

**ROCKLANDS ROAD WEEDBUSTERS
WINTER (July) 2011 NEWSLETTER
FOR PROJECTS ONE, TWO and THREE**

Here is an update of the three projects and the various timeframes that they are aiming at, so that you can see what progress is happening around you. There have been a lot of individuals doing all kinds of work to aid the project along and this is very much appreciated. For those of you with neighbours without e-mail please pass this on to them – I have mentioned this to most of those involved– thanks.

PROJECT 1 – UPPER ROCKLANDS ROAD

1/ The funding for the second year has come through. It is \$12,222. The monies from the first year are now all spent and a breakdown of the work that has been done and plants controlled per property is enclosed, for those in this group, so that you can see the amazing work that the weed team has done.

They battled away in some very tough terrain – especially high on the reef near to Bird's Road on Mark and Josie Shelly's land and a steep scree slope above the bluff which is on Marco and Karen Pessione's land close to Rudolf Samper's.

2/ A brief summary of the analysis and comments follows (for those that don't want to ponder over all the figures!):

a/ The initial knockdown has been achieved approximately on budget.

b/ 7705 Banana Passion Vines, 55 Old Man's Beard, 67 Wonga Wonga (including one with a circumference of 51cm!) and 2 large areas of Scented Jasmine (of unknown source, which is a worry) dealt with.

c/ 955 hours was assessed for the initial knockdown, including 145 hours of rope work.

A further \$5600 was allowed for perimeter searches, spray work and incidental expenses.

In all 1231 hours were done by the weed team (including the perimeter searches) and the specialist spray work came to \$465 (which was less than expected – simpler sites of Banana Passion Vine on bracken were dealt with by the regular weed team).

The northern end of the project (on Mark and Josie Shelly's land) was allocated 120hours, but this was on the basis that any left over hours / \$ would be used on the massive numbers of vines on the reef there (2525 dealt with). As it turned out, we were able to do an extra 110 hours and also some time behind the reef alongside Gibson Creek where there was a large infestation of vines. The highest part of the reef was not started as the volume of vines is low and a concentrated effort on the middle slopes achieved a better knockdown rate per effort – next year!

d/ So overall we achieved more than was anticipated in the initial plan and close to budget! The only aberration in the finances was that we bought GPS units for the weedteam to do tracking and mark key plants. This money was not allowed for and is being claimed in the second projects application.

3/ The second year sweep has started and the weedteam have finished Rudolf Samper's, Dave Wilkie's and Jill Pearson's and starting John Parkes' and Leon and Chrissy Moleta's this week. Then they will turn back and restart at the northern end. The weed team is recording ALL fruiting or flowering plants. On the first three of these, with 269 mature plants this time, versus 1347 last year, that works out at 20% of last years and done in 45% of the time. No surprises so far! At first sight it is going to be a tight finish to be on budget with the northern end gobbling more hours in the hard to reach bluff that they have just finished. However it was important because they dealt with 674 vines, but needed to chainsaw access through the Yellow Jasmine on a very steep scree slope! 159 hours were needed. This should be much less the second time around now the access is sorted. This was only just finished as the weather has slowed up progress.

PROJECT 2 – West side of Rocklands Road including Bird's Road through to Rawhiti Cave and the escarpment beyond.

The application for this funding was completed on time. It is a big project with 31 properties involved, with over 1800ha of land, on many diverse terrains.

The key points are:-

1/ The estimated hours required to achieve the initial first year's knockdown of pest vines came to **3050 hours** at \$20ph, which works out at \$61,000. Together with the additional costs of chemicals, specialist spray and climbing work and incidental expenses, the total application for the first year came to over \$60,000 – our maximum. We were advised that we could apply for more in the first year if it fitted the logistics of the weed control – so that is what we have done, as a complete knockdown in the first year does make more sense. **\$67,958 to be precise. The second and third years applications come to \$57,995 and \$59,020 respectively, making a total of \$184,973!!!**

2/ The contributions in voluntary hours and paid contractors **equalled** the amount applied for (with a few dollars to spare), which was fantastic and a big thank to all of you who have been beavering away pulling and poisoning vines.

3/ The final details for the application involved the Botanical report by Philip Simpson. This is very important for the Wellington office to appreciate the importance of the land forms and flora here. We found several species that are rare or less common in this region. I enclose the report for you to be aware of the level of biodiversity that we have at our doorstep.

4/ We now have a waiting period until September when we will hear how the application was received. We just hope that the size of the \$'s applied for does not put off the funding assessment team. We could cope with a smaller budget and do less properties and reapply another time if this makes the difference to getting some \$ rather than having none. The spread of seeds from Project 2 area into the nearly clear Project 1 is why keeping the momentum going is crucial.

5/ In the mean time, please keep up the good work with vine control and please keep tracks open so that if and when the money comes through, we can get off to a quick start in the spring.

A big big thank you to all of you. It is only by all your various efforts that this Project 2 has happened and hopefully get enough funding to achieve a good end result.

PROJECT 3 – Pohara

This is underway! There has been a large group of keen Weedbusters who have volunteered to help coordinate their neighbours and do the same that we have done in Projects 1 and 2.

I have repeated the same three following points as this project starts to acquire many new members.

1/ The area has been broken up in to 6 “pods” with one or two people helping in each. They are contacting neighbours and encouraging owners to start activating pest vine control as well as collect information so that the initial assessments can be done. This time, because we don't personally know most of the properties and how much is being done, we have very little idea of the extent of the problem. We hope to apply for funding at the end of this or mid next year, depending on how the second application is received.

2/ TDC's Biosecurity Officer – Ken Wright - has been very helpful supplying maps to help locate all the owners and “see” the terrain that is often hidden from the roads. He is happy to meet any landowners who have concerns about the project.

3/ Climbing Asparagus is being reported as a pest vine that was not found in the 1 and 2 project areas. If you do find it outside project 3, as well as those inside it, please let us know the locations.

4/ Your contributions in voluntary hours and paid contractors, in the last year, are crucial to making this project work, so that we can apply for sufficient funding to do the harder areas etc. Please keep details of all work you have done since June 2010 as we hope to apply in Nov 2011 and we will need a big push of activity this year to make it happen.

5/ Richmond Hill – Pod A – had a meeting of property owners and arranged a working bee for 2 July on three properties. The 11 people dealt with 300+ vines in 3 hours and had time for some scones and juice kindly supplied by Jenny Treloar.

6/ The Pohara Valley and Falconer Rd to Ligar Bay area (Pods B-F) has collected all the names and addresses and is now collating the information about the pest vine status of each relevant property. The assessments have started at the Ligar Bay and Falconer Rd end. So far 164 properties are involved, having some pest vines on them, with 133 owners. Approximately half are maintained pest vine free and the other half will need the weed team.

Well done everyone, a big thank you to the weed team that is working so hard in tough terrain. Please do keep pulling those seedling pest vines!

Chris Rowse (Facilitator)