

Keeping our

# Dunes Alive



Newsletter Winter 2011

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## Coming up...

- Trustee meeting, July
- Revised strategic plan
- Website overhaul

## Comments from Mark Dean, Chairperson

The Dune Restoration Trust has just met a major milestone - the 12th and final workshop of our Sustainable Management Fund project 'Empowering Coastal Communities to Adapt to Climate Change' was recently held at Mount Maunganui. Unfortunately the weather was appalling with torrential rain and gale force winds and the turnout, as you would expect, was disappointing. Despite this, those who came felt it was very successful. All those who have attended one of these workshops around the country will attest to the value of the information that was shared with members of the local community.

More great news this month is that the Dune Restoration Trust has been successful with its application for funding from the Community Environment Fund to carry out a major three year research project on back dunes. The information from the vegetation trials that will be set out around the country, will be invaluable to those 'Dunies' who are undertaking restoration projects on back dunes in the future. With this project on the go, the Dunes Trust has a very busy three years ahead and we all look forward to meeting you in your patch of dunes, and to hearing project updates at our conferences.

Speaking of conferences, in February we held a very successful conference at Ohope Beach in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. Despite hard economic times the attendance was wonderful and all those who came to the Bay went home stimulated and enthusiastic. Thanks to all those who helped make this conference a success: our sponsors, the organising team and all who attended and talked about their projects and ideas. This incredible spirit of sharing has become a hall mark of the Dunes Trust. The conference presentations have just been loaded to the website, so check them out. Enjoy the newsletter and as always, email any feedback and suggestions to [info@dunestrust.org.nz](mailto:info@dunestrust.org.nz).

## Dunes Trust successful with MfE Community Environment Fund bid

The Dunes Trust has been successful in securing three year funding from the Ministry for the Environment Community Environment Fund for the back dune restoration project. Despite awful weather conditions, representatives from Greater Wellington, Ministry for the Environment, Ngati Toa, the local coast care group and Dunes Trust Trustees joined with Minister Hon. Dr Nick Smith and GW Councillor Barbara Donaldson to celebrate the news at a planting day at Onehunga Bay, north of Wellington.

Hon. Dr Nick Smith said that "Sand dunes are one of the most compromised major ecosystems in New Zealand. Many dune species are threatened, including sand tussock and pingao. The work of the Trust is helping reverse this trend."

Hon. Dr Nick Smith and Greater Wellington Councillor Barbara Donaldson plant back dune species at Onehunga Bay in celebration of World Environment Day and announcement of the Dunes Trust funding. Photo: Tim Park



## Three year climate change project winds up

The Dunes Trust climate change project is in its last stages with the workshop series finished and handbook heading to the printers. The project, co-funded by the Dunes Trust and the Sustainable Management Fund from the Ministry for the Environment, has been highly successful, reaching communities throughout New Zealand.

One of the key components of the project was the 12 public workshops focused on the likely effects of climate change in coastal areas in NZ, and what we need to prepare and plan for over the coming years. Given recent events in Japan and the numerous earthquakes that have occurred in New Zealand centred mainly in Christchurch, the final workshop touched on Tsunami risks and the role of dune systems to deal with small Tsunami events.

Workshops have been well supported by local Councils, the Department of Conservation, Coastcare groups and local communities.



The Dunes Trust would like to thank the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Management Fund, the supporting Councils, Department of Conservation staff, Coastcare Groups, all our speakers and production crew as well as all the community members who attended these workshops. Your continued support helps keep our dunes alive!

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## Adapting productive coastal landscapes to climate change highlights opportunities for collaboration

Over the past year Jim Dahm and David Bergin have led a project talking with land-users, such as farmers and foresters, to identify opportunities to better integrate and sustain both productive land use and critical coastal ecosystems (including coastal wetlands & estuaries) in the face of projected climate change. Historically, coastal ecosystems have been lost or damaged by productive land uses, such as farming and forestry, which has ensued ongoing conflict between environmental groups, regulators and industry. These conflicts will only intensify with the added pressures of further intensified land use and climate change impacts. The project came about by the desire of the Dunes Trust to proactively talk with land users to try and identify opportunities and come up with solutions rather than continuing the conflict.

One of the main findings of this initial study showed that there are significant opportunities to restore degraded coastal dune-land systems in collaboration with land users. This will make coastal landscapes more resilient to climate change impacts and benefit the longevity and resilience of productive landscapes, for example by reducing the negative economic impacts of dune blow-outs. The project also found that to develop innovative and workable solutions, there needs to be less emphasis on regulation and compulsion, and an increased emphasis on flexibility of process, collaboration and developing mutual respect between parties with often conflicting aspirations. Whilst undoubtedly challenging, we see this work as an essential aspect of creating resilience in the New Zealand landscape, both environmentally and economically.

The Dunes Trust would like to thank the Ministry for the Environment's Sustainable Farming Fund, the landowners, interest groups, particularly the Landcare Trust, and the individuals who contributed to this valuable project.

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## Dunes Trust submission to the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity

The Dunes Trust submitted in support of the proposed National Policy Statement on Biodiversity, primarily because it will require all councils to identify areas of native vegetation on sand dunes in District Plans within five years of the policy taking effect and manage these so there is no net loss.

It is an undisputed fact that we have already lost most of our wild dunelands in New Zealand, and we are still losing them. Our submission noted concerns around the offsetting provisions and that there was not much direction to actively engage with communities to manage natural areas or to provide incentives for landowners to protect natural areas. For further information contact Trustees Tim Park or Harley Spence or go to [www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/biodiversity](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/biodiversity).

## Community Environment Fund project: Restoration of indigenous biodiversity on coastal backdunes

The Environment Minister Nick Smith announced on 5th June, World Environment Day, that a grant from the Government's Community Environment Fund (CEF) of \$300,000 will go to the Dune Restoration Trust of New Zealand to restore indigenous biodiversity in coastal environments throughout the country.

To date, dune restoration work has focused primarily on restoration of native sandbinders on the most seaward dune face critical to natural dune form and function. However, many community groups are now also moving into restoration of indigenous biodiversity in backdune areas and facing considerable challenges. These areas are very complex due to greater species and community diversity, a range of sub-environments, and serious problems with invasive exotic vegetation, grazing animal pests, and human pressure.



Photo: Bay of Plenty Regional Council

The purpose of this project is to enhance the capacity of local communities and councils to undertake restoration of indigenous biodiversity in coastal backdune environments through extensive review of existing knowledge and experience, setting up demonstration areas and monitoring sites, and providing practical guidelines for coastal groups, iwi, managing agencies and the wider community.

The project will run over three years and involve work in at least seven regions around NZ including Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Tasman, Canterbury, and Otago, and will therefore cover a wide range of dune environments and climatic settings. The review work, the monitoring sites, the demonstration plots and the field based workshops are likely to collectively involve work at over 50 coastal sites around New Zealand.

Project partners include agencies, iwi and community-based Coast Care groups. To date these include the Northland Regional Council; Environment Waikato; Bay of Plenty Regional Council the Department of Conservation; Greater Wellington Regional Council; Tasman District Council; Te Kohaka o Tuhaitura Trust, Canterbury; Timaru District Council; and the Dunedin City Council. Other councils and interest groups have also indicated a willingness to be involved in the project. Project partners will provide both direct and in-kind support including provision of funding for native plants for regional demonstration sites; facilitating local community involvement in site preparation, planting and maintenance; assisting in maintenance and monitoring; and contributing to the extension of results.



## Summary of 2011 conference presentations now available

Thanks to everyone who supported and participated in our 'Bay of Plenty Beach Bonanza' Conference last February. What a great event! A summary of the presentations is now available to download off the web, go to: [www.dunestrust.org.nz](http://www.dunestrust.org.nz).

If you have suggestions for the location and/or programme for next year please email: [info@dunestrust.org.nz](mailto:info@dunestrust.org.nz)

## Wellington Region 'Take Care' groups move to the back dunes

Robyn Smith, Greater Wellington Regional Council

Greater Wellington Regional Council's ecological restoration programme "Take Care" funds and provides technical advice to 35 groups throughout the region. Eleven of the 25 groups work on dune ecosystems. There are six different groups along the Kapiti coastline at Waitohu, Peka Peka, Waikanae estuary, Waikanae Dunes, Paraparaumu and Paekakariki in Queen Elizabeth Park. Although there is still some foredune planting happening, most of these groups are now working in the mid dune and back dune areas. Plant species being planted this year are a mix of *Coprosma acerosa*, *Carex testacea*, *Lachnagrostis billardierei* and *Poa billardierei* with *Euphorbia glauca* and *Libertia peregrinans* in moist sand hollows. All these species are grown from local seed sources.



*Lachnagrostis billardierei*, mid-back dune species. Photo: Robyn Smith

A recent find of a small remnant of back dune forest has given us a better idea and seed source of what species used to be very common along this coastline. This remnant contains *Corokia cotoneaster*, *Myrsine australis*, *Coprosma crassifolia*, *Melicytus ramiflorus* and *Asplenium oblongifolium* under very old windswept kanuka and is around 200m from the foredune. This remnant adds to our knowledge gleaned from old records of plant lists from the Journal of Botany and the NZ Plant Conservation Network species lists (<http://www.nzpcn.org.nz>).

West of Porirua City is the Whitireia Park restoration group which is gradually replacing marram with spinifex and pingao and is also working on a large area of backdune interspersed with ephemeral streams. Back dune species planted are *Olearia solandri*, *Coprosma propinqua*, *Tetragonia implexicoma*, toetoe and flax.

Petone Beach is also being planted by a dedicated group who are currently working their way west of the Petone wharf. Although the road runs fairly close to the dune system, as is common in urban areas around the country, there is enough space for mid-dune species to be planted behind the foredune.

On the Wellington south coast we have a group who have almost finished restoring dunes at Island Bay having saved this remnant dune from being converted into a footpath many years ago and another group work at Tarakena Bay just around the corner from Wellington airport.

The Tarakena group is mainly restoring backdune areas as habitat for the Little Blue Penguin who breed there but there is also a small pure sand area which is having local pingao added to it this winter. Local matagouri (*Discaria toumatou*) is being grown to help protect nesting areas. On the Wairarapa southern coastline a small group is working on restoring dunes at Whangaimoana. Historic photos show that this dune was dominated by pingao, however grazing and quad bikes almost caused the local extinction of pingao. The group has fenced off the dunes and are currently into a five year weed eradication and planting programme.



Island Bay dune before and after the restoration planting program. Photos: Robyn Smith

## Paraparaumu restoration project underway

Kapiti Coast District Council has commenced a large scale restoration project on its main beach, Paraparaumu. The project runs from just north of the Boat Club, where people access Kapiti Island, 1500m south to the beginning of the rock revetment. A works program of fencing (to manage access and protect dune faces), weed and rabbit control has kicked off with planting planned for this winter.



## Working with Weedbusters

Many of the weeds that Coast and Beach Care groups remove from dune systems have 'escaped' from local gardens. This year the Dunes Trust is going to work closer with the national Weedbusters organisation to coordinate some activities and resources to help out our coastal communities. Check out the Weedbusters website, it has all sorts of information to help identify weeds and get rid of them.

## Restoration trial at Smugglers Bay, Northland

The Department of Conservation in collaboration with the Bream Head Conservation Trust and the Northland Regional Council have recently begun a foredune restoration trial at Smugglers Bay.

Years of rabbit browse, beachgoers tramping over the dunes, grazing and weed invasion have contributed to foredune damage. Instead of sand being trapped by healthy and vigorous spinifex and pingao - blowouts have occurred and sand has continued to travel inland.

David and Michael Bergin from ERL provided advice on how to restore the dune system. They have set up a trial using large driftwood logs hauled up the beach to trap sand. These will be planted in winter with native sand binding species. Rabbit control will also be undertaken. The long term plan is to restore the foredune, backdune and in time the coastal forest.



Smugglers Bay, Northland. Photo: Michael Bergin

## Christchurch - a whole new landscape! Rodney Chambers, CCC



Who said there's no such thing as sea level rise! Unfortunately in this case a chunk of coastal Christchurch dropped down to meet it first.



Beach Grooming Christchurch Style! Not really, just clearing a smooth strip for the University of Calgary's 'seismic tractor' to do a fault line survey along the full length of Christchurch beaches.

Contractors were again busy raising stopbanks at vulnerable points - unfortunately we have shades of New Orleans with some Bexley homes now below high tide levels behind stopbanks.



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## Contact the Dune Restoration Trust of New Zealand

All general enquiries to:

Email: [info@dunestrust.org.nz](mailto:info@dunestrust.org.nz)

Telephone: 04 889 2337

You can also follow our updates on Facebook and Twitter (@DunestrustNZ)

Contact our Chairperson

Mark A Dean

Email: [Mark@naturalenvironments.co.nz](mailto:Mark@naturalenvironments.co.nz)

Mob: (021) 949 339



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