



Habitat Protection

1 Biodiversity Protection Programme

1.1 Activity Overview

This programme aims to have 100 of the Region’s best wetlands and 200 of the best bush remnants under active management by 2028-29. Active management means that the site is being protected from livestock, pest animals and pest plants that threaten it, and that necessary enhancement work (e.g. planting) is undertaken.

1.2 Targets – Year to Date Progress

Measure	Reporting Period				YTD Actual	Allocated	Target *1	% complete	% allocated
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th					
Additional top 100 wetlands actively managed *2	0				0		3		0
New high priority wetlands under partial management	0				0		NA		NA
Additional top 200 bush remnants actively managed *2	0				0		6		0
New high priority bush remnants under partial management	0				0		NA		NA
Environmental Grants supported *2	2				2	11	30	7%	37%
Continue to support existing community-based biodiversity improvement projects							10		

1.3 Targets - Life to Date Progress

Measure	Reporting Period					LTD Actual	LTD Target	%
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th			
Total high priority wetlands under active management *2	0					59	62	95%
Total high priority wetlands under partial management	0					24	NA	NA
Total high priority bush remnants under active management *2	0					118	124	95%
Total high priority bush remnants under partial management	0					28	NA	NA

*1 Annual target, *2 AP/LTP targets, *3 Life to date target

1.4 Activity Highlights

This report covers the reporting period from 1 July to 31 October. A summary of the progress made against the targets for the year is in the table at the end of this section.

General:

- 1.4.1 Staff have been involved in planting programmes, site assessments, audits and maintenance.
- 1.4.2 Environmental Grant activity is starting to pick up and there have been several applications for predator trapping projects. Some of this interest can be attributed to publicity around the Government's Predator Free NZ programme.

Community/private biodiversity:

- 1.4.3 So far, 11 grant applications have been approved and two have been paid out.

High priority wetlands:

- 1.4.4 No high priority wetlands were added to the managed list during the reporting period. The total number of high priority wetlands under active management is 59 and the number of sites under partial management is 24.

High priority bush remnants:

- 1.4.5 No high priority bush remnants were added to the list of actively managed sites during this period. The total number of high priority bush remnants under active management is 118 and the number of sites under partial management is 28.

2 Community Biodiversity

2.1 Activity Overview

The community biodiversity activity encompasses the work completed in collaboration with others to deliver biodiversity and recreational benefits to the region via projects such as the Manawatu Gorge and Pukaha Mount Bruce and projects to support community led initiatives such as the Rangitikei Environment Groups efforts to control Old Mans Beard.

2.2 Targets – Year to Date Progress (% complete)

Progress on Specific Projects	Reporting Period					YTD Actual	Target
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th		
Support community involvement in biodiversity protection							
Continue to support existing community-based biodiversity improvement projects* ¹	16 in part						10
Totara Reserve Regional Park							
Operate a regional park and camping facility that is appreciated by the community, responding to all enquiries and complaints within 48 hours. Track and report the number of campers to the park and the number of complaints/queries as a % of this figure * ¹	100%						100%

*1 AP/LTP targets,

Progress on Specific Projects	Reporting Period					YTD Actual	Target
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th		
Totara Reserve Regional Park							
Totara Reserve Regional Park (Manawatu)	40%						100%
Collaboration Projects							
Manawatu Gorge (Palmerston North and Taranaki)	30%						100%
Pukaha/Mt Bruce (Taranaki)	30%						100%
Kia Wharite (Ruapehu)	30%						100%
Save Our River Trust (Horowhenua)	30%						100%
Manawatu Estuary (Horowhenua)	30%						100%
Community Projects (10 supported)							
Massey Hill (Palmerston North)	20%						100%
PN Weedbusters (Palmerston North and Manawatu)	10%						100%
Rangitikei Environment Group (Rangitikei)	20%						100%
Waitarere Beach (Horowhenua)	20%						100%
Bushy Park (Whanganui)	30%						100%
Tawata Mainland Island (Ruapehu)	30%						100%
Awahuri Forest Kitchener Park (Manawatu)	30%						100%
Moawhango Community Project (Rangitikei)	0%						100%
Turitea Reserve (Palmerston North)	30%						100%
Te Potae o Awarua (Rangitikei)	30%						100%
Lower Kahuterawa Stream (Palmerston North)	30%						100%
New community projects supported as resources permit							
Gate Pa Bush Restoration (Manawatu)	10%						100%
Ohau Beach Walkway (Horowhenua)	0%						100%
Friends of Waitoetoe Park (Palmerston North)	30%						100%

2.3 Activity Highlights

Totara Reserve Regional Park (Manawatu):

- 2.3.1 The big highlight is completion of the new playground (Photo 1) next to the Kereru campground ablution block. There was a desire to create something that fitted with the surroundings and didn't look like a city playground. Feedback from visitors has been overwhelmingly positive with some parents commenting that their children didn't want to leave the playground, even after enjoying it for several hours. Three Councillors – McKellar, Te Awe Awe and Kelly – were involved in the opening of the playground at Labour Weekend.
- 2.3.2 Phase 2 of the Fern Walk track upgrade was completed. The second pedestrian bridge (Photo 2) and several boardwalks were installed. Steps were added to the steep top section of the new track that was created in Phase 1 of the upgrade.



Photo 1: Playground opening at Totara Reserve.



Photo 2: New bridge in the Fern Walk.

Lower Kahuterawa Stream (Palmerston North):

2.3.3 Planting was audited by Project Crimson following its payment of \$35,000 from the Trees That Count project. The auditor was full of praise for the way the partnership has tackled this project, the largest of its kind in the country.

Aaron Madden
ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR – BIODIVERSITY

Jon Roygard
GROUP MANAGER NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

3 Collaboration Projects – Horizons / Department of Conservation (DOC)

3.1 Activity Overview

This report captures some of Horizons and DOC collaborative projects which are not covered elsewhere in Environment Committee reports.

3.2 Activity Highlights

Kia Whārite (Ruapehu/ Whanganui):

- 3.2.1 Kia Whārite biodiversity project is a collaborative partnership between the Department of Conservation, Horizons Regional Council, Landowners and Iwi. The project area (180,000 ha) is a mixture of public, private and Maori land that aims to protect some of our most precious taonga in one of the most stunning and least visited areas of the North Island.
- 3.2.2 The project is on track, with significant work planned for the summer period. The project has also received a significant recognition and a financial boost following the confirmation of an Air New Zealand partnership – see detail in ‘spotlight’ section below.

DOC Community Fund Updates

- 3.2.3 DOC's Community Fund provides support for community groups focused on the ground and is now in its third year. All existing projects are on track.
- 3.2.4 DOC assessed the **Expressions of Interest (EOI)** that were received in early July and successful EOI applicants were invited to submit full applications by 16 September 2016. Assessment of these applications is underway and we expect the final decisions to be made in November 2016. Applicants will be notified as soon as this is complete. An update of successful projects in Horizons' Region will be provided in the next report.

Pukaha Mt Bruce

- 3.2.1 Pukaha Mt Bruce is a National Wildlife Centre and major tourism destination in the southern Tararua District. Pukaha is managed by a Board, supported through partnerships with Department of Conservation, Horizons and Greater Wellington Regional Council. The buffer control provided through the Horizons partnership is critical to the survival of birds such as kiwi, kokako, kaka, kereru, rifleman, bellbirds and tui.
- 3.2.2 Rat control in the reserve is delivered through the aerial application of 1080. An aerial operation will commence in the next fine weather window. Stoats, ferrets and feral cats invade the reserve from adjoining farmland but trapping efforts by Horizons and Greater Wellington Regional Council in the buffer significantly reduce the risk of invasion. Adult kiwi are particularly vulnerable to ferret predation. Traps in the reserve provide a second line of defence against the predators. The new walk-through aviary, opened in February 2016 by the Minister of Conservation, is proving to be very popular and the visitor centre is gearing up for a strong summer visitor count. The transfer of management of the visitor centre, captive management and restoration from the Department of Conservation to the Board is operating well. Bob Francis, Pukaha Board Chair, would likely welcome an invitation to attend the next meeting to provide more information on this transition and further growth of Pukaha's conservation and economic contribution to the Tararua District.

Manawatu Estuary

- 3.2.3 Manawatu Estuary is one of six in wetlands in New Zealand to be recognised as internationally significant wetlands by the International Wetland (Ramsar) Convention. A key aspect of this status is the migratory birds. The area includes land and waters for which Horizons, Horowhenua District Council and DOC have responsibility. Management is coordinated through the Manawatu Estuary Management Group, which includes iwi and community groups.
- 3.2.4 Migratory birds have started to return for the summer season. Summer work programme is underway with focus on weed and pest control. DOC has not been alerted to any planned events on the estuary (eg. kiteboarding) this summer.

Te Apiti Manawatu Gorge Biodiversity Project

- 3.2.5 The first meeting of a revised Governance Group occurred in September under the Chairmanship of Bruce Gordon. The meeting focused on the need for the development of a new long-term biodiversity plan, renewed neighbour engagement programme and more detailed reporting on all work streams. The next meeting is scheduled for December. The summer work programme is underway with the plant pest old man's beard, rats, possums and mustelids a key focus. There was a slip on a section of the 10 km east to west track in mid-September. Although the slip is still active, DOC has assessed options and a bid has been made to DOC's capital fund to get the track re-routed and opened as soon as possible. This is likely to be in the new year. A bid to the mid-size tourism fund was lodged on behalf of the Gorge project seeking funding to upgrade toilet facilities within the area. This was unsuccessful and feedback was provided to inform the rebid of this project in the second round of this fund.

Biosecurity work in the Rangitikei

- 3.2.6 The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) contracts DOC to provide biosecurity control of pyp grass and white bryony in the Rangitikei District. MPI and DOC have agreed on a contract for the 2016-17 season and work is underway.

Rangitikei and Tararua Tourism

- 3.2.7 DOC is focused on supporting regional tourism growth. A current initiative is to make two huts in the Ruahine Ranges bookable as a trial this summer. This complements our other focus on securing more reliable access into the Ruahine Forest Park assets. More predictable experiences in the park should support new visitors and the surrounding local communities.

Conservation Management Strategy

- 3.2.8 DOC's review of the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy is progressing well and is scheduled to be notified as early as December. DOC looks forward to continued constructive engagement with Horizons on this document.

4 Spotlight On Kia Wharite

- 4.1.1 Air New Zealand Great Walk Biodiversity Partnership – The Whanganui District was successful in securing funding for the Restoring the Whanganui River Forest Corridor project. The aims of the project are to improve forest condition, enhance biodiversity values and understand the growth of the kiwi population along the Whanganui Journey. This will allow for additional pest control and monitoring along the river corridor.
- 4.1.2 The partnership will add \$127k in year 1, \$133k in year 2, \$83k in year 3 and \$83k in year 4.

- 4.1.3 Goats – The tender has been notified on the **Government Electronic Tenders Service (GETS)** for a panel of suppliers for ground-based goat control in the Whanganui National Park over the next three years. Up to 34,000 ha of land is hunted each year through the programme.
- 4.1.4 Possums - Planning is underway for the 2017 aerial pest operation in the 52,000 ha Matemateāonga and Waitotara blocks.
- 4.1.5 Rats - Pre-Great Walk season control has been undertaken at all Whanganui Journey campsites using bait stations. These stations will continue to be monitored during the season.
- 4.1.6 Stoats - Maintenance of all stoat traps in the Manganui o te Ao/Retaruke Whio Security Site has continued as planned through the start of the whio breeding season. A total of 85 km of waterway is under protection through this network of traps.
- 4.1.7 Whio - Monitoring of the whio breeding success has begun with the surveys conducted on the Manganui o te Ao, Upper Retaruke and Kaiwhakauaka. A total of 15 pairs, seven single adults and 16 Class I ducklings were sighted. More surveys are to be completed this breeding season.
- 4.1.8 Following a request from the Whio Recovery Group, four whio nests outside the security site will be identified for egg collection, with hatched whio to be included in the captive breeding for release programme. Potential pairs have been identified and are being monitored periodically so that once nesting occurs, the eggs can be translocated and hatched in captivity.

Allanah Irvine
DOC OPERATIONS MANAGER, MANAWATU

Jon Roygard
GROUP MANAGER NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS