

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird

Newsletter October 2022

Horse grazing, enterprise, exclusive use, wetlands, and change in QEP

You will remember me banging on about GW allowing the Queen Elizabeth Park farm lessee to use herbicides and insecticides in the wetlands, and as you also know, that has all changed. Then GW established a climate acceleration fund, part of which was to fund planting large areas of their land including QEP. That has proceeded at pace and large areas of the land, perhaps 60 ha or more of mainly sand dunes, have already been planted. The wetlands will be restored. From F&B's point of view, it is a great success, but there are unintended consequences.

I was never opposed to grazing horses because riding your own horse and being able to experience riding under guidance (trekking) is a recreational activity and QEP is a Recreation Reserve. Trekking in QEP is a commercial enterprise but was not financially viable without the income from grazing of up to 40 private owner's horses who often rode in the park. But even that was not viable so the licensee was allowed to graze up to 10 cows. The land was for the exclusive use of the enterprise.

On 3rd September 2020, the *National Environmental Standards for Freshwater* (NES-F) came into law. This standard applies to wetlands and how they must be treated. The agencies that must act to protect them are the regional councils. That means that GW cannot now allow prohibited activities to be undertaken on land in QEP that is wetlands under the NES-F. It is slightly more complicated than that and applies to other lands, but that will do.

The horse licence comes up for renewal in November and some of the grazed area is wetland so, if the license was renewed, the horses could not remain where they are. New areas in the Mackay's Crossing part of the park were looked at for grazing. I suggested one of them. But did it contain wetlands?

The coastal plains of Kapiti were all sand dunes and wetlands. Many of the wetlands

have been drained, used as farmland, converted, filled over, and developed for housing. But some remain, especially where the landscape has not been modified. You can see them off the side of Ngarara Road, in the equestrian area of Waikanae Park, in QEP and in many other places less known to me. With climate change and the extremely wet winter, the water in those areas are at levels previously unseen and those high levels are remaining longer.

The area in QEP that I suggested for horses was a large sheltered and accessible dual valley within a large sand dune system. But GW ecologists determined that they contained two wetlands. If they were fenced (with riparian margins required by NES-F), there is insufficient remaining land to graze a small number of horses. See wetland mapping below.

The other issue is that many of the sand dunes have steep sides that heavy horses would soon turn into sand blowouts so this again reduces available sites.

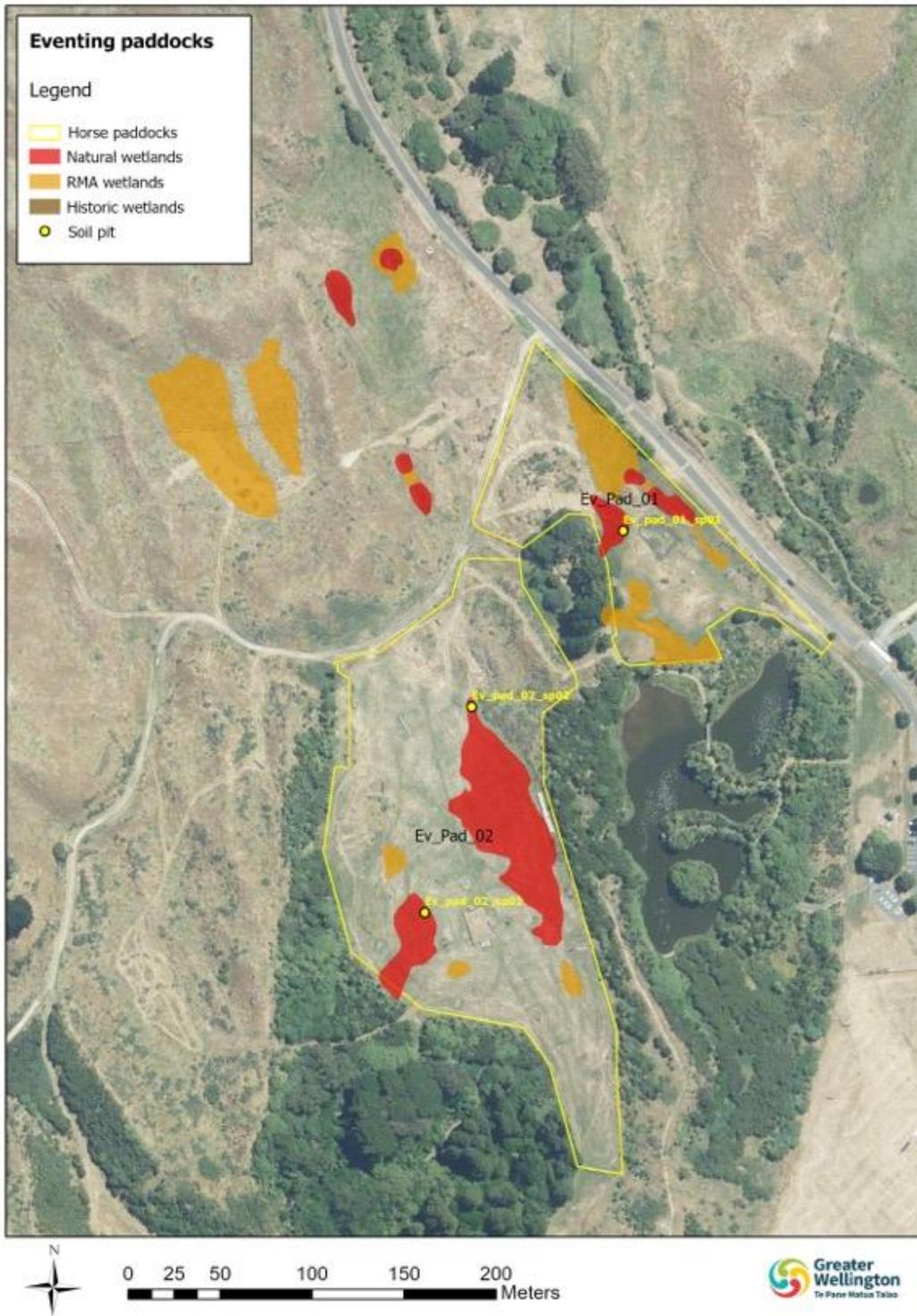
GW has concluded that it cannot provide grazing for horses at Mackay's Crossing and released a press release this month. Trekking and riding can be accommodated and even expanded, but grazing cannot. To the north near Rainbow Court, there is a large flat field and associated low slope hill paddock that can accommodate grazing the existing pony club's horses. Those paddocks do not contain wetlands and commercial viability is not a factor.

This is a difficult outcome for some and by actively participating in changes in QEP and Regional Parks Planning, to some extent, we are, or could be seen, as agents of this change.

From my perspective, the major influences that are driving change in QEP are GW's response to climate change and the government's response to the loss of wetlands.

Governments will have to deal with climate mitigation and biodiversity loss and that will mean some loss of areas used for recreation and other activities. This sort of issue I think will be come very much more common as climate change bites.

Russell



Ocean versus land

In the past month, I've been thinking more about the sea. As a portion of our planet, there is so much more of it than there is land. I know we're called Forest and Bird, but our remit includes ocean habitats and their inhabitants too.



How hard it is to get funding for ocean conservation initiatives? For every person willing to give \$10 to a 'land environment' cause I speculate not even 1 in 70 would give to an 'ocean environment' cause, and yet there is so much more of it and we know so much less about it. We know more close to where it touches land but what about the rest... and does it matter? I think so... a third of all animal flesh that humanity eats comes from the ocean (reference New Scientist, 23 April 2022, No. 3383). Apart from its edible resources, oceans are beset with pollution from ships and rigs - noise makes it difficult or impossible for creatures to navigate and hear each other; fuel leakages, rubbish and disruption of seabed habitats (from dredging or bottom trawling for example) make increasing areas of ocean uninhabitable and more recently wind farm towers are being constructed on the ocean

Tis the season

This is the season when birds and their nests and are at their most vulnerable. It's also a productive time for seeds. You will have noticed the increase in young rabbits and other pests. Predators also ramp up, so this is a time to increase trapping ensuring we have the best season. This nest, that of a thrush, was found about waist height in Queen Elizabeth Park.

floor, even 'dead zones'. Ocean environments don't have the same legal protection as land environments, and that protection is confused and extremely difficult to enforce (they don't call it the high seas for nothing). This doesn't only apply to fishing, but also to opportunities to extend the exploitation of the sea bed. Island nations are rebranding themselves 'ocean nations' and other nations including Australia, Russia and China are 'grabbing' underwater features of potential future mining value. Such mining, drilling, sucking, fracking, installing infrastructure etc. comes with a huge environmental cost, so we need to remember these environments in our lobbying efforts to ensure they stay safe. We can start by ensuring - at least in our waters - that fisheries are sustainable, and disruption of the sea bed is minimised. We also need to ensure that New Zealand is taking an appropriate stand on the world stage when it comes to our oceans. We can stand in support of the rights of small island nations, as well as of the planet. Next time you enjoy fish and chips, or admire a beautiful tree for example, spare a thought for the predicament of fish, and the many underwater fish and plant species not yet scientifically named. If you want to start speaking up, one opportunity might be the MPI document <https://tinyurl.com/4xpx2u5j> or you can sign F&B's petition to ban bottom trawling in the Hauraki Gulf <https://tinyurl.com/2vv9ye39>. You might also choose to donate to help Forest and Bird defend this cause: <https://tinyurl.com/4pwfk6xa>

Pene



Forest and Bird, Wellington Regional Tramping Club



F&B WRTG has approximately 200 members, mostly retired, who receive our weekly newsletter. It describes the two or three tramps planned for the following Wednesday, as well as reporting back from the previous week's trips.



Each year we have a six-month programme for summer and another for winter. One or two trips in the programmes will be nature oriented and lead by members with botanical knowledge. All other tramps focus on tramping. Tramps are graded: Easy, Medium or Fit, and are four to seven hours long, and typically have 20 to 30 trampers on each trip. Most trips are in the hills around Wellington, and from the Wairarapa to Kapiti coast.

Each year WRTG has a week-long summer camp in more distant parts of New Zealand.

Make Your Voice Heard

There are so many legislation changes coming out, and in my opinion, they are going in the right direction. I do wish this was happening 20 years ago or perhaps 50 years ago when we knew human demands were exceeding and damaging our finite world.

KCDC Proposed Plan Change 1E – Rural Indigenous Biodiversity Incentives Provisions

I have read these proposed changes. They are legal so not so easy to read but this is my understanding of them. There are three major changes. 1 the inclusion of ecological corridors, 2 the inclusion of margins when terrestrial or aquatic ecosystems are

In addition, we have overnight tramps in the Tararuas, and occasional weeks away with daily tramps, such as Rakiura, Picton, Nelson Lakes etc.



The club does not charge a subscription but does require members to subscribe to Forest and Bird. We cover our few costs with any surplus from events such as our pre-Christmas bus trip and mid-winter celebrations.



Our current programme can be found on the F&B Wellington branch web site:
<https://tinyurl.com/bdd25aka>

Ian Goodwin, convenor

protected, and 3 the incentives are defined as "bonus allotments" because this relates to subdivisions. The inclusion of ecological corridors is very important otherwise we will have small patches of forest of very little value.

The biodiversity outcomes the plan seeks to encourage are stated below. The underlined sections are the proposed changes.

To improve indigenous biological diversity and ecological resilience through:

- protecting areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna; encouraging restoration of the ecological integrity of indigenous ecosystems;
- encouraging connectivity between areas of significant indigenous

vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna:

- enhancing the health of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and their margins; and
- enhancing the mauri of waterbodies.

The whole document is quite long but to my reading it is entirely consistent with the above section. Due to the late delivery of this newsletter, there is little chance to support it. Submissions close 31 October 2022: <https://tinyurl.com/yc39f32m>

How we ensure the long term future of the land and people? MfE

This is a Ministry for the environment discussion document about NZ's long term future. It is trying to look at how NZ ensures the future wellbeing of land (whenua) and people as it deals with the competing pressures of population increase with its attendant food, recreation, waste, pollution environmental degradation effects, climate change mitigation and adaptation, a biodiversity crisis, all taking place in a land and world that is telling us that it is finite.

We not only cannot expect more from it, in fact we need to give some of what we have taken, back to it. Submissions have closed but the documents are still there to read.

This is intended to help inform thinking as policies are developed for the longer term. It's a good chance to ensure the importance of the environment in the Ministry's thinking for the future. <https://tinyurl.com/yeynnuw4>

Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region - Greater Wellington Regional Council

This document is hugely important. It essentially repoints the Wellington Region Policy Statement towards the environment. It is written in a quite direct manner identifying land types that have declined and need all the protection they can get such as sand dunes, wetlands, and coastal forests. It recognises that we have polluted our waterways and must improve them. It recognises indigenous biodiversity and the values of Māori such as if the water is

polluted, the people will not thrive. And of course there is a large chunk on climate change. I know law is only law but sooner or later, it becomes accepted practice, and while I like many others want to act directly on the ground, now, law makers start from policy and eventually that brings societal change. Submissions have closed. But if you want something that is hard to read but inspiring and will bring change, check it out here. <https://tinyurl.com/29pre7d2>

Pricing agricultural emissions

You may remember that if an alternative agricultural carbon pricing system is not implemented by 1 January 2025, the Climate Change Response Act 2002 states that agricultural emissions will be priced under the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme. Since then NZ has been struggling to come up with a scheme that dissatisfied the least, does not result in a failure at the next election and that won't be reversed by an incoming government. (That's what I think.)

You have seen the action. Tractors driving into towns and cities. Farmers telling us they will go broke and how well they are caring for the environment and how milk powder feeds the world. (Opinion). Well, the proposed agricultural carbon pricing system is out and MPI are receiving submissions on it.

You can imagine that farmers will be organised to oppose or weaken this essential system yet they are responsible for half of

NZ emissions and George Monbiot in *Regenesi; Feeding the world without devouring the planet* said NZ farmers were the most profligate in the world.

Kapiti Coastal Adaptation Project: Takutai Kāpiti:

Discussion between KCDC's Coastal Advisory Panel and residents will help council decide on how Kapiti protects (or not) its coastal places and communities. Greater Wellington has decided that at Queen Elizabeth Park, facilities will retreat from sea level rise, but that may not be appropriate where there are houses and human infrastructure. It also might be inevitable if stopping (mitigation) of

Further submissions on Variation 1 and Plan Change 19 (for Porirua)

This is a second chance to support, oppose or comment on submissions received during the first round. QEII Trust, Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet (GOPI) and GW wrote submissions to the first round and some

Whaitua Kāpiti project:

This project is long and involved but that is reasonable given that the output will determine how authorities treat our water. Whaitua projects deal with complete catchments so the Waikanae and Otaki rivers will be considered from the top of their catchments to the sea. Whaitua projects have already been completed for other rivers in the Wellington region. The Hutt River was undrinkable and sometimes not safe to swim in. The whaitua committee for the Hutt River decided it wanted the river returned to a state of health and authorities have to take that decision into consideration in all their

Changing the way we treat our offshore fisheries.

The Ministry of Primary Industries says it is moving to a more ecosystem based approach to fisheries and one of the actions is to identify habitats of particular significance for fisheries management. I don't think it goes as far as saying that it will protect them

You can read more or express your view on this before 18 November at:

<https://tinyurl.com/tew88xh2> or

<https://tinyurl.com/5c9nptza>

climate change is not undertaken. There is conflict here between a shorter term local view (protect ourselves) and a world-wide long term view (protect all the peoples of the world and the other creatures that share it):

<https://tinyurl.com/2p84ntmb> and you can

sign up for Monthly newsletters on the website - Takutai

Kāpiti: <https://takutaikapiti.nz/>

submissions identified ecological corridors and riparian margins as issues that the plan change should address. Submissions close 3 November 2022:

<https://tinyurl.com/kwd3m63x>

decisions. In an historical context, we had clean rivers so there was no need to say how we wanted them to be. Now most of our rivers cannot be drunk from as I used to as a kid and sometimes cannot be safely swum in. They are polluted to some degree. This formal process asks the population what they want and then the authorities have to take steps to achieve that.

There's a short survey to complete by 22 November 2022, and the chance to register for a public

workshop: <https://haveyoursay.gw.govt.nz/kapiti>

rather collect information on them to see if they are negatively affected. It's a small step I think but then so were national parks once.

Submissions close 18 November

2022: <https://tinyurl.com/4xpx2u5j>