

UPDATE ON OKAREKA MISTLETOE RESTORATION PROJECT

Paul Cashmore

So far we have completed two workdays in 2006, one in February and one in April. Our February workday focused on releasing existing restoration plantings in the marginal strip. With the plantings towards the bottom of the slope now over a year old and getting quite large, only minimal releasing was required in much of this area. Most of the time was focused on releasing the smaller plants along the top of slope which have struggled with weed competition and some relatively dry conditions over late summer. It did not take long for the small group present to hand weed this area with Grant following up with knapsack releasing of the area. This enabled us to move into the Scenic Reserve on Okareka Loop Rd and treat the jasmine infestations which are now largely under control and remove cherry seedlings. Any jasmine regrowth was resprayed along with the remains of the once dense wandering willie infestation on the roadside at Loop Rd. I was very impressed with the amount of work the group achieved in a single morning here.

In April we only had five people (including myself) attending the workday which was disappointing. However we succeeded in clearing tracks into the small area of blackberry vineland further downhill from the existing restoration area with a view to planting this area in spring. As the morning's torrential rain had stopped just in time and the sun came out we were even able to spray the dense blackberry once we had finished cutting tracks through it. Mike Goodwin's chainsaw was very effective in removing some of the larger obstacles in our way. Mike was also able to spend some time poisoning grey willow on lake margins adjacent to the work area which was just in time before the trees starting losing leaves for winter. This blackberry area will be left to die off and then completely cleared in winter for planting in spring.

On the downside it appears some of our plantings have died along the top of the bank over the past few months, including some of the larger more well established tree lucerne. Initially this was confusing and we were unsure whether it was careless spraying, wrong herbicides used for releasing or a dry summer. Having looked at the patterns of death we now believe some careless spraying, possibly by council roadside contractors may be responsible but since no-one saw it happen we are not certain. This simply means some of this area will need to be replanted for the 2nd year in a row and maybe some “No spraying” signs in addition to the plentiful DoC signs will be needed. This aspect is rather frustrating and has slowed progress on the project in this area.

BOTANICAL SOCIETY WINS WEEDBUSTERS AWARD!!

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In other news the Botanical Society entered the Okareka project into the Inaugural Weedbusters Awards 2006 (www.weedbusters.org.nz/awards) in the Public Land category.

Weedbusters Awards are about recognising the dedication and commitment of community groups, organisations and individuals. The awards pay tribute to 'local heroes' who give their time to enhance the environment, and who help raise awareness of weed issues within the community.

The result of this is the Society has just won the Overall Excellence award (the top prize) in the BOP Regional Weedbusters competition for our Weedbusting work on the Okareka project. The judges comments were as follows: “the judging panel was impressed with your thorough application. It was made clear that your vision and objectives were long-term goals of restoration and community involvement. Publishing stories in newsletters and newspapers has obviously been effective in educating the local community shown by the reduction in garden waste dumping at the Reserve. The