



Peninsula Enviro News

Awhitu Peninsula Landcare Inc

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Upfront Issue

Tree vandalism. It's a disease. Once you could freely take a chainsaw to just about any living thing out here and few would object. That was before we truly understood the value of the many giants holding our ancient sand dune (the Peninsula) together. As a result, wholesale slaughter is no longer quite so easy. Or, is it? Because the carnage continues. There appears to be a rash of people who feel justified in turning a view through trees (often not their own) into a giant picture window. Usually with scant regard to the many unquantifiable benefits of giving nature a free hand. I site a recent case where three old (80 years) Kanuka (*Leptospermum ericoides*) of between, 10 and 15 metres in height each, were shamelessly slain to improve somebody's once-a-fortnight outlook. "They're just Manuka so they'll grow easily" (Sure, but in whose lifetime?) was the lame excuse. One of those Kanuka provided a valuable perch for Blue Heron; another was a regular Tui debating chamber; the third, an almost annual Kereru nest site. All gone in minutes. Despite my having spent nearly a year convincing the perpetrator of this crime of these avian values. Vanity ruled. Sue and I have since been branded "Tree Nazis".

The mere fact these serene giants also helped stitch the landscape together, shielded the under story from pestilent weeds and provided Riroriro and Piwhakawhaka with tucker, was like water off the proverbial.

My point is. I have to admit to feelings of powerlessness in the face of this onslaught. And would welcome any suggestions as to how we as a community might combat it given the lack of legal means.

Paul Dixon

Our Convenor Reports

Jack's Bash

Jack Harper's recent winning of the ARC Environmental Award gave us at Awhitu Landcare a GREAT excuse to party as only a community can. Many thanks to Ann Lee for prompting the happy dinner that eventuated. Awhitu Golf club provided the cozy ambience for so many friends to gather – and Meike Pye and her team effortlessly fed 65 in record time.

Jennifer Morley's arrangement of native flowers and foliage in honour of Jack's protection and promotion of indigenous plants was particularly admired. Kowahi flowers she included came from a Trees for Survival specimen, grown at Papatoetoe High School and planted on the Cowling farm under supervision of Anne Lee. Dianne Glenn MC'd formalities and provided an insight into the awards, explaining the process by which Jack was chosen over all other entries. Of course all were the result of thoughtful planning and much hard work, though none could match Jack's 45 years of environmental activism.

Dianne presented Jack with a special Awhitu Landcare Award prepared long before his ARC award was even mooted. The reason for the delay being a lack of appropriate occasion. It was worth the wait. And the community showed its gratitude with endorsements and anecdotes that rounded off a most enjoyable community gathering.



Tyres Damned!

New ARC Rural Team Fiona Betteridge informs Awhitu Landcare that new research proves those handy old tyres are even worse than we thought. Not only do they give off dioxins and heavy metals when burned. Those enviro-nasties slowly leach from buried tyres, which would indicate no easy method of disposal. Her best advice seems to be: don't let them past gate. Store silage tyres under cover at end of season for re-use, rather than burning, at the end of the season. And let's keep planting marram grass rather than tyres to stem sand movement.

Anna McNaughton

David Millett's Letter from **America**

The United States Senate is currently debating – and will likely pass – the U.S. Farm Bill. Among other things, this bill sets the amount of farm subsidies that will be paid to farmers over the next few years. The budget stands at approximately \$25 Billion over five years. Most of this money is channelled into five major food groups: corn, soybeans, rice, wheat and cotton. This helps to keep the cost of these products low for purchasers. At the same time, many farm workers in the U.S. are illegal immigrants and paid extremely low wages. This means that processed food is relatively cheap here because those subsidised items (except cotton) are common to many products. Big Agribusiness farmers with thousands of acres of a particular crop receive huge subsidies whereas small farmers producing fruits and vegetables receive almost nothing. Its ironic that a highly processed Twinkie bar which has come from the other side of the country costs less than a carrot from the local farmer's market.



The Twinkie doesn't reflect the true cost of producing and shipping it, and its constituent parts are of increasingly dubious quality. It could be made of GMO's, have artificial products added, and be subject to contamination of various forms. At the same time the tiny Twinkie has an enormous carbon footprint because of the huge amount of fossil fuels consumed in its production, distribution, and packaging. None of these factors are included in the price of the Twinkie. It may taste good, but its bad for you (and everyone else) in ways you never even thought of.

People here are beginning to realise that their cheap food has many hidden costs and they're trying to do something about it. Many towns and cities through-out the U.S. have successful farmers' markets where farmers can sell their own products at prices that reflect the effort expended to produce them. Community supported agriculture groups are becoming popular, too, where people buy shares in a farm and share in the crops produced. People calling themselves "locavores" dedicate themselves to only eating food produced within a 100 or 200-mile radius. This way they know they are eating seasonal products produced by people they know and trust who don't use large amounts of fossil fuels to transport it across the globe. This small, but growing group may be an important movement if we are to find a sustainable future for our planet.

Helpful Hint Creates Instant Yard-space.

Got a vehicle that is simply "past it"? Dial 0800 DISPOSAL (34776725) and watch it being driven away. Free. Satisfied users already report genuine same or next day service.

Invitation to Talk Environment

The Ministry of the Environment is hosting a 5th Talk Environment Roadshow – an opportunity for you to ‘engage’ (their description) Ministry officials and share your views on the Ministry’s current and emerging work programmes.

Two of the planned 19 national meetings will be held locally. One in Hamilton on Friday 26 October. Another in Auckland on Thursday 1 November. Both will run from 7.30am to 9.45am and light refreshments will be served.

Topics addressed will include: Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change; Encouraging Household Sustainability; Sustainable Business; and National Guidance under the RMA. Feedback from last year’s Roadshow will be presented too.

All interested are encouraged to register free on 0800 TALKENV (0800 825 536) or at www.mfe.govt.nz/talkenvironment/

The website also features an extensive report on the outcomes from the 2006 meeting.

ECO HERO

Orua Bay’s Mal White does not enjoy being called “eco anything”. He sees no reason for singling him out from the many in the area who willingly work for community good. Yet few would deny his level of personal commit to environmental causes deserves recognition. Mal is often first on the scene when a pile of other’s trash appears roadside. And every few weeks utilizes his own vehicle to patrol a 5-kilometre stretch of some of our more ‘challenging’ roads for dumped stuff and vandalism. He wryly recounts how, when trying to straighten a vandalized road-sign recently, a passerby admonished him. (Outted! – Awhitu’s veteran vandal. He turns 70 next year.) But Mal is making a major contribution in another very important way – analysis. Having a PHD in Chemistry from the University of Tasmania makes Mal question the rationale people (authority especially) use to justify action. Mal calls it “checking the science”. In a recent letter published in the Herald, Mal offered a fresh perspective on Maul Dolphin mortality.

And, of late, he’s been pawing over the plethora of material available on climate change in an effort to establish some meaningful answers. Mal’s conclusion on that is - no matter what we do to lower carbon emissions, much can be undone by natural calamities like forest fire or volcanic eruption. “Our best hope, in Mal’s knowledgeable view, is to live responsibly”. And provides three easy examples. “Wrap up rather than turn up the thermostat. Burn only very dry firewood – wet wood generates more air junk. Walk if it’s just as practicable to drive; we can all benefit from the extra exercise anyway”, advises Mal, currently preparing for his next 70ks competitive bike ride.



Mal White in familiar pose.



Centre of Success



Matakawau's flash new Recycling centre – achieved largely as a result of Awhitu Landcare initiative and drive - is proving popular. Our Kate Fegan, who deals with day-to-day issues concerning the centre, reports few problems. It's success was due in no small part to Gary Marson who is currently taking a well-earned rest from involvement. Of course he was not alone in this, but always seemed to be the one person permanently up to his armpits in alligators over it. BIG THANKS.

As for Euan Craig's colourful and comprehensive mural - planned to adorn the Centre walls with assistance from Awhitu Central School pupils - watch that space.

Kaka Take Flight

STOP PRESS!
Anna McNaughton reports hearing Kaka roosting in Ponsford Road as we went to print.

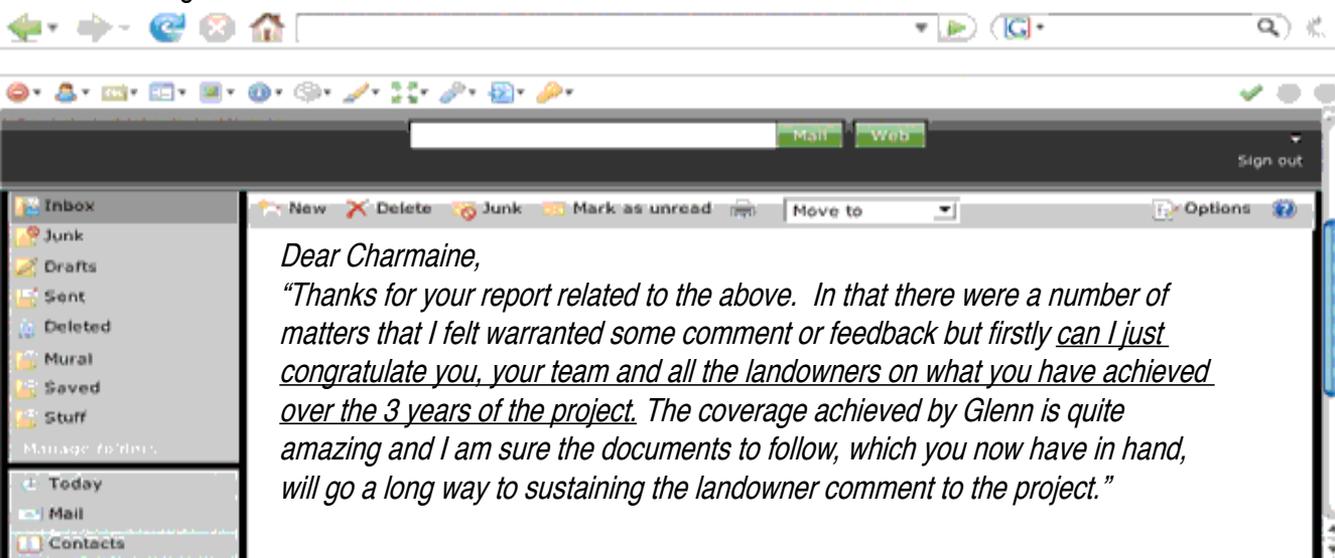
Disappointment around Kohekohe at the decision, some weeks ago, by the fledging Kaka flock (possibly all bachelor males according to Trish Aspin) to move on after over-wintering in the neighborhood. Hopes of nests have gone too. Other readers may be able to shed light on the birds' current whereabouts.

FDC Discussion Meeting Planned

If you have issues you would like to discuss with the FDC Planning Team in an open forum, an opportunity is being planned for a date late in November. Probably between 3pm and 7pm, BBQ included. This joint Awhitu Landcare/ FDC initiative will include a short presentation on the Council's current planning document. Stay alert for details.

Praise from DOC

The following extract is from a recent email to Charmaine Pountney from Alan White, Doc's Fund Manager for the TFBIS Programme:



This issue's topic is asparagus. Not the delicious vegetable, but the three forms growing wild in New Zealand – *Asparagus asparagoides* (Simlax), *densiflorus* (Bushy) and the bush-invading *Scandens* or Climbing Asparagus.

Scandens is quite probably our native forest's worst enemy after the possum. It's a climbing perennial with tuberous roots. It forms dense patches on the ground and can climb to 4 metres, smothering everything. It's quite capable of killing its host by smothering or ring barking! It flowers from September to December, producing orange berries (about 8mm in diameter) from October to February. Birds feeding on the berries carry them to infect other parts of the forest.

This menace is widespread on the Peninsula, some chunks of our precious bush are already seriously compromised by its' presence. Killing it is difficult because the tuberous roots sprout easily. While the plant is susceptible to herbicide Glyphosate (Roundup, etc is more than adequate) the problem is avoiding damage to surrounding plants.

Here, with advice from the ARC's Chris Katterns, is a recommended approach: Cut the plant down to about 600mm (2ft) and immediately spray, until the plant is wet but not dripping, with a mixture of Glyphosate, 10ml, plus 1 to 2ml of Pulse or other penetrant (washing-up liquid if using a domestic sprayer) to 1 litre of water. Less is best. It is vital to get the herbicide to translocate (move) down to the tubers. A strong herbicide mixture will only result in burned-off greenery but untouched roots that will reshoot. The forgoing is no magic bullet. Most likely you'll need to re-spray. However, it gets easier every time. Eventually you'll knock-off those roots.

Asparagoides Simlax is currently under attack by a rust that has arrived naturally from Australia. If you have any *Simlax* in your garden, be very happy if it looks sick. Landcare Research is trying to find a similar biocontrol for climbing asparagus. But these things take time – something much of our bush has little of.

When I worked in the public sector in my youth, we had an elderly and very experienced gardener who was hoeing some decorative rose beds, including hoeing dandelion – a fact loudly remarked upon by a passing matron:

"You shouldn't hoe them my man, they need to be dug up!"

The elderly gardener replied: (Sotto voce and to no-one in particular) "Cut the devil's head off enough times and the b***** will die."

That piece of advice works if you are in your garden/bush regularly and persevere in cutting plants off at ground level.

Glenn Knight



Climbing Asparagus – current scourge of Peninsula bush.

Next Generation of Pest Controllers in Training

Eleven years old Tyler Palmer of Orua Bay learning the ropes of possum control. When asked his impressions after tackling some of the Peninsula's least-accessible bait station sites, he replied: "It's cool!". Pest Control Manager 'Uncle' Glenn is confident others are keen to follow Tyler's example.



Tyler tops-up a bait station.

Wetland Walk Full of Surprise

The invitation by Landcare stalwarts Viv Wise and Nicky Reynolds to view the newest project on their Heads road property on 23rd September produced several surprises for the 35 guests assembled. Naturally the usual bunch of suspects arrived – Jack, Anna, Charmaine, Tanya, Viv R. and more, plus one very privileged dog (Toru) for an interesting guided tour. While all agreed at the size and integrity of the work the pair have achieved, most were at a loss to understand "how?" since both selflessly devote so much time and energy to numerous local projects. Some even suggested a medal might be on the way. Tea and tuck-ins concluded the proceedings just as the rain decided to step up a gear.



All smiles for a job well done.

Labour Weekend Walk – Meikle's.

Visit land that may soon be locked-up in private blocks. Bus leaves Matakawau at 2pm Sunday 21st Oct. Gold donation. BBQ afterwards. All welcome.

2351650 for details or www.awhиту.org.nz



Seasonal Ups and Downs

Seed comes Down
To be gathered Up
And a seed bed laid Down
To be planted Up
After hoeing Up
For plants to spring Up
To be, eventually, cut Down
And cut Up
To burn Up
Until burned Down

Anon.

If money does not grow on trees, why do banks have branches?

In Passing

Ron Monten, husband of supreme ecoHero Geraldine Oliver, died aged 79 at their new Napier ecohouse, September '07

be there for your beach

Those exasperated with the lack of care shown to our beaches – Waimatuku/Hamilton's Gap in particular - are urged to attend a Beach Care Management meeting at Pollok Hall, 7pm, Monday 15 October. FDC's Greg Lowe will speak on the 'why and hows' of starting beach care groups. The meeting should also provide an indication into the popularity of such a move with harbour beach dwellers.

Sign-up for November Festival

Awhitu Landcare needs a roster of members to be on duty at the Awhitu Food, Wine & Arts Festival, 10am to 5pm, Saturday 3 November. Call Kate 2351650 to put your name forward.