

# Castlecliff fieldtrip

Between 1908 and 1929 the moles (river retaining walls) were built to facilitate better access for coastal shipping. This has resulted in a large triangular area of sand being accreted on Castlecliff beach. At times, the shoreline has moved seaward up to two metres annually.

Fieldtrip participants will pass through large rear dunes predominately populated by Marram Grass and Acacia, to Spinifex dominated fore dunes.

A concrete bunker built in 1946 now sits about 150 meters back from the high tide mark, vividly demonstrating the accretion.

Castlecliff Coast Care, a sub-group of Progress Castlecliff, was formed by Ted Frost in 2007 to implement his ideas to enhance sand dune ecology and provide stability to the dunes, through education and demonstration. Thus increasing Whanganui's recognition of the value of coastal dunes and their ecological fragility.

The groups work focused initially on the rear dunes, removing Acacia and weeds such as Boxthorn, Madeira Vine and Climbing Dock and adding about 600 native plants annually. These are provided by WDC, DOC, local nurseries and through seedlings donated by local people.

In addition to the regular helpers, community planting days are held, and local schools and community groups encouraged to contribute. This strong community input has been recognised with a National DOC Conservation 2010 award, Coastal Restoration Trust NZ "Best Coastal Community Group" award 2012 and the CRTNZ 2019 award.

During the last two years the group has increased its activities on the foredunes. Collecting Spinifex and Pingao seed, so that eco-sourced plants can then be purchased from Coastlands Nursery. WDC spends \$40 to \$60K annually moving and removing sand from coastal infrastructure. The group hopes demonstration of the successful retention of sand using native sand binders will encourage the WDC and the community to adopt this ecological approach to sand control.

The field trip will also visit the southern end of the Castlecliff sand dunes, where the port, river mouth and moles are located. In 2017, the Whanganui River was recognised as "Te Awa Tupua". Giving it legal rights of a person, a world first. Te Pūwaha (the river mouth), will be the first true community-led exercise for management of a project under this new legal status.

*"Te Pūwaha is a collaborative partnership between Whanganui iwi and four other groups investing in the re-development of the Whanganui port: Whanganui District Council, Horizons Regional Council, Q-West Boat Builders, and the Whanganui District Employment Training Trust.*

*Under the Te Awa Tupua status at law, a set of innate values called Tupua Te Kawa, now guides all decision making in respect of the Whanganui River. These values can broadly be described as the metaphysical and indivisible nature of the River; the intrinsic and inalienable place of hapu*

*and iwi as the River; and community empowerment via collective obligation to work collaboratively for the River's benefit.” (WDC news release Aug 2020)*

Graham Pearson, Castlecliff Coast Care Coordinator