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1. **Introducing Habitat Tuateawa**

- Habitat Tuateawa is a community group focused on protecting the natural environment at Tuateawa, on the north-eastern coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, North Island, New Zealand.

![Map 1: Location of Habitat Tuateawa, north-eastern Coromandel Peninsula.](image)

- Following several years of pest control efforts by a few landowners a ‘Tuateawa Kiwi Care group’ was created in 1997 when several local residents cooperated to control pests in order to protect a small kiwi population which persisted in the area. This group maintained a pest control regime in the vicinity of the Tuateawa subdivision for several years.

- Building on the efforts and achievements of the Kiwi Care group, Habitat Tuateawa was established in 2003. With a growing number of residents involved Habitat Tuateawa introduced a more formal structure and procedures, and progressively increased the scale, scope and intensity of pest control operations and related monitoring. It was registered as an incorporated society in 2012.
Map 2: Habitat Tuateawa Pest Control Area and Southern Buffer.

- By 2015 Habitat Tuateawa was controlling possums, stoats and rats using a network of traps and bait stations across more than 400 hectares of native forest, rough pastureland and coastal areas surrounding and including the Tuateawa subdivision and a portion of a southern buffer area.

- As well as being one of the longer running community-led pest control operations in New Zealand, Habitat Tuateawa has also been remarkably successful. We have seen a marked increase in the number of forest birds such as kiwi, kaka, kereru/ NZ pigeon, tui and korimako/bellbird to the point now where noisy flocks of birds are commonplace. The forest is also healthy, with little sign of pest impacts on the vegetation.

- Important social outcomes have also been reported. Habitat Tuateawa has emerged as a valuable forum for community get-togethers. Members talk of the benefits in getting to know their neighbours and their pride in voluntarily contributing to coordinated activities which are leading to significant conservation outcomes.
Habitat Tuateawa has also emerged as a credible provider of conservation services and has been successful in securing funds from the Department of Conservation and the Waikato Regional Council to support its activities. Some residents have contributed as donors and sponsors, adding to our resources to achieve our objectives. We have also shown our willingness to partner with other conservation groups in the northern Coromandel, and to expand our operations by working with neighbouring landowners.

2. **Purpose of this plan**
   - The purpose of this strategic plan is to guide the Habitat Tuateawa committee in its decisions, promotions and allocation of resources. Specific plans will be prepared that set out actions to be taken to progress strategic goals, such as pest control. This plan will also be useful as a basis for evaluating our progress towards our longer-term goals, and to inform our members, partners, donors and other stakeholders of our interests and intentions.

   - The plan was drafted following two strategic planning meetings and subsequent committee meetings held between June and September 2015. Following further inputs from members it was endorsed by the Habitat Tuateawa committee as our guiding document in February 2016.

3. **A refreshed vision**
   We believe our mission statement in our first strategic plan remains appropriate. As part of preparing this new plan, however, we decided to add some concepts which reflect our evolving aspirations.

   We hope this second Habitat Tuateawa strategic plan will be a useful guide and reference for members, donors and others with an interest in protecting and conserving what makes our place special. We hope it inspires people who care about our environment, and what makes it special for them, to join us.

   **Our enduring vision:**
   ‘As guardians of the Tuateawa environment we acknowledge the interdependence of the people with this inspiring place. The bush, the streams, wetlands, coast and sea are maintained and enhanced as habitats for native plants and animals and are sustained so that future generations may use and enjoy them.’

   **Some added dimensions coming from recent strategic planning meetings:**
   ‘We are united in being inspired by our vision. We are enthusiastic about the possibilities of restoring natural habitats and recovering native species that were previously abundant here. We hope to secure additional funds and resources from a range of donors, including government agencies and local members and benefactors. We are excited by the social dimensions of Habitat Tuateawa; we will continue to value our relationships with local people, and with mana whenua, as well as with existing and new partners and other like-minded groups.’

   **Concepts Underpinning what we do:**
“Working together with others.”
“Keeping it real.”
“Doing what we can ourselves.”
“Communicating effectively.”
“Getting better before we get bigger.”
“Embracing change.”

4. **Strategic goals**
In the next 5 years we will:

A. **Further enhance wildlife populations in our area:**
   A.1. Control pest mammals, especially possums, stoats and ship rats and limit the prospects of other potential pests establishing and consolidating in our area including pigs, goats, rabbits, cattle, ferrets and feral cats. Effectively controlling pest mammals is central to us achieving our vision. We will seek landowner permission and donor support to implement our annual pest control plans. A coordinator will ensure best practice procedures are consistently applied by volunteer trappers and baiters, and contractors, and that our results are rigorously analysed and appropriately reported.

   A.2. Monitor wildlife populations, including a quarterly programme of 5-minute bird counts undertaken by Habitat Tuateawa volunteers at fixed points within our pest control area. Over time it is anticipated that these counts will confirm what local residents already know – that bird numbers have increased significantly, and that species rarely seen in the past, such as kereru and kaka, are now common. We will continue to gather wildlife observations made by local residents and to encourage their involvement in wildlife monitoring activities. We will also continue to regularly monitor kiwi numbers by counting their calls from fixed points, as well as using new listening technology. We may also monitor other species of particular interest (eg kaka, kereru, geckos and stick insects).

   A.3. Re-introduce species that were once present. Our initial focus is on seabirds, including titi/grey-faced petrel which were relatively common here and harvested by tangata whenua into the 1970s. Once we have effectively controlled invasive predators to very low levels we would like to enhance the mauri of the area by restoring seabirds to their previous abundance. Building on emerging best practice in wildlife translocations we may also consider reintroducing other species such as toutouwai/robin, tieke/saddleback, hihi/stitchbird, tuatara, Coromandel striped gecko, wetapunga/giant weta and Hochstetter’s frog, amongst others.

B. **Continue to protect and restore indigenous habitats including forest, wetlands, streams, coastal areas and the sea:**
   B.1. Pest control is also central to protecting habitats. In addition to controlling possums which eat foliage (amongst other things), we will also support rabbit control since they not only inhibit regeneration of open sites, they also may attract predatory stoats, cats and ferrets. We will do our best to prevent populations of feral goats and cattle re-establishing.

   B.2. Weed control is an important tool in habitat protection. A weed control plan has been drafted which identifies key weeds that present risks to our environment, and
to habitat quality. These include pampas, wild ginger and asparagus fern. We will work alongside management agencies and our partners and neighbours to effectively implement a weed control program.

B.3. While we are fortunate in that habitats here are largely undisturbed we may need to undertake restoration planting in sensitive areas to reduce disturbance and to accelerate re-vegetation. We may also protect and restore disturbed sites around streams and wetlands.

B.4. The main environmental protection tool Habitat Tuateawa members may use will be advocacy, including advising our neighbours and visitors about appropriate resource use practices, and encouraging sensitive and sustainable activities that serve to preserve and protect the qualities of this place that we cherish. The Habitat Tuateawa committee may advocate for land uses that serve to protect habitats and the natural character of the area, including protecting habitats and restoring corridors and landscape connectivity. As rate payers we have the option to lodge individual objections with the relevant government agencies to what we see as inappropriate developments.

C. Reach out to Tuateawa residents and visitors so that they understand what makes this place special and are aware of what we are planning, and want to share in our achievements:

C.1. Effectively communicating with our members and other audiences through accessible mechanisms including our Habitat Tuateawa website (http://tuateawa.com) and regular newsletters circulated to members on the internet. We will also use social media, such as Facebook, to keep a growing audience informed including, hopefully, engaging younger people wishing to participate. Key audiences and appropriate communications mechanisms will be identified in a communications plan.

C.2. Extending an open invitation to all Tuateawa residents to attend any Habitat Tuateawa meeting or event, and encouraging interested people to join our organisation will be important ways we can ensure people are well informed and are able to engage. Building personal relationships is a key to effective communication. Many friendships have grown out of Habitat Tuateawa activities.

C.3. Community notice boards will be erected and regularly maintained as another mechanism through which residents and visitors may be kept informed of Habitat Tuateawa activities and other information. We will liaise with TCDC, WRC, DOC and others in joint promotions wherever this is appropriate.

D. Enter into further partnership arrangements with DOC, Waikato Regional Council and TCDC, as well as with other organisations and community groups that have similar goals and interests:

D.1. Maintaining strong relationships with local, regional and national government agencies to ensure they are aware of Habitat Tuateawa and how we might help them advance their missions. We can expect the value of such relationships to increase further as government agencies recognise the capacity of community groups to consistently provide high quality conservation services and to reflect departmental policies. There may be opportunities for such agencies to
increasingly engage local people to assist community groups such as ours, reflecting what we see as strengthening "local conservation action".

D.2. Building stronger relationships with other community groups in the northern Coromandel, and elsewhere, that have similar missions and complimentary capacity to augment our activities. As an umbrella group with strong local and national networks, a proven record and significant infrastructure, the Moehau Environment Group is already a valued partner. Mutual benefits can be anticipated from further cooperation, including joint funding proposals and collaborative pest control operations. We can expect the number and scale of community conservation initiatives in the Coromandel, and nationally, to continue to increase. As a long-standing group we are well-placed to build on our relationships, and to expand our networks for mutual advantage.

E. Consult with mana whenua so that we may appropriately reflect maori perspectives and values:
   E.1. Continuing to maintain dialogue with mana whenua, and consulting iwi representatives to better-understand maori perspectives, and working to appropriately reflect taha maori in our plans and activities.

F. Double the number of Habitat Tuateawa members so that we may increase our impacts and enhance the sustainability of our actions.
   F.1. The number of people attending committee and planning meetings and participating in Habitat Tuateawa activities has increased steadily since a more formal structure was created, and membership formalised. Since member contributions and participation are the life-blood of our community group we are determined to foster further growth so that we can confidently plan for the future. A key will be to communicate effectively with, not only our existing members, but also with other residents who are potential members. We make no distinction between those of us fortunate enough to live here permanently, and those who travel, often considerable distances, to be here and to participate in Habitat Tuateawa activities. We all love this place and want to contribute to its environmental and social wellbeing.

   F.2. Our Habitat Tuateawa Newsletter will be a key mechanism for informing residents, members and non-members alike, of what’s going on. We will enhance the newsletter, recognising that it is a valued information source. We will also disseminate it through social media and other networks, and post it on our website.

   F.3. We will increase our focus on keeping people informed, on acknowledging inputs and encouraging participation, as these are important interactions. We will remember that, first and foremost, Habitat Tuateawa is about people.

G. Increase revenue from different sources to enhance the continuity and efficiency of our programs.
   G.1. We currently rely on two main revenue sources; donations from members, residents and others who support what we do, and from grants from either Waikato Regional Council or the Department of Conservation. We will formalise the process of gathering members’ annual subscriptions as this is an acknowledged way people
can contribute and is a reliable income stream. We will encourage more substantial donations from those who are able and would like to do so. We hope that improvements to our communications with members will lead to stronger financial support from our members.

G.2. We will continue to apply for DOC and WRC grants, as appropriate, building on our successful implementation of past grants and the credibility we enjoy with these agencies. We will also investigate prospects for receiving grants from other government and non-government agencies such as TCDC, the Ministry for the Environment, the Ministry for Primary Industry, the Department of Internal Affairs, the Lotteries Board, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Trust Waikato. We will seek to develop complementary programs using multiple grants, and to leverage off these grants to secure further funds. We will also work with our partners to prepare collaborative funding bids to advance landscape scale conservation objectives.

G.3. Recognising that some members and residents may be in a position to make more substantial financial contributions we will hope to be in contact with these people, to identify how they might specifically contribute, and discuss how any larger donations or sponsorship should be acknowledged. While we do not envisage large numbers of people being in this situation, we hope their contributions to our programs will be significant. We will also encourage personal bequests as a wonderful way to leave a legacy of support for our community and our environment.

G.4. We will implement a funding plan which will guide coordinated and prioritised fund-raising efforts.

For further information please contact the Chair through our website; http://tuateawa.com or email to HabitatTuateawa@gmail.com