

ROCKLAND ROAD WEEDBUSTERS PROJECTS I to III NEWSLETTER #9 – May / June 2012

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. If you have a neighbour without e-mail please pass the information along to them.

As usual, the weed team and support people have been busy, helped by with excellent weather. Here is a summary of where the various projects are up to:-

Project I - Upper side of Rocklands Road – 14 properties

The last 3 months has seen little activity on this project.

2 days were spent on the Pessione bluff near to R. Samper's boundary. This is abseiling rope work and dealt with 102 Banana Passion Vines (BPV).

Various outstanding sites of large Wonga Wonga (WW) and Scented Jasmine that have been treated are still being monitored.

There are enough funds left in the kitty for a quick search for outstanding larger vines in this funding year, which ends in May 2012. The team have started doing this and will be going from the south end through to Gibson Creek.

The next funding payment will be used initially to:-

- 1/ Check the remaining North end in the late spring. It was last done in the late spring and can wait a bit.
- 2/ Do a full search from South to North later in the year, or even early next year, when seedlings will be larger and easier to spot later in the weeding year.

We anticipate that there will be another 1-2 sweeps after that before the funding runs out, so please start gearing up for that day, by spending more time searching your outer areas of land.

4 landowners have been counting vine seedlings on their properties for the last 2 years. They are starting to see a small drop overall in seedlings, particularly up on the higher slopes, but it will be another year or two before the seedling numbers really fall, so please watch out for any creeping up the trees and of course the seedlings.

Total vine count to date is 11,161 BPV, 26 Old Man's Beard (OMB) and 204 WW.

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

The main energy has focused on the weed team working their way through the next six properties of Greg Anderson, Kelsey Chandler-Yates, the Houston's, Jeff Ray and Wayne Brittenden to John Harper, heading south from the Grove Scenic Reserve. They have finished last week in this wild country and have managed to deal with the canyon areas. We are sure that there are still patches that have not been visited, but from the GPS downloads, they are relatively small compared to the whole area covered. The use of GPS tracking has been really helpful here and the resulting maps of the tracks crucial in the planning for the weed team to reach all areas of each property. Some further tracking next year will help access those spots not yet reached. Bianca Harris is leading the weed team and with a pool of about 7 others, there are usually 3 or 4 available most working days. They usually work 3 days a week, Monday to Wednesday.

They have done 686 hours in this period. So far 10 properties are finished:

Actual hours 1222.5 v's 1340 assessed. This is particularly amazing, as there was a large element of guess work in the wild areas!

The spray and related chemical costs have been higher than anticipated, due to several very large Wonga Wonga (up to 2000m² in area) which required specialist "bottle and vine" technique as mentioned in the last newsletter.

7072 vines have been dealt with in this reporting period. This includes 3752 BPV, 3269 OMB & 51 WW.

Total vines to date: 7303 BPV, 4088 OMB, 106 WW = Total 11497

The less common vines are Scented Jasmine and Honeysuckle and last but by no means least, 2 Climbing Asparagus and 1 Climbing Dock (see last newsletter for details).

These numbers do need some comments!

The large numbers of BPV are to be expected, but whilst we knew there was OMB in this region, we were surprised at the numbers and most of them were large vines heading up into the canopy and in the lower areas of the properties.

Another case of large plants is the Scented Jasmine and several large ones have been sprayed. With each year's tendrils moving out another 1-3 metres, it soon takes over a massive area. Three areas are now

prepared for spraying in the spring, the outer perimeters are marked with tape and vines going up trees are cut. This will allow the spray chemicals to be absorbed by as much of the vine as possible.

The new owners of the farm that reaches down from the weed project zone to Abel Tasman Drive, Mark and Philipa Houston, have been active opening up their end of the canyons and we had a WORKING BEE there on Saturday March 3rd that some of you managed to get to (see the collage photo). We teamed up experienced folk with those less used to identification of vines, to go into the canyons and cut and paste as many as they could in the morning. Mark and Philipa organised a BBQ in the field afterwards. 300 OMB's were dealt with and locals had a chance to see the amazing landscape on our doorstep. We would like to organise another one in the spring at a Packards Road property and will be in touch nearer the time. The next five properties – that is Hans & Ulla Lehr, Kemp & Helen English, Steve & Barbara Hand, Gerhard Ondrej, John & Paddy Salmon and Jeff & Chris Salmon are all being contacted now, to discuss the process, check access tracks and ensure that the weed team can be as efficient as possible. I will start contacting the next group of properties beyond them soon. I am away until late August.

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

The Pohara area has been hit hard by the flood in December and with the many slips there will be large areas of bare land itching to be colonised. We are still planning to apply at the end of this year or shortly after, depending on the dates of the next funding round. We are still looking around for other funding sources and are very aware of the limited budgeting options from TDC, it is an unfortunate time to apply when funding is so limited.

Here is a time line of the various things we have tried to date in 2012:

The successes / positives are highlighted in **BOLD!**

Feb 2012 - Applied for RRW3 to Golden Bay Community Board for help and **received \$150 for RRW3**
Showed Mik Symmons (GB Community Board) & Lloyd Kennedy (TDC staff) around Pohara project - RRW3

March 2012 - Applied to Cobb Mitigation fund for \$6000 to help with Climbing Asparagus in the Pohara project RRW3 – will hear in a few months

March - Applied to have **Climbing Asparagus status changed to “Progressive Control” for the Pohara area. STATUS CHANGED and being notified**

March - Applied to TDC for \$40,000 over 3 years for help with the Pohara project 3.

March - Started negotiations to clean up the many species of pest vines (OMB, BPV, Climbing Asparagus and Climbing Dock) in the **Pohara Water Reserve. The water engineers have agreed in principle. We are aiming for a spring start.**

March - Negotiated with the Butt's to make a start on the **clean up of C. Asparagus along the Pohara cliffs. They AGREED TO fund an initial spray using a private weedteam contractor – Approx 1/3rd DONE.**

May - Talked to submissions at TDC hearing

Showed Councillors Martine Boullir and Paul Sangster around the Pohara project

May - REJECTED by TDC councillor vote

May – Advised to apply for GRANT for TDC in September

Having found 2 seedlings of Climbing Asparagus on the properties near to the Grove Scenic Reserve, I repeat again the comments made in the last newsletter about it:-

There is considerable concern about the levels of Climbing Asparagus in the Pohara area and the fact that it can not usually be pulled out of the ground, even as a small seedling. The current method of control seems to be Glyphosate/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 year, more discussions will restart with the various owners of the larger properties, to find ways to involve them and work out a strategy to start some weed control on the toughest zones. If you do not live on your property and are outside Golden Bay, but are visiting at any point, please contact me when you are here so that we can meet and have a talk about the options of weed control on your property.

Other news

Carolyn Lewis, the National Weedbusters coordinator visited this autumn. She was very interested in the many efforts that are happening around Golden Bay and how many of them are community led.

We will be putting her on our newsletter list. It was heartening to hear about the efforts and successes in other regions.

As always, do keep up the good work. One owner is very excited that the weed team have opened up areas of his land that he thought he could not reach or manage and is keen to keep up the vine fight.

Cheers

Chris Rowse – Facilitator

Enclosed: Photo Collage and Photos of a Giant Old Man's Beard

About life in the canyons – by a member of the weed team.

Within the limestone reefs and canyons a weed busting team consisting of 4 people armed with razor sharp saws, secateurs and bottles of paste can tackle well over 300 old man's beard plants in one single day. The plants generally range in vine size from the thickness of a pen to the thickness of an arm. The northern most reefs on the project were yielding a continuous wall of whoppers that have probably been basking in the sun for decades. These monsters head skyward into the canopies of unfortunate life choked trees, weighing them down to breaking point or scramble up the limestone walls tapping a new root system into every gram of soil and every crack of rock. However, now and again we stumble upon a slightly different situation, where it looks like dump trucks have dumped a pile of gigantic spaghetti over undulating terrain, which is often rigged with hidden rock ledges, foot sized ankle snapping flute holes and of course barberry and hawthorn branches under tension ready to whip the nearest contestant with a new set of thorns. When we approach a site like this it is best make a plan of attack and 'disassemble' the plant into manageable sized chunks working towards the epicentre or main root source of the plant. In the case of the monster plant, agile folding blade hand saws were the weapon of choice, where possibly thousands of cuts were to be made... to keep spirits up and minds off the daunting task ahead we often joke about the yoga routine and poses often required to complete this task. As the plant slowly loses ground to the team, trails of blue paste on cut roots and stacked piles of axed vines slowly become a sign that victory is close... but a mammoth old man's beard trunk the size of a persons torso is the ultimate prize, even if it did cost a large amount of hours. Now onto the next battle which is only meters away...