

NOVEMBER 2022

COROMANDEL ZONE

KI UTA KI TAI

HEALTHY
CATCHMENT
HEALTHY
HARBOUR



Tēnā koutou

As always, a lot 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 June 2022.

We are continuing to work alongside tangata whenua, iwi trusts, landowners and communities to undertake works across the peninsula.

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.

Tihei mauri ora



Biggest effort in Coast Care

The biggest and most successful coastal restoration event in the Coromandel Peninsula was held in Pāuanui in May.

More than 200 volunteers planted over 13,000 plants across a 260-metre length of shoreline at the southern end of Pāuanui beach to increase coastal resilience and enable better management of the reserve space.

Over the last two years, the foredune in Pāuanui had eroded around 10-15 metres due to storm events. Previous plantings were lost to erosion and just a narrow width of sand-binding dune plants (such as spinifex and pīngao) and a grass reserve were left behind.

The area was landscaped to create a wider sand strip in which to plant sand-binding native plants to accommodate future erosion events and enable self-repair.

Planting was not extended all the way down the new foredune to allow for coastal erosion during winter. It is anticipated that during

calmer conditions, the spinifex and pīngao will naturally grow down the foredune face and trap any windblown sand during summer.

Windbreak fences were put up to trap any windblown sand to help the new plants flourish. They also provide protection from foot traffic and keep sand from blowing onto the reserve. These will be removed and replaced with bollards after approximately one year.

Altogether, in winter/spring 2022, about 54,000 dune plants were planted in 27 sites of the Coromandel Peninsula, from Whangamatā to Whangapoua on the east coast and Kuranui Bay Reserve and Torehina, Waitete Bay on the west.

This work would not be possible without the hundreds of community volunteers giving their time to help on planting days.

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

Planting day at Kapakapa wetland



Rayonier Matariki Forests (RMF), Oputere School, Wharekawa Catchment Care Group and Waikato Regional Council staff got together to plant 600 native plants in and around Kapakapa Wetland at Oputere in August. We supplied 450 of the plants.

Record planting year

The 2021/22 financial year was a record year for catchment new works on the Coromandel, assisted by Waikato Regional Council, with more than three times the number of native plantings than usual.

In the Coromandel, our native plantings usually range in the 20,000 to 30,000 range per financial year, but 106,894 plants went into the ground in 2021/22.

This increase was in part due to funding from the Ministry for Primary Industries' One Billion Trees and Hill Country Erosion Fund which helped assist landowners to plant larger areas.

In total, 36 hectares of land was retired and 19.74 kilometres of fencing completed in the 2021/22.

Every year, we have catchment new works environment grant funding available for landowners who want to retire areas from stock and/or plant streams, wetland, bush and steep hill country. This gives eligible landowners a grant of 35 per cent of the cost of the job. Other grants may also be available depending on whether the council has secured additional funding for work programmes.

Clean Streams 2020

The final year of plantings as part of Waikato Regional Council's two-year Clean Streams 2020 programme has been completed.

Funded \$1.998 million by One Billion Trees (Te Uru Rākau, Ministry for Primary Industries), Clean Streams 2020 enabled landowners in priority catchments who permanently fence and retire approved stream riparian margins, have those margins planted in native plants at no cost to them.

For the 2022 planting season, 244,484 mixed native plants were planted across the Waikato region, including 10,313 in the

Coromandel area: 6313 into the Whiritoa catchment and 4000 at Colville, with the plants grown by local nurseries. Last year, nearly 60,000 plants went into the ground in Coromandel catchments at Papa Aroha, Whenuakite and Hikuai.

By the end of August 2022, a total of 333,574 mixed native plants had been planted on 88 hectares of retired land and along 66 kilometres of streambank across the Waikato region as part of Clean Streams 2020. Work continues maintaining the new plantings, such as hand releasing them from weeds.

Hill country erosion funding available

In 2019, the council secured \$3.7 million from the Ministry for Primary Industries' Hill Country Erosion Fund (HCEF) to support works across the Waikato region over three years.

This funding 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.

In winter this year, we worked with four Coromandel landowners to plant native plants on a total of about 12 hectares of hill country in native plants.

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. Phone 0800 800 401.



Te Uru Rākau
Forestry New Zealand

Summer student eager to start

Reef Townsend is this year's Arthur Hinds Scholarship summer student working in the Coromandel Peninsula.

The 20-year-old, who was born in Coromandel township and is studying ecology, biodiversity and marine biology at Victoria University in Wellington, says growing up in the Coromandel Peninsula hugely influenced her love for the great outdoors.

"I realised early on in life I wanted to incorporate my passion for the environment into my career. I'm incredibly excited to have got this role and I'm really looking forward to contributing to projects and giving back to my community and the whenua.

"I'm eager to grow in my career by implementing my passion, skills and knowledge into meaningful conservation research."

While living in Coromandel, Reef has volunteered for annual coast clean-up events, volunteered for pest control projects and helped with kauri tree planting.

Reef held a casual position as a biodiversity conservationist for Driving Creek Railway, helping to implement new projects,



assessing its trapping network and monitoring the abundance of geckos and native birds.

She has also worked as a zipline guide for Coromandel Zipline Tours and as a deckhand for Goldridge Marine Farms.

The Arthur Hinds Scholarship was started in 2018 and is available for students who are studying conservation or natural resource management related tertiary programmes. Students are employed fulltime for a fixed term of about three months over summer.

Part of what makes this job unique is that the role works with the Department of Conservation and the council.

The scholarship was set up in recognition of Arthur Hinds, a notable conservationist who led numerous conservation efforts across the Waikato and Coromandel.

For more information on the Arthur Hinds Scholarship go to waikatoregion.govt.nz/arthur-hinds-scholarship.



Whangapoua catchment condition survey

We have completed a survey of the Whangapoua Harbour catchments to help us identify areas where land management efforts could be focused.

A survey will be done every five years and they will also help us assess the success of projects and actions that have been carried

out as part of the *Whangapoua Harbour and Catchment Management Plan*.

The key issues for management in and around the Whangapoua Harbour catchments are fencing and exclusion of stock, river management and pest plant and animal control.

The main findings of the survey were:

- 83 per cent of waterways are permanently fenced from stock
- soil erosion in pastoral areas is minimal
- stream bank erosion is the major source of sediment during high rainfall events
- some farms show exemplary sustainable land management practices
- a trend in the change of land use from pastoral farming to horticultural and land subdivision is evident in some sub-catchments.

Thanks to all the landowners who gave us access to their land to carry out the survey and to all those who have taken steps to protecting soils and waterways in the catchments.

FUNDING



Kiwi population thrives on dedication

For Thames Coast Kiwi Care coordinator Sheena Beaton, the best part of her job isn't – surprisingly – the kiwi.

It's the 90 or so selfless volunteers who together contribute an average of 11 hours a day to the predator control project, which extends from Tapu to Te Mata and covers an area of 5000 hectares inland, to benefit kiwi.

"Everyone is just really dedicated," says Sheena, pictured, who is in her fifth year on

the job. "They just get out and do it. You can spend an hour in a vehicle and then some of the trap lines are four to five hours around. They give 4000 hours a year, which equates to about 11 hours a day."

Waikato Regional Council has recognised the group's success in increasing the Thames coast kiwi population from 28 in 2016 to over 250 and climbing with \$270,000 over four years from its Natural Heritage Fund.

The funding is to expand the group's mustelid control and to reinstate possum and rat control in the area.

Sheena says the land is about 50:50 public conservation and private land, and the intention is to set up lines of AT220 traps to target the possums and rats.

"Together, possums and rats prevent regeneration of our forests by eating vegetation and seeds, so controlling them will greatly improve the kiwi habitat and better support increases in our kiwi population."

Thames Coast Kiwi Care is part of the Operation Nest Egg programme, which removes kiwi eggs and chicks from their burrows and cares for them in captivity until they're big enough to fend for themselves in the wild.

Without this intervention and the predator control work by the group, the local kiwi population would almost certainly have disappeared.

Instead, as Sheena says, "the residents hear kiwi all the time, all the time".

'Ring of steel' to create safe haven for kiwi

A group of 27 landowners near Whangapoua is creating a ring of steel against pest animals with help from Waikato Regional Council.

Mana Manu Trust is reinforcing its network of 180 bait stations and traps with more than 200 new traps (AT220s, DOC 200s and DOC250s) and bait stations over two years, thanks to \$35,721.15 in funding from the council's non-contestable Priority Biodiversity Fund.

The trust was formed in 2006 to collectively manage and restore 316 hectares of privately-owned regenerating coastal forest and wetland.

The aim of the trust's Ring of Steel Project is to significantly reduce the incursion of animal pests across the boundaries of the conservation area.

The new arsenal will be positioned along the boundary of the conservation area to provide a buffer and reduce the opportunity for pest animal incursion.

Trust chair Joi Ellis says what is really exciting is the trust recorded its first kiwi call this year.

"Kiwi have been absent from the Whangapoua district for decades, since the 1990s, and it's thanks to all the work by community groups in the Coromandel that we now have this kiwi in our patch.

"We want to make it safe here for kiwi to come back and this funding will allow us to ramp up our pest control efforts. The protected area also supports matuku (Australasian bittern), fernbird and banded rail."

Predator Free Hauraki Coromandel Community Trust's field support team is helping the trust set up the new trap lines and maintain them.

Find out more about Mana Manu Trust at manamanu.org.nz.



Eric Hamilton, from Mana Manu, checking traps.

Landowners save trilogy of taonga

What do you do when you have endemic, endangered species on your property, and that property is one of the few remaining places where these species may be found?

You protect them of course!

Waikato Regional Council is helping landowners of Mahakirau Forest Estate, an internationally significant natural area of 600 hectares on the 309 Road between Coromandel and Whitianga, save a “trilogy of treasured taonga”.

The community was granted \$201,000 from the council’s Natural Heritage Fund over four years towards predator control, education and site specific biodiversity plans to protect populations of Archey’s frog, northern striped gecko and Helm’s butterfly.

Mahakirau Forest Estate Biodiversity Threats Manager Tim Hooson, pictured, who lives in the estate, says he and the other landowners feel a “very, very big obligation” to sustain its populations of the trio.

Archey’s frog is ranked number one amphibian on the Zoological Society of London’s global EDGE (Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered) list; the northern striped gecko is found only in the



Coromandel Peninsula and mostly recorded within Mahakirau Forest; and the Helm’s butterfly is said to be at risk of being the next global butterfly extinction.

Tim says he believes the reason these species exist within the estate is because the landowners have established a safe environment.

Since 2001, the community’s predator control programme has evolved, and \$150,000 of Natural Heritage funding from the regional council in 2017 helped achieve their aim to reduce rat levels to below 5 per cent.

Tim says it’s come to a point where more site-specific knowledge of the endangered species is required.

The funding will allow the community to work with others to advance the understanding of the ecology, habitat and predators of the three species for the development of site-specific biodiversity plans for each.

“We’ll be running advocacy and educational programmes for other conservation groups, as well, because we suspect there are populations out there that haven’t been found yet.”

The funding will also help cover the cost of maintaining the predator control programme in place, with a particular focus on rodents, cats, wasps and pigs, the main species believed to negatively impact Archey’s frog, northern striped gecko and Helm’s butterfly.

Other projects funded this year

It’s so heartening to see how much ecological enhancement is going on by individuals and groups across the region.

Six community environmental groups are benefiting from this year’s round of our Environmental Initiatives Fund (EIF). The EIF provides one-off grants to projects which directly enhance and/or benefit the environment or provide environmental education.

The council approved a total of \$54,298.97, including nearly \$30,000 to three groups in the Coromandel Peninsula.

- Habitat Tuatēawa, which undertakes animal pest control on 300 hectares

of public conservation land north of Kennedy Bay, was given \$9300 to help with the development of an outcomes monitoring plan based on analysis of historical trap catch and bird count data.

- Kūāotunu Dune Care Group, which was formed this year to deal with dune erosion along the foreshore of the Kūāotunu beach area, was given \$5858.97 towards plants and \$4140 towards the cost of a pest plant contractor.
- Te Moata Charitable Trust, which runs a retreat on 344 hectares of regenerating native bush near Tairua, was given \$10,000 for a contractor to control wilding pines on the property.

We also gave 44 pest animal and plant control projects a total of \$150,000 in funding in the latest round of our Small Scale Community Initiatives Fund (SSCIF). This fund was set up to help landowners and local community groups undertake ecological enhancement through pest animal and plant control by helping with the costs of materials required for management.

Nearly half of this year’s approved projects – 21 – were from the Coromandel Zone, with grants ranging from \$323.96 to \$4971, mainly to individual landowners.

waikatoregion.govt.nz/funding

BIOSECURITY

New national pest plan to protect kauri

The National Pest Management Plan (NPMP) for *Phytophthora agathidicida* (PA) to protect kauri came into force in August this year.

The NPMP has the following objectives:

- to reduce the spread of PA
- maintain areas free of PA
- reduce the impact of PA within infected sites
- locally eliminate PA within infected sites
- protect kauri with special value from PA
- facilitate controlled access to kauri forests where it does not compromise the future or protection of kauri.

The plan has 10 rules to help achieve these objectives. These include:

- restrictions on the movement of kauri plants (nursery movements)
- possible requirements for PA risk management plans for certain properties
- stock exclusion notices and restrictions on the release of animals.

More information on the plan, including the plan rules, can be found on kauriprotection.co.nz.

If you are worried about the health of kauri trees or would like to discuss how best to protect kauri on your property, contact the council.



New fencing completed by Waikato Regional Council and a landowner in Long Bay to protect kauri from stock.

Funding available

We have funding available for fencing to protect kauri trees from stock. The amount of funding is on a case by case basis and depends on the quality, quantity and location of the kauri you want to protect. Please contact our kauri protection biosecurity officer on 0800 800 401 to discuss this opportunity.

Wilding pine control at Whitianga

Waikato Regional Council secured \$500,000 from Jobs for Nature funding to control wilding pines in the 2022-23 financial year.

In the Coromandel Peninsula, we are working with the Mercury Bay Environmental Trust and the Backdrop Trust (BDT) to help carry out work on 61 hectares of land across the river from Whitianga. The land is owned by BDT and is home to kiwi and a number of kauri stands.

BDT raised \$50,000 and started clearing wilding pines from the block but needs ongoing support to complete the job. To prevent reinfestation of the BDT land, surrounding land holdings with wilding pines will also need to be addressed,

therefore we will be looking to carry out further control work on neighbouring public conservation land and potentially several nearby privately owned blocks.

We are working in Waitaia Reserve and will start control work in the Coromandel Forest Park off State Highway 25, Kuaotunu, in early 2023.

Coastal regenerating forests are very susceptible to wilding pines. Wilding pines spread prolifically from seed and grow fast to form a dense canopy that shades the forest floor, killing and preventing the growth of all other plant species and displacing the habitat of native animal species.



Help us eradicate this grass

Grasses can be hard to identify. Grass looks like grass, right? Well, it's not just any old grass if it's identified in the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032 (RPMP)* as an eradication species.

In January, the council were made aware of a small patch of nassella tussock grass (*Nassella trichotoma*), about 5 metres by 5 metres, in Te Kouma. The closest active sites known to the regional council are in Waitete Bay and Te Puru, a significant distance away.

Nassella tussock can be seriously invasive, completely dominating low-producing grassland. The leaves are unpalatable to and indigestible by stock. It forms pure stands in low-growing plant communities, especially in harsh sites, and prevents the seedlings of native species from establishing.

We do not want this pest plant in our region. Nassella tussock is an eradication pest in the RPMP. Currently, it is still establishing in the Waikato, so the most effective management is eradication to prevent its spread.

Plants usually flower between October and early summer when they have a purplish tinge, so now is a good time to identify them. Flowering stems can be up to 1 metre tall. The flower heads are open with a branched seed head 25-95 centimetres long, produced between November and January. Ripe seeds are purplish with a 3-centimetre-long bristle.

Nassella tussock grows up to 70 centimetres high and 80 centimetres wide and forms dense clumps. The light green or yellowish-green leaves are thin and tightly rolled, and do not break when pulled.

Waikato Regional Council is responsible for the control of this grass. Sites require ongoing maintenance to remove plants as seeds can survive over 10 years in the soil.

Please keep an eye out for this grass and let us know if you think you may have it on your property.



Marine pest surveys

A dive team has started surveying the Coromandel Peninsula's coastal marine areas to determine the presence and extent of marine pest species.

More than 600 vessels have already been surveyed in Pāuanui, Tairua, Whitianga and Whangamatā, with 90 per cent showing no more than a slime layer and barnacles on their hull (level of foul 2 or less).

Marine pests are mainly spread by heavily fouled vessel hulls, so the dive team is targeting pathways of boats and checking vessels, marine structures (marinas, wharves, jetties and moorings), popular anchoring spots and mussel and oyster farms. If infested vessels are found, owners may be requested to remove and antifoul them.

Previous surveys have shown the eastern side of the Coromandel to be free of marine pests, however, the west coast of the peninsula is not so good.

This biosecurity surveillance work typically targets marine pests Mediterranean fanworm



(*Sabella spallanzanii*), pictured, and clubbed tunicate (*Styela clava*), but divers this year will also be looking out for exotic Caulerpa.

The natural spread of Mediterranean fanworm is continuing up the coast from the Coromandel Harbour. At the time of the last delimiting survey, in 2018/19, fanworm was found as far north as Colville, up from Papa Aroha the previous two years.

If your vessel hasn't been cleaned in a while, now is a good time to think about booking it in for a haul-out ahead of the busy summer period to ensure you're clean below, good to go. If you're more of a do-it-yourself person, then take a look at this online one-hour webinar at marinepests.nz/events.html.

Caulerpa campaign

You may have noticed that Biosecurity New Zealand is running a summer campaign to inform boaties and visitors to Aotea Great Barrier Island and Ahuahu Great Mercury Island about two non-native invasive Caulerpa seaweeds that have been found in those locations in the past year.

These unwanted organisms can spread rapidly, forming dense beds and potentially smothering native species. They can be easily transported out of the affected areas on vessel anchors and aquatic equipment.

The campaign is to inform the public about the legal controls that are in place and the measures they must take to prevent the spread of Caulerpa.

Keeping your boat and equipment clean is the best thing you can do to avoid spreading marine pests and diseases.

It's really important to remove any seaweed you see on your anchor or chain, or any other gear, and put it back in the same water.

MARITIME SERVICES

Operation Neptune cranks up a gear

Waikato Regional Council's Operation Neptune will be back in greater force this summer, patrolling the Coromandel Peninsula to ensure boating safety.

The maritime safety team's annual campaign has been running for five years. Regional Harbourmaster Chris Bredenbeck, who leads the maritime safety team, says more staff will be recruited to patrol Waikato's waterways this summer in line with expectations that there will be an increase in holidaymakers.

The focus of the Operation Neptune is having an increased patrol presence on the water in key recreational boating areas, educating the boating public and ensuring compliance of the region's navigation safety bylaw to reduce the risk of harm on the water.

"The maritime safety team has the mandate for navigation safety in the region," says Chris. "This summer, we will add up to an additional 19 staff from across all areas of the council to work in the maritime safety team for Operation Neptune to make our waterways safe and enjoyable for the summer. Last year we had an additional 12."

The number of people taking part in recreational boating has been growing



year on year. Maritime New Zealand data estimates 160,000 people are involved in recreational boating in our region every year, with many travelling from outside the Waikato.

"Here in the Waikato, we now have some of the most congested waterways in New Zealand. The increased number of people out on the water causes us all sorts of challenges."

Last year, the team interacted with just over 1000 vessels carrying about 2700 people.

"We expect to exceed that this year," says Chris. "The Coromandel Peninsula is a

hugely popular spot for boating and remains a focus for the team."

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

"This is why we go to great lengths to not only educate the public on boating safety, but also to hold to account those people who choose to engage in unsafe behaviour.

"We want everyone to enjoy our waterways and our goal is for to get them all home safely."

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