



## ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

### Executive Summary

Weed Action is a Community based organisation focussed on protecting the natural values of the precious native ecosystems on Whangārei Head's peninsula through removing invasive environmental weeds.

We took a momentous step this year and became an independent Charitable Trust and renamed ourselves **Weed Action Native Habitat Restoration Trust** (WANHRT) to reflect our primary focus –to restore native habitats. Establishing the Trust has been an important achievement and we want to acknowledge the support of the Whangārei Heads Landcare Forum which has been our legal entity for the past 7 years.

This year we have developed a meaningful relationship with Ngāti Wai and local hapu Ngāti Korora / Te Waiariki and with them, established the Waka Hourua partnership. Strengthening this treaty partnership has been mutually beneficial as the Weed Action team learn about Te Ao Maori ways of being and local hapu are trained and supported in ecological weed management.

Although WANHRT is primarily funded by the Northland Regional Council (NRC) for our work with landowners, this year we were successful through the Whangārei District Council (WDC) Long Term Plan process, to receive \$15,000 per annum for the next 3 years. This funding will enable us to work with more confidence and consistency on WDC reserves.

From these established funding sources we have leveraged for funding from; Lottery Environment for additional privet control work across the peninsula and from WDC – Covid Relief funding to facilitate our work across the landscape and with the Ngāti Wai team complete many contractor hours on Public Conservation Land (PCL's) and Reserves.

### *In the 2020/ 2021 financial year we operated 5 key programmes working at a landscape level across the peninsula*

- 1. Landowner Support Programme** - (Funded by the Northland Regional Council- High Value Area)  
– This programme is multi-pronged and designed to enable landowners and groups to control pest weeds and remove barriers to weed action. We provide public outreach, engagement, education, dispensing of herbicide and property site visits.
- 2. Conservation Land Buffer Zone Programme** – We engage landowners on Reserve and PCL buffer zones and support them to gain funding through the contestable Northland Regional Council Bio Fund initiatives. In these partnerships landowners must provide 50% of the funding or effort.
- 3. Parua Bay Privet Buffer Programme** – (Funded by landowners and the Northland Regional Council CPCA (Community Pest Control Area) This 5 year programme supports landowners removing tree privet and creating a buffer zone in the Parua Bay area. The aim is to prevent this most invasive weed from spreading into our forests.

4. **Reserves and Public Conservation Land Programme** – (Funded by; Whangārei District Council, Lottery Environment Funding, WDC –Covid Relief Funding). This programme engages Weed Action volunteers to work on iconic reserves such as Mt Manaia and Reotahi and support and train these groups and fund contractor work in high density weed areas outside the physical scope of volunteers.
5. **Waka Hourua Partnership** – (WDC – Covid Relief funding.) In partnership with Ngāti Wai, Ngāti Korora and Te Waiariki hapu, WANHRT has trained and supported local hapu members to become a dynamic and effective weed control team. This motivated team works on Reserves and Public Conservation Land including Mt Manaia, Reotahi and whenua Māori. Ngāti Wai kaumatua provide cultural guidance as we work on site of significance.

## Programme Reports

### 1. Landowner Support Programme – NRC -High Value Area (HVA)

The highlights below indicates what this programme has achieved:

#### **Supporting Neighbourhoods and other Groups**

Twelve one-off events using our event kits or coordination hours, supported landowners or groups remove weeds from either private land or adjoining weed corridors.

#### **Resident Initiated Action**

Residents of Urquhart's Bay, Beasley Road and Our Rd requested support to assist them with large infestations of moth plant, cotoneaster, queen of the night, wild ginger, chinese privet and blue passion flower.

#### **Raising Awareness**

Parua Bay School – We offered an education opportunity to support the students understand forest regeneration and the impacts of weeds on ecosystems. They Planted 250 native seedlings and witnessed different stages of forest regeneration.

#### **Weed Amnesty**

This year 3 x 9mskips were made available for the community. All skips were filled and 27m<sup>3</sup> of some of the nastiest ecological weeds at the Head disposed of.

#### **Whangārei Heads Citizens Association Newsletter**

Five articles were submitted to the WHCA newsletter for distribution to our community. These articles continue to be a highly effective medium to promote weed awareness.

#### **Weed Education**

Our weed of the month permanent sign and roadside weed identification was updated followed by Facebook posts and control methods. This signage helps bring weed awareness to the community.

### Strategic use of HVA Funds

62 contractor hours were spent to support 2 landowners with significant weed issues in strategic areas of Mt Manaia and Taurikura Ridge. Large tracts of elaeagnus, wild ginger and woolly nightshade were controlled. One mature Taiwan cherry tree was felled on Darch Point Rd.



Before and after pictures of wild ginger removed near Mt Manaia using strategic fun

### Weed Workshop

Our October 2020 workshop provided hands-on demonstrations of control techniques. These workshop are an invaluable way to upskill our community in weed control techniques.

### 2021 Calendar

This calendar is full of great weed identification and eradication information and 200 copies were sold for a gold coin donation. A big thanks to our local business sponsors; Totalspan Northland, WHAT Automotive, Manaia Excavators, GAS Parua Bay and Calder's Design & Print.

### Fundraising

Committee members have put in huge hours applying for and receiving funding from a number of funding organisations.

**Volunteer events 121, Volunteer members 42, herbicide allocations 61.**

**Total volunteer hours 4314**

**Which equates in \$\$ terms to =\$107,850**

**Value of additional Funding obtained =\$82,160**

**Over 500 contractor hours invested on PCL's and Reserves**

## 2. Conservation Land Buffer Zone Programme

WANHRT supported three buffer zone projects on private property connected to Mt Manaia and Reotahi under the NRC Biofund initiative. Landowners provide an in kind or financial commitment to match NRC funding. This work prevents weed invasion into adjoining PCLs and reserves.

## 3. Parua Bay Privet Buffer Programme (PBPB)

This 2<sup>nd</sup> of 5 year project continues to move ahead strongly. Our year two NRC contract for weed control hours increased from 225 to 450 hours and provided a wonderful opportunity to engage more landowners and to extend the project from 11 to 30 properties.

### Landowner Weed Control Achievements.

The number of hours completed by CPCA signatories was 467 with most landowners completing their hours. Combined with NRC contribution, just over 1005 hours of privet control work was completed during the 2020-21 financial year. This combined effort made huge inroads to the privet infestations in the Parua Bay area.



Before and after ...

### Materials and Resource budgets

Landowners were grateful for the products supplied and some borrowed Weed Actions drills so they could do their own drilling and filling. The focus was on killing large seeding privet trees and drill and fill was the main method used.

### Coordination Hours

Regular project updates were sent to landowners with tips about privet and other weed species control. The landowners kept records of their monthly hours and contacted the coordinator for advice or requests for herbicide.



### **General Comments and observations**

The PBPB has been a big wake up for Weed Action as we witness how insidiously privet is taking over. What seems like intact forests, has privet growing under and through tall canopy trees and has been steadily infesting the whole of Parua Bay. This privet buffer programme provides a positive community networking opportunity, bringing neighbours together for a common purpose. The Parua Bay community and Weed Action have pushed back the privet tide but privet needs to remain a key focus of our work so that it doesn't become a dominant species.



Ngati Wai crew member removing a large thicket of tree privet

## **4. Reserves and Public Conservation Land Programme**

Our work on Public Conservation Land across the peninsula continues to be a core focus. These iconic reserves are of deep significance to tangata whenua and the community at large. An important function of WANHRT is to advocate and be the voice of our conservation lands and seek resourcing through council, DOC and government departments.

Weed Action has a growing profile and this year, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Simon Upton met with us to discuss from a community perspective the scale of weed issues we face, including the struggle for resourcing. He was very interested in us as an organisation working with weeds using a community engagement model. The PCE are working to bring to the government's attention the environmental disaster that is occurring in our forest due to the lack of funding and appropriate management of these taonga.

Despite the frustration of limited resources for our reserves and conservation land, with the help of the Whangārei Heads community, NRC and WDC we continue to make a difference.

### **Whangārei District Council**

WHAT made a submission to the WDC long-term plan (LTP) and gratefully received a guaranteed \$15,000 per annum for the next three years. This funding will give us some certainty and confidence to plant weed control on council land for the short term and will be used to support our volunteer groups, events and strategic weed management projects.

### **Weed Action Volunteer Groups and events**

Regular Weed Action groups met throughout the year including Ocean Beach, Manaia Bush Recovery Group, Take Back Reotahi, FORT – Bream Head FORT (Forest Recovery Team), Tamaterau Reserve and Ritchie Road Reserve. Weed Action supported volunteer groups and individuals both hands-on and providing our event kit, protective equipment and herbicides.

### **Taking Back Reotahi**

WANHRT has directed meaningful time and effort into this reserve alongside the work of a couple of amazing volunteers (Marc and Frank) and a dedicated volunteer group. We are planning to make this reserve a flagship of native habitat restoration and accordingly are directing a good proportion of our fundraising efforts in this direction.

A draft 2020 Reotahi Weed Management and Restoration plan mapped areas where initial control works on key weed target species had been achieved over the last few years and identified current target species of elaeagnus, wild ginger, woolly nightshade, cotoneaster, bush cherry, Queen of the Night and brush wattle.

Our work to date has been about buying time for the native habitats to survive by removing the large seeding infestations and working to change the dominance in favour of native species. By mapping management zones and earmarking zones for contractors and the community we can better plan and implement control works into the future. It is hoped that this plan will provide a template for restoration through weed control at a landscape level for other reserves.



**A controlled for key weed species at Reotahi and Vinsen Reserve from 2018 to June 30th 2021**



### Wilding Conifer Programme

As part of the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) National Wilding Conifer Programme (WCP) WANHRT was asked by WDC to oversee large scale pine control works on 34 hectares of WDC land at the base of Mt Manaia. The commission received from this work is being reinvested into control work on WDC reserve lands, such as Mt Manaia and Reotahi creating a win-win for control of invasive weeds impacting on these iconic ecosystems.



Part of the wilding pine control area near Manaia that WANT gained commission funds from.

### Manaia Bush Recovery Group

This volunteer group has met regularly to deal with large weed infestations on WDC land that adjoins the steep faces of Mt Manaia. Large weed densities have been reduced substantially and with continued follow up work this area will become a more healthy and robust native habitat.



Two key areas of forest (5 ha) controlled for weeds by Manaia Bush Recovery Group

### **Other PCL and Reserve Work**

We have committed time and effort to other smaller project such as; Road verge work at the golf course, organising Doc volunteer days at Ocean Beach, facilitating groups at Darch Point, working bees at Bream Head and Home Bay, killing 25 wasp nest, skirmishes with Marc Lawrence doing 2<sup>nd</sup> phase control on Reotahi and Manaia, controlling everlasting pea with Frank Bates in Vinsen Reserve, advocating to WDC and obtaining funding to facilitate contract works on Reotahi Reserve (elaegnus) and Richie Rd (tree privet).

### **Privet lotteries funding**

A successful funding application provided \$16,290 to control privet. This funding supported our Parua Bay Privet Buffer programme and enabled Weed Action to work on outlier infestations of chinese and tree privet that threatened conservation land across the peninsula. As a result, huge areas of tree privet and chinese privet have been controlled including areas in Pataua South, Ocean Beach, Taurikura and McLeod's Bay. An estimated combined 5000 tree over 60 hectares were controlled during the course of this funding opportunity.



**Combined areas controlled for Chinese and Tree Privet in 2021, Whangarei Heads**



## 5. Waka Hourua Partnership with Ngāti Wai

In the second half of 2020 WANHRT strengthened our partnership with Ngāti Wai and after a very meaningful treaty workshop, Kaumatua Hori Parata, Te Kaurinui Parata and the Weed Action team, discussed how we would work together. Hori provided cultural induction, tangata whenua values and guidance around wahi tapu sites.

WANHRT has supported the development of the hapu based weed team by providing gear, training and on the ground coaching on habitat restoration and environmental weed control.

We have continued to support this growing weed force and they have completed significant amounts of control work on various reserves using Privet Lotteries Fund, WDC, CPCA and Covid Relief Funding. Alongside working with WANHRT, the team have been employed as subcontractors to work on MPI's wilding conifer project across the peninsula.

This type of skilled work-force will be a key component to solving the landscape level ecological weed issues Whangārei Heads faces. On a recent visit with the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment organised by Jo Barr of NRC this model was met with positive comment and support.



(L to R) Some of the team) Te Wairua, Ollie, Kruger, Ray and Nga Waru

## Summary Conclusion

2020-2021 has been a challenging and expansive year for WANHRT. We have implemented innovative projects and added new funding streams.

The need to improve our Health and Safety systems has become paramount as we ensure contractors, sub-contractors and volunteers are safe and we will be pursuing SiteWise accreditation in the near future.

The formation of the Trust has required the implementation of new financial and administrative systems and the resourcing to manage these systems. More recently the decision by our highly respected Coordinator, Kelly Maxwell to resign after 3 years, created a sense of loss and her knowledge and skill will be greatly missed.

With Kelly's resignation, we decided to assess our needs going into the future and have contracted Wendy Ambury to provide operational oversight for the organisation and a new role for Mike Urlich has been established as the Projects Coordinator. Jan Marshall will continue as the Coordinator for the Parua Bay Privet Buffer and Patricia Santos will take on a field officer role managing our volunteer events.

After expansion, there is a definite need for consolidation and we will take the remainder of 2021 to consolidate the Trust, integrate new Team members and source funding for the projects we are passionate about maintaining.

Finally, we want to send our sincere thanks to the many volunteers, landowners, committee members and our supporters on council who get behind the work we are doing. Together we are making a difference and it is heartening to witness our forests being restored.

## The Team

### **The Weed Action Native Habitat Restoration Trust**