

Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust Annual Report 2009-2010

It is with pleasure that I present this annual report. The Vision that we had 4 years ago is getting closer to a reality. We have had positive feedback from the Community for a proposed programme of possum eradication. The Otago Peninsula Community wants us to work 'Toward a Pest Free Peninsula'.

We started the year by bringing together all the facts and information to ascertain both if our vision was feasible and also, if there was the community buy-in that would be so necessary for success. I would like to thank Rhys Miller who continued to project manage this work and prepare the material for public scrutiny.

Our second round of community consultation meetings was held in October 2009. We announced these meetings using appropriate media and also by mailing out our second brochure, 'Toward a Pest-free Otago Peninsula –The Next Stage' to every Peninsula resident. The 3 meetings were very well attended and I thank Rod Morris for his superb talk on Peninsula Biodiversity.

Rhys Millar, project manager, then gave a presentation covering

- information gathered and collated from the April 2009 survey of urban residents and small and large landholders
- the results of possum population monitoring undertaken in May 2009
- a summary of the Possum Eradication Management Plan, prepared by independent contractors
- an explanation of the sector by sector approach to eradication and eradication methods that might be used.

All of the above were fully discussed and individuals' questions and concerns were addressed. We were given overwhelming feedback from the Community that they wished the programme to proceed and with that endorsement we have continued to work towards our objective.

Individual Trustees have spoken to numerous community groups and were invited to participate in classroom studies at one Intermediate school. In May a meeting held in conjunction with the Otago Botanical Society to discuss the vegetation on the Otago Peninsula, and the benefits of pest control, attracted over 70 people. The evening meeting was followed by a well attended field trip to Colinswood Bush and Okia Reserve. Community interest in all aspects of our project is increasing, which is most encouraging.

As a result of funding success from the Department of Conservation Biodiversity Advice and Condition Funds, we have recently contracted Rik Wilson as Project Manager. Rik has begun work on stage 2 of the project and is preparing all the necessary documentation prior to the commencement of the eradication operation. He will liaise with landowners, manage trapping programmes in the townships and assist with fund raising.

Vegetation and bird monitoring will commence prior to eradication operations and school education programmes will commence as soon as funding allows.

We welcome Rik to the project and congratulate him on his first public Possum Workshop with 70 people learning more about trapping, skinning and poisoning possums. A Timm's trap loan register has started for local residents wishing to undertake trapping on their properties.

We are extremely grateful for all the local support; for financial contributions and some work in kind from Otago Peninsula Community Board, Dunedin City Council, Otago Regional Council, Otago Regional Services, Dunedin Conservancy Department of Conservation, S.T.O.P (Save the Otago Peninsula Inc), David McPhee. Rod Morris, Bruce McKinley. We thank them for their time and enthusiasm for the project

I would like to give our appreciation to the Otago Peninsula Community Board who facilitated the start of the Biodiversity Group. Also the Dunedin City Council who assisted with the financial administration in our early stages and subsequently the Otago Peninsula Trust who have supported us with administration from June 2009 until now.

The group until now informally known as the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group was recently registered as a Charitable Trust and an Incorporated Society. Formally, we are now the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust. However, to avoid confusion with other trusts on the Otago Peninsula, we continue to call ourselves the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group. We have an inaugural Trust Board of nine Trustees, with a revolving term of three years. There will be no elections this year but in each year following there will be three trustee places up for election.

I wish to finish with special mention to the establishment Group, most of whom are now Trustees on our board. The time and individual effort that each has put in to move the project to this stage has been immense, and I thank you sincerely. Working toward a Pest Free Peninsula to save and enhance the wonderful Biodiversity that we have on the Otago Peninsula is a vision you can indeed be proud of.

What was just an idea of a few became has become a vision of a Community.

Irene Scurr

Chairperson Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust