

29/January/2024

HEART OF THE NGAHERE SANCTUARY Proposal.

Open letter to: Te Kawerau a Maki and Auckland Council.

Dear Edward

Thanks again for forwarding me Te Kawerau a Maki's proposal for a Heart Of the Ngahere Sanctuary. I appreciate Te Kawerau a Maki's proactive approach to sharing your centuries-old perspectives on the Waitakere Ranges rohe. Publishing these ideas on your website and reaching out to various parties has sparked a good conversation. In turn, I have had conversations with many people, which added other points of view for me to think about, hence my delay in replying.

Thank you for outlining how Te Kawerau a Maki envisages working with the Council to enable further public access within the rahui area over the Waitakere Ranges in a way that you believe reduces the risk of kauri dieback disease and supports broader forest health.

Since 1892, my family, now spanning seven generations in the Waitakere Ranges, has also formed deep connections with this area. In 1939, my grandfather and his brothers founded Huia Private Reserve Ltd to protect Jacky's Peak, a culturally significant landmark to both our hapū. One hundred and twenty of my whanau, representing every branch of our family tree, hold shares. I perceive this as being a European variant of the Māori perspective of land ownership. We, and many in the wider community, have much in common with the views and perspectives you outline, and I know we all share a love for our land.

That said, and as you would be aware, there are areas of your proposal that I and others see differently, and there are a few points of total disagreement and many areas that require clarification and further discussion.

I am speaking on behalf of many family members and the people who elected me to represent their wider community views.

Your proposal rests on the assertion that our Waitakere Ranges wao/forest is in continuous decline.

This assertion is contrary to my lifelong observation of a regenerating forest that has gone from nursery scrub species interlaced with introduced pest plants to a landscape that can only be described as a young native forest.

I have observed the resurgence of our native ecology, which is overpowering the pest plants and weeds that you claim are jeopardizing it.

Your claim that our area is now in imminent danger from human pressure ignores the century and a half of history when our forest was nearly obliterated by logging. When the great trees were felled for their timber, what wasn't cut down was crushed as the resulting logs were rolled and washed to the timber mills.

Throughout our area's human history, this was when our forests faced annihilation, not now.

You start by describing "THE PROBLEM, " quantifying the Waitakere Ranges as consisting of 27,700ha, the same area over which the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act sits. As your report goes on, you further reference the WRHAA several times.

What is not made clear is that only 17,000 ha of the Waitakere Ranges are publicly owned Regional Parks, the other 10,700ha being primarily private property, or that 21,000 Aucklanders live within the Heritage area.

You say, "Unfortunately, not many people are aware of the extent of the significance of the area that there is a legal requirement to enhance it."

People living within the Waitakere Ranges know the area's significance. The legislation you speak of is the result of their awareness and actions, not the driver of it.

The ongoing recovery of our Waitakere Ranges Forest is primarily due to the love and respect of the many, not the rules and regulations of a few.

Like the generations of Te Kawerau a Maki before, the people living in the Heritage Area now embrace the role of kaitiaki and take it just as seriously. They must be included in any discussions/decisions about how the area is planned and managed going forward.

You say, "Unfortunately, not many people are aware that it must be managed in an integrated way."

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act legislation, born out of extensive public debate, remains well understood by the communities it encompasses.

However, your proposed Sanctuary status of 36% of the regional Park spanning 6145 ha is a departure from integrated management. It is the separation of management, contrary to the Act's intent.

You express Te Kawerau a Maki's despair with poor management of the area, identifying the absence of

- long-term planning,
- lack of coordination between agencies and groups,
- ad hoc and knee-jerk-based decision-making
- and that some people simply fail to see a problem.

Everyone I talked to agrees with this and shares TKAM's frustration.

But this has only recently been the case.

From the inception of Auckland Centennial Memorial Park to the formation of our Supercity structure, there was a vision, purpose, thoughtful and timely decision-making, adequate funding, and pride in managing and investing in the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. I think there is little dispute that the amalgamation of the Auckland province into a single Supercity structure over a decade ago delivered the demise of these attributes, which worries you and the rest of us so much now.

All the people I talked to agree and welcome Te Kawerau a Maki's help and leadership in returning those important attributes to Auckland Council's management of our Regional Parks.

I beg Te Kawerau a Maki to help force Auckland Council to face its statutory duties and moral responsibility to our communities and run all our public amenities well.

Edward, this is my philosophical response 😊 to your document.

Your proposal is much more than just the establishment of a 'Heart of the Nagahere Sanctuary.' It raises more questions than answers, but I am very glad we are in deep, meaningful dialogue. I am still working through your proposal and compiling a list of questions many of which I feel should be directed at Council rather than Te Kawerau a Maki alone.

Edward, I have responded in this open manner because Auckland Council staff have made apparent to me the extensive contribution of their time and, thus, public funding in collaborating on this proposal. So, for the sake of full transparency on my part, I will include those I understand collaborating in all my correspondence.

I will have my list for you soon.

Warm regards

Ken Turner