



Secretary: Ian Uttley
 13 Maple Lane
 Waikanae, Kapiti Coast
 Telephone: 04 293 1733
 Email: tink.ian@clear.net.nz

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ANNUAL MEETING 13 JUNE 2001

THE BEGINNING

Welcome to this second Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Waikanae River ("the Friends"). On 30 August 2000, the first formal AGM was held under the Chairmanship of Mr Don Peat, Chair of the Interim Committee, and the key outcomes were:

- the **Terms of Reference** which had been prepared by the Interim Committee were adopted,
- the **Memorandum of Understanding** between the Friends and the Flood Protection Group of the Wellington Regional Council (WRC) was introduced,
- it was agreed that the incoming committee would investigate whether the Friends should become an **incorporated society**,
- 11 community representatives were elected to the incoming committee which, together with the 3 appointed members from the WRC, the Kapiti Coast District Council (KCDC) and Te Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai (the Iwi), would be known as **the Working Group**, and
- the Friends were advised by the WRC that **funding** was available to them as a nominated **Care Group**. I'll speak more about that later.

On 4 October 2000 the Working Group met to **elect a Chairperson** and **set a programme** for the coming year's activities. I was appointed Chairman at that meeting, Ian Uttley was appointed Secretary, and there was a discussion about the proposed work programme. By the end of November draft **Strategic and Business plans** had been formulated and I'll also come back to these later. The Group has met 6 times and had several inspections and working bees. We participated in the opening of the River Walkway on 11 November.

INCORPORATION

After taking advice from its honorary solicitor and the Companies Office, the Working Group agreed to apply for incorporation as an incorporated society. The key benefits were seen to be:

- the society becomes a **separate legal** entity from its members,
- members have **no personal liability** for the debts, contracts or other obligations of their society,
- the rules must meet minimum requirements, leading to some **certainty in the way the society is run**,
- members can have **no individual claim** on the property of the society.

Although application for incorporation was made in March, at the time of writing this report we are still awaiting advice from the Companies Office.

PLANS

Early in its term the Working Group prepared a Strategic Plan for the period 2000-2003, and a more detailed business plan for the balance of the year to June 2001. We owe Susan Forbes from the Iwi a big vote of thanks for the early drafts of these plans, which were built around the Friends' vision "**that the Waikanae River and its environment are enhanced and maintained for all to enjoy**", and contained Objectives in **five core project areas** as follows:

- revegetation/rehabilitation,
- membership/promotion,
- ecology/water quality/catchment management.
- maintenance,
- Memorandum of Understanding requirements,

Whilst the Business Plan has been updated during 2001 to reflect actual work progress, the Strategic Plan and the Objectives remain firm bases for the Friends' work in the 2001/2002 year. An early matter for the new Working Group to address will be the **preparation of a Business Plan for July 2001 to June 2002**.

CARE GROUP FUNDING

At the AGM, the Friends had been advised that funds would be available to them from the Community Environmental Care Programme. This programme, operated by the WRC, aims **to enable community groups to look after and learn about the environment**. Through the programme the WRC supports projects that contribute to the sustainable management or enhancement of:

- rivers and streams,
- wetlands and lakes,
- estuaries,
- dunes, and
- the coast.

Because the Friends' vision and objectives were seen clearly to be aligned with these criteria, funding was made available as follows:

- first year (to June 2001) \$5,000
- second year (to June 2002) \$10,000
- third year (to June 2003) \$2,000
- fourth year (to June 2004) \$2,000

KCDC FUNDING

We have been most grateful to the KCDC for the allocation of \$2,000 for the purchase of trees, and for the donation of another 200 trees for planting this season.

LOGO / LETTERHEAD / WATERMARK

An early task taken on and successfully completed by the Working Group was to design a logo and incorporate it into a letterhead. Additionally, a kowhaiwhai designed by Mei Higgott from the Iwi, and portrayed on the Walkway sign at Edgewater Park, was introduced as a 'watermark' for the Friends' paper.

The logo displays water, flora and fauna, the key ecological aspects of the river and its environment, and the kowhaiwhai aims to evoke the full essence of the river.

PUBLICITY (NEWSLETTERS, MEDIA REPORTS, WEBSITE)

The Working Group agreed on the importance of the Friends publicising their activities widely in order to attract new members and to gain general support, and possibly future sponsorship, from the local community. So far, this publicity has taken the form of two newsletters under our new logo, articles and photographs in the local newspapers (for which we must particularly thank Guru Gurunathan, reporter with the local Kapiti Observer), interviews on Beach FM radio, and the opening of a new Friends website on the internet at the address: www.friendswaikanaeriver.itgo.com

Additionally, the Friends decided to join the nation-wide network known as NZERN, the NZ Ecological Restoration Network, which evolved from Christchurch's Addington Bush Society, and is a network designed to make it simpler for residents, schools, farmers and other groups to set up their own areas of native bush. NZERN has its own website at the address: www.bush.org.nz

SUBMISSIONS

The Terms of Reference defines one of the Friends' roles as acting as a channel of communication between the community and the statutory bodies responsible for managing the river. The Working Group has taken this role seriously and has made submissions expressing concerns and/or asking questions about the following proposals which it deemed may have a detrimental effect on the Waikanae River:

- KCDC's Draft Resource Consent Application to Take Water from the Otaki River, and
- WRC's Draft Resource Consent Application to Extract Gravel from the Waikanae River.

CLEARING AND PLANTING

During the year there has been a great deal of physical activity along the river bank. In very broad terms this can be described as clearing the unwanted trees and weeds, including many noxious weeds, and planting new native trees.

Our thanks go to Garry Baker, Graham Winterburn and Kevin Whitburn from the WRC for their efforts, including the removal of many of the larger willow trees and for track maintenance, and to Mike Cardiff from KCDC, for willow, silver poplar and pine removal, and fencing. It is also very encouraging to be able to welcome Alastair Polglase who will report to Mike Cardiff as KCDC's new "Dedicated Walkways Officer".

I would also like to pay a tribute to John McLachlan for his support in the work I have been undertaking on the south bank between the Otaihanga Domain and the point opposite Greenaway Road. I am embarrassed that this has become known as "Topliff's Reach", but I will note that some 2,500 new trees have been planted in this reach of the river over the last few years. This includes 200 trees which were planted by 90 children from local Kapiti schools earlier this month on Arbor Day.

And I must also mention a "Trees for Survival" programme which, by coordinating the efforts of Rotary and Kapiti College, will shortly begin planting new trees just upstream of the Arbor Day plantings, and will also utilise a newly acquired shade house to raise plants for next year's plantings.

In a recent survey of native plants in this reach, some 44 species were recorded including Kahikatea, Pukeatua, Tawa, Matai, Rimu, Miro and black Mamaku fem. There is a limited amount of natural regeneration which includes Kawakawa, Mahoe, Coprosma Karamu and cabbage trees with very limited numbers of Pigeonwood and Kohekohe, and a single Tawa and Ngaio. Regenerated Kahikatea were also recorded but did not survive the very dry summer. This natural process should accelerate with increasing natural cover and weed reduction.

And talking again about new plantings, an exciting development will shortly see some 5,500 trees planted in the bush remnant opposite the Water Treatment Plant in the upper reaches of the river. This work has received funding from the KCDC and the trees have been donated by "Nga Kaimahi o Nga Hau e Wha", a forestry training establishment in Levin.

On the northern bank the activity has so far been limited to a couple of Working Bees which have started to clear the weeds from existing plantings in the Pukekawa Reserve. With increasing support from local residents, however, it is hoped that the momentum will grow, and that further clearing work and new plantings can start to make a difference all the way along the northern bank.

VEHICLES IN THE RIVER

On a less positive note, I feel it necessary to report on the 4-wheel drive vehicles which continue to use the river for recreation. The risk of damage to the ecology of the river is significant. It should not be used for this purpose, and we would rather seek the cooperation of the drivers concerned than have to resort to expensive barriers to prevent access.

THANK YOU

In conclusion I would like to say that being Chairman of the Friends has been a real challenge for me. I could not say that I have really enjoyed all aspects of the job, but I have enjoyed the association with other members of the Friends and with the Council staff who have all worked so hard in pursuit of our Vision. As well as the people I have already mentioned, could I also take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Working Group for their support and time, Graeme Campbell, Derek Wilshere and Trecia Smith from the WRC for their guidance and encouragement, and also Te Ati Awa for their enthusiasm and for the use of the Marae for our meetings.

I look forward to working with you all again in the coming year.

John Topliff