

COASTAL DUNE VEGETATION NETWORK - PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

Fiona Ede¹, David Bergin¹ and Harley Spence²

¹*Forest Research, Rotorua*

²*Environment Waikato, Hamilton*

Research into aspects of sand dune revegetation and coastal management has been in progress at the New Zealand Forest Research Institute Ltd. for several years. In the past decade there has been an increase in interest from local communities, iwi and agencies responsible for coastal management in using indigenous species for revegetation of degraded sand dunes to control erosion and restore natural character. This has led to a number of local and regional councils collaborating with *Forest Research* in planting trials with indigenous species, which were designed to provide scientifically sound guidelines for dune revegetation and restoration programmes. Wherever possible, councils involved the local community in the installation and maintenance of these trials, through the involvement of Beach Care and Coast Care groups.

Through this collaborative process, it quickly became obvious that there was a need for a forum where all those involved in coastal management could access reliable information, exchange ideas and discuss coastal vegetation issues. And so the Coastal Dune Vegetation Network was born. Formed on 1st July, 1997, the Network is a research collaborative between researchers based at *Forest Research*, financial members who each contribute \$3,000 per annum, and non-paying collaborators. The Network currently has 14 financial members, including ten regional and district councils from throughout New Zealand, two forestry companies, a polytechnic and the Department of Conservation. Collaborators (over 60 in total) include Beach and Coast Care groups, iwi, consultants, nurseries and private individuals interested in coastal issues.

The main aims of the Network are to facilitate interaction between participants, fund research of direct application to members, to provide leverage for applications to other funding bodies, and to facilitate effective technology transfer. The financial members determine the research projects that the Network funds each year. Additional funding for these projects is provided by FRST and other government agencies. In the 1998 - 1999 year, the research projects funded by the Network include:

- nursery propagation and planting trials of spinifex seedlings, to ascertain the most cost-effective methods of raising large number of healthy seedlings
- spinifex phenology and seeding, to determine factors affecting flower and seed production
- operational scale fertiliser trial on existing foredune vegetation, to determine appropriate rates and timing of application of nitrogenous fertiliser to maximise plant growth
- restoration of exposed sites using a range of management techniques

A major initiative of the Network is the production of a high quality, full-colour Technical Bulletin series to provide user groups with guidelines and key information on issues of revegetation and management of coastal sand dunes. One bulletin outlining the basics of coastal geomorphology is in preparation, while three other technical bulletins on indigenous sand binding species (pingao, spinifex and sand tussock) are currently being produced. The Network sends a newsletter out twice a year to all participants and meets annually for a field tour and AGM. In March 1998, more than 60 people from 30 organisations attended the annual meeting held at Papamoa.

To date, the Network has proved successful in facilitating the free exchange of ideas and information between all those interested in the sustainable management of our coastlines, be they members of the public who live, work or play in the coastal zone, employees of territorial authorities charged with managing the coastal ecosystem or researchers interested in providing solutions through the application of appropriate vegetation management techniques.

KEYWORDS: collaboration, community groups, coastal, sand dunes, revegetation