

## From the Chair



Another year goes by, and we are ready once again to enjoy all that Ōpito has to offer. We are fortunate to have a place in this wonderful and special environment.

I would like to thank the OBRA Committee members Paul Cook, Sue Edens, Cheryle Willoughby, Jonny Teat, Craig Roe, Glenn Sycamore, Perry Cornish and Edward Scorgie for their support over the past year. We have a fantastic community in Ōpito - first responders keeping us safe, volunteers helping us clean up our beach and planting grasses to protect our dunes, teams running our Sports Day and Fishing Competition and the incredibly hard-working group involved in active pest control. All contribute to ensure we have a safe and sustainable environment, so thanks to all - it is truly appreciated!

A reminder that the Kūaotunu Volunteer Fire Brigade will be coming round over the Christmas / New Year period selling raffle tickets to support the Brigade. Please have cash ready (\$10 a ticket). Great prizes available!

On behalf of the OBRA Committee, I wish you a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

## Our Pest Control and Bush Track Team Are Doing a Stunning Job!



CLEARED SECTION OF TRACK

A big 'Shout Out' to our Pest Control Team Rachel, Margie, Richard, Craig, Cassie and Aaron. Since mid 2021 they have recorded over 2500 'kills' of rats, possums, stoats, hedgehogs and ferrets. With generous funding from the Ōpito community and Waikato Regional Council the team has been able to purchase and set over 175 traps along the length of the Bay and into the hinterland along Stewart Stream. It has been heartening to see local businesses and over 60 families sponsoring a trap at \$140 each to ensure we have a 'Pest Free Ōpito Bay'. Funding has also allowed us to purchase baits and lures to attract pests into the trap (for \$40 a family can also help sponsor baits and lures). There has been a noticeable increase in native birdlife in the Bay including kiwi, kaka and kereru.

## Native Planting planned for mid 2024.

The team has also been busy clearing the walking track along Stewart Stream that can be accessed from Matapaua Bay Road, which had become overgrown with pampas grass. Now it is being mowed regularly to keep this pest weed at bay and allow for a pleasant walk beside the stream. Access to Sandy Bay and the Waterfall can be made following the track.

Natural native revegetation of the track is noticeable, and OBRA intend to make a modest contribution to purchasing native plants like manuka, kanuka, cabbage trees, flax and hebe's to help the rewilding process. This will also attract more native birds into the Bay. If anyone has access to eco sourced (from the Coromandel) native plants they could contribute please call or email me to discuss (021938402 or [chris@obsidiancommunications.co.nz](mailto:chris@obsidiancommunications.co.nz) )



## Dune Restoration Year 4

Another Successful Dune Planting session was held in June at Stewart Stream where a further 2000 dune grasses were planted. The hard-working Andrea Whitehead and her team from TCDC oversaw the process and also put on a barbecue for our 30 volunteers who as usual did a fantastic job. This is now an annual regenerative programme to restore our damaged dune system and replace exotic weeds with native sand binding grasses.



*A GREAT TURNOUT TO PLANT 2000 DUNE GRASSES AT STEWART STREAM*



*DUNE CLEARED READY FOR PLANTING*

## Kiwis are back in the Bay....

### Kiwi avoidance training for your dog

The Project Kiwi Trust has been extremely successful in rearing and releasing kiwi into the Kūaotunu Peninsula - so successful that kiwi can now be heard on our properties at Ōpito.

Sheila Westley from Project Kiwi will be holding further 'Kiwi Avoidance Training for Dogs' sessions over the summer. Dates and online bookings for this FREE training can be found on the website [www.kiwiavoidancetraining.nz](http://www.kiwiavoidancetraining.nz) or phone Sheila direct on 021716514.

## ....and so are Dotterels!

It's not just Kiwis. Dogs and dotterels, the endangered species breeding on the beach at present, are a potentially fatal combination. Be mindful when on the beach to have your dog under control and preferably on a lead. If you rent out your property, please ensure your guests are aware of this issue. DOC are putting up signage and roped fencing to remind people to be mindful of protecting these birds and to indicate where they are nesting. Please keep your dog well away from these areas.

## Beach Clean-up Year 5

We have partnered with Sustainable Coastlines to have regular checks on plastic pollution in the Bay. The good news is that of the 385 beaches in the Sustainable Coastlines database we in Ōpito are regularly in the top five when it comes to **plastic free** beaches. Congratulations. Our great team of volunteers led by Hilke Giles and Jennie Bruce are ensuring our beautiful Ōpito stays clean and as a reminder if you are walking the beach take a (non-plastic) bag with you to pick up any plastic or inorganic material. Check out [www.litterintelligence.org](http://www.litterintelligence.org) to see how we stack up.



*THE VOLUNTEER TEAM FOR THIS YEAR'S BEACH CLEAN UP*

# Other News from the Bay

## Blackjack Road Repairs

The first repair has been completed. The second more major work will commence shortly and recommence on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Traffic control will be in place while work continues. We have asked TCDC to move quickly (before Christmas) to repair the corrugations on the hill between Ōtama and Ōpito. They have made a commitment to do this.



## Security Camera

Thanks to community contributions, we have installed a camera that recognises number plates of vehicles entering and leaving the Bay in daylight and at night. To protect your privacy, only NZ Police will have access to this information. There will be two OBRA Committee 'Gatekeepers' to ensure no other access is given. If you have a crime to report to the Police, they will now be able to identify vehicles that have been in the Bay over the relevant timeframe.



**Kūaotunu Dark Sky Community**  
*Kaitiaki of the Dark Skies of the Kūaotunu Peninsula*

The Dark Sky Community Trust have achieved a major milestone, with submission to TCDC of a proposed District Plan Variation. This is to introduce policies and regulations that will meet International Dark Sky Association (IDA) standards. We hope the variation can be adopted early in the New Year, with a further few months needed for consultation and other processes. We are also well advanced with our formal application to IDA, which will be ready to submit as soon as, or possible before, the plan change process is complete. Meanwhile, look out for news of the next community stargazing event at Ōpito coming soon.

## Scallop Gathering Rāhui

With the support of Ngāti Hei, Legasea, the NZ Sports Fishing Council and the communities of the North Mercury Bay area, we successfully

### RĀHUI. NO DIVING OR DREDGING FOR SCALLOPS

An official 2 year ban on taking scallops from the eastern Coromandel coast.



Ministerial approved rāhui is supported by Ngāti Hei and the local community. The ban applies to recreational, customary and commercial scalloping for 2 years from 11 September 2021.

**HEI** Please respect this rāhui. 

This rāhui was initiated by Ngāti Hei, the Opito Bay Rotarangers Association, the Mercury Bay Game Fishing Club, Teiwa Pūaruai Sports Fishing Club, Whangamata Ocean Sports Club, New Zealand Underwater Association, Spearfishing NZ, New Zealand Sport Fishing Council and Legasea.

initiated a rāhui over 6,000Ha off Opito Bay. Research funded by OBRA found an unsustainable level of one legal scallop every 27sq metres in the Bay. Follow up research by NIWA confirmed the negative state of the beds in the whole of the Gulf and the 'no take' period has now been extended indefinitely until recovery is evidenced. This means It remains illegal for commercial and recreational fishers to dredge or dive for scallops in Ōpito and the rest of the Hauraki Gulf.

## Stay 'Fire Safe' this Summer!

Dry weather will create an abundance of material to add to forest slash and bush as a serious fire hazard. The Fire Service advise that beach or other outdoor bonfires will be permissible by permit only, obtainable online at [www.fireandemergency.nz](http://www.fireandemergency.nz). Fireworks and magic lanterns are always a real danger, and particularly irresponsible when wind conditions may not take them out to sea.

**Make sure you have cash available to buy tickets in the annual Fire Brigade Raffle. Help the dedicated volunteers who keep us safe!**

## Summer Rubbish Collection Dates

Are shown in the pdf attached to this newsletter. Details of the next collection can also be found at [www.opitobay.nz](http://www.opitobay.nz).

## Fishing Competition and Sports Day

**Join us for two days of Family fun!**

Details of these key events in the social calendar of the Bay are in the attached pdf files. Sincere thanks to the dedicated organisers led by Roger Gwynne and Cheryle Parker!

## Art Exhibition

The annual exhibition of paintings by local artist Gaylene Lonergan will be on January 3<sup>rd</sup> from 10am to 3pm at 11 Ohinau Drive. Details in the attached pdf.

