

WEED ACTION

NATIVE HABITAT RESTORATION TRUST

Annual Report 2022 – 2023



Vision:

To work with community, tangata whenua, NGOs and government agencies to restore the native habitats within the Manaia Ecological District-Whangarei Heads-High Value Area, so indigenous ecosystems are healthy, flourishing, and free of invasive exotic plants and the ecology of the area can thrive.

Overview:

Our Purpose: Weed Action Native Habitat Restoration Trust recognises the importance of a vibrant, healthy and resilient forest as a means of mitigating against climate change and our work is directed to assist degraded ecosystems to recover their biodiversity. Our working landscape is located within the 6444 hectares of the Manaia Ecological District (Manaia ED) and the Whangārei Heads peninsula. We work to engage the community to deal with weeds in their backyard and help from Weed Action groups to care for our native forests on Public Conservation Land and Reserves. We work in collaboration and partnership with local hapu/iwi and support the development of iwi-led conservation within the area.

Our Changing Values: The need to engage and call on our community to protect our native ecosystems from decline and the threats of climate change is becoming more urgent. Therefore, our focus in the past few years has moved from purely weed control toward ecosystem native habitat restoration and building resilient forests. Associated with this more holistic approach is our growing engagement with tangata whenua and support of Mātauranga Māori principles to heal the natural environment and tangata whenua - tau iwi relationships.

Our Team: Kate Hardcastle was engaged in October 2022 and has become our Community Engagement Coordinator. She is working closely with our volunteer groups, landowners, managing our database, social media, newsletters, website and the Weed of the Month campaigns. Mike Ulrich provides our higher level conservation expertise to landowners and oversight of our work on Reserve and Public Conservation Land. Mike continues to support WANHRT's treaty partnership objectives and works with local hapu to assist them to restore whenua Māori. Jan Marshall coordinates and undertakes most of the on-ground work of the Parua Bay Privet Buffer Community Partnership Conservation Area, which is completing its fourth year.

The Trust: The Governance of WANHRT is guided by six Trust members and three advisors to the Trust. Robyn Bigelow - Chair, Bill Mallet - Treasurer, Marion Blake, Simon Gurnsey, Brian Waddell and Peter Coates, with advisors Joanna Barr - Northland Regional Council, Ngaire Sullivan - Kiwi Coast and Hori Parata - Cultural Advice.

2022 – 2023 Objectives

Governance - Build a sustainable and resilient organisation

Support the growth of relationships with our treaty partners
The Health and Safety of all contractors and volunteers is grounded in sound policy and procedures
Ensure all aspects of end of year finances are complete and a financial management plan is in place

Outcome:

- In this financial year, WANHRT became more comfortable and proficient with the requirements of being a standalone Charitable Trust, including consolidating our financial oversight by our Trustee and Accountant Bill Mallet.
- The Trust and Team have attended hui and Te Tiriti workshops and explored our responses to co-governance.
- We have undertaken a significant Health and Safety upgrade. Our new Trust member Simon Gurnsey has helped us embed more robust Health and Safety processes and documentation. After a huge effort we achieved 94% SiteWise accreditation.
- The WANHRT Governance committee is growing in strength and capacity and to fulfil our bigger picture strategic intent for environmental weeds to be adequately resourced, we have joined the Environmental Weed Coalition. We are keen to promote and unite as a Whangārei Heads Biodiversity Forum as a means of collaborating over ecological goals for the area.



Reporting against our 5 key programmes:

1. Landowner Support Programme

Develop a team that works creatively within the Landowner Programme

Provide conservation expertise to the community

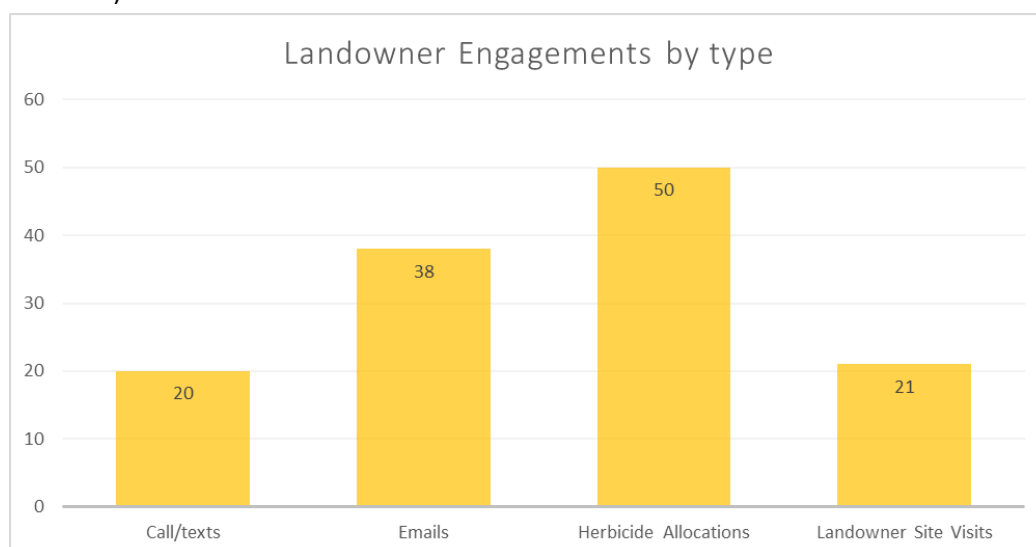
Outcome:

By the numbers

Volunteer hours	4018.5
Value of volunteer contributions (\$)	\$120,555
Number of groups	7
Number of core group members	40
Number of public engagement activities	29
Number of landowner engagements	109

Landowner Support

- Our team liaises with landowners on a daily and weekly basis: making site visits, attending weed events, providing advice or herbicides, or responding to email enquiries.
- We are forging a strong relationship with the Campbell Road Landcare Group, which encompasses a large, varied, and in many places strategically important (Pataua River and wetlands) weed corridor.





**Five volunteer stalwarts demonstrate the 5 Stages of Weed Work Emotions:
L - R Rick (Denial), Wayne (Acceptance), Hans (Grin and Bear It), Pia (Genuine Enjoyment), Peter (Knackered Satisfaction)**

Weed Action volunteer groups

- Manaia Bush Recovery, Ocean Beach and Reotahi continue with a steady number of volunteers turning up each month, although in the past year a number of events have been cancelled due to bad weather. Tamaterau has fewer regular volunteers and we are actively looking for more.
- We send out a monthly email to Landcare and volunteer groups with Weed of the Month information, Health & Safety advice, updates on WANHRT activities and keeping them inspired and motivated to keep plugging away at removing invasive weeds.
- Kate and Mike work together to support Weed Action Volunteer groups and Landcare groups through regular site visits to coordinate weed management plans, advice, equipment, herbicide allocations, promotion of events and achievements in newsletters and social media and Health and Safety support and training.



Ocean Beach Coordinator John Green

SWAT Success

- The formation in 2022 and ongoing management of the Strategic Weed Action Team (SWAT) under Mike Ulrich has seen this group of dedicated volunteers grow in expertise and determination.
- A 3-4 hour session once a month is now a hugely effective part of our work, not only in controlling large infestations of multiple or dominant single species sites, but in linking together our various groups and kick-starting further action by the local community.
- We have run 8 successful SWAT events, focussing our attention on several locations along Whangārei Heads Road, Lamb Road, Tamaterau, Reotahi, and the Nook Reserve.
- This programme is costly when it requires Traffic Management, but necessary as landowner concerns are frequently about road verge weeds.



The inaugural SWAT event having tea along Whangārei Heads Road between McLeod Bay and Parua Bay



SWAT tackle moth plant vine and pods on Lamb Road, Parua Bay

Hapu iwi relationships

- Mike continues to build hapu/iwi engagement in a number of very practical ways to help restore the natural habitat of whenua Māori. Receiving World Wildlife funding to begin the process of restoring the Whenua Māori at Waikaraka and Pataua has resulted in engaging hapu in weed control on large tracts of open and forested land.
- Mike works actively with the Aki Tai Here team who are now a fully fledged and autonomous conservation team.



Aki Tai Here check out a successfully controlled ginger patch

Moth Plant Pod and Weed Amnesty Bin

- Starting in January with **'STOP the PODS'**, an encouragement to address moth plant when they see it flowering and before pods are formed, through to June when there were still a large amount of pods emerging, we have worked to engage the community to collect as many pods as possible.
- We placed collection bins at the Parua Bay Community Centre twice in the first half of 2023, as a means of supporting the community to dispose of pods safely. The volumes collected mean we focus only on this species (and part of the species), rather than a general weed waste bin.

Strategic Funds Work

- To ensure the habitat restoration done in previous years by WANHRT progresses we invested our strategic funds back into sites.
- The list of sites we manage is growing and we hope to have a mapping system in place next year so that we can record and keep track of these areas while also future proofing this knowledge.

EcoNet Conservation Activity Management System CRM and GIS Tools

- NRC funding is allowing WANHRT to pilot the use of the Customer Relationship Management and ArcGIS mapping tools being developed by EcoNet.

- Being able to use mapping to both track weed control work and share the story of our activity has been an aim of WANHRT for some years now and we feel this programme most closely aligns with our work and values.
- The CRM will require significant background work to meet the Microsoft Office requirements but will provide huge efficiencies in communications outwards and better service in managing our database of volunteers, landowners, community requests, etc.

Health and Safety

- Over the 12 month period to the end of June 2023, WANHRT contractors and volunteer coordinators adopted JotForm templates for on-site health and safety checklists and briefings. This resulted in 20 Volunteer Event forms and 127 Contractor Work Plan forms being submitted and archived.
- Our Chemical Store received an upgrade with additional bunding above requirements and we now hold six-monthly sessions reviewing all H&S and SOP documentation, processes, and equipment and completing all dispensing, cleaning, labelling, disposal and other tasks.



Chemical Store with glimpse of new concrete bunding at bottom

2. Reserve and Public Conservation Land Restoration

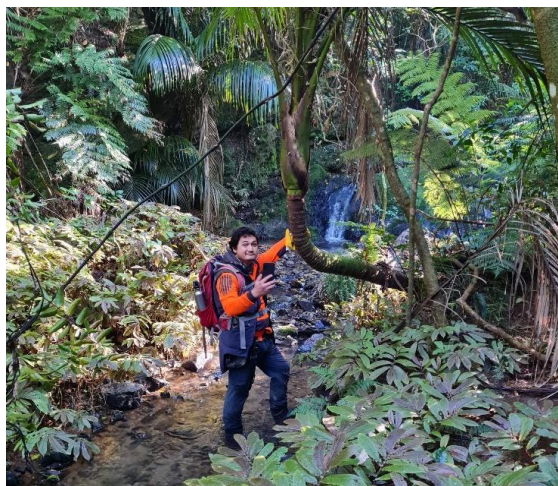
3. Waka Hourua Tangata Whenua Partnership programme

Maintain and strengthen relationships with tangata whenua and local hapu groups
Enrich and enhance WANHRT's knowledge and appreciation of Te Ao Māori ways of being
Ensure funding is obtained to continue the Whaka ora Reotahi flagship 5 year restoration project
Work with tangata whenua to build momentum for an iwi led invasive weed removal programme on Maunga Manaia

Outcome:

Waka Hourua Mātauranga Māori Collaboration

- A big cause for celebration for WANHRT and tangata whenua in February was the news that we were successful with our funding application to Foundation North. This funding builds on the work WANHRT has been doing with local hapu/iwi.
- The project work plan will be rolled out in the latter half of 2023 and will entail 8 – 12 project sites.
- As part of this project the Trust, team and volunteers have begun the process of deepening our Te Tiriti understandings and are embarking on the process of understanding how to partner meaningfully and co-govern with tangata whenua.
- In February, we successfully completed a year's project at Pataua on whenua Māori, with a 5 year NRC CPCA following on from this initial funding. This year a further WWF application has enabled a similar process to begin on whenua Māori at Waikaraka with NRC providing further funding for a culturally informed weed survey for this whenua.
- To further our Waka Hourua programme we are currently starting to engage with whenua Māori landowners at Solomon's Point to build relationships to support weed work happening.



Aki Tai Here's Te Kaurinui Parata

Whaka Ora Reotahi

- This project was boosted by a \$51K Lottery Environment grant which saw 67% of this 60ha WDC Reserve receive 1400 hours of weed control.
- Aki Tai Here found this project very rewarding with great training and the opportunity to use Maramataka to inform the work alongside knowing they were making a real difference to the restoration of this maunga.



Large infestations of jasmine tumble down Reotahi slopes



Map showing controlled area on Reotahi in yellow

4. Conservation Land Buffer Zone

Engage landowners with native habitat contiguous with PCL's, Reserves and significant tracts of bush.

Outcome:

- Building on our Buffer Land programme we have facilitated a Bio-Fund for a Ross/Lamb Road property that borders QE2 covenanted land and 4 landowners in the Taurikura area, whose important properties link directly to Bream Head and Manaia.
- The NRC Bio-Funds are a big plus as they offer an avenue to engage landowners who recognise the importance of their location and are doing their best, but the size and scale of their property requires additional support. Both sets of locations will be followed up on in 23-24.

5. Privet Control and Parua Bay Privet Buffer

In year 4 of this 5 year project focus on consolidating re-infestations of privet in areas already treated and supporting landowners to continue the work independently

Maintain engagement and provide ongoing information through regular communication with the Privet Buffer signatories and also the Whangarei Heads Community

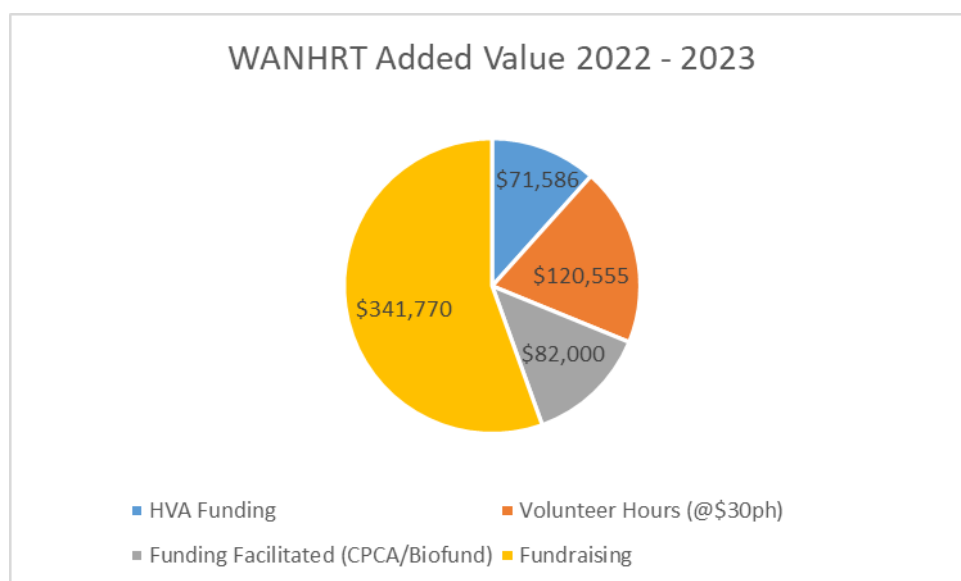
Outcome:

- Jan Marshall, the Coordinator of the Parua Bay Privet Buffer is in the 4th year of this 5 year project with Landowners involved across 144 Hectares. While this valuable project is due to wind down, the continued uptake of new landowners into the programme speaks to an ongoing need and spreading engagement.
- It would be a great loss to just stop here, so WANHRT will be exploring funding options to continue the battle to stop privet from encroaching further towards our forests, PCLs and Reserves.



More and more privet poles abound – Kohinui Landcare Te Rongo Road

Funding Sources - Added Value 2022-2023



WANHRT has been able to access funding from a range of different sources and has leveraged this for further investment by funders for example the World Wildlife Fund, who can see that we are a trusted partner. The different arrangements with funders means various timing for project completion and these can span financial years, up to 2024.

Compared to 2021-2022 we have received a significant boost to funding with a meaningful contribution from Foundation North. Conversely, our volunteer hours are down by approximately \$20,000, possibly due to weather related issues.

Thanking our Funders

The work Weed Action Native Habitat Restoration Trust does simply would not occur without the continued support of the Northland Regional Council.

In the 2022 – 2023 year we were also pleased to be successful in securing funding from Whangārei District Council, World Wildlife Fund, Lottery Environment and Heritage, Lottery Northland and Foundation North.

Looking Ahead - A Snapshot

Our goals for 2023 -2024 will focus on implementing the Waka Hourua Mātauranga Māori Collaboration. This will involve the Trust and Team strengthening its capacity to co-govern, engage in further Te Tiriti training and work alongside tangata whenua in the conservation mahi. The Team knows that engaging our Whangārei Heads community is the key to habitat restoration and to this end they will work to increase the number of weed warriors and native habitat restoration activists.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koe

