

# Coast Care in Christchurch

Kay Holder - Christchurch City Council

The city's coast line, a 35 km strip of sandy and rocky shoreline — is now managed for coastal protection, conservation and recreation. The management of this environment is undertaken by Coast Care, a section of the Christchurch City Council's Parks Unit.

Coast Care's work is guided by the Christchurch Beaches and Coastal Parks Management Plan, 1995. The management objectives are to:

Restore the indigenous habitats and ecology of the Christchurch coastal environment

- Protect and enhance the visual qualities of the coast
- Foster in the community a sense of pride and identity
- Protect and enhance the coast's cultural and historic features

In its restorative role, Coast Care carries out planting programmes in dunes currently covered predominantly in marram. Fires, grazing and city development has left little of the native vegetation cover intact. Trials with Forest Research have identified 14 native species most suited for restoration plantings on this coastline. Native front slope sandbinders — pingao, spinifex and euphorbia — have been reintroduced to specific sites while the back slopes have been planted with native coastal species including ake ake, ngaio, cabbage tree, flax, and hebe. The harsh climate dictates careful placement of plants is necessary to avoid losses due to drought and frosts. Other threats to the plantings are sand accretion, weed invasion, trampling, theft and browsing by hares and rabbits.

Both native and exotic sand binding plants and sand fences are used to stabilise sand dunes. Recontouring of eroded dunes is undertaken as resources allow and within limits set by resource consent, with revegetation following. Ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*) is used extensively on newly recontoured dunes because of its availability and establishment success. Native plants are planted into ice plant covered dunes the following season.

Coast Care provides for and controls recreational use of the dunes. A system of tracks provide access to the beach in many places. Fences and board-walks are used to keep people and vehicles off the dune vegetation.

Seven community Coast Care groups were formed at the inception of the Coast Care programme in 1995 with several aims. These include to improve the attitudes towards understanding of the role dunes play in coastal protection, and to support the council in sustainable management of the dunes. The community participation can be viewed as having mixed success. Coast Care has good support for facility development and public planting days. However several coastal issues are controversial. The use of predominantly native species over what is deemed to be more aesthetic species (eg Norfolk Pines) has been raised by several groups. Mechanically recontouring sand dunes in the New Brighton area has been very controversial, as some residents want the dunes lowered below the current Resource Consent height of 8m to improve their view of the sea.

Despite the challenges of public participation Coast Care is committed to community Coast Care groups as the future of the programme and restoration projects lies with the support of the community.