

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter December 2021

Chair's opinion. Wetland Prosecution in Kapiti

You may have read about the three month jail sentence for a man that destroyed a wetlands in Nikau Valley and the property owner who allowed it being fined \$118,750.

I see this as a very good message that you cannot just drain wetlands without the necessary consents but with just over 2% of Wellington Region's wetlands remaining, it could be argued that no more consents should be given.

- It is interesting to compare this prosecution with one of say burglary. This prosecution occurred after orders to cease and desist were

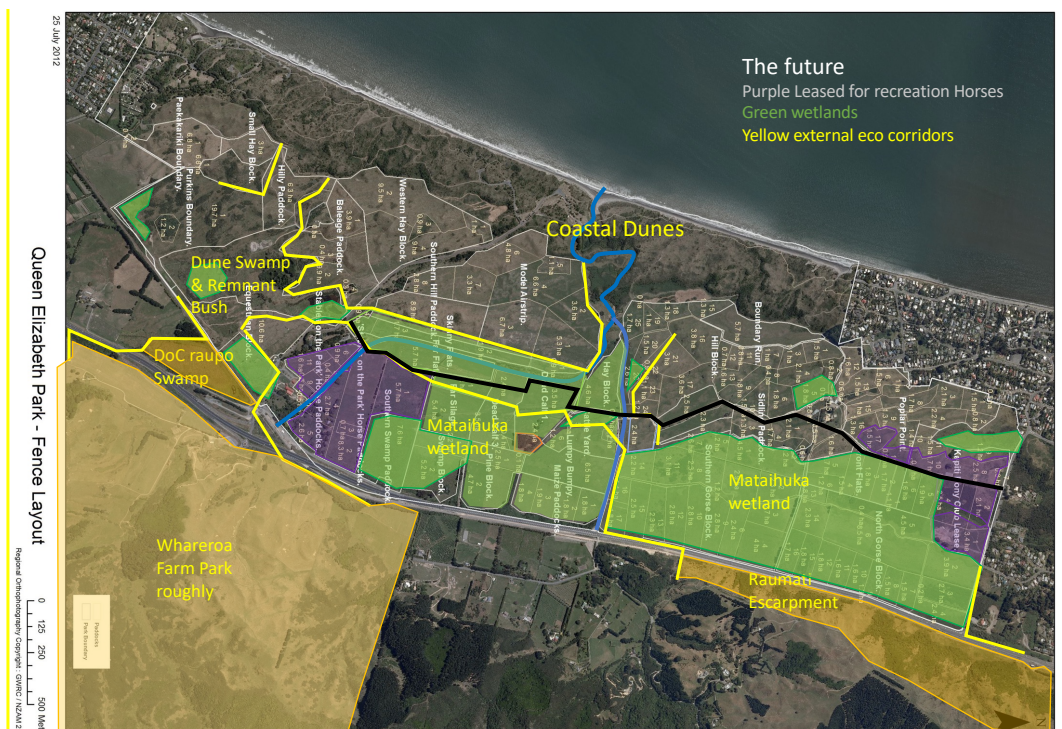
repeatedly ignored. Imagine if burglars caught in the act were ordered to cease and desist otherwise they would be charged.

- This type of prosecution by GWRC is rare whereas burglary prosecutions are frequent.

I am really pleased that GW pursued and achieved this prosecution. But we have a way to go before these offences are given the importance they deserve.

Russell

Queen Elizabeth Park - Farm no more



Green: Wetlands. Purple: Leased to equestrian groups. Black line: New walking cycling road (See below) The rest of the park will become accessible.

December 9, 2021 was an important day for Queen Elizabeth Park. GWRC voted to not proceed with the three year 208ha grazing proposal it had signed off a few short months earlier.

Some people are quite rightly worried about fire and weeds taking over, but the reasons why we could not support the grazing proposal are;

- It covered about 65 ha of peat wetlands which should be rewetted and restored.
- It included grazing cattle. Cattle like and damage wetlands.
- Cattle generate more greenhouse gas than any other meat source.
- While the license says grazing, it allowed herbicides and fertilizers to be used. This is farming, not grazing and is not consistent with the Reserves Act.
- The planetary boundary for nitrogen (fertilizer) has been exceeded.

Our opposition was about these issues, not grazing itself.

There are benefits.

- The road from Poplar Avenue to Whareroa Road will be open to cyclers and walkers, possibly before Christmas.
- Other tracks through the park will be opening for use by the public, when

Planetary Boundaries.

Planetary boundaries, mentioned above is a 2009 idea to describe environmental boundaries that are a "safe operating space for humanity". The safe area is inside the second ring from the centre.

Five boundaries; ocean acidification, ozone depletion, phosphorus cycle, freshwater use, and deforestation and other land use changes (shown in green) are within the safe zone. Climate change, biodiversity loss and the nitrogen cycle (shown in red) are not. Particle and chemical pollution have not yet been quantified.

The diagram might well be out of date by now but the principle is sound. There are limits to living on this earth and if we cross

signage is in place. They will allow access in case of fire.

- Over time, the whole of the park will be open to the public, with the exception of areas which are leased.
- Restoration, for the avoidance of fire, is likely to increase.
- The wetlands will re-establish and rewetting will be a fire mitigation strategy.

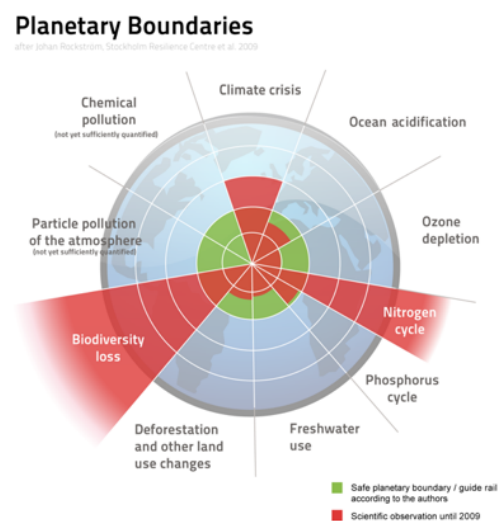
A new report describes alternative strategies that lower the fire risk overstated in the first report.

We very deliberately raised submissions against the grazing proposal. 152 submissions were received. 72% were opposed grazing. Many supportive others were from equestrian people. Grazing horses is the park is consistent with the Reserves Act because it is related to recreation.

It should now be much easier to get agreement over areas that are important to restore because they support a park feature or help establish an eco-corridor. We have not discussed this with GW yet.

Finally, Forest and Bird thanks the Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park for leading this campaign. Forest and Bird played only a supporting role.

any of the 10 boundaries, that may result in an uncertain future.



“Inspired by Sanderson” Project

Last newsletter, I wrote about 3 of these projects; 1000 totaras, Whareroa 1ha wetland and Water sampling in QEP. Here are 3 more. One still to tell you about.

Nga Uruora project. Five hectare pioneer planting

Project Yield by 2050, 386 tonnes CO₂e.

The location for this planting was to be on NZTA land (Perkin’s farm) but this proved unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. We identified a 9ha paddock in QEP that is close to the nursery, will be seen by park visitors and is a stable dune that sits above a small wetland. See photo. We have obtained GW permission and signed an MOU with Groundtruth for it to happen next planting season. So apart from doing the work, this project is all but complete! The reason we want it close to the nursery is so we can enrich it with secondary species in a few years.



Nga Uruora and F&B project. Waikakariki wetland

Project Yield by 2050, 28 tonnes CO₂e.

Bay of Islands Mammal Sanctuary

The branch wrote a submission supporting this sanctuary. This sanctuary which comes into effect this year covers all of the Bay of Islands restricting how boats and people interact with marine mammals. It should

This wetland is very small, just south of the entrance to Paekakariki, between road and rail. It is weed infested. When finished, this little wetland will have a stream flowing through it, will be seen by everyone walking the escarpment track and will have signage about Captain Sanderson (F&B founder) who was also a Paekakariki resident. It may feature in F&B 100 year anniversary. You may have seen an article in the winter 2021 edition of the F&B magazine. A contract has been let for weed control.

Friends of QEP. Riparian planting of streams in Emerald Glen

Project Yield by 2050, 222 tonnes CO₂e.

This project is to help the people in Emerald Glen riparian plant the streams that flow through their properties into Queen Elizabeth Park. We have approached some of the residents and have 4 properties involved. Three have been partly planted and the fourth will wait till the next planting season.

One property in particular has high potential ecological value and its owners intend to restore a large part of it and are ecologically tuned in. A student has been involved and used part of the project for her environmental assignment.

This project has been successful, rewarding and fun.



protect marine mammals, especially declining bottle nosed dolphins. Six hundred and forty five submissions were received of which 60% were supportive.

Rewetting the peat wetland in Queen Elizabeth Park

This applies to the northern peat wetland – north from Waterfall Stream to Poplar Avenue.

The first thing that must happen is to determine that there will be no unintended consequences from rewetting. GW has been investigating that for some time now.

Then there is a process of getting rid of woody weeds – gorse and blackberry, because if they remain, they will draw up water and evaporate it and the gorse will fix nitrogen whereas wetlands are acidic. The best time to deal with these weeds is in autumn then follow up in spring. There will always be a weed issue which will have to be addressed but hopefully, it will be small.

After most of these weeds are gone, rewetting can take place, so in March or so in 2023.

What happened in 2021

Meetings

It's been a messy year for branch public meetings. We thought we might be able to hold a few meetings, but as time closed in we realized we could not.

Mitigation of Climate change

It was very disappointing that KCDC had no climate change mitigation in its long term plan. Kapiti is wealthy compared to the rest of the world. If we cannot afford mitigation then we will experience the disaster that climate change has already shown us it will be. On the other hand KCDC has two employees who work full time helping volunteers on restoration projects. The results are impressive. I would have another two!!!

Queen Elizabeth Park

The progress here supporting the Friends of QEP has been very significant in reduction of herbicides and insecticides, reduction of fertilizers (Nitrogen), gains in access for the public, gains in biodiversity and plans for much more, and gains for climate change

That sounds like a long way off – it is 15 months away. But in the scheme of things, to know that 85 ha of an ancient peat wetland with a thriving wildlife, that existed for thousands of years, safely storing millions of tons of carbon, that was canoed through by Maori, that was drained during the second world war, that has been farmed until 2020, will start on a journey back towards a wetland, keeping its remaining peat and slowly, as it recovers, will start to sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and that start will begin in 15 months' time, is pretty cool.

We will be able to walk through it on a dry low ancient sand dune and watch as it recovers. One day, it will host fernbirds and crakes and maybe bitterns. Visitors will come off the escarpment walk, refresh in Paekakariki, then walk through a large accessible wetland.

through planting and peat rewetting. It was and remains the biggest conservation opportunity on the coast.

Inspired by Sanderson project

To win so much money to spend on climate change projects in the Kapiti Region and to be part of these projects has been great. Many of them simply enable existing groups and residents to achieve more.

Thank you for your support this year. Have a happy Christmas and see you in the new year.

Russell

Editors: Russell Bell & Pene Burton Bell
Email: russelljamesbell@gmail.com
Phone: 021 22 66 047

Your feedback on this newsletter would be most welcome as would contributions to future newsletters.