

Kāpiti-Mana Forest and Bird Newsletter

November 2022

Editorial. Land for sale

As I drove down the expressway, past the Paraparaumu offramps, I noticed the land on the left between Kāpiti Road and the Wharemauku Stream. It has been worked on over the last year and I, like many, have been wondering what is going on. What were they trying to make the land look like. Now, over summer, it looks nice. It is advertised for sale as a prime commercial /residential site. The land may not be so suitable for that and some of us have other ideas.

It could be used to give Paraparaumu a park that is central to the city where, within minutes, people could walk and enjoy nature. The dunes would provide safe, dry, recreational and walking areas. The peatlands used to mitigate climate change and restored wetlands would bring nature towards the city.

For F&B, our concern is the natural world. The land in question has peat wetlands. Making the area suitable for a commercial /industrial site would require removal and/or drying of peat and that makes climate change worse and so will have a negative effect on our natural world. The Wellington region has less than 3% of its wetlands left so to lose more is not acceptable. Council decisions and new law also need to be considered when thinking about the fate of this piece of land and others like it.

KCDC and GW have declared that we are in a climate emergency situation. Emergencies demand actions to mitigate them. The land for sale has large peat areas within it. Stopping peat from drying and turning to CO² is an action that is a high priority because of the sheer amount of carbon tied up in peat. . *"Wherever peatlands are allowed to be damaged or drained, harmful emissions will continue to be released for decades,"* (Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP). *"If we are going to keep on track with the Paris Agreement goals, peatlands need to be protected and restored globally,"* (Dianna Kopansky, UNEP Global Peatlands



Coordinator). Peat is not suitable for building so generally it is removed and replaced by sand. This is how the expressway was built. Under a climate emergency, this should not happen.

The area was also part of the Great Swamp – a swamp/sand dune complex that stretched from Paekākāriki to Levin. It is still wetland despite drainage. In 2020, legislation called the National Environmental Standard - Fresh Water (NES-F) came into force making it much more difficult to drain or alter any wetlands.

Also, the peat/wetland areas are flood prone and if the land was raised for building platforms, where would water from ever increasing weather events go? Would existing housing along the Wharemauku Stream be affected? Would development make Kāpiti less resilient or would we simply create a problem for future generations?

In the bad old days, when there were few laws to protect nature, the solution would be to bulldoze the land and build on it. Today with the RMA, NES-F and climate change, solutions are much more difficult. This is a typical conflict between government (the functioning of society) and individual ownership rights. With climate change and a biodiversity crisis, these sorts of issues will only increase. A new buyer might pay a price that reflects full commercialization of the site and council may be seen as preventing that realization.

Climate and biodiversity loss are a whole of world crisis which we must play our part in. Increasingly, councils and governments are promoting constructive actions, and restricting damaging ones. These influences will inevitably affect land owners and developers.

The land in question is a great example of how this interplay of governance and private rights might play out.

Finally from a human perspective, I cannot ignore the climate damage that has happened in Nelson, Ohau, Westport, etc. Damage overseas: NSW, Pakistan, California,

Have your say about Mining

We couldn't find any relevant documents on which to submit this month, but there will be a great opportunity to use your voice on 7 December 2022 at Parliament. Meet on the lawn at noon to help convince the members of Parliament, and remind them of their promise to stop mining on conservation land. The date for the *No New Mines* meeting has shifted a couple of times because the date for the debate on the bill has moved. In case this happens again, sign up for notifications here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1334812093992551>

If you haven't already done so, you can also learn more and sign the F&B petition here: <https://www.forestandbird.org.nz/show-your-support-no-new-mines-conservation-land>

COP-27: Very disappointing results

It is hard not to feel disheartened after the woolly and weak result from the most recent climate change summit. Guardian reporter George Monbiot's article pretty much summed up how I feel: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/18/leaders-climate-breakdown-fail-power-cop27>.

Where does this leave us? Not where we hoped we'd be for sure...

What can we do about it? We can't individually change the minds of world leaders, but here's three things we can do:

etc. may be more easily dismissed because it is remote. Because we all must act to stop climate change, council must play its part. Council has declared its stance on climate change and the NES-F is operative.

For F&B, this is unfamiliar territory. I have no idea how this will end. We hope to learn a lot and participate where appropriate.

To support this initiative, you could sign a petition at <https://lowcarbonkapiti.org.nz/a-park-for-people-and-planet-in-paraparaumu/>

Russell

- Use our voice in protest by supporting calls on platforms like [AVAAZ.org](https://www.avaaz.org/) (which has nearly 70 million members) <https://secure.avaaz.org/page/en> and of course we can think globally and act locally,
- Lobby government at all levels to ensure the right initiatives are supported, and
- Minimise your personal carbon footprint and help your family, friends and community to minimise theirs.

Gandhi said: "We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change."

Myrtle Rust eating midge?

As summer approaches, chances are we might start noticing myrtle rust spores on affected species. Fortunately, Roanne Sutherland, of Scion, has identified a gall midge that has an appetite for myrtle rust spores. The *mycodiplosis constricta* midge has been known about since 2012, but its taste for myrtle rust spores wasn't identified until recently. Here's hoping this gall midge, which might be native, will help control or even eliminate this disease. Scion's research is continuing. Learn more here: https://bioheritage.nz/new-gall-midge-eats-the-fungus-that-causes-myrtle-rust/?mc_cid=36d867ac74&mc_eid=df2b2e012a

Rainbow skinks creep closer

It has been a while since these plague skinks were found in Foxton Beach, but recently they were also discovered in Kilbirnie. They look very like native copper skinks, so you can learn more to help you identify them on this DOC page:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/plague-skinks/>



Image: Tony Whitaker (creative commons licence)

New Zealand Copper Butterflies

Members might recall that we had to correct our identification of a copper butterfly we snapped for the newsletter some months ago. It turns out that we're not the only ones who are confused.

In fact, entomologists think there are not just four, but possibly up to twenty species of New Zealand copper butterflies!

The Butterfly Discovery Project is sorting this out once and for all, using DNA, but they need more funding.

Find out more here:

https://www.nzbutterflies.org.nz/project/butterfly-discovery-project/?mc_cid=36d867ac74&mc_eid=df2b2e012a

Pene

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What to do if you see a rainbow skink:

- try to take a photo and accurately note the location
- If you find a dead one, freeze it in a plastic bag to pass on to authorities
- load your photo onto iNaturalist. –
- advise MPI by calling 0800 80 99 66, and complete their online report form: <https://report.mpi.govt.nz/pest/>

Know someone who needs a change of career?

If a job in conservation is a possibility, check out the Conservation Careers website:

<https://www.conservation-careers.com/>



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