

ROCKLAND ROAD WEEDBUSTERS PROJECTS I to III NEWSLETTER #8 – February/ March 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 despite the floods, which fortunately did not affect the area where they were working. 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.

Various outstanding sites of Wonga Wonga and Scented Jasmine have been treated that had not been finished in the previous period.

There are still some funds left in the kitty for further work for this funding year, which ends 5th May 2012.

These will be used by then to:-

A/ Finish the second sweep in the areas where the weed team were last autumn doing the first sweep. That includes the rope work on the bluff above Rudolf Samper's house, which was the hardest work of the project.

B/ Revisit briefly a few key areas of heavy infestation to pick up missed mature vines.

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 first four properties near to the Grove Scenic Reserve. Three have been completed and one of the largest of the whole project is still under way. They are over half way through this 15ha of 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 had been really helpful here and the resulting map of the tracks crucial in the planning for the weed team to reach all the 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 most working days. They usually work 3 days a week, Monday to Wednesday. They have done 560+ hours to date. This is within the assessed number of hours for the various properties. It also included work on Richard and Lenke Thorpe's part of the "Peanut Slab" and behind. It was a formidable area of steep land to work on, with many BPVs and it finished off the work of RRWI on two adjoining properties that had cleared most of that reef. Due to the floods and the summer temperatures, it made sense to continue there later on in the autumn or winter months.

The weed numbers are starting to mount up and to date have reached 2868 Banana Passion Vine (BPV), 778 Old Man's Beard (OMB), 46 Wonga Wonga (WW) and lesser numbers of sites of Scented Jasmine and Honeysuckle and last but by no means least, 2 Climbing Asparagus and 1 Climbing Dock.

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. In fact a small chainsaw will probably be required when they go in to the next canyon zone to save hand sawing time and blades on the biggest ones! The worst area was the zone on the Pessione's property nearest to their eastern boundary with the Alder, Sarll and Kemp properties, with 630 OMB's dealt with on the two sides of the access track there. OMG might be the best way to sum it up!

The WW has been busy growing undisturbed for many years, with several enormous plants. The largest to date is about 2000m² in size and very hard to penetrate as it is upto head height. Fortunately some DOC staff came out to show the weed team how to tackle such a large plant with a technique called "bottle and vine". This involves cutting large stems and pushing them into plastic bottles with partially diluted glyphosate (Roundup) in them. By cutting many stems around the perimeter and repeatedly topping up the bottles, the plant sucks up the chemical and translocates it through the plant. We will be awaiting the results with great interest.

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. The Honeysuckle clumps were more contained.

Of particular concern was the discovery of Climbing Asparagus – if you don't know what this looks like,

TDC have a leaflet with pictures of it and other pest vines, with suggested treatment regimes. This has almost certainly been brought by birds from the Pohara area where there are reportedly some areas of large vines. It will spread rapidly unless it is stopped from seeding. Their seeds live longer than the other vines that we are dealing with. See the Project III update below. Climbing Dock is also common in the Pohara area and this only one was near a car parking spot, so we are hopeful that is as far as it has got!. We were very fortunate to have Silvia's cousin and partner visit from Germany. They are both Ornithologists and he is a professional nature photographer. He wanted to help the project and kindly offered to do a photo report of the work in the canyons as well as helping me to set up a spread sheet to aid the reporting. He took pictures along the green trail on the Pessione's, where the biggest concentration of OMB's was and also of the weed team in action there. He also did a great set of photos of the Houston's canyons. It makes such a difference to have great photos and I have included 3 collages with this newsletter. He was amazed at the world in the canyons and AWESOME was definitely a good summary of the experience he had. He did ask that, if the photos are passed around, his name is linked with them – Frank Henning. We are very fortunate to have landscapes like this on our doorstep and want to give you a chance to see it for yourself. 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 (see the collage photo) and we are planning a WORKING BEE there on SATURDAY MARCH 3rd (see enclosed invitation attachment to all owners in RRWI and RRWII and keen weedbusters in RRWIII). This will be a great chance to meet the weed team in action. We want to team up experienced folk with those less used to identification of vines, to go into the canyons and cut and paste as many as we can in the morning. It is not strenuous, unless you fancy climbing the canyons' walls. You will get to see how amazing the landscape is there and also appreciate the work that the team is doing. The next four properties – that is Greg Anderson, Kelsey Chandler-Yates, the Houston's and Jeff Ray are all being contacted now, to discuss the process, check access tracks and ensure that the weed team can be as efficient as possible.

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 funding round. We are still looking around for other funding sources and are very aware of the limited budgeting options from TDC. A presentation was made to the Community Board to apply for some funds and we hope to have a reply soon. A meeting with TDC's Community Services Manager, Lloyd Kennedy, is scheduled for March to explore options.

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

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 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 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 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 during the summer, please contact me when you are here so that we can meet and have a chat.

Other news

Carolyn Lewis, the National Weedbusters coordinator visited this week, 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 was saying how she and some helpers tackled a mass of BPV seedlings for 2 mornings along her boundary and were amazed at the numbers and the change of view!

Cheers

Chris Rowse – Facilitator

Enclosed: 3 Photo Collages and Working Bee invite