

## **ROCKLAND ROAD WEEDBUSTERS PROJECTS I to III NEWSLETTER – November 2011**

To all landowners in the Pohara, Clifton and Motupipi region who are in the areas of these weed busting projects and the various support team members, DOC and TDC staff

Since we heard that the second project has been granted the full funding, there has been a lot of activity behind the scenes:-

We have had a visit from Susie James, the administrator of the Biofunds that has granted us the funds for both project I and II. It was a busy day to explain what we are up to and also for her to meet the weed team and visit sites and landowners throughout the three projects. We even managed to fit in a few of the wilder locations, so that she can see how amazing the landscape is and also the lengths that the weed team need to go to access the pest vines.

The negotiations have been finished about the reporting schedule for project II and the documents are being drawn up and the first monies should be allocated in a few weeks.

TDC invited me to speak on behalf of the Weedbusting project at a TDC sponsored Biodiversity Forum in Richmond. It was well received and hopefully encouraged some other groups over the hill to be more active in their pest vine management.

Here is a summary of where the various projects are up to:-

### **Project I - Upper side of Rocklands Road – 14 properties**

The second year sweep is nearly finished, apart from a couple of the hardest to access zones that were only visited for the first time about 6 months ago. They will be done in about 6 months. The budget is on target to finish the second sweep.

The figures are not all collated yet, but here is the summary of what was done up to the end of October:

In the first year 7705 Banana Passion Vine, 55 Old Man's Beard and 67 Wonga Wonga were dealt with. This does not include areas that required spraying.

In the second year 2624 BPV, 22 OMB and 148 WW were pulled out or cut and pasted, including seedlings. There were more seedlings to deal with as the canopy of vines dies and the seedlings become visible. This also included some new areas which were never reached in the first sweep.

The number of mature plants from the same area as the first sweep was 1168 BPV, 22 OMB and 56 WW. This represents approx 15% of the number from the first year – a very pleasing result, indicating that with only 2 -4 % of mature vines left now, the number of viable seeds will be rapidly diminishing.

### **Project II – Bird Road via lower Rocklands Rd along Packards Rd and to Rameka Creek Rd 31 properties**

Now the funding has been approved, the first step has been to contact those properties at the north end to organise access and make sure the weed team will have easy ways to reach the worst infestations. This has involved using GPS mapping to access routes on 4+ properties to create a map and see if some of the remote tracks can meet up. We are talking ravines and tomos here – already some new tracks have shown an amazing labyrinth of canyons. Long term access will ensure that landowners can visit these areas regularly and can maintain the good work that the weed team will be doing. This advance work will be well ahead of the weed team and allows time for discussions about any concerns the owner might have and which are the areas that the owner has worked on most recently etc.. Many different properties means that different approaches are needed for many of them. The overriding aim is to somehow find ways to ALL work on pest vines at the same time. The weed team has taken on two new members to date to keep the impetus up. Bianca Harris is their coordinator and will be contacting you before they come to your property to discuss details. Whenever possible one of the assessors will come for a day or two at the beginning as they know their way around. Work has started on the first 4 properties at the north end. It will change locations

to suit weather and heat conditions. The next 3 are actively working on opening tracks.

**Project III Pohara – approx 75 properties needing different levels of help**

Now that the advanced planning has been done and the assessments and most of the contributions to date collated, it is possible to focus on getting Project II into action. Some talks are underway about logistics and funding. The Biofund staff have indicated that the second project will need to run for at least a year before the next one can be applied for and that some other funding source should be found to share the cost with them.

There is considerable concern about the levels of Climbing Asparagus in the Pohara area and that it can not usually be pulled out of the ground, even as a small seedling. The current method of control seems to be Round Up as a spray. For more details contact someone in the weed busting team or Ken Wright our local TDC Biosecurity Officer. Any work in the meantime on this rapidly spreading pest vine would be great. It grows up trees easily and strangles the tree as it tries to expand and the vine holds on, in effect ring barking the tree. We have pictures of it if you are not sure what it looks like.

Later in the summer or autumn, more discussions will restart with the various owners of the larger properties, to find ways to involve them and work out a strategy or start some weed control on the toughest zones. If you do not live on your property and are outside Golden Bay, but are visiting during the summer, please contact me when you are here so that we can meet and have a chat.

These projects are creating considerable interest outside of Golden Bay. It is being used as an example of how large numbers of landowners can work together to deal with a common problem at the same time to achieve a much better result than on their own. Although there have been different levels of interest from the many landowners, every bit helps and the group funding helps those unable to keep up with the pest vines on their property. By agreeing to work together, those in the projects have started to change the perception of what can be done in remote gullies and regenerating bush blocks. So, big congratulations to all of you.

We hope this year goes well for the start of the project II. It is the hardest of the landscapes and will be a real challenge for the weed team.

Project II will have 4 monthly reporting and so I will be doing newsletters at those times from now on. To those of you with neighbours without e-mail please pass a copy on to them – thanks.

Wishing you a Happy festive season and do try and keep pulling or cutting and poisoning those pesky vines whenever you see them!

Cheers

Chris Rowse  
Facilitator