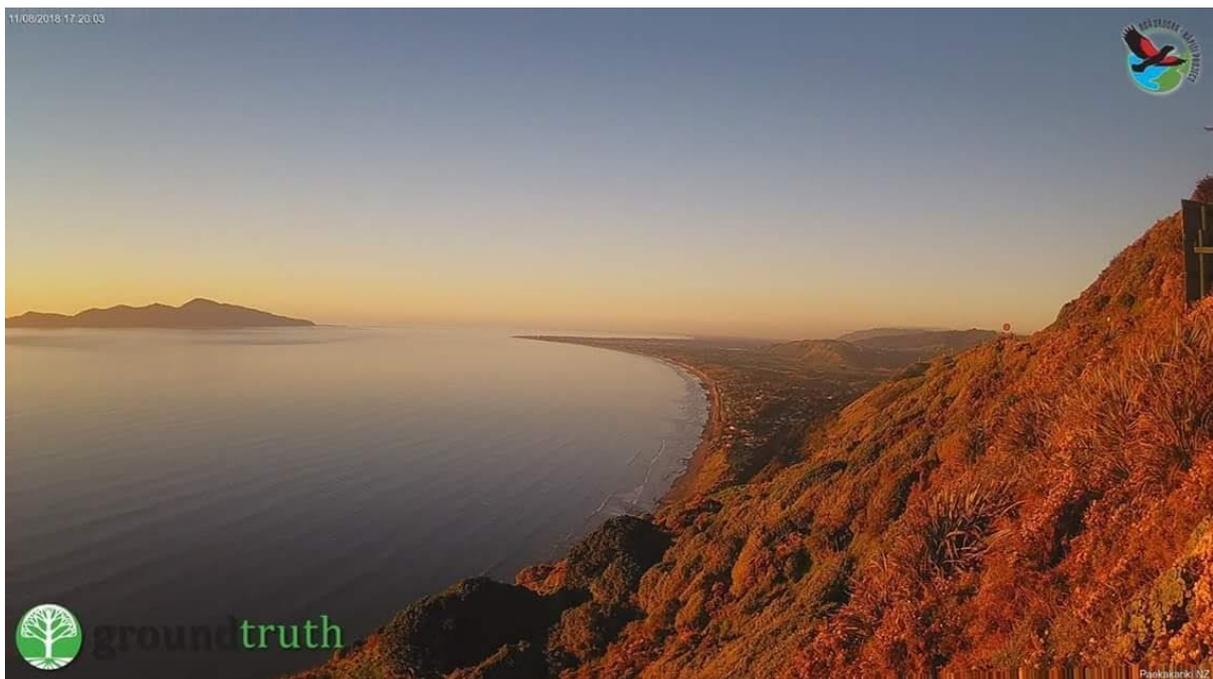




Ngā Uruora - Kāpiti Project Incorporated

Strategy 2020



Foreward

This strategic document provides high-level vision and outcomes to guide the work of Ngā Uruora-Kāpiti Project Inc. (NUKP), to achieve benefits for our native wildlife and to the communities surrounding the Paekākāriki – Pukerua Bay escarpment.

The Wellington region has only 34% cover of native woody vegetation and around 32% of that woody vegetation is located within farmed land¹ and is thereby classified as Chronically Threatened or Critically Under-protected, due largely to grazing and clearing pressures². NUKP is committed to the ongoing reversal of the decline of coastal forest on the Kāpiti-Porirua coast. We acknowledge these high-level outcomes build from the strategic plan³ and achievements of many past and present members and provide a starting point for the next phase of our work into the future.

This strategy is a dynamic live-document, and we welcome updates and collaborative opportunities that consider and promote future benefit to the Kāpiti – Porirua coastal environment.

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Introduction to Ngā Uruora – Kāpiti Project Inc.

Ngā Uruora – Kāpiti Project Inc. (NUKP) was established in 1997 by Fergus Wheeler and the Paekākāriki community to halt and reverse the decline of coastal forest on the Kāpiti – Porirua coast⁴. Our membership now includes a core committee that convenes weekly and monthly working bees, attracting passionate volunteers and dedicated trappers.

The focus of NUKP has shifted over the past 23 years as other community conservation groups, some affiliated with NUKP, have formed to conserve specific sections of the Kāpiti – Porirua coast. Our core activities of planting, weeding, and pest control continue within the 292-hectare strip of land between Paekākāriki and Pukerua Bay. Since retirement of this land from farming in the mid-1900s, over 70,000 native trees have been planted. We continue to advocate for further retirement and restoration of the land.

NUKP's membership includes a wide range of expertise and our work has been recognised through awards including a 2003 Wellington Conservation Award, 2007 Rata Community Partnership Award, 2012 Weedbusters Award, 2013 overall regional winner of the Kāpiti Region Voluntary Community Awards, and a 2017 WWF Innovation Award.

NUKP has strong working relationships with a wide stakeholder base, including:

- Paekākāriki, Pukerua Bay and Raumati communities
- Neighbouring farmers
- KiwiRail
- NZTA
- Greater Wellington Regional Council
- Department of Conservation
- Kāpiti Coast District Council
- Paekākāriki Community Board
- Porirua City Council
- Te Araroa Wellington Trust
- QEII National Trust
- Guardians of Whareroa Farm
- Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park
- Wainuiwhenua
- Kāpiti Coast Biodiversity Project

In 2012, NUKP gained formal support for our ecological restoration work from a local representative of Ngāti Toa Rangatira. Committee members also have informal relationships with members of Ngāti Haumia ki Paekākāriki who also support our work.

Our Vision

The coastal escarpment from Paekākāriki to Pukerua Bay is a resilient coastal ecosystem supporting indigenous biodiversity and the return of the Kāpiti dawn chorus. Communities of the Kāpiti – Porirua coast are engaged with and, benefit from, the flourishing environment into the future.

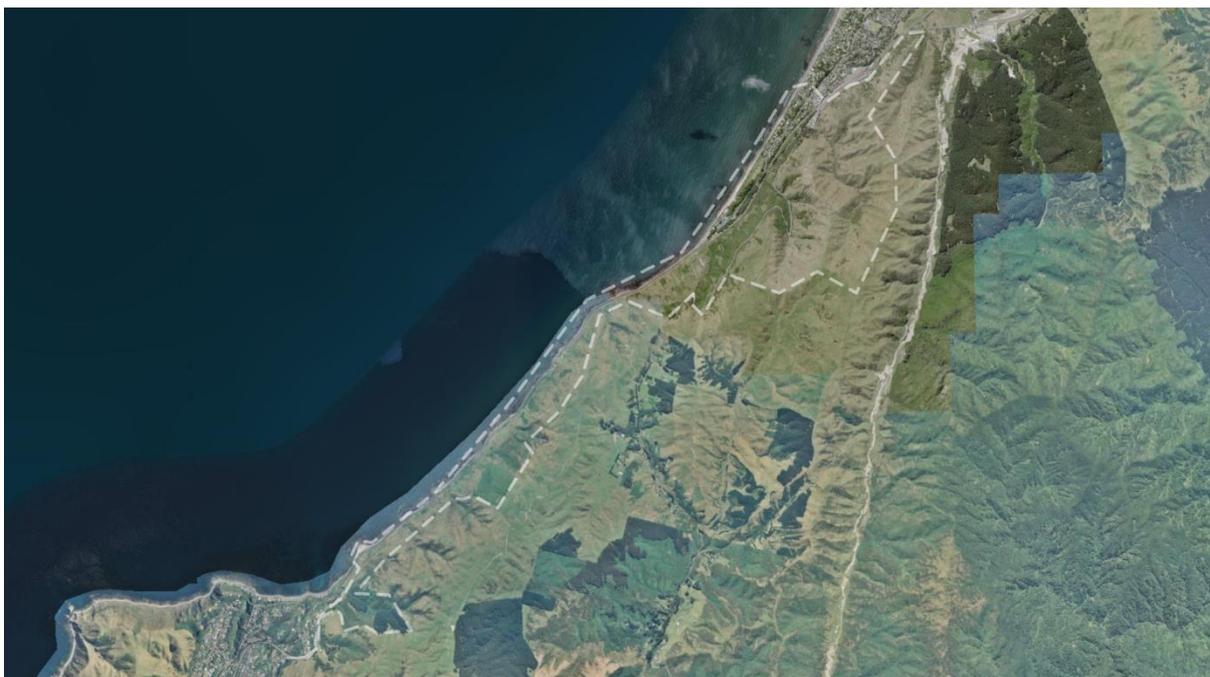
Our Mission

To create a continuous ribbon of bird-safe resilient native forest through ecological restoration projects that includes advocating for restoration of marginal farm and riparian land, and promoting environmental awareness and engagement within the surrounding communities.

Area of Interest

NUKP's key area of interest is the escarpment between Paekākāriki and Pukerua Bay (See map below). The area on the escarpment from Paekākāriki to Pukerua Bay was farmed with sheep since the mid-1800s by Francis Wilson Smith and his brothers. After the 1870s, the escarpment was cleared of native forest and intensively grazed by sheep and cattle.

This area contains the Paekākāriki Escarpment, recognised as an Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) under the Resource Management Act and in accordance with the Greater Wellington Regional Policy Statement⁵. Within this ONL exists the Paekākāriki Escarpment Key Natural Ecosystem (KNE) which is 118 ha of land that straddles the boundary between the Kāpiti Coast and Porirua City councils' jurisdictions⁶. The KNE site comprises an exposed, steep coastal escarpment and contains remnant and regenerating coastal kohekohe – māhoe dominant broadleaf forest, grey scrub, and flaxland. The majority of the KNE site is legally protected, either by agreement between KiwiRail and the QEII National Trust, or by being within local council road reserve and recreation reserve designations.



Strategy Objectives

1. Resilience – Native habitats are restored to their natural coastal state; able to flourish in the coastal environmental conditions and be resilient to future challenges.
2. Biodiversity – Native species are thriving without the negative impact of non-indigenous predators and pest species.
3. Dawn Chorus – The Kāpiti coast bird song is enhanced and enjoyed readily by surrounding communities and escarpment visitors.
4. People – Interactions between the escarpment ecosystems and people is thriving as a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship.

Strategic summary table

Vision	The coastal escarpment from Paekākāriki to Pukerua Bay is a resilient coastal ecosystem supporting indigenous biodiversity and the return of the Kāpiti dawn chorus. Communities of the Kāpiti – Porirua coast are engaged with and, benefit from, the flourishing environment into the future.			
Mission	To create a continuous ribbon of bird-safe resilient native forest through ecological restoration projects that includes advocating for restoration of marginal farm and riparian land, and promoting environmental awareness and engagement within the surrounding communities.			
Objectives	<i>Resilient</i> coastal forests	<i>Biodiverse</i> system thriving without pest species	<i>Dawn Chorus</i> enhanced and enjoyed by all	<i>People</i> are engaging in a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship with escarpment environment

Implementation of Objectives

1. Resilience - Native habitats are restored to their natural coastal state; able to flourish in the coastal environmental conditions and be resilient to future challenges.

Issues:

Long-term farming of the escarpment area resulted in aggressive clearing of the native forest ecosystem. As well as clearing hillside vegetation, the steep nature of the gullies along the escarpment leaves it vulnerable to erosion and further removal of forest habitat. Gullies can provide a refuge for native habitat, providing a local seed-bank/source of propagules that feed out to replenish the hillsides and other sink systems. Therefore, the gully and hill system of the escarpment is prone to erosion, further loss of natural coastal habitat, and replacement by weed species if the decline is not reversed.

Solutions:

Fencing out farm animals – sheep and cattle – will ensure the soil and vegetation have a chance of regeneration. A formal management arrangement with the QEII National Trust for NUKP to undertake pest plant control and restoration planting guides the solution to restoring native forest habitat. In addition, NUKP collaborates with Kāpiti Coast District Council (KCDC) to control ecological weeds that have the greatest ecological impact within boundaries of the KCDC owned land³.

This work includes:

- Ensuring maintenance of fences and tracks
- Targeted weed control on the escarpment and along its margins
- Continued planting of native trees using eco-sourced plants

Targeted weed species:

- English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
- banana passionfruit (*Passiflora tripartita*)
- climbing asparagus (*Asparagus scandens*)
- boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*)
- karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*)
- boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*)
- pampas (*Cortaderia selloana*)
- kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*)
- wilding pines
- blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)

Over 100 indigenous plant species have been recorded in the KNE site³. The native forest species to be planted include:

- flax (*Phormium cookianum*)
- coastal tree daisy (*Olearia* spp.)
- akiraho (*Olearia paniculata*)
- toetoe (*Austroderia* spp.)
- karamu (*Coprosma robusta*)
- tauhinu (*Ozothamnus leptophyllus*)
- mānuka (*Leptospermum scoparium* var. *scoparium*)
- kānuka (*Kunzea ericoides*)

- Tawa (*Beilschmiedia tawa*)
- tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*)
- northern rātā (*Metrosideros robusta*)

Success indicator: Planted trees are growing to adulthood with successful reproduction. Sub-canopy regeneration of native forest species. Native trees outnumber weed species. Erosion of cliffs is reduced.

Achievements to build upon:

- 70,000 native trees planted since 1997
- Fencing is ongoing. Finishing fencing remains a priority as 'wild' sheep are now roaming without ownership to control or remove them.

2. Biodiversity - Native species are thriving without the negative impact of non-indigenous predators and pest species.

Issues:

Native forests provide structure, habitat, and food for native animal species. Possums, rabbits and hares reduce the canopy and sub-canopy vegetation of native forest species, contributing to the decline of available habitat. In addition, possums, rats, hedgehogs, and mustelids prey on native birds, lizards, and invertebrates. These pest species reduce the richness and abundance of native animal species through predation and competition, thereby causing local extinctions and a reduction to the biodiversity of the escarpment region. Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) has no records of lizards in the KNE area, but since 2016 NUKP and the Biodiversity Project have surveyed 100s of skinks and geckos comprised of at least four species in need of protection from mammalian predators. Domestic and feral cats, as well as hedgehogs need to be considered for their contribution to the declining species, but have so far not been included in discussions. Coastal shore birds are also at threat in the region due to these mammalian predators.

Solutions:

The agreement with QEII includes pest animal control by NUKP. A pest animal control network on the escarpment is serviced on a fortnightly to monthly basis by NUKP with poison bait supplied to NUKP by GWRC³. A revised Pest Control Strategy 2018-2021 is in place and includes more environmentally friendly and remote technologies to be trialled and implemented. Including cats in the conversation and an active campaign to create awareness among domestic cat owners would improve our ability to reduce the impact of feral cat to the biodiversity decline.

Success indicator: Residual trap catch of 5% or lower. Lizard and invertebrate species surveys show increased species richness and abundance. Coastal shore bird reproductive success and population increased.

The network currently includes:

- 114 poison bait stations
- 226 kill-traps that target possums (*Trichosurus Vulpecula*), rats (*Rattus spp.*), and mustelids (*Mustela erminea*, *M. furo*, and *M. nivalis*)

Achievements to build upon:

- Pest Control Strategy 2018-2021 in place. Trialling more advanced technology and less environmentally persistent toxins. Trail cameras also used in various areas to record trap and bait stations.
- A 3-4 year Lizard survey using pitfall traps and trail cameras, as well as intensive trapping project is underway within the KNE site. Results indicate good beginnings, and the first records of lizards present on the escarpment. We aim for lizards to be abundant on the escarpment by 2030⁷.
- Fences, weeding, and rock piles built at Quarry Lizard Garden in collaboration with Conservation Volunteers Wellington
- Kororā/Little Penguin surveys conducted on Paekākāriki beach, and penguin protection signs installed

3. Dawn Chorus – The Kāpiti coast bird song is enhanced and enjoyed readily by surrounding communities and escarpment visitors.

Issues:

The KNE site on the escarpment is known to support native bird species such as the bellbird (*Anthornis melanora*), tūī (*Prothemadera novaeseelandiae*), New Zealand falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*), New Zealand pipit (*Anthus novaeseelandiae*), grey warbler (*Gerygone igata*), kererū (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), and the fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*). The bird song in the escarpment area is lacking and other native birds that have been successfully reintroduced to Kāpiti Island are unable to flourish in the altered ecosystem of the escarpment. Domestic and feral cats need to be considered for their contribution to the declining species, but have so far not been included in discussions.

Solutions:

Regeneration of native forest habitat and control of animal and plant pest species as stated in objectives 1 & 2 will ensure the habitat for native bird species is restored and safe. Translocation of bird species into a restored ecosystem would be possible when the habitat and pest species along the escarpment are at a controlled state for optimal survival of the translocated birds. Including cats in the conversation and an active campaign to create awareness among domestic cat owners would provide information on the importance of feral cat to the biodiversity decline.

Success indicator: People in surrounding communities and visiting the escarpment readily note bird activity.

Achievements to build upon:

- Five-minute bird count (5MBC) surveys are done annually within the KNE sites at operational area E. Expansion to other areas is currently being investigated.
- Cacophony Project – installed a solar powered bird call listening device, from which data can be extracted to set success indicators and to monitor progress.

4. People – Interactions between the escarpment ecosystems and communities is thriving as a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship.

Issues:

The successful regeneration of the Paekākāriki Escarpment relies on volunteer input, strong stakeholder relationships, and community activities. NUKP has strong relationships with key agencies and stakeholders, but the work of NUKP relies on community volunteers to engage with working bees and to take an interest in seeing their environment flourish. Working bees require energetic volunteers and NUKP is currently attracting only a handful of committed volunteers. Succession in the membership of the committee is a consideration for the resilience and leadership of NUKP. The Paekākāriki Escarpment Track implemented by Te Araroa Trust requires maintenance as an essential access point for people to interact with and enjoy the regeneration of the escarpment. Part of the track is maintained by NUKP, as well as the Kohekohe Loop Track, which also relies on volunteer effort.

Solutions:

Effectively Communicating with NUKP members and the wider community, and diversifying the activities to which communities can contribute.

Success indicator(s): An increased volunteer base for working bees and other community activities. Evidence that the escarpment is attracting visitors who are respecting their access to this highly valued site.

Achievements to build upon:

- As a core group in Wainuiwhenua we continue to ensure high-level engagement benefiting environmental initiatives into the future
- Radio coverage on Paekākāriki FM and Radio New Zealand
- Regular newsletter
- Strong social media presence
- Community meetings held when necessary for consultation
- Maintain a safe working environment for volunteers and contractors
- Core trapping group of 12-15 people
- Tuesday core group of volunteers work on vegetative regeneration, weeding and track maintenance. This group includes two staff from KCDC.
- Every 2nd Sunday working bee
- Goat track crew the last Sunday of every month to clear weeds in hazardous areas
- **New** - Backyard trapping initiative started but did not continue. This is now being reinstated with tunnel traps provided by school project
- **New** - Project connecting Paekākāriki track to wetland area. Plants have been provided for this project. This project is a low-land project that could bring in wider community participation and sets the scene for visitors to the track.

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5. Regional Policy Statement (2013). Policy # 25. Wellington Regional Council.
6. Key Native Ecosystem Plan for Paekākāriki Escarpment 2015-2018 (2015)
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