Summer is fast approaching, and we’re sure you’ll be out making the most of our Region’s beautiful beaches and coastlines. This Beachcare Newsletter looks at the highlights over the past year for our Region’s 15 Beachcare groups and their plans for the year ahead. We also profile the great work achieved by the Pauanui and Raglan Beachcare Groups. We’ll profile other groups’ achievements in future newsletters.

We’re also reporting back on what you’ve told us. Check out the results of the Beachcare survey and the Whangamata beach user survey.

All the best for a safe and happy summer!

The Beachcare Team

Hi everybody!

Pohutukawa Festival

As part of Environment Waikato’s commitment to the Region’s communities and environment, we’re supporting this year’s Pohutukawa Festival in the Coromandel.

With more than 50 family-oriented events there are plenty of opportunities for people to enjoy the Peninsula’s unique environment, as well as local cuisine, arts, sport and culture. It’s also a great opportunity for local environmental and community groups to showcase their projects.

The Festival runs from November 25 to December 11. More information is available from www.pohutukawafest.com

What’s that native coastal plant?

Pohutukawa - our native Christmas tree.

Mainland pohutukawa (Metrosideros excelsa) occurs naturally throughout the top half of the North Island. Its distinctive crimson flowers appear from November to February. Pohutukawa grow up to 20m high, with a 35m wide crown and can live to a thousand years.

Pohutukawa face many threats. Natural threats include possums and weeds such as kikuyu. Dense swards of this introduced grass make it difficult for new generations of pohutukawa to establish. Exposed roots are easily damaged by cars, pedestrians or grazing stock and are extremely sensitive to fire. Trees are sometimes removed to make way for new buildings, landscaping or to improve the view.

More pohutukawa are being planted throughout the Region and, with your help, animal and plant pests are being controlled around the trees.

More information?

For more information on coastal issues in the Region, check out Environment Waikato’s website www.ew.govt.nz

Key contacts

For more information on Beachcare, call Environment Waikato’s Freephone on 0800 800 401 and ask to speak to a Beachcare co-ordinator.

Pohutukawa

The planting season has now finished but there will be other Beachcare activities for you to get involved in next year. Details will be in the next Beachcare newsletter.

Pohutakawa (photo: Leif Pigott)
Beachcare survey

In March, many of you replied to our Beachcare survey. Twenty-five percent of recipients responded so thanks to all those who took time to give us such valuable feedback. You have helped us with planning for future Beachcare activities and developing the newsletters.

We now know that Saturday is the most popular day for working bees. You were all generally positive about the newsletter, but some of you want more technical information. You also told us that you’ve been talking with your friends, family and neighbours about issues affecting our coasts and, by your own actions, you set a great example to all beach users by using accessways and picking up litter. It’s good to see that all your hard work over the years has not only succeeded in restoring beaches, but has also rubbed off on holidaymakers.

Many of you told us you want to be e-mailed about upcoming Beachcare activities closer to the time. We’ll be initiating this service soon. If you would like to get ongoing updates, please e-mail us. Freephone 0800 800 401. Alternatively you can email: Jim jdahm@xtra.co.nz Harley harley@coastline.co.nz.

Don’t forget to let us know which Beachcare group you’re interested in.

Call Environment Waikato’s Freephone 0800 800 401 if you would like a copy of the survey report.

Whangamata beach users survey

In January, Environment Waikato research staff interviewed 229 beach users at Whangamata to find out what they thought of beach accessways and their understanding of dune systems.

It’s been seven years since beach users were last interviewed at Whangamata, when the Beachcare group was still quite new. In that time, awareness of Beachcare has doubled, up from 24 percent to 49 percent!

More encouraging still is the positive way that most beach users perceive the accessways at Whangamata and their understanding of why they’re an important part of managing the impacts we humans have on dunes. It appears that even though many might not know Beachcare was responsible, they’ve noticed the changes and are keen to play their part by keeping off the dunes.

We found that most people, 84 percent, said they don’t use the dune area behind the beach. Nearly everyone, 94 percent, thought that sand dunes were important and told us that this was because they helped prevent erosion and to protect the properties behind. They also felt they were important for aesthetic and natural values.

Most beach users, 81 percent, rated built accessways positively, and knew that they had been put in to protect the dunes, prevent erosion and control people’s access. The most preferred accessways were boardwalks and sandladders, but a few still liked to walk through a sandy track to the beach. The really good news is that only two percent of those interviewed tended to just make their own way through the dunes, preferring what they felt was a more natural experience.

The distance to the nearest accessway is sometimes a barrier to their use, as people with children, beach gear or poor mobility prefer to only walk short distances to an accessway. If they can’t find one easily, they might walk through the dunes.

The full report is available as a PDF file on our website www.ew.govt.nz - type the keywords ‘beach users’ in the search.

Whangamata

Hi Kids!

Welcome to the Beachcare Kids’ Page. Each issue you’ll find jokes, activities and fun facts about the Waikato Region’s coasts and beaches.

Get your work published in the next issue of this newsletter! Send your jokes, drawings, poems and puzzles to the Beachcare Co-ordinator, Environment Waikato, PO Box 4010, Hamilton East.

Have a safe and happy summer!

Whangamata

Colouring in

Welcome to the Beachcare Kids’ Page. Colour in the beach picture and stick it on the fridge or the wall of your bedroom to remind yourselves of how beautiful our beaches are.

Have a safe and happy summer!
Mataroa
The group held two well attended working bees in September and November, 2004. Extensive numbers of sand grasses were planted on the dune, and trees and shrubs in the back dune and wetland areas. Species planted included spinifex, pingao, native groundcovers, karo, five finger, taupata and pohutukawa. Further progress was made this year, with two more working bees held by the local hapu. Dick Hauraki and the team plan to continue this restoration work in 2006.

Profile - Whaingaroa (Raglan) Beachcare Group
The Whaingaroa Beachcare Group - one of the newest groups in the Waikato Region - has now been operating for two years. Environment Waikato and Waikato District Council support this community-based group with Tainui hapu.

The group aims to restore badly damaged dunes along the ocean and harbour foreshore and reduce human damage through improved management of beach access and use. The work is difficult as the dunes are exposed to high use and very severe winds. However, as the following before and after photos indicate, the group is already achieving significant success.

Beachcare group annual highlights

Stop the spread!
Don’t dump garden waste at the beach. Weeds, exotic species and even vegetable plants such as pumpkins can spread fast on the dunes - they love the sand.

At one New Zealand dune site that Department of Conservation monitored there were 249 species of exotic weed established!

Weeds to watch for Bushy asparagus
Bushy asparagus is an invasive weed that is becoming an increasing problem on our Region’s coasts.

Bushy asparagus, also known as ‘possum tail’, grows at bush edges and in dunes, particularly near gardens. It’s a dense, patch-forming weed, whose seeds are spread by birds. It can smother shrubs and other low vegetation, including dune plants.

How to get rid of it:
Firstly, dig out the tubers. Dispose of all the tubers at a refuse transfer station or burn them. You can leave the rest of the cut material on site to rot down. Then apply weed wipe of glyphosate (333ml/L), no penetrant. This should only be done during spring or early summer.

How to stop it coming back
Tubers often sprout back again after spraying and stems break at ground level so plants cannot be pulled. Also, fragments of tuber usually survive digging. Always follow up on treated areas at least six-monthly. It is also best to replant treated areas where possible after two or three treatments. This helps establish dense ground cover and minimises the risk of the bushy asparagus returning.

Information supplied by Weedbusters.

Bushy asparagus problems at Rings Beach
Environment Waikato Plant Pest Contractor Jeff Jeffery has been working with Beachcare Co-ordinator Jim Dahm, Thames-Coromandel District Council staff and local Rings Beach residents to determine the success of asparagus weed control work to date. Excellent results have been achieved. Jeff will begin control of the final area shortly with follow-up of all areas to start in February.

In order to prevent further spread of the invasive weed, it is hoped that local residents and the Rings Beach Beachcare group will undertake further plantings of remaining areas at Easter.

Vehicles on beaches
The impacts of increasing numbers of vehicles on New Zealand’s beaches have been highlighted in the news over the last few years.

Vehicles can cause severe dune damage and disturb bird breeding and roosting areas. They can also conflict with, and impact on, other activities such as swimming, fishing, sunbathing, kite flying, surfing, walking and surf lifesaving. This can result in potentially dangerous situations.

If you’re driving a vehicle on a beach, reduce harmful effects by staying off vegetated dunes and slowing right down around other beach users, birds or other animals on the beach.

Environment Waikato’s Beachcare Co-ordinator, Harley Spence, recently attended a ‘Vehicles on Beaches’ workshop hosted by Northland Regional Council, with participants from all over the country. The workshop identified several areas that require central government clarification so that local authorities and communities can more effectively manage this complex issue.

Vehicle problems at Wharitea

Wharitea

The group held a well attended working bee over Labour Weekend 2004 with over 70 people participating, followed by a group discussion of future plans for Beachcare activities.

A further working bee planned for June 2005 was cancelled due to a storm. However, the group and other community members met with the Beachcare co-ordinator and talked through the storm event.

Significant water damage in area of the surf club is the subject of ongoing discussion between the Hauraki District Council, surf club and Beachcare group. Plans for the next year include ongoing maintenance of sand grass cover on the dune face, with particular focus on the damaged area near the surf club, as well as progressing backdune plantings.

Whangamata

With the loss of several key volunteers, Environment Waikato and the Whangamata Community Board decided to hold a number of public meetings and activities to rejuvenate this group. A successful meeting was held on Labour weekend 2005, and the group now has several new members to help with planning and working bees.

Significant plantings are planned for 2006 and your help would be great! We’ll notify you of the dates closer to the time. You can also keep up-to-date with Beachcare through the Coastal News - Pam does a great job covering Beachcare activities.

Significant storm water damage in area

The Whangamata Beachcare Group - one of the newest groups in the Waikato Region - has now been operating for two years. Environment Waikato and Waikato District Council support this community-based group with Tainui hapu.

The group aims to restore badly damaged dunes along the ocean and harbour foreshore and reduce human damage through improved management of beach access and use. The work is difficult as the dunes are exposed to high use and very severe winds. However, as the following before and after photos indicate, the group is already achieving significant success.

Beachcare in action!
One of several Beachcare working bees held to replant the area in native dune species (spinifex and pingao) after clearance of weeds and reshaping. University and school groups assisted the group with the plantings.

After: Just over 12 months later and the dune condition has already markedly improved. There is a good cover of native vegetation (both spinifex and pingao) and the natural dune building and repair processes have been successfully restored. Problems with wind blown sand are already diminishing and this will improve further over time.

Beachcare Group

The group will continue to restore the dune areas further south of this section and hope to restore most of the dunes in this area over the next three to five years.

Information supplied by Weedbusters.
Pauanui Beachcare Group - Happy 10th year!

Congratulations to the Pauanui Beachcare group. The group has been active since 1995 - ten years of looking after their beach.

The group's overall goals include:

- restoring and maintaining sand grass cover on the dune face.
- managing pedestrian and vehicle access to the beach.
- encouraging the development of a dune care ethic in the local and beach user communities, using signage, information and participation in Beachcare events.

Over the last few years the group has embarked on its most ambitious programme of dune restoration. The steep clay-capped bank in the central area of the beach is a legacy of the original development of the township. There was no foredune in this area and it was very difficult for people to get to and from the beach.

An initial trial foredune restoration in the area just north of the airstrip proved very successful. Over the last couple of years a further 300 metres of dune has been restored, new accessways have been defined and over 5000 dune plants established.

Over the next 18 months it is planned that the rest of the steep dune faces will be restored.

The group has achieved great results over the years and benefits from the partnership between the community members, Tairua/Pauanui Community Board, Thames-Coromandel District Council and Environment Waikato.

Tairua

The group has started sand grass restoration along the foredune immediately south of the surf club, where severe erosion occurred in 2003.

In the previous 10 years, Beachcare restoration works advanced the dune 10-12 metres forward. This meant that there was a good buffer for the 2003 storms and no property damage occurred! It is now critically important to re-establish spinifex and other native dune repair species so that rapid dune recovery can occur following erosion.

Difficulties are being experienced with a dense cover of exotic flowers on the top of the eroded dune, which prevent spinifex from being established. Native dune plants are also being damaged by people cutting across the dunes or allowing children to play on steep planted dune faces. However, good support is already being provided by some beachfront owners who are planting out their frontages with native dune building species provided by Beachcare.

The next planting working bees will be in April/May 2006. If you’re a beachfront owner and would like to plant native dune species on your frontage, email Jim: jahm@xtra.co.nz

Whitianga

Whitianga’s beach is slowly recovering from the severe erosion of the 1990s. To help this process, the group needs more people to get involved in dune planting and re-vegetation work.

If you’d like to help, contact Louie Pooley - (07) 867 2010.

Kuaotuna/Otama area

Backdune plantings at Kuaotunu West continued in 2004 and 2005. This work has been going for over 12 years and, thanks to the dedication of Allan Hill and his team, an excellent cover of native coastal shrubs has now re-established at the eastern end by the stream. If you’re in the area over the summer, have a look at this great work - there are very few dune shrub plantings of this quality in New Zealand.

Trial work to release native groundcovers from exotic grass infestation is proving successful. Keep your eye on the top, seaward edge of the dune.

Re-vegetation of the dune face is difficult due to the exposed old sands, but the group has continued to plant pingao. Please support the group’s hard work and avoid walking or playing on planted areas of the dune face.

At Otama, work continues to finalise a planting plan to continue Michael and Gian’s excellent work over the last eight years. Thanks to John Gaukroger of Department of Conservation and Bernie Brown for their help with the plan.

If you’d like to help, contact Louie Pooley - (07) 867 2010.

Rings Beach

The group has continued planting spinifex and pingao in this area. To support their work, four working bees were held in 2004 and 2005 - they were well attended and the community support was greatly appreciated.

Progress is also being made with clearing the serious infestation of bushy asparagus on the dune. As the asparagus is cleared from the dune, Beachcare will plant these areas with native sand grasses.

If you want to get involved in Beachcare at Rings Beach, contact Louie Pooley - (07) 867 2010.

Matarangi

Matarangi

We’re looking to start Beachcare at Matarangi, and have been talking to the local Reserves Group and members of the community about this. If you’d like to become involved in Beachcare at Matarangi, or would like more information, contact Louie Pooley - (07) 867 2010.

Karioiwhai

Karioiwhai

The group has been working with Franklin District Council’s Greg Lowe to try and resolve the difficulties with vehicles using the dunes. Rules and bylaws are being developed to put speed limits and other controls in place. If you use vehicles at Karioiwhai please read the signs, observe the speed limits, keep away from the high use central beach area, drive slowly near other beach users and stay off vegetated dunes.

Dune restoration work will recommence in 2006.

Port Waikato

Port Waikato

Thanks to the efforts of the Beachcare group, the dunes at the southern end of the beach are now in reasonably good condition. With most beach users now keeping off vegetated dunes and using accessways, the serious problems of the early 1990s have mostly been resolved.

If you’re visiting Port Waikato this summer, please keep off the seaward vegetated faces of dunes - this site has experienced serious wind erosion in the past due to disruption of native vegetation by vehicles and pedestrians, and restoration has been a mammoth task. The outstanding achievements of Trevor and team will be highlighted in the next newsletter.

Steady progress is being made with planting in the backdune areas. Monitoring the condition of the dune continues, and spinifex and pingao are planted as required.

Whangapoua

Whangapoua

The dune on the northern side of the accessway is now in great condition, considerable progress has been made on the southern side, and restoration of the dune in the high use central beach area is continuing. Before and after photos of these achievements will be highlighted in our next newsletter.

Well attended community working bees were held over Queen’s Birthday weekend in 2004 and 2005. A working bee was also held with Te Reerenga School students in May this year. The students did a great job planting native sand grasses, trees and shrubs. Many residents are also helping by planting their beach frontages with plants supplied by Beachcare.

The next working bee will be Queen’s Birthday weekend next year. If you want to get involved with planting at Whangapoua, contact Meg - (07) 866 0770 or Louie Pooley - (07) 867 2010.

Kuaotuna/Otama

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Kuaotuna West Planting, May 2005
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The group’s overall goals include:

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If you’re visiting Port Waikato this summer, please keep off the dune face. For more detailed information on each beach, visit www.ew.govt.nz.
**Stop the spread!**

Don’t dump garden waste at the beach. Weeds, exotic species and even vegetable plants such as pumpkins can spread fast on the dunes - they love the sand.

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**Bushy asparagus problems at Rings Beach**

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**Weeds to watch for**

**Bushy asparagus**

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**How to get rid of it:**

Firstly, dig out the tubers. Dispose of all the tubers at a refuse transfer station or burn them. You can leave the rest of the cut material on site to rot down.

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**Whiritoa**

**Beachcare group annual highlights**

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**Before:** Badly damaged dunes prior to commencement of Beachcare restoration. The dunes completely lack native sand trapping vegetation and have recently been damaged by erosion.

**After:** Just over 12 months later and the dune condition has already markedly improved. There is a good cover of native dune species (spinifex and pingao) and the natural dune building and repair processes have been successfully restored. Problems with wind blown sand are already diminishing and this will improve further over time.
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More encouraging still is the positive way that most beach users perceive the accessways at Whangamata and their understanding of why they’re an important part of managing the impacts we humans have on dunes. It appears that even though many might not know Beachcare was responsible, they’ve noticed the changes and are keen to play their part by keeping off the dunes.

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The distance to the nearest accessway is sometimes a barrier to their use, as people with children, beach gear or poor mobility prefer to only walk short distances to an accessway. If they can’t find one easily, they might walk through the dunes.

The full report is available as a PDF file on our website www.ew.govt.nz - type the keywords ‘beach users’ in the search.

Whangamata

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Get your work published in the next issue of this newsletter! Send your jokes, drawings, poems and puzzles to the Beachcare Co-ordinator, Environment Waikato, PO Box 4010, Hamilton East.

Colouring in

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All the best for a safe and happy summer!

The Beachcare Team

Pohutukawa Festival

As part of Environment Waikato’s commitment to the Region’s communities and environment, we’re supporting this year’s Pohutukawa Festival in the Coromandel.

With more than 50 family-oriented events there are plenty of opportunities for people to enjoy the Peninsula’s unique environment, as well as local cuisine, arts, sport and culture. It’s also a great opportunity for local environmental and community groups to showcase their projects.

The Festival runs from November 25 to December 11. More information is available from www.pohutukawafest.com

Pohutukawa

Mainland pohutukawa (Metrosideros excelsa) occurs naturally throughout the top half of the North Island. Its distinctive crimson flowers appear from November to February. Pohutukawa grow up to 20m high, with a 35m wide crown and can live to a thousand years.

Pohutukawa face many threats. Natural threats include possums and weeds such as kikuyu. Dense swards of this introduced grass make it difficult for new generations of pohutukawa to establish, exposed roots are easily damaged by cars, pedestrians or grazing stock and are extremely sensitive to fire. Trees are sometimes removed to make way for new buildings, landscaping or to improve the view.

More pohutukawa are being planted throughout the Region and, with your help, animal and plant pests are being controlled around the trees.

What’s that native coastal plant?

Pohutukawa - our native Christmas tree.

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Boaties and other water users have an opportunity to voice their opinion on the bylaw covering navigation safety as Environment Waikato reviews its Navigation Safety Bylaw.

The Navigation Safety Bylaw covers the entire Waikato Region to ensure safety on all navigable waterways - the sea, harbours, lakes and rivers. It allows people to use lakes, rivers and harbours for waterskilling, swimming, boating, kayaking or other water activities safely, and some areas are zoned to avoid people interfering with others’ activities.

The Bylaw does not currently apply to Lake Taupo or Port Tararua.

The review process will make sure that Environment Waikato’s Bylaw is consistent with the Maritime New Zealand Regulations (National Guidelines - “Part 91”), the Harbour Risk Management Plan currently being developed as well as the changing use and pressures on surface waters around the Waikato Region. Since the Council’s Navigation Safety Bylaw 2002 became operative, any necessary changes have been recorded and will be incorporated into the review.

If you would like to suggest any changes or make a comment on the Bylaw, we would like to hear from you by the middle of December 2005.

For more information please contact Shelley Monrad on Environment Waikato’s Freephone 0800 800 401.

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