

Banks Peninsula Conservation Forum minutes, 1 July 2013
DOC Maahanui office, Christchurch

Meeting started 9am

Present: David Mules, WWF Northland, Wayne Beggs DOC, Geoff Walls, ecologist, Tina Troup ecologist, Jack van Hal DOC, Elise Arnst, BPCT, Iaeen Cranwell Wairewa Runanga, Anita Spencer, DOC, Alice Shanks QEII Trust, Euan Kennedy DOC, Les McNamara ex Landcare Research, Chris Jones, Landcare Research, Marie Haley, BPCT, Robyn Russ, ECan, Mike White/Paul Tebbutt/John Goodrich/Summit Road Society, Rick Menzies BPCT, Richard Simpson BPCT, Kay Holder CCC, Robin Smith DOC, Jon Sullivan Lincoln Uni, Kate Whyte BPCT, Laura Molles Lincoln Uni, Andrew Crossland CCC, Paul Devlin CCC, Anna Veltman/ Rob McCaw/ Tamsin Page, ECan.

Presentation by: David Mules, programme manager 'Reconnecting Northland'.

"A large landscape scale ecological restoration programme."

For the wellbeing of ecology and culture of Northland.

The Tindall Foundation, ASB Community Trust, HSBC Global Water Fund, \$2.3 million over 5 yrs. Reconnecting fragmented habitats and isolated species, large scale ecological, empower people and strengthen communities. It is not an agency or organisation. But it is a concept for a shared vision and ultimately a reality. It is bold and transformational. Northland mosaic, pastoral farming. Recognise what is already there and happening. Living landscape, holistic, potential partners are huge, facilitators, working with the willing. WWF and Landcare will exit once successful.

Starting with one pilot project 'Kiwi Coast'. Covenants for no cats and dogs on land. Dogs huge threat to kiwi. Potential corridors to link islands of kiwi populations, creation of buffer zones of areas of high value, future-proofing for climate change. Initially eastern northland, connecting predator control areas, spread interest and find synergies. 21 community-led projects, 40,000 ha area, encourage and support action. Kiwi are used as a proxy, aim to increase safety for a spread of species. Only a week old. Predator control is based around kiwi so control is around mustelids and cats, and dog control. The \$3 million is around the whole project, funding projects, paying staff of facilitation and linking is the key role. Contact details are:

David Mules dmules@wwf.org.nz Hokianga, Ngaire Tyson ngaire.tyson@landcare.org.nz Whangarei.

Presentation by: Rik Wilson, Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group. Pest management in action, lessons learnt so far. Contact opbt@xtra.co.nz

Need to connect community groups around NZ. Started 2008, trust from 2010. Community driven project. Slide 1: not so much about possums and pests but people and partnerships.

First goal was to tackle possums. 66 bird species, 44 endemic. Habitat and species loss ongoing. Potential to make peninsula pest free. Driven by trust, good support from funders but less from councils. 18 project partners and 12 funders. 10,500 ha, split into five sectors. Extensive work in central area can create buffer for two larger areas. Approx 1500ha of bush left, largest 56ha, 32 covenants.

To date: reduction of possums in sectors 1-4. Bird, veg and rodent monitoring. 24x 1km bird transects with keen volunteers, done minimum of 6 monthly. Volunteers trained outdoors plus CD of bird calls. 14 veg plot sites. 10 rodent monitoring lines, checking for mesopredator release. Community trapping. Mostly feratox baiting using contractors. Lizard monitoring not part of program but professional volunteer doing some work.

2: Expect the unexpected. Dense possums in sand dunes

3: Acknowledge funders. Was funded through DoC biofunds. Poison signs also acknowledge who is paying for the work.

4: Best practice. Little things can make a difference.

5: do what you tell people you are going to. Keep communication going.

Now have 80 volunteers. Learning skills from contractors.

6: Collect as much info as possible. Everything is GPS'ed. Builds a good picture. Can relate data to the terrain.

8: Report accurately. Important for funders.

9: Plan. Strategic plan plus plans for each area of work. Helps to keep the program focused and achieve the outcomes desired. Two main goals –possum reduction and acceptable methods of control. Traps, poison, shooting and monitoring with wax tags. Now at the clean-up stage which is more difficult. Many landowners now on board. Urban areas the most difficult to deal with. Some geographical barriers e.g. cliffs. Push professionalism. Need competent contractors.

Success requires funding, landowner goodwill, community support, expertise, determination.

11: Teamwork

Q: How do we deal with interface of housing and rural land?

Started with community meetings. Had Timms traps available for people to take. Need to hear back about what people are catching. Started getting neighbours interested. Now have 400 traps out in suburbs. Have had no pet deaths. traps installed every 10-12 houses in urban buffer need to minimise reinvasion. Urban buffer is 800ha/ 3,4km with traplines and bait stations. Short term staff members, eventually community members take over. Now have trained volunteers to do trapping and poisoning. Volunteers like to catch things, when possum numbers get low less likely to catch possums and volunteers may lose enthusiasm.

Trust Board is a broad mix of backgrounds, farmers, Ngai Tahu, wildlife/environmental enthusiasts. Update landowners via email and newsletters. Phone bigger landowners. Monitoring rates of reinvasion through checking traplines. A lot of work done on the buffer between sectors. May work towards ferret control in the future but no plans for stoats and rats at this stage.

Presentation: Rick Menzies, BPCT Chairman Banks Island Project/ Pest Free Banks Peninsula

Draft outline for discussion. Promoting the idea of weed and animal pest free Banks Peninsula.

Designed to encourage and assist existing projects and create additional projects to fill the gaps.

Long term project. Sectors with intensive eradication along borders. Set species priorities, build on work done by Tamsin Page. Have core areas to focus control on, halo effect into surrounding areas. Need to map where all of the existing activities are going on. Need someone to oversee the process and a strategic plan. Would be good to boost the Community Initiated Possum Programme (CIP), and re-evaluate the program probably need more intensive trapping.

Paul: do a review of the Wildside area to see what effort has gone in and what has been achieved. This could inform what work could be done on the wider Peninsula.

Rob: little funding for weeds. Community can encourage Ecan to spend more on weed control.

Rick Menzies will be approaching all groups for comments and ideas.

Round table update from participants:

Alice Shanks: monitoring QEII covenants. Found veldt grass under light Kanuka, keep an eye out for it in shady areas and coastal cliffs.

Euan Kennedy: YEP trust having a conference in October with the aim of working together as DOC requires community groups to do more work. DoC has published report on self-resetting traps

looking at field trials. The concept is sound but the traps need some improvements. DoC will work with 'Good Nature' to help improve the traps.

Les McNamara: Evaluating BPCT species conservation projects and the tools used to evaluate projects. Linking costs and outcomes eg cost per fantail.

Chris Jones: developing outcomes for the Wildside by putting objectives into measurable form. Measuring the difference made rather than the number of individuals killed. Useful for reporting and funding applications.

Marie Haley: Charter for Wildside to delegate responsibilities, still under development. Need a cohesive monitoring effort.

Robyn Russ: site based work, focussed areas including weed control. Trying to link fragments with corridors.

Andrew Crossland: traplines along Kaitorete, Wairewa, Wildside and Port hills. Baseline monitoring for coastal birds. 30 transect sites for bush birds. Long term data for many sites. Can provide historic data for projects.

Mike Bowie: Quail Island has eradicated most pests except for mice which are building up in large numbers. Have tried intensive trapping with 10m gaps but still a lot of mice. Popping corn and peanut butter oil is a good lure which insects are not interested in, which also mean baits last longer. Looking at effect of killing major predators on smaller predator populations & native fauna.

Paul Tebbutt: Omahu and Gibraltar Rock pigs and deer are a major problem. Working with a hunter, some difficulties as pest control not his main priorities. Mustelids, rats and hedgehogs caught in Fenn traps.

Mike: Ohinetahi reserve doing planting and predator control. 200 bait stations (brodifacoum) and traps for feral cats, mustelids and possums. No monitoring but an increase in palatable seedlings is obvious. A lot of weeds, concentrate on 5 species particularly old mans beard, also banana passionfruit and darwins barberry.

Anita Spencer: Jewelled gecko protection project, setting up best practise for all predator control and gecko monitoring. Testing if existing trapping is affecting gecko populations. Commercial funding for hardware, landowners doing the work.

Iaian Cranwell: Wairewa runanga is working with 9 landowners looking at stream restoration and willow control. Hope to inspire other landowners to do this work. Kaupapa kereru is doing work at Kakanui looking at pest monitoring with a control site at Hikuraki.

Tina Troup: Kakanui and Hikuraki grazed and full of pests. Kakanui doing pre-treatment bird monitoring with kereru counts in 2010. Possums, rodents, cats, mustelid tracking at both sites. Will add veg and invert monitoring and more detailed bird monitoring.

Geoff Walls: will be involved in Kakanui Covenant veg work. Put together planting guide for the Chathams, list of potentially weedy species. This could also be done for Banks Peninsula.

Wayne Beggs: Good breeding season for yellow eyed penguins, 7 chicks. Have been micro chipping. This winter will be chipping adults as well. Lost a couple of good breeding birds. Let Wayne or Andrew know of any injured bird sightings immediately. Autumn moult and look sick but are ok, otherwise if you can walk up to it probably not ok. Sightings in spring may indicate nesting sites. Darwins barberry flowering over winter, let DoC know of sightings. Pig sightings. Population released Wainui and Western Valley

Rachel Barker: We need to do more work on weeds. Some sites need to be revisited a lot eg Hauroko (volunteers needed). Continuing work on goats to eradicate the last few. Tui monitoring coming up, can sponsor a bird for \$250. Hope to find nesting sites and do predator control based around those sites.

Richard Simpson: CWMS (Canty Water Mgt Strategy) ZIP has 107 recommendations. Starting to work through short term goals. Fishermans Bay cooks scurvy grass planted a couple of years ago, surviving plants looking good. Should be successful if continue to keep rabbits away.

Rob McCaw: Possum CIP started to eradicate TB. AHB withdraw from area, community asked Ecan to help control possums. BP Pest liaison committee put pressure on. Rural land is rated to fund control. \$115,000 a year for possum control over the whole peninsula. DoC and CCC do control on their land plus some private landowners. Has had some success but still no noticeable impact on biodiversity. The Peninsula also has a rating program for rabbit eradication, funding available for control when necessary. Shows how communities can work together. Keep an eye out for wallabies as some people are starting to move them around.

Kate Whyte: Manage property adjacent to Wairewa. Been doing trapping along coastline for last 3 years. Hard to see penguins as they nest under cliffs. Neighbours have some penguin nests which Kate will be doing trapping around. Another trapping project in podocarps. Reducing grazing in conservation areas increases grass which can increase predators, but easier to control gorse by cut and painting. Would like the area to eventually be pest free. Also controlling narsella tussock.

Tamsin Page: Pest management strategy is being reviewed. Likely to be a 2 year project. Need new strategy by June 2015. Aiming for discussion document early next year. Full review so looking at the way things are done. Currently production and biodiversity pest strategies.

Jon Sullivan: NatureWatch website is now live. Way to engage wider community in biodiversity, lots of people using it. First sighting of blue morning glory in Canterbury. Sighting of a Banks Peninsula banded tui at Leithfield beach! Currently biodiversity exploration, looking at setting it up to be useful for monitoring data. Pitfall trapping on Wildside shows some inverts only showing up in biggest oldest patch of old growth forest.

Laura Molles: Tui monitoring, banding and radio tracking happening this year to see what population is doing and identify breeding sites. Work out breeding success and which predators are a problem and influence predator control work.

Paul Devlin: Volunteer programs around port hills, have opened some areas closed due to rockfall issues. Volunteers remaining now doing planting. Support 5 community groups. A number of traplines in community, will be adding logo. Sites of Ecological Significance (SES) programme included an aerial survey of BP coastline which will help indicate locations and distributional limits of plant pests. Sycamore control has been controlled on some roadsides and private land where landowners willing. ECAN have contributed \$20k for control on private land. After Christmas council will be changing. Managers have been flexible on working on private land, will try to continue doing this. Release of weka will be trialled. An area has been set aside with monitoring, trapping and fence. Willowbank has some weka that are to be released.

Rik Wilson- an amazing amount of work going on. Start with Pest-free as progress can happen quickly, especially with technology advances.

David Mules- good diversity of work and people doing great work. Communication to the community is vital. Financial support limits what is possible, but private sector funding possible.

Where to next?

Rachel –still need an overall strategic plan. While we communicate well amongst conservation community we need to find ways to work on communication with wider community.

Pam –ZIP and co-ordinated monitoring is happening but needs to be brought together.

Rob M: Rick has started with Banks Island project. Need a vision to tie all the work together and get all the community to buy in. Pest management strategy is similar to what it was 20 years ago. A strategic view for the Peninsula could be included as part of the RPMS. Asked how we will share today's discussion with the wider community.

Rick: Geopark, tourism, conservation etc all needs to mesh together. Need an organised communication plan.

Marie: BP Action Plan was started and can be valuable but hasn't been used. It can be used as a base for what all of the agencies are doing. Discussion on setting indicators without developing monitoring plan.

Rik: Otago spent \$5000 on consultant to discuss with key stakeholders and wrote a draft strategic plan. Can use someone within the group or someone independent. ACTION: Rik to seek permission and then pass on to Rachel to give BP ideas/outline for a plan.

John G: Need an overarching entity to coordinate the efforts between all of the groups.

Tina: communicating to the wider community is very important. Quail Island project/ Lyttelton harbour starting to plan education project to inform people about conservation projects and why they are necessary.

Kate: Strategic plan could have projects that people can get involved with.

Marie: been doing a lot of education work. Working with different organisations. Met with a group of keen young people in Akaroa looking for things to be involved in. Wildside still has a long way to go, often feels like it is going around in circles. Need to start implementing ideas. Can then be adapted for the wider peninsula.

Mike Bowie: the Wildside has achieved getting the community involved. Need achievable goals to keep people enthusiastic and involved. Review this programme to give ideas and help set goals for other areas. Core areas are a good idea and provide example of what can be done. Could distribute Wildside letter more widely.

Dave: different areas can have different goals. Eg some predator control, other areas weed control, restoration planting etc.

Pam: a number of storms on BP. May need to review how we do fencing and riparian planting.

Next meeting to happen later in the year. We will discuss Banks Peninsula biodiversity indicator work being developed by the smaller working group as a result of the BP ZIP recommendations.

Forum closed 12.35pm