



May 2015

Making a difference at Matai Huka and on the escarpment

Matai Huka

Over the last decade, Nga Uruora led the revegetation of the southern section of the Matai Huka reserve. This is the area of escarpment above Queen Elizabeth Park. Each winter children from Te Ra School joined Nga Uruora volunteers to plant native trees. These before and after photos taken by Peter Kentish show the outcome of these plantings. It's a further step in creating a bird friendly band of forest from Porirua to Waikanae.



The escarpment

In recent years Nga Uruora has been concentrating on creating a band of forest from the Paekakariki end of escarpment through to what we call the 'quarry' (opposite Fishermans Table restaurant). There are a number of aims for this planting.

- Expanding the area of bird friendly forest.
- Creating a defence against the invasion of weeds and
- To help with weed control on this section of the Te Araroa trail

Again before and after photos taken by Peter Kentish shows the difference we have been making.



This year we are completing planting along the stream on the first part of the Te Araroa trail. The work is being carried out by our Tuesday working bee team with assistance from KCDC staff.

In these plantings we have been primarily using pioneer species such as Ngaio, Mahoe and Taupata. However, in recent years we have been adding some secondary species including Milk Trees (the small leaved *Streblus heterophyllus*), Totara, Tawa and Northern Rata (supplied by Project Crimson).

Perkins farm

Nga Uruora has been granted a 'right to occupy' by the New Zealand Transport Agency for some areas of Perkins farm. This is the farm bought by NZTA in order to construct the Transmission Gully motorway. We are very grateful to NZTA for facilitating this agreement.

The right to occupy allows Nga Uruora to undertake some weed and pest control on the land under agreed conditions. The agreement does not allow for general public access to the farm. Only authorised Nga Uruora volunteers are allowed access to the farm.

The areas Nga Uruora will be involved in are well away from the construction site, consisting of the escarpment above the Paekakariki railway station as well as Waikakariki valley and Hairpin gully. Within these areas are some existing kohekohe forest, with much of the rest of the farm starting the slow process of reverting to native forest.

Given the steepness of terrain and specialised skills required a considered plan will be needed for weed and pest control. Nga Uruora will need to contract for much of this and we will be seeking funding support for this project. As a first step, Nga Uruora has been funding control of climbing asparagus on land between State Highway 1 and the Paekakariki Hill Road. Climbing asparagus is a very invasive weed and we are wanting to stop it spreading onto our own area of escarpment as well as preventing it spreading onto Perkins farm.

Some seats for weary walkers and workers

While our key activities are planting, weed and pest control, Nga Uruora volunteers have also been involved in two building projects in the Te Araroa track.

In autumn Nga Uruora volunteers Peter Kentish, Paul Callister, and Ian Cairns joined forces with Te Araroa Wellington Trust committee members John Craig, Andrew Simm and Bill Wakelin to construct seats at the lookout on the Te Araroa track. In May Nga Uruora volunteers Peter Kentish, Ian Cairns,

Paul Callister, Steve Mann, Ken Fraser and Margaret Laing built a picnic table in the area we call the 'depot'. We were greatly assisted in this work by KCDC workers Lawrence Silas and Dan Green. Shortly after completing the picnic table a pair of Kereru were spotted sitting in the trees above it.



Te Araroa Trail

Funding has now been made available to complete the trail through to Pukerua Bay. It is hoped the trail will be open in early 2016. This will not only allow walkers to explore new areas of our escarpment but will also allow pest and weed control to begin from the Pukerua Bay end of the escarpment.

Coordination of local pest control teams

Early this year, we held a meeting of the pest control teams from Raumati to Pukerua Bay. This included pest control teams from Whareroa farm, Queen Elizabeth Park, Nga Uruora and Friends of Mana Island who undertake pest control at Pukerua. Also attending were the 'pest buster' team from Paekakariki village. This group is aiming to make Paekakariki pest free, starting with village wide rat control.

One of the topics of discussion was all groups moving to use the trap recording system trap.org.nz. This on-line tool was developed by local Paekakariki business Groundtruth and will enable all groups to pool data and better plan pest control across our region.

One initiative arising from this meeting was the setting up of the Facebook page 'Kapiti Island Mainland' (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/808443299275757/>). Anyone who is interested in pest control in our region is welcome to join this group.

Other co-operation with local groups

At the grass roots level there is a high level of co-operation between local conservation groups. Members of Nga Uruora regularly volunteer at the Wednesday morning potting sessions at Queen Elizabeth Park nursery, Queen Elizabeth Park volunteers come to our Tuesday working bee and Nga Uruora have regularly donated plants to Whareroa Farm.

We can only continue our work both locally and regionally if we attract volunteers and each group is trying to work out how best to attract volunteers including arranging its work program to best work in with people who can lend a hand.

Help needed!

Nga Uruora and Te Araroa are holding a joint working bee to continue planting along the higher parts of Te Araroa trail.

This will be held on Monday 22nd of June.

We aim to plant 400 trees on the day so helpers are needed. We will be assisted in this effort by students from the Outdoor Adventure department at Whitireia Polytechnic. Please contact Paul Callister paul.callister@actrix.co.nz for further details.

Every Tuesday morning we hold a working bee. At the moment we are focussing on planting and weed control. New volunteers are always welcome. Contact Peter Kentish for details pk2003_595@hotmail.com

The Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park and Greater Wellington Regional Council have decided not to have regular planting working bees this winter in QE Park but instead aim to put in 5,000 trees in just one day. All local restoration groups are invited to attend this event.

This is set down for Sunday July 12 from 10am to 2pm, everyone welcome!