

## Tangatapu Wetland Restoration 2014 – Our Vision Begins to Take Shape

This is the third year of planting to restore the ecology of the Tangatapu wetland at the start of the Whangamumu walking track, facilitated by Living Waters Bay of Islands ~ Wai Ora. The past six months have been busy finalising the restoration plan and covenant along with on-going releasing of trees planted in previous years. The degraded wetland is gradually being transformed into a Kahikatea swamp forest and the adjoining slip-prone hillside is being stabilised with hardy natives. One objective of this restoration is to attract native birdlife, especially the endangered Pateke (brown teal duck). This year we took a major step toward making this happen and created ponds in the old meander channels.



On 10 May, our first planting day this year, we planted 3800 plants in the wetland. Forty five people attended and many veteran planters commented that it was the most organized planting day ever and that the preparation had made planting easy!

Here is the Kahikatea grove being planted with the prepared hillside in the background.



So what did Living Waters do to prepare? First we blanket-sprayed the thigh-deep kikuyu. Then, ponds were formed by digger. Since the dead Kikuyu was still too thick for a spade to penetrate the local fire brigade assisted with a controlled fire to burn it off. Sadly, this still left behind a mass of dead kikuyu strings, so we weeded planting spots into the wetland. All of this preparation made easier digging for our planters. Because the vision is full ecological restoration, plants were also carefully placed and colour-coded according to habitat. Wooden stakes for Manuka and pre-placed Kahikatea, Swamp Maire, hoheria and puriri. Colour-coded bamboo stakes were set out for carex secta, umbrella sedge, cabbage trees and flax, which all received plant protectors, protecting them from cheeky Pukeko uprooting them.

A thunderstorm around midday, sent us under cover for lunch and great conversation. Rain didn't last long and a watery sun drew us out planting again. The plant protectors were time consuming (3 bamboos stakes threaded into a soft plastic tube). When the 3<sup>rd</sup> thunderstorm came through many people went home leaving a few plants for the Northland Corrections Employment team to complete planting in the following days. But what a satisfying view at the end of a long day!!



Our second planting day on May 25<sup>th</sup> threatened by a dubious forecast was carried off by 30 keen planters who came from as far away as Kerikeri and Auckland. Another 2000 trees were planted on the hillside. The showers passing through did not deter them.



The five horses in the paddock next door enjoyed our company and watched longingly as we put tasty plants just out of their reach. Last week we ascertained that they must be mineral deficient, as they have been eating the fence posts and even took on a kea trait when they ate the rubber out of the windscreen of our plant delivery vehicle. Sandra kindly donated a special horse mineral lick. Their reaction was to curl up their lips and show their teeth. We took that as a happy sign.

We could not have achieved this without the help of many people. We'd like to thank: Chris Richmond and Sandra Scowen for their ongoing dedication and project coordination. Philip Yates for providing his vehicle for blanket spraying. Spot spraying on the hillside and weedeating dense Kikuyu by Chris, Lindsey Alexander, John Booth, Vic Turner and the Northland Corrections Employment team. Alan McDonald, for digging the ponds. Rana and his crew at the Rawhiti fire station for the controlled burn-off. The Kerikeri Shadehouse, Kerikeri Plant Productions and Alternatives for growing such healthy plants. The Northland Corrections Employment team for carrying the plants up the hill, planting and releasing. Chris Richmond and Vicky Froude for writing the Restoration Management Plan, and Wendy Megget for coordinating the covenant process. Ruth Marsh for writing funding applications and her overall guidance and governance. All the dedicated hard working planters. Eastern Bay of Islands Preservation Society for their support. Our funders, The Ministry for the Environment, Department of Conservation, WWF Habitat Protection Fund, Northland Regional Council and two generous local landowners. Most importantly Vic and Barbara Turner for living their dream and taking a leap of faith covenanting and trusting Living Waters Bay of Islands to oversee the restoration of their land.

If you missed out on the action so far this year, there is a final planting day on 5 June – Arbour Day. And of course, there will be another two or three years of planting. In year 6 or earlier we will begin creating a boardwalk, bird hide and interpretive signs. If you would like to be involved please contact Sandra Scowen at [sandrascowen@vodafone.co.nz](mailto:sandrascowen@vodafone.co.nz) 09 403 8537. For further information check out our website at [www.livingwatersboi.org.nz](http://www.livingwatersboi.org.nz)

Please join us on Arbour day 5<sup>th</sup> June at 10am for a day of planting, staking and releasing. Please RSVP to Chris Richmond at [pacificecologic@gmail.com](mailto:pacificecologic@gmail.com)



Burning off the dead kikuyu!