

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 11 July 2018

Issued by Titirangi Protection Group Inc.
For immediate release



Goff's scrub and gorse - stuff and nonsense say treatment plant protesters

Two new reports have revealed exactly what Aucklanders will lose if Watercare is allowed to plonk a new treatment plant in Titirangi. The vast majority of the four hectare site has been described as an "endangered forest ecosystem" - giving the lie to Auckland Council's claims that the land is expendable.

"Mayor Phil Goff has described the site as 'mostly scrub and gorse' and that is pure stuff and nonsense," says Belynda Groot from the Titirangi Protection Group, the community organisation trying to stop bulldozers moving into the kauri forest.

Watercare originally tried to place the WTP in Oratia but when that proposal was overcome by strong community protest they were forced to shift focus to their second-choice location in Titirangi.

"Now we're in a place where not one but two ecological impact reports pour cold water on the idea that nothing of value is going to be destroyed," says Groot. "One of them from Watercare itself."

The two reports, one commissioned from Boffa Miskell by Watercare and the other an independent report written by respected ecologist, Shona Myers, recognise the high ecological value of the site. According to the Boffa Miskell report: "Our vegetation assessment identifies that endangered or critically endangered forest ecosystem types cover more than 70% of the Project Site".

The Myers report goes into further detail, "The site itself is representative of regenerating forest types including kauri, present in this part of the foothills. It contains threatened ecosystem types (regenerating kauri forest, broadleaved forest and kahikatea-swamp maire forest) and nationally and regionally threatened species. The site forms linkages and corridors for wildlife with adjoining regional parkland forest." The adjoining parkland mentioned by Myers is home to two of Auckland's oldest kauri (Clarks and Bishop). The reports also reveal that the site forms the headwaters which flow in to the Waituna Stream and Little Muddy Creek, home to native freshwater fish species that are at risk of extinction such as Īnanga and long finned eel.

TPG spokesperson, Belynda Groot, says: "We're thrilled to finally have official recognition that sets the record straight about the high ecological value of this site. It has been hugely frustrating trying to counteract the mis-information circulating about it. In a recent interview Mayor Goff himself described the site as mostly scrub and gorse so we hope that in light of this evidence to the contrary he will reconsider his position. We know that Watercare has been giving politicians a customised tour covering only a tiny part of the site with the least ecological value so the confusion is understandable.

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Mayor Goff has also mentioned in several interviews what great neighbours water treatment plants are and we agree with him on that. Many of us have lived next to the Huia Water Treatment Plant for years with no issues but if your 'good' neighbour suddenly wanted to decimate 4ha of what is primarily endangered native forest I think you'd probably do what we're doing and stand up to fight for what's right."

Groot continues, "We have never argued about the need for a new water treatment plant, we just think it's time for Watercare to get serious about their claims to prioritise sustainability. One of their strategic priorities is to "protect and enhance our natural environment". Well they're failing badly on that front! They need to go back to the long list or come up with a more innovative solution that doesn't require the destruction of native forest."

Watercare have assured concerned locals and environmental groups that they will do their best to plan the build away from the most sensitive areas but at the same time admit that the site is a lot smaller than ideal for the scope of the project which means it will be very difficult to do so. The reality is that the earthworks, constant movement of heavy machinery and construction process itself will have a major impact even on those parts of the site not scheduled to be destroyed and also on native flora and fauna in adjacent forested areas. As a result of significant pressure from local iwi, scientists and environmental groups, Auckland Council recently closed the Waitakere Ranges to help save kauri from the very serious threat posed by kauri dieback. More recently they implemented a targeted rate of \$311m which will be used to tackle kauri dieback and on other targeted ecological protection. TPG feel that allowing a council controlled organisation to fell kauri and other endangered species while the council are trying to save a forest in crisis would be reckless and illogical.

The next phase in this process will begin once Watercare make their resource consent applications. The TPG believe they have more than enough compelling evidence and support from the wider community to succeed in stopping Watercare in their tracks. Groot says, "We'll be engaging with local residents, community groups and any other interested parties to ensure that all voices are heard. It's time to start putting the environment first and for us that starts with this 4ha of a Significant Ecological Area. If the layers of protection over this land can't keep it safe from the bulldozers, where does it all stop? It's clear from the huge increase of support for environmental causes over the past few years that New Zealanders have had enough of the widespread destruction and neglect of our beautiful environment. That's left us with beaches and rivers we can't swim in and forests that are in crisis. It's time to start using the number eight wire mentality and our proud history of innovative thinking to come up with creative solutions that don't cost the environment. Clean water shouldn't be at the cost of our precious native forests! There are other more viable and sustainable options."

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- The proposed WTP and reservoirs would be located 2km west of Titirangi Village in Titirangi, West Auckland.
- The site is part of the nationally significant Waitakere Ranges, which is identified as a Significant Ecological Area (SEA) in the Auckland Unitary Plan Operative in part (AUP-OiP).
- The ecological value of the Waitakere Ranges is protected under the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008.
- The proposed water treatment plant and reservoirs would require the clearance and levelling of 4 hectares of land – a total area that is larger than the size of LynnMall. The large scale of works involved would severely impact the natural landscape.
- The area is well known for its rich biodiversity in flora and fauna, including rare species of ferns, epiphytes, butterflies, and snails. The site contains habitat for nationally threatened plant species; including kauri swamp maire, climbing rata, kanuka and manuka. It is also home to a range of native invertebrates that help keep nutrients cycling and are our key pollinators.
- The site is connected to and forms a linkage with regional parkland to the south and west and is part of an extensive network of lowland forest in the Titirangi Waima area.
- The site contains endangered and critically endangered ecosystem types, including kauri forest, swamp maire – kahikatea - pukatea forest (rare in the ranges and regionally), regenerating podocarp-broadleaved forest, and the escarpment of broadleaved forest.
- The value of remaining regenerating kauri forest is heightened due to its threat on a national and global scale.
- The site is a high quality habitat for native fauna (birds, lizards). Threatened fauna such as long-tailed bats and North Island kaka are likely to visit the site occasionally.
- The site forms part of a network of habitat through the Waima area and adjoins regional parkland habitat to the north and south and forms an important connection for wildlife in this network. The Yorke and Armstrong Gullies provide high quality freshwater habitat. Longfin eel and inanga (at risk declining) are present in the Yorke Gully catchment, the site contains the headwaters which feed into these.
- Clark Bush Track runs directly behind the proposed water treatment plant site and is home to Clarks and Bishops kauri, two of the oldest and largest kauri in Auckland. The track has now been closed.
- The environment and community would be significantly impacted by clearing of bush and recontouring of land for construction and the subsequent operation of a new WTP.
- There are already two water treatment plants on Woodlands Park Road where Watercare plan to build the new treatment plant; the operational Huia Filter Station (that will largely be decommissioned under the new proposal), and the Nihotupu Filter Station (which has been decommissioned but still has a

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functioning reservoir).

THREATENED ECOSYSTEM TYPES ON SITE:

- Kauri forest (WF10) (regional IUCN threat status - endangered)
- Kauri podocarp forest (WF11) (endangered)
- Mixed regenerating broadleaved forest (WF7.2) (critically endangered)
- Swamp maire - kahikatea – pukatea forest (WF8) (critically endangered)

NATIONALLY THREATENED AND AT RISK PLANT SPECIES PRESENT:

- *Agathis australis* (kauri) – Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable
- *Kunzea robusta* (kanuka) – Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable
- *Leptospermum scoparium* (manuka) – At Risk – Declining
- *Metrosideros carminea* – Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable
- *Metrosideros excelsa* (pohutukawa) - Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable
- *Metrosideros diffusa* - Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable
- *Metrosideros perforata* - Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable
- *Syzygium maire* (swamp maire) – Threatened – Nationally Critical

REGIONALLY THREATENED FLORA SPECIES PRESENT IN THE VICINITY OF THE SITE (WITHIN CLARKS BUSH AREA):

- *Elaeocarpus hookerianus* (regionally acutely threatened – critical)
- *Pennantia corymbosa* (regionally at risk – sparse).

KAURI DIEBACK DISEASE:

The threat of kauri dieback disease has heightened the value of remaining kauri forest nationally and regionally. Te Kawerau a Maki have placed a rāhui over the Waitakere Forest to prevent human access and to prevent the spread of kauri dieback disease. Auckland Council supported this rāhui in 2018 by closing tracks in the regional parkland.

BIRDS PRESENT ON SITE:

- Tui
- Kereru
- Grey warbler
- Kingfisher
- Fantail
- Shining cuckoo
- Morepork
- Silvereye
- Spur winged plover
- Harrier

May be present (not detected during bird surveys):

- North Island kaka (At Risk – Recovering)
- North Island fernbird (At Risk – Declining)
- New Zealand pipit (At Risk – Declining)
- Long-tailed cuckoo (At Risk – Naturally Uncommon)

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Bird counts were done over a short time frame - 3 days in total over 3 weeks. The timing of bird counts affects the results. As the counts were done during 'summer' conditions there will be some seasonal effect (birds can be quieter at this time of the year).

Keep up to date with TPG on Facebook for information on how to submit on

Resource Consents: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TitirangiPG>

Donate to the TPG Givealittle: <https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/protecttitirangi>

Visit the TPG website: <https://protecttitirangi.org>

Sign the TPG petition: <https://www.toko.org.nz/petitions/stop-watercare-say-no-to-destruction-of-native-bush-in-titirangi-for-a-water-treatment-plant>

View the TPG Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/titirangi_protection_group

Follow the TPG on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TitirangiPG>

Watch the TPG YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/wjX954J1zjl>

For more information contact:

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The site of proposed new WTP (corner of Manuka Road and Woodlands Park Road).

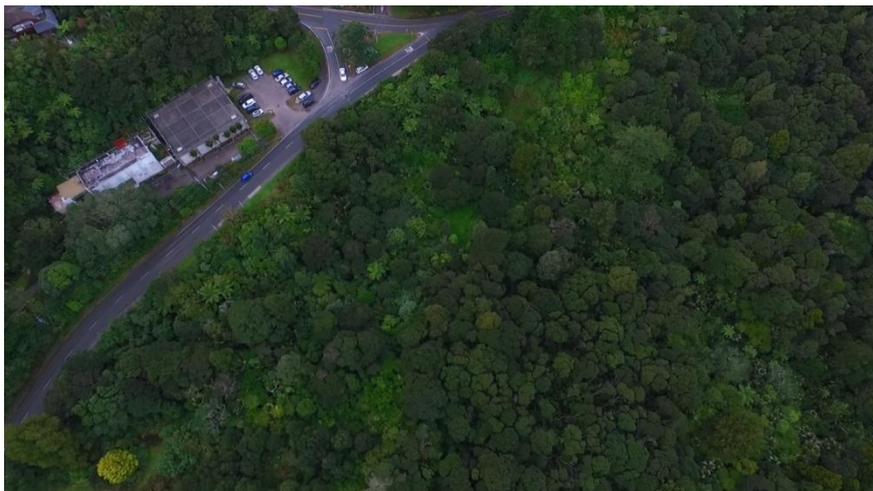
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The two new proposed 125 m x 50 m reservoirs would be situated on Woodlands Park Road, across the road from the operational Huia Water Treatment Plant.



The site of proposed new WTP below the mothballed Nihotupu Filter Station and functioning reservoir on top left.

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