



COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST CHARITABLE TRUST (March 2016)

Preparing plans seems to be the order of the day at the moment. As mentioned, one important element of the kiwi translocation proposal is a Dog Management Plan, and our small team is getting close to a final product for the Department of Conservation to have a look at.

Margaret Pohe and I have also been putting in the time for our next funding application round with Foundation North. If successful, this will allow us to give more hours to our trapping team as we start to consider the next extended area of Pukenui Forest to be trapped.

We have been informed by the Department of Conservation that they are about to upgrade the loop track that starts at the Amalin Drive car park. This will be very helpful for walkers and visiting tourists unused to the forest, which is much more challenging than people realise.

Further to which, the regular trapping teams will be going back into Pukenui Forest to collect any unused toxins after the December knock down.

Anecdotal comments suggest that rats, and particularly possums, are now in very low numbers, and our trapping team continues to keep stoats under constant pressure. Birds, lizards and invertebrates will slowly increase in numbers back into the forest.

The Pukenui Forest Trust Business Plan has recently expired (2012-2015), and on re-reading it, it tells me that we have stuck to our "game plan" pretty closely. The Trust itself was formed in 2008 and tasked itself to control pests, collect baseline data, enhance recreational values, promote public education and advocacy, develop good, strong relationships with our key stakeholders (Department of Conservation, Whangarei District Council, Northland Regional Council, Iwi, Whangarei Museum, Quarry Gardens, Quarry Arts Centre) and, of course, raise funds to achieve all of the above.

In a kauri snailshell, we were granted a generous three years of funding by the ASB Community Trust (now Foundation North) plus a grant from the Whangarei District Council. This has enabled us to employ staff, purchase traps and toxins to reduce pests (all goats removed, possums and rats less than 10% over 700 hectares), work with volunteers, schools and North Tec, develop good relationships with our key stakeholders and collect baseline data (bats, fish, lizards, pests and kiwi).

All that now remains is to achieve another successful funding application and the Pukenui Forest Trust will continue to grow as a key environmental and corporate player in the Whangarei District.

Gerry Brackenbury

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