

Protecting Coromandel town

Flood protection reduces the likelihood of floods impacting on our communities. It safeguards lives and property, enables use of land, and protects services such as water supply and power. However, some people have no idea that flooding was an issue in the past, or even know they are protected by schemes.

Why was the scheme built?

The Whangarahi and Karaka streams have a combined 16 square kilometre catchment that originates in the western Coromandel Ranges. These catchments, which are relatively steep and covered in regenerating native vegetation and scrub, are also susceptible to short duration but high intensity rainfall events that cause flash flooding and debris flows with little or no warning. The Whangarahi Stream flows out of the Coromandel Ranges before draining to the Coromandel harbour. The Karaka Stream also rises in the Coromandel Ranges



Rock rip rap protects the Karaka Stream bank from erosion on a bend.

and flows through Coromandel town before draining into the Whangarahi Stream.

As part of the Peninsula Project, Waikato Regional Council and Thames Coromandel District Council worked with Coromandel town's community to develop a flood mitigation strategy to address the Whangarahi and Karaka streams flood hazard.

Level of protection

Due to feedback from the community, a full flood mitigation scheme for Coromandel town was not constructed.

The flood infrastructure provides protection only to the central business district and residential dwellings in the vicinity of the Kapanga Bridge Road from a 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) event.

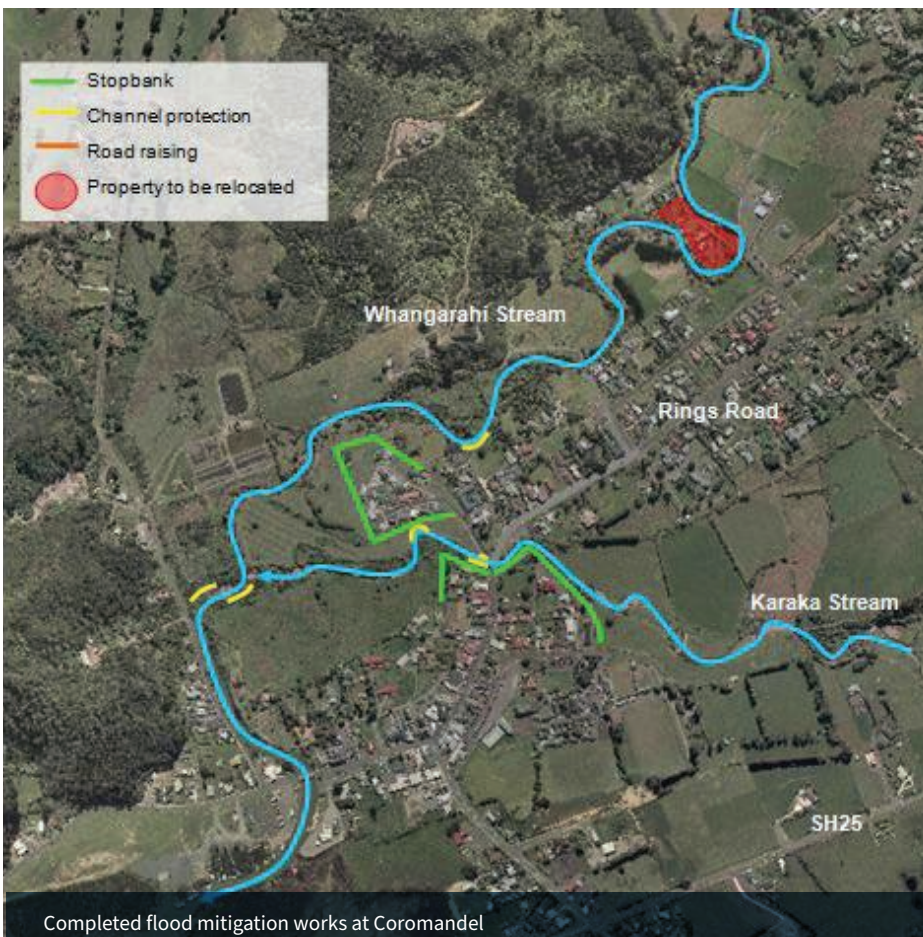
The scheme includes stopbanks around Elizabeth Park Retirement Village and along the right bank of Karaka Stream to the north of Kapanga Road bridge. Channel protection works, including rock rip rap, was completed to increase channel capacity and protect the critical bends of the streams.

Four residential properties identified as being at particularly high risk were purchased by the council and removed, with the land used as a floodway as part of the scheme.

Residual flood risk

'Residual flood risk' is a term used to describe a river flood risk that exists due to the potential for 'greater than design' flood events to occur.

Also, as the Coromandel community did not agree to the implementation of a full flood protection scheme, parts of the community are still subject to flood hazard from flooding from the Whangarahi and Karaka streams.



Completed flood mitigation works at Coromandel

YOUR COAST

\$200,000 grant helps buy land at New Chums Beach

Waikato Regional Council has helped secure the protection of forest behind New Chums Beach in perpetuity.

The council contributed \$200,000 from its Natural Heritage Fund to help NZ Coastal Trust buy 30 hectares of land at the northern end of Wainuiototo in the Coromandel Peninsula.

The trust bought the land at New Chums Beach for more than \$2 million in December to put a stop to controversial development plans. However, as the trust had just three weeks to raise the funds when the property was put on the open market, the purchase was underwritten by significant contributions from three individuals, pending results of grant applications to institutional and philanthropic entities.



The Preserve New Chum for Everyone group, mana whenua and the Environmental Defence Society were behind the fundraising drive to support the trust's land purchase.

The Natural Heritage Fund is derived from a portion of the Natural Heritage Targeted Rate which is currently \$5.80 per property.

Water monitoring results

During the summer months, the council implements a water quality monitoring programme across the region for safe swimming.

In the Coromandel Peninsula, this includes seven beaches, two estuaries and one river.

During the 2021/22 season, faecal indicator bacteria concentrations exceeded guideline values on several occasions.

The beaches were mostly suitable for swimming, with just one exceedance of the

guidelines for enterococci at Buffalo Beach. (We also monitor Hot Water Beach, Tairua Beach, Pauanui Beach, Onemana Beach, Whangamatā Beach and Whiritoa Beach in the Coromandel Peninsula.)

Two estuary sites were monitored this summer in the Coromandel for enterococci and *E. coli* bacteria at Tairua Pepe Stream and Whangamatā. There were four exceedances above the enterococci guideline at the Tairua Pepe Stream and three exceedances above the *E. coli* guideline at Tairua Pepe Stream.

Kauaeranga River was monitored weekly for *E. coli* from December to February, with two exceedances recorded.

The exceedances are mainly related to rainfall – it's normal to have high faecal bacteria levels after rain due to runoff from the land.

The council has implemented recreational water quality monitoring programmes during the summer months since 1985. Monitoring results are published on the Land and Water Aotearoa webpage, lawa.org.nz.



MARITIME SERVICES

Operation Neptune

This summer, Waikato Regional Council's maritime safety team conducted its biggest and most challenging operation to date, running for three weeks from Boxing Day through to 16 January with an additional 12 staff covering recreational boating activity in the region.

"The number of people taking part in recreational boating has been growing year on year and here in the Waikato we now have some of the most congested waterways in New Zealand," says Regional Harbourmaster Chris Bredenbeck.

"The increased numbers of people out on our waters causes us all sorts of challenges."

Challenges include a lack of consistency of rules nationally, such as the wearing of lifejackets, and no national requirements for skipper licensing and training or vessel registration.

"Many of our visiting boaties come from Auckland, where the maritime rules may be different to what we have here. We also believe that COVID travel restrictions have led to more Kiwis purchasing various new watercraft, with many new skippers being inexperienced on the water.



"There are no national requirements for skipper licencing or vessel registration, as is in place with drivers and motor vehicles on the roads of New Zealand. Essentially a person can purchase and operate a vessel with no knowledge of maritime regulations or the rules of the sea."

Operation Neptune, which has been running for five years, is the summer on-water education and compliance programme run by the council's Maritime Safety team which has the mandate for navigation safety in the region. The focus of the programme is on increasing a patrol presence on the water in key recreational boating areas, over the peak summer boating period, to maintain compliance with the region's navigation safety bylaw and reduce the risk of harm on the water.

Over the summer, the team helped respond to a number of incidents with other agencies such as Coastguard and the Police, including a number of bar crossing incidents (Tairua, Whangamatā and Matarangi).

"As a result of the strong and unusual currents seen after the eruption of Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai in January, many of our channel markers in the Whitianga and Tairua/Pauanui harbours shifted considerably and had to be reset.

"We also manage hazards on the water. A good example of this was removing a huge log floating in the Whitianga harbour channel. That could have done some real damage to a vessel if struck at speed."

WAYS WE CAN HELP

Call 07 866 0172 or 0800 800 401.

Activity	For assistance with	Ask for
Catchment management	Restoring a wetland, stream or forest area? Want to reduce erosion, runoff and improve water quality? Did you know there is financial assistance, and we can draw up a programme of works specifically for you?	Catchment management officer
Rivers or flooding	Eroding stream, in-stream blockages? Issues with vegetation choking a waterway? Our river staff can help.	River management officer
Pest plants	Issues with pest plants? Not sure how to control a pesky weed? Just need some advice?	Biosecurity pest plant officer
Maritime safety	Moorings, safety on the water, jet ski registrations, concerns about others' behaviour on the water.	Maritime officer

Talk to a councillor

Thames-Coromandel constituent councillor

Denis Tegg 021 285 3743

Ngā Tai ki Uta councillor and deputy chair

Kataraina Hodge 027 450 8905

River and Catchment Management Committee co-chair

Stu Husband 027 233 0030