

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 16 August 2017

Issued by Titirangi Protection Group
For release Thursday 17 August 2017



Legal action taken against Watercare to save protected land

The Titirangi Protection Group Inc. (TPG) announced at a public meeting on Wednesday the 16th of August that they will be filing legal action against Watercare to challenge the company's interpretation of the designation for a water treatment plant in the Auckland suburb of Waima, Titirangi.

The TPG will bring the legal claim to the Environment Court with two local residents. A determination is being requested as to whether Watercare's 'designation' actually authorises the construction of a new water treatment plant in addition to the existing Huia and Nihotupu plants already located in the Woodlands Park /Waima area.

The group formed in early 2017 in direct opposition to Watercare's intention to develop a new water treatment plant on part of their 57 hectares of 'designated' land in West Auckland. The TPG position is that the designation is quite clear in that it relates only to the two existing water treatment plants and not to a prospective \$300 million new one.

"Designations are supposed to be a way of making local residents aware of developments which could happen in their community so it is important that they are sufficiently explicit to ensure transparency," said Simon Kitson, TPG President. "By challenging the designation at this early stage we're making sure that everything is quickly and properly clarified so that Watercare can get on with the important business of providing Aucklanders with fresh water."

Importantly, the land is also subject to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 and has been identified as being of Significant Ecological Value in the Auckland Council Unitary Plan.

Watercare contends that the designation authorises the new water treatment plant. However, TPG notes that the designation has been "given effect to" which means that the designated work has been completed; any future work requires a new designation.

"Essentially, the TPG and the two residents are seeking for the Court to declare that the designation only authorises the operation of the two existing water treatment plants, namely the Huia Water Treatment Plant and the Nihotupu Water Treatment Plant," said Doug Cowan, lead legal counsel for TPG. "The current designation does not authorise any further water treatment plants and we're confident the courts will agree."

The TPG's concerns for using the land extend beyond the legality of the designation; the land is of significant ecological value in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and the proposed plan involves putting healthy kauri at risk of removal or damage. The sites contain a range of native, rare and endangered flora and fauna. At a time when the Ranges are under the threat of closure in an effort to halt further spread of kauri die-back disease, developments as destructive as the one proposed must be assessed with the utmost scrutiny and authorities held to account for the processes they follow.

The scale of the proposed water treatment plant would have a huge impact, not only ecologically, but on the landscape itself – with major earth works and construction vehicles entering and leaving the area on a road network not suitable for such vehicles.

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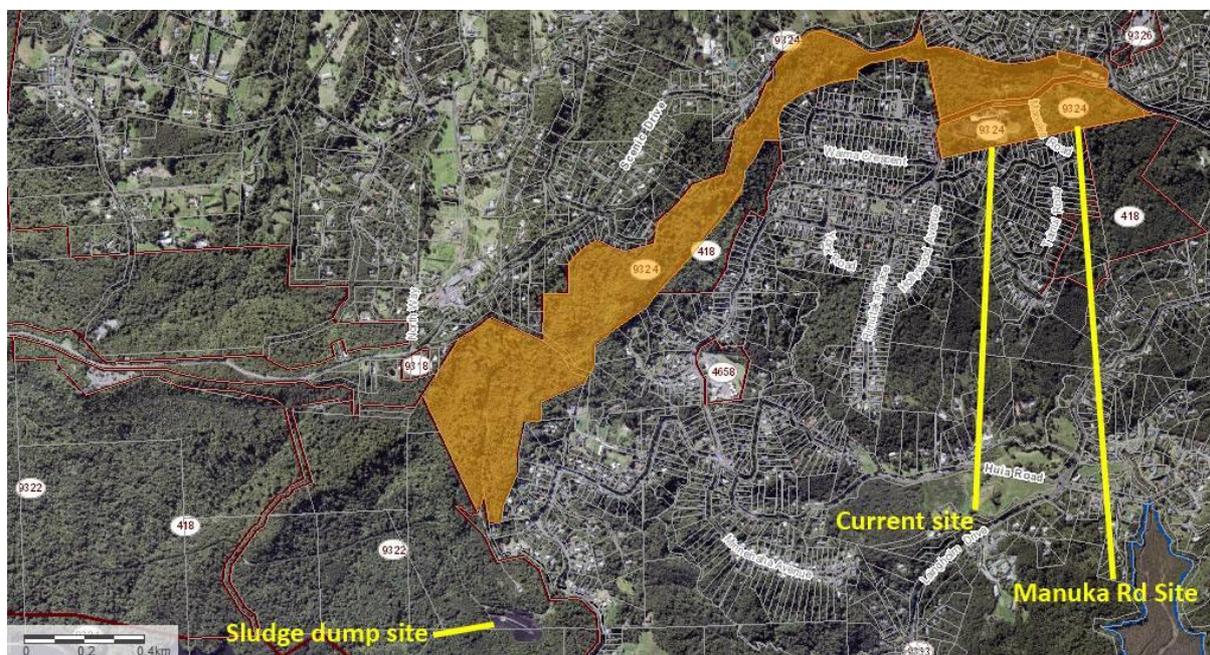


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Kitson said, "Beyond this legal challenge our group will continue to fight in a number of ways for the protection of our flora and fauna to make sure that environmental protection continues to mean something."

For more information please contact:
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Attached and below are maps showing the extent of the designated area and an aerial view of the current and proposed sites.



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ADDITIONAL FACTS:

- Waima is located 2km west of Titirangi Village in West Auckland.
- The area is the gateway to the historic and protected Waitakere Ranges.
- There are currently two water treatment plants on Woodlands Park Road where Watercare plan to build the new treatment plant - the operational Huia Water Treatment Plant (that will largely be decommissioned under the new proposal) which provides nearly 20% of Auckland's water, and the Nihotupu Water Treatment Plant (that has already been decommissioned).
- The area is well known for its rich biodiversity in flora and fauna, including rare species of ferns, epiphytes, butterflies, and snails; forest tree giants including the iconic kauri, rimu, totara and tawa; and significant fragments of critically endangered kaihikatea wetlands. It is also home to a range of native invertebrates that help keep nutrients cycling and are our key pollinators. These are fully functioning and healthy ecosystems.
- The proposed water treatment plant and reservoirs would require the clearance and levelling of 4 hectares of protected land – a total area that is larger than the size of LynnMall.
- The new plant itself would be twice the size of the existing facility yet only increase its water output by 11-15%.

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