

# Friends of Waiwhetu Stream 2019 AGM - Minutes

Held 11 November 2019, 7.30pm, Pelorus Trust Sports House, Hutt Park, Seaview

---

## 1. Welcome (Meeting Chair – Michael Ellis)

Michael Ellis (Deputy Chair FWS) welcomed those present and outlined the evening ahead. Housekeeping matters were covered including what to do to evacuate the building and where to meet outside.

## 2. Recognition of distinguished guests

Michael acknowledged the following distinguished guests present:

- Prue Lamason – GWRC Councillor
- Tui Lewis – HCC Deputy Mayor
- Simon Edwards – HCC Councillor
- Josh Briggs – HCC Councillor
- Josh Van Lier – GWRC Councillor

## 3. Attendance record and apologies

Attending the AGM were 7 committee members, 5 distinguished guests, 6 Council and related agency staff members, 1 guest speaker, and 6 FWS members – 25 people in total.

Apologies: HCC Mayor Campbell Barry, HCC Councillor Andy Mitchell, Chris Bishop MP, Alistair Allan (GWRC staff), Janet Lawson (HCC staff), Rachel Tallon (FWS Committee), Owen and Julie Williams, Andrew Campbell-Stokes, Danielle Wills.

*Acceptance of apologies – Moved by Michael Ellis, seconded by Vera Green-Bargiacchi. Motion carried.*

## 4. Minutes of 2018 AGM (Meeting Chair)

Copies of the 2018 AGM minutes were available for all present to look at. Michael asked for any corrections to be advised. None advised.

*Acceptance of 2018 AGM minutes – Moved by Grant Webby, seconded by Councillor Tui Lewis. Motion carried.*

## 5. Nominations for 2019/20 Committee / Election of Committee (Meeting Chair)

Nominations: Merylyn Merrett, Michael Ellis, Henry Steele, Rachel Tallon, Vera Green-Bargiacchi, Rosemary Webby, Grant Webby, Roy Edney, Ros Wech. No further nominations.

*Election of nominated individuals – Moved by Michael Ellis, seconded by Vera Green-Bargiacchi. Motion carried.*

## 6. Annual Report (FoWS Chair – Marilyn Merrett)

Marilyn provided an illustrated report of activities for the past year.

Points to note:

- 2018 Strategic Plan reviewed with eleven initiatives confirmed:
  - Installation of new picnic tables
  - Installation of three signs marking historical locations
  - Installation of distance markers from Wainui Rd to Tilbury St
  - Sculpture on streambank with 2014 Award money
  - Fish passage improvements at St Ronans Ave weir
  - Continued support of naturalisation of Naenae concrete channel below Rata Street
  - Completion of a footpath and bridge linking Riverside Drive Central and Riverside Drive North
  - Documenting FWS rehabilitation of Waiwhetu Stream
  - Improved pedestrian access across Wainui Rd between Hinemoa St and Riverside Drive South
  - Continued streambank restoration planting and development of the Rishworth urban forest restoration project
  - Ongoing regular activities – streambank plantings, stream corridor rubbish collection, citizen science activities, cape pondweed patrols, website maintenance, stream advocacy and community education, and continued liaison with GWRC and HCC.

Progress made on six of these.

- Liaison between GWRC, HCC & FWS - stream management meetings organised by Mike Jensen from GWRC were initiated to facilitate good communication and relationships, and to ensure that management issues, especially around weed control are discussed, leading to good outcomes for the stream environment. There has been a hiatus in these 6-monthly meetings since May 2018 but they resumed last week.
- Meetings with HCC Mayor - In response to some issues raised at our 2018 AGM, there were three meetings with the previous Mayor, Ray Wallace, one in November 2018 attended by Andrew Campbell-Stokes and me, one in December 2018 with Riba and me, and then In February he hosted our first committee meeting of the year in the Mayoral Chambers so he could meet the entire committee and express his support of our activities. He complimented us about the improvements and our work along Waiwhetu Stream.
- Rishworth Reserve urban forest restoration project – a successful year with good plant growth. About 160 plants were added this year, focussing along the stream edge and gap filling elsewhere. Efforts are concentrated on releasing, weeding and mulching with isolated spot spraying. 'Dead flax' area at front entrance has been weed-eated and sprayed in preparation for planting in 2020. Not much volunteer assistance this year. Vivien Pohl has had to withdraw from active involvement after 7 years for health reasons.
- Streambank plantings - about 1270 plants planted this year bringing the overall total to >30 000 plants along about 5.7 km of stream banks. Two main plantings: one at the

southern end of Hamerton St, Naenae and the other along Hayward Tce. Smaller plantings done around the Te Whiti Park footbridge and behind houses along Cleary St. We also supported a group of local residents with planting along the edge of Awamutu Stream in a small reserve in Awamutu Grove.

- Weed mat usage – GWRC and HCC representatives on joint Hutt Valley Floodplain Management Sub-Committee agreed in May 2019 that non-woven weed mat could continue to be used on streambank plantings until an effective alternative was available. A weed mat trial was proposed with other mattings currently available. Five types of weed mat (jute, wool, coconut fibre, eco mat and non-woven polypropylene) with plants put down in 10 m long section along Hayward Terrace including a control section and another section pre-treated with a weed suppressant spray. Monitoring carried by independent consultant on 22 October, 11 weeks after installation, with further inspection to be carried out in 3 months' time. Eco mat and coconut fibre showed significant buttercup growth underneath, while weeds deeply rooted through jute and wool mats.
- Waitui Cres Deconstruction Project – clearing of a weedy, overgrown area of public land opposite Waitui Cres began in August by volunteers from Wellington Electricity and has been continued by a small number of FWS volunteers since, especially Franz Hubman. Although we expected to clear weeds, we had no idea of the extent of dumped domestic and garden waste hidden under the growth that need to be removed including a collapsed shed, car body parts, an old formica dining table top, a microwave, and the proverbial kitchen sink! Tonnes of broken up concrete rubble have also been removed along with multiple sheets of corrugated iron. Downers have been employed to remove rotten and unwanted trees and branches including a very large willow. The area should be ready for planting in 2020.
- Berm rubbish collection – regular monthly clean-ups of stream corridor have continued with bridge to bridge teams covering from Naenae Park in the north to Hutt Park in the south. Awamutu Stream, which emerges near Woburn Railway Station and discharges into Waiwhetu Stream at Hutt Park, is also a rubbish conveyance source of rubbish and has been cleaned on occasions, especially in the station area. On average there are 22 volunteers each month. This year 300 hours were given to keeping the stream and its banks free of rubbish. A total of 254 50-litre bags of rubbish were prevented from reaching and polluting the harbour. In August a group of students from the Kimi Ora (special needs) School helped pick up rubbish opposite Waiwhetu Marae, supervised by Rachel Tallon.
- Cape pondweed clearance – Franz Hubman has continued regular patrols for vagrant Cape pondweed plants. Only two plants removed this year.
- Citizen Science activities:
  - 3-monthly macro-invertebrate surveys of the Stream at a site just downstream of the Birdwood Rd Bridge are a means of monitoring the health of the stream. The stream health continues to hover between poor and fair based on a NIWA index.
  - Fish surveys in November and February below and above the St Ronans Ave weir continue to show that some inanga are able to swim up the 800 mm high weir although flow conditions have to be suitable to allow fish passage. It is still not known whether

inanga are able to negotiate the floating ramp. An article in the June 2019 edition of Forest and Bird magazine described inanga swimming up the back face of the weir.

- We are hoping to get some baseline monitoring underway at the Rishworth Project site (more on this next year).
- Plan Change 43 submission – Michael Ellis submitted on Plan Change 43 on behalf of FWS regarding the impact of intensified urban development on the Waiwhetu Stream. It would appear from the recently released Independent Commissioners’ Report on the Plan Change that our submission contributed to recommendations for new residential developments to be stormwater neutral with rainwater tanks and a minimum area of permeable surface required to assist with the management of stormwater runoff created by any development.
- Stream advocacy – 6-monthly meetings with Wellington Water staff re water quality matters affecting Waiwhetu Stream, continued involvement in consultation with HCC, WW and other stakeholders re application for renewed temporary discharge consents for overflows from Seaview Wastewater Treatment Plant.
- Annual Waiwhetu Stream walkover with GWRC and HCC – This was held on a fine day in March. Stops included the concrete channel naturalisation project in Naenae at Rata St, the lower end of the concrete channel where an earlier, more expensive naturalisation project was trialled, a successful green engineering bank protection trial below Tilbury St, the St Ronans Ave weir (where GWRC Councillor Prue Lamason formally unveiled the mosaic around the inner walls of the picnic table with the artist, Rachel Silver, present), the Clearly St plantings and macro-invertebrate monitoring site, the gap between Riverside Drive Central and Riverside Drive South at the Wainui Rd Bridge to talk about possible safe pedestrian crossing options, the Bell Rd Bridge to look at the carvings on the pink granite coconut rolling stones from the old Griffins Biscuit Factory, and the Hutt River Estuary rock wall under construction downstream from the Waiwhetu Stream mouth (a joint GWRC / HCC Project).
- 2018-19 plan for weeding, planting, maintenance – this document first initiated in 2014 has been updated by Andrew Campbell-Stokes (copy available on table for inspection after AGM).
- Other events:
  - Conservation Showcase event organised by GWRC and HCC to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Conservation Week in September 2019 – FWS participated in this event with other environmental care groups and agencies.

This year volunteers have contributed more than 2,040 hours, slightly fewer than last year because of the reduced number of plantings. However, this is a significant contribution by the community and a reflection of the value placed on the stream and its corridor. Since 2011 the total number of volunteer hours is about 16,300.

Merilyn acknowledged the contributions of all committee members and other individuals including Brendan Elks (Naenae Nature Trust, who stepped down from Committee in 2019), Barbara de St Croix, Roy Edney, Franz Hubman and Vivien Pohl.

Michael thanked Marilyn for presenting her Annual Report.

## **7. Presentation (Meeting Chair)**

### **Dr Amanda Valois (NIWA) – Carried Away: Streams and Rivers Reveal Our Dirty Secrets**

Amanda gave a very enthusiastic presentation on the state of our urban streams, urban streams as waste streams and solutions to the urban stream syndrome. The presentation drew on her practical experience on monitoring human impacts on urban streams in the Wellington area.

She talked about a community-based water monitoring project on the Hutt River to investigate the toxic algal problem on summer which prevents swimming and bringing dogs to the river. The project compared the results of monitoring of cyanobacteria and other variables (E coli, water clarity and temperature) obtained by community volunteer against similar results obtained by professionally trained Council staff. The monitoring results were very comparable.

Amanda noted that urban streams are important areas for recreation, connection with the environment and relaxation. In addition they provide key ecosystem services in a tough, urban environment. However, they have in the past been viewed as a nuisance in an urban environment and been piped to permit development (e.g. 95% of the urban streams in Wellington are piped). Those streams that remain have become 'dumping ground' for all sorts of human-related detritus.

As a consequence of urban development (the urban stream syndrome):

- Storm runoff hydrographs are flashier than for natural, vegetated catchments
- Urban streams contain a high concentration of nutrients and contaminants
- Channel morphology is significantly altered
- Species richness is altered and invasive species are frequently present

In her research work, Amanda studies two types of human 'waste' which affect our ability to enjoy and swim in our urban streams: faecal waste and municipal waste.

Monitoring of faecal waste (sourced from illegal wastewater to stormwater connections, leakage from damaged wastewater pipes to the stormwater network, and emergency overflows from wastewater networks to natural watercourses) is the key to finding and fixing problems. Regular monitoring of rivers and streams helps keep us safe.

Stream litter tells us a lot about the 'health' of a catchment. While there are many community volunteer groups involved on the collection of litter are doing a good job by which helping to clean up our rivers and streams, monitoring litter, just like monitoring any other pollutant, is key to understanding and fixing our waste problem.

Project Kaiwharawhara is a community-based project in Wellington City aimed at:

- Quantifying how much litter is being transported by the Kaiwharawhara Stream into Wellington Harbour
- What proportion of this litter is plastic

- Where is this litter coming from
- How does this litter get into the stream

A recent report from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (November 2019) reviewing how well NZ reports on the state of its environment notes that the *“huge gaps in environmental data and knowledge bedevil our understanding”*. The report points out that the system is fragmented. There are multiple pieces of legislation, often unclear responsibilities and inconsistencies in how data is collected and analysed which make it hard to construct a reliable, national picture.

Amanda concluded that what we need from our urban streams is:

- Monitoring data on the impact our growing population has
- A benchmark at which to assess change
- Easily understood local (place-based) data to encourage changes in human behaviour

How do we get there:

- Understanding people’s values and how they change
- Involving the community in both monitoring but also setting agenda and using data
- Community involvement is a key part of communication

#### **8. Any other business (Meeting Chair)**

None.

Rosemary Webby drew attention to the site photographic comparisons of streambank vegetation growth covering the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 years pinned to the back wall.

Spare flexinet covers for recycle bins were available for attendees to pick up if they wanted one.

Michael closed the meeting at 9.15pm

#### **9. Supper**

Refreshments followed the AGM.

Thanks to Riba Greally (HCC staff) for making all the arrangements for the AGM.

---