



Manaaki Whenua Care for the Land

BIODIVERSITY NETWORKING DAY

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE of representing AvON at a biodiversity networking event at Landcare Research on 27 June. About 15 people with huge expertise and knowledge from throughout Canterbury participated. During the morning there were 2 excellent presentations, and a field trip.

Professor Mark Hostetler, (University of Florida) spoke on the "Green Leap: Increasing the uptake of biodiversity conservation practices". Then Colin Meurk (Landcare Research) presented on "Green Urban & Rural Elements: Overcoming barriers to integrate biodiversity into cultural landscapes".

One telling comment that Colin made was that "we have a history in NZ of re-zeroing areas, chopping down all their life and starting again". He then asked, "are we actually going to have a history or will we just keep re-zeroing because we can?"

I thought it a deeply relevant question to ask in terms of the red-zone land along the Avon and what "clearance" of the land means. It highlights the importance of the audit work we are seeking to coordinate and complete.

Another point he made that has direct relevance to the river park/reserve concerned riparian planting and biodiversity corridors. He stressed that the wider these corridors are the better they function as nurseries for biodiversity.

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Manaaki Tangata Care for the People

INAUGURAL SPRING RIVER FESTIVAL

2012 IS THE INAUGURAL YEAR OF THE SPRING RIVER FESTIVAL to be held each Labour weekend on the lower Avon corridor, estuary and beaches – the playground of the city!



40 ACTIVITIES
From the City to the Sea

Initiated and promoted by Avon-Otakaro Network

This exciting programme, packed with almost 40 recreational and community events, is taking place on **20 and 21 October, 2012**. With event hubs at New Brighton, Ferrymead, Wainoni, Burwood/Travis, Shirley and Avonside, the festival showcases the vitality and potential of the east as "Otakaro: place of the game".

There is something for everyone, whatever their age, ability or interest: a diverse range of activities embracing sport and recreation, culture and heritage, environment and gardens, and entertainment and community.

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Haere Whakamua Go Forward...

AVON MEETS MINISTER BROWNLEE

OUR HARD WORK AND PERSERVERANCE has finally paid off. We recently met with Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee - the start of what we hope will be an ongoing dialogue.

This is a major coup and acknowledges the fantastic efforts of the Network and the importance and popularity of the AvON vision to the recovery of the east and Christchurch as a whole.



We spent several months collecting over eighteen and a half thousand signatures, then presented our petition to Parliament and followed up with written and verbal submissions to the Local Government and Environment Select Committee.

When Co-Chairs Mark Gibson and Evan Smith gave a joint verbal submission to the Select Committee in early August it was received with enthusiastic applause from MPs of all the parties represented.

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Colin Meurk's beautiful award-winning biodiversity bush garden (Ellerslie Flower Show 2012)

Biodiversity networking day

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If a green corridor is less than 100m wide it will be subject to a two-edge effect and the breadth of bio-diversity that can be sustained will be limited.

It was useful to visit three biodiversity restoration sites in Lincoln. A Ngai Tahu subdivision development, the Liffey Stream and Mahoe Reserve. The Ngai Tahu development incorporates an artificial wetland system including swales for the filtering and holding of stormwater - an element we want to see in the Avon river park.

In the afternoon after a superb lunch provided as part of Landcare hospitality Tamsin Page from ECAN walked us through the new Bio-diversity Strategy for Canterbury. AvON will need to work with this strategy and find ways of making a connection with the local committee responsible for the whole city. What became clear from the overview is that the Canterbury Water Management strategy will eventually drive the biodiversity strategy. Things are moving in the direction of adopting a whole watershed focus.

Mark Gibson

RED ZONE TREES & GARDENS

FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AvON has been working with a number of different groups and individuals to undertake audits and surveys of the Avon River Residential Red Zone (RZZ) to identify 'assets of value' and monitor the changing ecology of the lands.

These include our on-line asset register; street survey's undertaken by John Clemens (Curator Botanic Gardens) and Robert Watson (Landscape Architect); a community survey with Riverside Community Group; geospatial analysis using LiDAR data by Canterbury University geography postgraduates; ongoing ecological sampling evaluations by Colin Meurk with ecology students from Lincoln; proposed forestry and soil sampling investigations by Scion Research; and proposed soil surveys and growth trials under the supervision of School of Forestry and Sustainability House.

The Riverside survey of the block of land bordered by River Road, Banks Ave, Woodchester Ave and Medway St identified over 450 plants of value:

Evan Smith

about a third indigenous, a third exotic fruit trees and the remainder mature exotics.

In addition The Press has been featuring a weekly "Trees of the East" in their Gardening section – thanks to the advocacy of Di Madgin.

One of the really encouraging aspects of this work has been the fantastic support and enthusiasm of the scientific communities including researchers from both Canterbury and Lincoln Universities along with Landcare Research and SCION Research. There are real opportunities here for scientists, academics and communities to work together for the benefit of all.

On this note two other projects were carried out recently by Geography 309 students: on biodiversity mapping and on processes for the geo-spatial allocation of land for future uses.

So where has this all taken us? It has demonstrated that we need to flip things on their head!

The CERA RRZ Operations team initially indicated that the land would be cleared of all buildings, vegetation, fences and trees and grassed over. If we wanted to retain mature trees we would have to make a case for protected status for each, tree-by-tree.

We have argued that the default position should be that there is intrinsic value in all the mature vegetation, gardens and trees in the RRZ lands and that all should be retained unless there is a good case for their removal eg invasive weed species.

CERA has now moved considerably in their stance and have agreed that indigenous trees and shrubs, exotic trees over 6m and other mature exotics that the community has identified as of value (eg fruit trees) will be retained. This is a real success – it is important now that we set about identifying those exotics of value under 6m in height.

Have you tried: <http://naturewatch.org.nz> yet? Your one stop shop for recording any plant, animal or fungus - even if you don't know what they are – just upload a good picture(s) and ask for an ID.





COMMUNITY GARDENS: ENRICHING THE CITY

SO FAR THE CANTERBURY COMMUNITY GARDENS ASSOCIATION (CCGA) supports AvON by endorsing its Charter and helping with the audit of trees and other plants in the residential red zone. We would like to be able to do more in due course.

Our priority is the identification of fruit and nut trees because only when we know what exists can we work out a way of ensuring that it isn't needlessly cut down.

We also have the beginnings of several interesting community gardens in the residential red zone. Let's work together towards bringing new life to these spaces. We want to see people with a passion for food joining us in developing proposals and building support behind them.

Imagine taking your children for a bike ride along the Avon and being able to forage freely for apples and plums, walnuts and raspberries and other hidden treasures on the way. Imagine being able to pick a bunch of wild flowers to take home. Imagine being part of a team who revived urban farming in Christchurch. Imagine such memories! It is possible.

Community gardens are created and maintained by groups of people who share similar aims. The flowers, fruit, nuts, herbs and other edibles grown in this way enrich our city immeasurably. Helping to make a community garden brings people together on a shared enterprise. It provides a creative outlet for anyone wanting to join in. Such gardens carry memories of the past while contributing to the building of a more sustainable future.

Contact Bailey Peryman on 326 6927 or email gardencity2.0@communitygardens.org.nz if you are interested in being involved.

You can find out more and look at design proposals for community gardens via the link below. Or contact Diana Madgin for more info on 385 3559 www.lucas-associates.co.nz/water/the-lower-avon-heritage-recovery-trail/

Bailey Peryman



PACKE STREET PARK & COMMUNITY GARDEN

An example of how old domestic gardens can be developed and managed for the on-going benefit of everybody:

Packe Street Park and Community Garden came into existence in an unusual way.

In 1995 two adjacent houses in Packe Street came on to the market at the same time. Children had discovered that the old orchard hidden behind one of these properties was a nice place to play. Also the only three big trees in our block were sited on this land and would probably be lost if the land were to be subdivided.

A campaign was started to persuade the Council to buy the land for a pocket park. It took a year and with support from our local councillor – Garry Moore – the land was bought as a reserve in 1996. Because there was no available CCC budget for development we, "The Friends of the Park at 125–129 Packe Street Incorporated" offered to have a design drawn up and create the park in partnership with the Council. That partnership was established under the Adopt-a-Park scheme.

The first step taken by our society was to employ Di Lucas, landscape architect, to listen to us and to draw up a plan. It was her suggestion that sessions should be run over a six week period to find out what the children wanted. The outcome is a design that has stood the test of time.

Council cuts the grass and takes the

big prunings that we cannot compost on site. They also do their audits, maintain the play equipment and service the rubbish bin. We plant and weed, water and prune, collect any litter, deal with stray dog droppings, put on events and generally provide a benign presence in the park. Parents say that they are happy for their children to play there unsupervised because chances are one of the gardeners will be in there working.

Ours is a Pick-and-Share Garden. Being a reserve it is open to everyone all of the time. Horticulturally it is a very rich place: you will find pears, apples and crab apples; Mediterranean fruits such as olives, figs and various grapes; South American foods such as feijoa, oca, mashua, and ugni; plums, quinces, red and black currants, raspberries and strawberries; peaches, apricot and several nectarines, walnuts and hazelnuts. Then there are herbs including a bay tree and all sorts of flowers to pick. We have a recycled lock-up shed and plenty of tools.

At present we are building raised beds so that we can produce more vegetables above dog-leg-lifting height. In summertime there are beans, tomatoes, zucchini, and salad greens but we can never keep up with needs. Our main social events are Matariki in June and Carol Singing in December. For the last 16 years our weekly working bee has been held on Thursday afternoons. Our park is a heavily used and well-loved asset in the community. The key to its success is the relationship between CCC, City Care and our Society.

Peggy Kelly



