

PROTECTING  
OUR  
COASTLINE

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# Coastline's future reliant on stronger protection policies

by Finn Rainger

TAIRAWHITI will need stronger coastal protection policies to ensure the natural beauty of the region is passed on to future generations, says coastal scientist Dr Amber Dunn.

Her comments were made yesterday at the start of the 2016 Dune Restoration Trust of New Zealand conference, which is being held here to the end of tomorrow.

Some of the country's top sand dune and coastal experts have heard how Tairawhiti has one of the most spectacular and culturally significant coastlines in the New Zealand.

This includes numerous headlands, estuaries, lagoons, a marine reserve, sandy beaches, sand spits and coastal dune systems.

"Our coastline has the highest degree of natural character — meaning we have unmodified coastal environments, free from built elements, and according to a Ministry for the Environment report, these areas have the highest priority for protection and preservation," she said.

"That is why it is fitting the Dunes Trust is in Tairawhiti because we have a lot of what needs to be preserved and protected."

The coast was a system with three interconnected parts — the ocean, the beach and the dunes — and the movement of sand between them was what mattered most, she said.

"The coast is a place of moving sand — from dunes and beaches out into the ocean and then back again in a natural cycle."

It is important that humans understood this cycle because sand protected developments such as homes on the shoreline, Dr Dunn, who is also a Gisborne district councillor, said.

"Some scientists say erosion is a strategic retreat, it is a defence mechanism of nature. When the ocean takes sand from the beach out to sea, underwater sand bars are formed, forcing waves to break out at sea and not at the shore where we have our houses."

The underwater sandbars are also our surf breaks, she said.

This region seemed to have escaped the "first wave" of coastal development, Dune Restoration Trust member Jim Dahm said. He asked Dr Dunn if it could survive the next.

Tairawhiti had been lucky so far but stronger policy protection would be needed



**EYES OUT FOR OUR COAST:** Jim Dahm (Dune Restoration Trust), John Logan (Wainui Beach Coast Care Group), Amber Dunn (coastal scientist and Gisborne councillor) and Greg Bennett (Dune Restoration Trust) gave presentations on day one of the 2016 Dune Restoration Trust of New Zealand conference held at Wainui Surf Life Saving Club yesterday.

Picture by Paul Rickard

in the future, she said.

"There will be no desire to strengthen them if we do not recognise the beauty we have first."

For example, many people could not see the natural beauty in the series of low dune ridges at Kopututea. That was a significant dune system and landform, she said.

Coastal policy frameworks were ineffective unless the community was informed, Mr Dahm said.

"A lot of council policies and strategies are by experts and most people won't be aware what is in them and the issues involved. Experts are disconnected from communities," he said.

The knowledge had been in this region for generations; it was a matter of listening, Dr Dunn said.

"Talk to the people and learn the history and significance of these places, and use that as a base to go forward. Then we can add science on top of it."

Wainui Beach was the focus of the conference yesterday and Dr Dunn paid tribute to Wainui kuia (elder) Ingrid Searancke, who passed away at the age of

90 last year, for sharing her knowledge on the area.

"On many occasions I got to sit with Ingrid and she shared with me her immense knowledge on Wainui Beach.

"Ingrid ignited a deeper passion in me for Wainui and made me believe I could become a kaitiaki of this beach."

Ian Ruru showed drone footage of the area and other parts of the region including Kaiti Beach.

John Logan spoke of the history and vision of the Wainui Beach Coast Care Group, which is made up of Wainui residents who want to protect and manage the environment along the beach.

The conference group today headed up the Coast to Kaiua Beach, Tolaga Bay and Kaitawa Estuary to learn about the Uawarui Sustainability Project and Whangara Beach and Te Tapuwae o Rongokako marine reserve.

Tomorrow they will visit Oneroa Walkway and the Kopututea Dunes from Midway Beach to the Waipaoa River. This will be followed by a presentation by Professor Derek Lardelli at Toihoukura - Maori Visual Art & Design School.