

# CoastCare News

Issue 4 — Winter 2008

## Winter head start for dune plants

Corporate Northland has joined an army of volunteers engaging in a winter campaign that will see thousands of dune-binding spinifex and pingao planted at beaches throughout the region.

Twenty-five New Zealand Refining Company staff and their families volunteered to plant more than 1000 dune-binding plants in the Marsden Pt area as part of recent celebrations for World Environment Day recently.

The oil refinery staff's efforts are just one of many dune restoration projects being carried out around Northland over winter.

Winter is ideal because newly-planted pingao and spinifex are able to take advantage of its higher rainfall and ensure their roots are well-established by the time the drier summer months arrive. However, the wider Northland community is also being asked to play a role and respect newly planted areas to further help plants bed in.

Laura Shaft, the Northland Regional Council's CoastCare Co-ordinator, says pingao and spinifex are remarkable plants.

"They play a truly vital role on our coast, trapping and holding wind-blown sand and building up dunes, which in turn help protect inland areas from erosion."

However, threats such as fire, coastal settlement, off-road vehicles, people trampling them, pest plants and browsing of dunes by stock and rabbits have exacted a heavy toll, decimating pingao and spinifex at many Northland beaches.

In a bid to redress the damage, dozens of volunteers from all walks of life have been planting both plants in Northland for the past several years and 2008 is proving to be another busy planting season. Organisers estimate that about 10,000 spinifex and more than 7000 pingao will be planted this winter.

This year's planting season began at Queen's Birthday weekend with a planting day Omapere. Planting continued with planting events at Taruanga Bay and Marsden Point on World Environment Day. This winter's



*Craig McInnes, IT System Support Engineer (left) and Jason Teale, Software Engineer, from the Marsden Pt oil refinery, plant dune-binding plants at Marsden Pt as part of World Environment Day celebrations. Another 40 staff also planted 500 native plants inside the refinery boundary.*

planting programme is also expected to also include Kaimaumau, Waipapakauri, Taipa, Waipu, Oakura and Mangawhai Heads

Ms Shaft is urging people to respect newly-planted areas, most of which will be fenced and have signage.

She says pingao and spinifex are at their most vulnerable when newly-planted and asks people to stay away from them to give them the best chance to establish themselves.

"Even if you can't make it to a planting day, when you're at the beach please stick to the tracks, stay off the dunes and respect fenced areas."

*For further information on planting days and to find out how you can get involved please contact Laura Shaft, CoastCare Co-ordinator on 0800 002 004 or check out [www.nrc.govt.nz/coastcare](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/coastcare)*

Caring for Northland  
and its environment

NORTHLAND  
REGIONAL  
COUNCIL 

## PROFILE:

### Did you know?

Ten to 15 rabbits can eat as much grass as one sheep

# Baylys Beach Society Inc

The Baylys Beach Society was set up by a group of concerned local residents to deal with the issue of vehicles on the beach and dunes.

A major part of its work is to reduce the damage caused by vehicles to the dunes so group members are working on planting and fencing at risk dunes. They are also undertaking pest control to help reduce rabbit numbers so that dune plants have a better chance of survival.

The group has a dedicated committee of four and more than 100 members, which includes the Baylys Beach Camp Club.

In 2007 a planting programme was started and spinifex was planted on the dunes near the pedestrian and vehicle access point to the beach. The group is also undertaking pest control in the back dune area.

Planting continued this year with a planting day held in June. More than 20 people braved the weather to plant 1200 spinifex in less than two hours. Prior to the planting, post and wire fences were erected to protect existing plants and the newly-planted area from pedestrians and vehicles.

The Society has also bought a number of signs which will be placed around the area to help encourage people to respect the fencing and dunes.



Some of the keen planters with signage to help encourage people to protect the dunes.



The Northland Regional Council (NRC) Environment Fund funded the signage and the plants were funded jointly by the NRC and the Kaipara District Council.

The group is applying for to the NRC Environment Fund to plant more spinifex next year and extend its fenced area southwards.

## Get it done online 24/7

Just some of the information available on our website 24/7

### CoastCare Northland

► About CoastCare, CoastCare groups in Northland, information about sand dunes, CoastCare publications.

[www.nrc.govt.nz/coastcare](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/coastcare)

### Text alerts for Civil Defence warnings

► Sign-up for text alerts when Civil Defence warnings for tsunami are issued.

[www.nrc.govt.nz/cdalert](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/cdalert)

### Boating in Northland

► Boat ramp locations, marine reserve details, weather and tide times, Coastguard and marine radio details, rules for using our harbours, registering your jetski, get a mooring or marina berth, information on how to transfer or sell your mooring.

[www.nrc.govt.nz/onthewater](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/onthewater)

[www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz)

# Dunes not for dumping

Dumping lawn clippings and other plant matter does not help sand dunes.

Whether it is laziness, or an urban myth that organic matter helps the dunes, many people continue to dump weeds and lawn clippings on sand dunes and beach reserves.

The native dune plants, spinifex and pingao have evolved to grow in sand. Adding organic matter alters the condition of the sand which leads to problems such as increased moisture retention, fungal spore content and weed seed content and makes it less suitable for our native sand-dwelling plants.

Not only does adding organic matter to the dunes hamper the growth of native sand-binding plants, it also makes the dunes an easier place for weed species to grow and thrive!

Many problem plants such as kikuyu and ice plant grow from plant fragments and take over dune systems. Weeds compete with our native plants, which will reduce the sand-trapping potential of the sand-binding plants on the dunes.

Rather than dumping weeds and lawn clippings on coastal reserves and dunes, you can compost them yourself or take them to the green waste collection at your local transfer station. If you have a contractor mowing your lawns, please ensure the lawn clippings are disposed of appropriately and not dumped in coastal reserves or on dunes.

For more information on composting check out [www.nrc.govt.nz](http://www.nrc.govt.nz) and search 'compost', visit one of our offices or call 0800 002 004 for a copy of the "Composting and Worm Farming" brochure.



Weed dumping at beaches throughout Northland is common and causing problems for our dunes

## The pest files



### Rabbits



Well known as farming pests, rabbits are also a huge problem on sand dunes and in coastal areas. They are often very abundant in dunes as it is an almost perfect habitat for them. They can have a severe impact on dune ecosystems and even light infestations can cause significant problems.

Although they can tolerate very adverse weather and environmental conditions, dune plants, spinifex and pingao are very vulnerable to being grazed.

And rabbits love eating both spinifex and pingao, but are particularly partial to pingao.

As well as browsing existing vegetation, rabbits can prevent new plants from establishing.

Rabbits live in colonies or warrens, which can be extensive with many interconnecting burrows. They are nocturnal, spending most of the daylight hours below ground.

There are a number of methods of reducing rabbit damage including using rabbit deterrent, trapping, poisoning and shooting. For more information and advice contact a Northland Regional Council Biosecurity Officer on 0800 002 004.

## Staff news

Claire Nyberg (who has been on maternity leave) has resigned from the position as CoastCare Co-ordinator to focus on her new role as mother to baby Ben.



A big thank you to Claire for all the work she put into setting up CoastCare in Northland. Claire will continue to work for the Council on a part time basis so you may still see her around!

Laura Shaft has been appointed permanently as CoastCare Co-ordinator.

# CoastCare Kids

What belongs on our beaches?



Match the objects below with the right answer to see what should and shouldn't be on the beach.

<b>Rubbish</b>	<b>No</b> - They eat native animals that live in the dunes
<b>Spinifex &amp; Pingao</b>	<b>No</b> - this needs to go in the bin or be recycled.
<b>Driftwood</b>	<b>Yes</b> - they have their nests in the dunes
<b>Dog poo</b>	<b>Yes</b> - When they have fun and look after the dunes!
<b>Sea shells</b>	<b>Yes</b> - These are the buffer between the land and the sea
<b>Cats</b>	<b>Yes</b> - These native plants grow on sand dunes
<b>Sand dunes</b>	<b>No</b> - Yuck! don't leave it on the beach, clean it up.
<b>Dotterels</b>	<b>Yes</b> - Sea creatures used to live in them
<b>People</b>	<b>Yes</b> - some native insects live in this

## Tane's eyebrows

*The legend of Tane's eyebrows (Nga tukemata o Tane) tells of the origins of pingao:*

In the beginning of time there was a great conflict between Tane, God of the Forest, and his brother Tangaroa, God of the Sea. Tangaroa was jealous of Tane's success in separating Ranginui, the Sky Father, from Papatuanuku the Earth Mother.

Tane tried to end the fighting between them and as a sign of peace plucked out his eyebrows and gave them to Tangaroa.

Tangaroa could not find it in his heart to forgive him and he rejected the gift and threw the eyebrows back onto the shore.

There they sprouted and grow today as pingao, symbolising the boundary between the forest and the sea - the realms of Tane and Tangaroa.

Source: TeAra, The Encyclopedia of New Zealand. [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz)

### Further information

If you wish to discuss anything raised in this newsletter, please contact:



Laura Shaft  
CoastCare Co-ordinator

Freephone: 0800 002 004  
Email: [lauras@nrc.govt.nz](mailto:lauras@nrc.govt.nz)  
[www.nrc.govt.nz/coastcare](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/coastcare)

### Regional offices

#### WHANGAREI

36 Water Street  
Ph: (09) 438 4639  
Fax: (09) 438 0012

#### DARGAVILLE

61B Victoria Street  
Ph: (09) 439 3300  
Fax: (09) 439 3301

#### KAITAIA

192 Commerce Street  
Ph: (09) 408 6600  
Fax: (09) 408 6601

#### OPUA

Unit 10, Opuia Marine Park  
Ph: (09) 402 7516  
Fax: (09) 402 7510