

Backdune Restoration

Partners Newsletter 2, September-October 2011



Riversdale Beach, Wairarapa, is dominated by marram grass and many exotic garden species. Greater Wellington is working with locals to set up a demonstration area which will monitor the removal of exotic species and establishment of native species. Photo: M. Bergin

Local support growing at each site

Four months into the backdune restoration project, local enthusiasm is growing with each site visit we make.

Over the last two months we have concentrated our efforts into: setting up demonstration areas in the Coromandel; running field-based workshops in Northland and Kapiti; and visiting sites to review existing projects and talk through opportunities in the Wairarapa and Tasman/Marborough.

We are seeing a lot of successful frontal dune restoration but only a limited amount of successful backdune species establishment and restoration.

However, thanks to all the community members and agency staff who have come to workshops and working bees, we now have the second regional demonstration area installed to show practical ways to effectively restore backdune sites.

Field-based workshops a useful tool

Field-based workshops with local communities and agency staff are a useful tool to review the history of a site and talk through the potential opportunities and expectations for backdune restoration.

Waitohu field-based workshop

This group has successfully restored large areas of foredune over the past 10 years and more recently worked in backdune areas. Much of the backdune is dominated with dense marram grass and, whilst this is not ideal, there has been better success with native backdune plant survival where plants have been placed in gaps in the marram, as it has provided

some shelter. The group is keen to install a demonstration area to compare establishment techniques and monitor their success.

Ruakaka field-based workshop

With the exception of small stands of sand coprosma, the Ruakaka backdunes are dominated by a mix of exotic grasses and herbs. Backdune species that have been planted were not monitored, so it is difficult to determine their success. At the workshop several restoration options were discussed including monitoring existing vegetation cover, controlling weeds and planting along transect lines.



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The container ship *Rena* that grounded in early October has significantly affected coastal communities throughout the Bay of Plenty. Dunes Trust individual and organisation members, as well as several Trustees, have been involved with the clean-up response. One positive aspect of this event has been the desire and determination of local communities to become actively involved in the clean-up.

Congratulations to the incident response volunteer coordination team who developed processes to enable volunteers to carry out this work safely and effectively.



Hundreds of volunteers have mobilised to undertake the painstaking task of picking up the oil. Photos: K. Crawford



Planting the Whangamata demonstration area. Coastal communities have been very enthusiastic towards getting the demonstration areas in the ground. Photo: J. Dahm.

Sites visited for review and monitoring

In the past two months sites visited to review backdune condition and/or set-up community monitoring projects include:

Northland

Waipu Cove; Ruakaka

Waikato

Cooks Beach; Whangamata; Otama; Wharekaho; Kuaotunu East & West; Rings Beach; Whitianga; Matarangi; Whangapoua

Wairarapa

Riversdale Beach

Tasman/Marlborough

Motupipi Spit; Rabbit Island; Pakawau; Tomatea; Parapara; Pohara

Contacts

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Demonstration Areas: East Coast Coromandel

Beaches along the eastern Coromandel and much of the eastern North Island typically consist of three broad zones:

- a 15-20m wide spinifex dominated frontal dune;
- a 20-30m wide backdune with a limited range of native species and/or weed-dominated communities;
- grassed private properties or reserves.

In developed areas, private properties and reserves encroach on the natural backdune zone, further reducing and modifying the already narrow remnant area.

A high level of landowner liaison and involvement in the establishment of the Whangamata and Cooks Beach demonstration areas has meant that landowners are learning about native

backdune species. It is hoped they will eventually consider incorporating those species on their own properties – potentially increasing the backdune zone.

The restoration approach at both the Whangamata and Cooks Beach demonstration areas involved:

- spraying the exotic vegetation;
- removal of all vegetation to bare sand;
- planting a selected range of native dune species as soon as possible so the area was not exposed for too long.

Low lying plants have been used in each area because of the proximity to the sea and concerns about sea views. Species include knobby club rush, pohuehue, sand coprosma and Cooks scurvy grass. Shrubs and trees will be incorporated as the areas become more established.



Cooks Beach before (left) and after (right) installing the demonstration area. The area was dominated by agapanthus and a wide range of other exotic species. Photos: J. Dahm.

The Dunes Trust thanks the following partner organisations for their funding and ongoing involvement in the Backdune Project. We also appreciate the fantastic efforts of the community groups working on their local projects. We welcome other partners so please contact us.



Nga Tauru, Waitotara