

# CoastCare Northland News

Issue 6 — Winter 2009

## Making a difference to the dunes

The Waipapakauri CoastCare project shows just what can happen when a community work together to improve the fate of our coastal sand dunes.

The people involved in the dune restoration work are mostly long term residents who had watched dunes erode to the point where vast amounts of sand was being blown onto their back doorsteps.

"We started planting in 2004 when the road was cut through, changing the shape of the dunes and creating far greater movement of sand inland," says Mary Jane Ardley, a resident of more than 30 years and one of the driving forces behind the CoastCare group.



Areas damaged in last July's storms will be replanted by the group.

"Motorbikes going over the dunes and traffic created bare sand – it was so noticeable, the sand movement, as there were piles on the veranda on a windy day," she says.

*Marram* was planted to start with, which changed the shape of the dunes and many thousand more *spinifex* and *pingao* have been planted since, with the help of funding from the Northland Regional Council Environment Fund.

A walkway was put in last year and Ms Ardley says this has made a huge difference to the dunes.

"The walkway was huge," she says. "It's been a more dramatic effect than the planting as it gives controlled access in easy steps that are safer, and people automatically take the path."

There have been setbacks with the process including storms in 2007 which washed away a large section of recently planted dunes.

"Everyone was 'oh no' because it looked so bad but we just have to keep going," says Ms Ardley.



Local resident — and one of the driving forces behind the Waipapakauri CoastCare group — Mary Jane Ardley checks out the view from the newly formed walkway to Waipapakauri Beach.

"We lost a few fences but they're being put back up. George Van der Linden, one of our residents, is down there daily, checking for damage."

It's this type of perseverance and dedication that makes the difference and for Ms Ardley is the one piece of advice she'd give other coastal communities.

"Just persevere, don't give up. A little bit every year goes a long way and even though the plants look scraggly to begin with, they spread quickly."

There is more work to be done at Waipapakauri and ongoing challenges, but the passion of the group mean the dunes are in good hands.

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Putting Northland first

**NORTHLAND  
REGIONAL  
COUNCIL**



# The right seed for the job

It's called eco-sourcing — finding seeds from our native plants to grow seedlings for planting in the same ecological area — and it's one of the keys to successfully growing dune plants.

When it comes to *spinifex* and *pingao* there are differences between the plants that grow on the east coast and those that grow on the west, which makes sourcing seed a major consideration.

"East and west coast plants grow very differently so it is particularly important seeds are eco-sourced," says CoastCare Co-ordinator Laura Shaft.

Planning ahead is also important when it comes to sourcing dune plants as it takes between 12 and 18 months to collect seed, propagate and grow the plants to a suitable size for transplanting.

"Seed collection takes place in the summer — usually from December to January for pingao and January to February for spinifex," says Ms Shaft.

"It's important to collect enough seed to allow for failures and also allow time for propagation over the winter months, ready for planting the following winter."

There are a few local nurseries that have started propagating Northland *spinifex* and *pingao* but there is still only a limited amount of seed collected.

"The Department of Conservation require a concession to collect seed from DoC land if there is any 'commercial benefit', for example, if a nursery is paid



Seed collection on the west coast, at Baylys Beach.

to grow plants from the seed."

"Eco-sourcing seed also limits our options, which is why organised seed collection days are so important."

Ms Shaft says seed collecting working bees are run by some CoastCare groups so it's worth checking with a local group to learn more.

While planning a planting project Ms Shaft advises groups and individuals to contact the Regional Council first. She can provide advice about sourcing plants, preparation prior to planting, permissions needed and other information to make your planting project a success.

There is also some funding available through the Environment Fund for planting projects. For more information go to: [www.nrc.govt.nz/environmentfund](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/environmentfund)

## Planting days this winter

Planting will take place at the following sites this winter:

- ◆ Baylys Beach
- ◆ Taipa
- ◆ Mangawhai Spit
- ◆ Glinks Gully (back dune planting)
- ◆ Tauranga Bay
- ◆ Waipapakauri ramp
- ◆ Omapere-Opononi
- ◆ Kaimaumau

Dates have not all been set, and may be weather dependent. For more information on any of these planting days please email: the CoastCare Co-ordinator at [mailroom@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:mailroom@nrc.govt.nz).



Eco-sourcing spinifex seed on the west coast to grow plants for future planting in the area.

From the CoastCare Co-ordinator...

## Laura's word

Kia ora Koutou!

Winter is here and everyone is thinking of planting. See the information on where planting will take place this year, and also our article on the issues involved in sourcing plants.

If you are keen to do some dune planting in your area, and there is no existing CoastCare group, it is probably too late to get plants for this winter, but you can start planning ahead.

There are often other things that can be done to protect the dunes as well as, or instead of, planting – such as fencing off sensitive areas, erecting signs, and placing walkways. Phone or email me if you have a potential beach protection project you would like to discuss.



*Laura and local residents at Rangiputa beach on the Karikari Peninsula. Ongoing erosion of the foreshore is a concern at Rangiputa and Laura is working on a plan to rebuild the dunes, in association with the Far North District Council and local ratepayers.*

*If you have a possible beach protection project like this, contact Laura.*



*Laura with Kamo Intermediate students at Waipu Cove, learning about sand dune formation.*

# Passing on pingao knowledge

CoastCare group Te Roopu Whakaoranga O Te Taha Moana has released another children's book as part of its work to educate students about the importance of pingao.

The book, titled *Nana's Koha* tells the story of a boy as he is taught about pingao by his grandmother.

Te Roopu Whakaoranga O Te Taha Moana – sometimes called 'The Pingao Group' – grows pingao from seed and educates children and adults about the ecological and cultural importance of this plant.

Several dedicated people set up the group five years ago and they continue to visit schools around the Far North, teaching children about the importance of pingao. They also show children how to collect the seeds for propagation.

The group also runs pingao weaving workshops and teaches about the traditional uses of the plant.

Waipapakauri was one of its first planting projects and a large number of pingao grown by the group are planted there.

The group has won a number of awards for its work. Last year members celebrated the opening of a shade house, built using a grant from the World Wildlife Foundation. They have also received funding from the Regional Council's Environment Fund for nursery materials.

The next project is to build a new shade house at Waipapakauri ramp to grow pingao and spinifex, and for educational purposes.



*Group members Mavis Nopera (left) and Betsy Young (right) demonstrating how to collect pingao for use in traditional Maori weaving.*

# CoastCare Kids — Students take the lead

Ashleigh, Jahna, Tiana, Katryan, Rahine, Alamein and Lania are unlikely heroes but they are definitely heroes at Taipa beach.

Ashleigh – whose grandmother Trisha set up the original Taipa Beach Improvement Society in 2006 – made up the student group last year to become involved in the dune replanting programme.

"I thought it would be cool to help change the way the environment works," says Ashleigh. "We have fun down at the beach but it takes a lot of work to keep the *kikuyu* grass out of the planting and to plant the new *spinifex* plants."

Ashleigh got other classes involved in the planting project at the beginning and she and the others came down in their lunch time last year to weed the plants.

"It's much harder this year as we're in different classes but we try to come down to the beach as often as we can," she says.

The students have learnt about dune restoration and dune plants, with Northland Regional Council CoastCare Co-ordinator Laura Shaft visiting the school several times to work with the students.

Ashleigh is keen to organise fundraising events and run a competition to design some CoastCare Kids ID badges for easy identification when they are working at the beach.

Keeping the project going is now the main concern for everyone involved, particularly Trisha who is aware of the work involved.



Some of the students from Taipa Area School pull kikuyu grass out of the planting area.

"The project has made such a huge difference to the beach and the community but it comes at a price," she says.

"I can see the problems now and the work needed to keep things going. It takes a lot and I won't be around forever, so we need more people to be educated and take up the cause."

*Matapouri,*  
by Taylor McCleary  
A  
wonderful day  
at the beach.  
Laura talked to us  
about sand dunes.  
We made sand sculptures  
and had fun.  
What a  
day.

This is one of several poems by Kamo Primary students after a day spent at Matapouri Beach learning about dunes.

## Further information

If you wish to discuss anything raised in this newsletter, please contact:



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