

Chairpersons Report

I succeeded David Hart as chair of this Committee in 2009 and felt that this being the 10th year since that date it would be useful to chart the progress made in this time. This does not however in any way negate the work completed by previous committees who laid the foundations for the work which has followed.

We began in a burst of enthusiasm, raising funds to employ Wildland Consultants in developing an Ecological Management Plan to guide our work.

In 2010, we planted 2000 plants mainly on the old landfill site and a further 760 plants along the edges of the Inverary reserve. A large group of locals came to help us, regrettably such numbers have not been seen since. We continued plantings in 2010 with approx. 1000 rushes and reeds along the side of the Scotia St and Inverary end of the causeways. Unfortunately, few survived, those that did survive and are still doing well today include the planting near the Inverary St entrance and those on the north side the bridge. We hope to extend these types of plantings in the future, once we know more about how to improve their survival rate. Contact Energy staff donated their time over two years and planted 900 plants at the Inverary Reserve.

The first panel at the causeway intersection was erected in 2010 using the earliest photo of the lagoon available to us (1865). We later installed a brochure box (made by Julie) and we regularly need to replace brochures taken by visitors. Two park benches donated by the DCC (via Andrew Noone) were installed. During this year we began inquiries for a Water Management Report to be compiled. Dougal McTavish from Moeraki was employed, he instigated three (well attended) public meetings, the development of an MOU with the agencies we deal with and finally presented us with a detailed document in 2013, outlining a range of options for improving the water quality in the lagoon.

During 2011 a website dedicated to the HL was created and in the past year the website has averaged 270 unique visitors a month. Approx. 30 tonnes of limechip was spread on the Stewart St – Inverary St causeway. The truck and driver time being donated by East Otago Transport with committee members doing the raking. 7000 plants were planted with funding from the newly created Speights Fund and the Community Conservation Fund. The local Lions Club donated \$2000 for Kowhais which were planted at the Inverary Reserve.

In 2012 we embarked on clearing the entrance at Stewart St, removing willow, gorse and broom, replacing it with 575 Hebe, Olearia, Toi toi and Kowhai. Many Stewart St residents joined in to help with the planting on the day.

A trapping programme was also underway during these years using 12 Fenn traps, today Russell manages this programme with nearly 20 traps placed and which he regularly visits. He will present his report shortly.

In 2012 we began selling postcards using photos donated by Brian Monk, to enable a small funding stream, these have continued to contribute funds over the years with the addition in 2014 of our tea towels featuring lagoon birds sales of which have also added to our bank account.

2012 was a busy year, willows on the Inverary reserve were removed, replaced with native trees and fenced off, the fences have just recently been removed as the trees are now quite mature. The highly successful Ki uta ki tai project was initiated by Patti and Joel Vandenburg this year, involving U of O students, the local Runaka, the Rivercare Group and ourselves. These days occur twice each year and our next planting day on Sunday April 28th will be the 17th such day. We have achieved much during these days and met some amazing young people. Matt Desmond another university student carried out a core sedimentation project at the HL which added to our knowledge of the lagoon. Matt's study was written up and accepted for publication in a scientific journal. Nicole (a committee member) carried out her Masters thesis at the lagoon this year, for which she was highly commended on her final submission. Derek carried out a bird survey, which is part of the ongoing monitoring of bird numbers at the lagoon. In January 2013 Derek reported upwards of 40 Spoonbills at the lagoon and between 2000 – 3500 wildfowl being present.

On receipt of Dougal's water management report we held lengthy discussions with regard to managing areas of the lagoon in different ways ie allowing greater tidal influence, maintaining a higher, or lower water level, scraping up the sediment to create an island thus removing the anoxic sediment, or by diverting PO Creek into the main lagoon. Concern as to the possible negative effect any such changes may have on the bird populations delayed any final decisions. DOC discussed the removal of the mature pine trees near the railway line and reached agreement with the nearby neighbour. The pine trees were finally removed and since then we have returned several times to plant out this area, with some success as maintenance of the area is an ongoing difficulty. During 2013 Oceanagold donated funds for 52 Kowhais, 35 Rimus, 40 Hebe and 80 Toi toi, which we mainly planted along the northern arm of the lagoon. Discussions were begun in this year to replace the culvert covers with something more permanent and easier to manage. Discussions were also held with DOC to fence the area near to Edinburgh St so as to fully enclose the Reserve and keep out the often wandering stock.

2014 saw us without a treasurer all year until Julie agreed to take on the role again. Another \$4000 from grants was used to purchase more plants and a \$3000 donation (still unspent) was received from Oceanagold for a replacement culvert cover. Egg pricking to reduce the geese population was begun in spring and erecting nesting boxes for Grey Teal was also mooted. We continued to explore options in relation to regular water monitoring, upgrading to new culvert covers or maybe weirs. The bottom culvert was left open to see if a greater exchange of water might improve the water in the main lagoon. Derek designed a new informative coloured brochure and we had 5400 printed (We are now down to our last 1000). The idea of erecting interpretation panels was proposed using the brochures as the basis for the designs. The plant nursery managed by George on behalf of the Runaka was

now supplying us with native plants, thus ending the need to keep applying for funds. The nursery has since gone from strength to strength in the number and quality of plants it can supply.

In 2016 tea towel and card sales continued to be successful thanks to the display at Silkbody's in the main street. Gorse was cleared from the Maori easement and last year the area was planted out, the plantings are growing well. The bottom culvert was left open for 2 ½ years, with the lagoon all but drying out completely over the summer. Mallards were now replacing Shoveller ducks as the most prevalent wildfowl. Two swans' nested in the middle of the Scotia St causeway causing consternation to walkers.

At the beginning of the following year (2017) mallards, swans, canadian geese and spoonbills were seen in high numbers and the top culvert was closed to encourage more shovellers. Schools of small fish were seen in PO Creek and frogs were heard down near Stewart St. The PD boys spread 45 tonne of limechip over all the causeways, which fortunately was carried out after a major rainfall event where the causeways were covered in water in places for the first time ever. Egg pricking resulted in 37 geese eggs rendered unhatchable. Final designs for the interpretation panels were bought to the committee and approved for installation. The five panels were in place by April 2018. The lower culvert cover was vandalised beyond repair in February and a meeting with representatives from the ORC re possibilities for replacement culvert covers or a weir resulted in little progress being achieved. Jenny took on the Inverary St Reserve as her personal project and keeps adding and maintaining new plantings as well as clearing around earlier plantings. John Ollerenshaw continues to mow this area on a regular basis as he has continued to do for over 20 years.

Over these past ten years of being chair on this committee, I have been privileged to work with many likeminded people. It is easy for me to focus on what still needs doing and it does feel never ending at times, I wrote this ten year summary, partly to remind me of how much has been accomplished and also to acknowledge just how many people have been involved over the years. We have planted around 18000 plants, maintained the causeways and increased the profile and importance of the lagoon within the Waikouaiti community. There is still much I have left out, and many people I haven't mentioned. I appreciate the support from everyone over these ten years and acknowledge all the contributions everyone has made towards maintaining this significant ecological environment. Long may it continue.

I ask that my report be accepted.

Shirley McKewen

Chair

Hawksbury Lagoon Soc.