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**COMMUNITIES, MANAGEMENT, AND SCIENCE FORMING SUCCESSFUL
ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PARTNERSHIPS -
EXPERIENCE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT WAIKATO "BEACH CARE" PROGRAMME.**

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In 1993 Environment Waikato (Waikato Regional Council) launched "Beach Care", a programme which developed partnerships between local coastal community groups and statutory management authorities to address hazard management problems associated with sand dunes. Sand dunes are a dynamic natural buffer between the land and marine environments and therefore an important component of New Zealand's coastal ecosystem. Dunes provide a unique habitat for indigenous flora and fauna. Anthropogenic pressure on dunes has resulted in widespread damage throughout large areas of New Zealand. In addition to hazard management and controlling erosion, the Resource Management Act (1991) places an obligation on land managers to protect and preserve the natural character of the coastal environment.

From small beginnings at one beach on the Coromandel Peninsula, Beach Care has developed and been proven to be a very useful forum with 12 Beach Care groups now active throughout the Waikato region. Beach Care partnerships have enabled the various community interests to improve communication, develop consensus in regard to most management issues and objectives, and to work together to develop and implement management plans. Since the introduction of the Beach Care concept by Environment Waikato, Beach Care or Coast Care has been adopted by agencies and communities throughout the country and groups are now involved in ecological restoration works in a wide range of coastal environments, whilst enhancing public access and amenity values.

Forest Research, Rotorua, has been investigating methods of propagation and management-scale establishment of indigenous sand binding grasses on foredunes and a wide range of indigenous species on back dune species for nearly 10 years. One of the major aims of the research programme was to be able to produce scientifically sound guidelines and practical methods for successful rehabilitation and management of coastal dunes. A feature of the programme has been the close collaboration with managing agencies and local communities including iwi with involvement of locals in establishment and monitoring of planting trials. However, a co-ordinated approach was required at a national level to foster effective communication, provide partial funding for research and to prioritise research requirements. Bergin *et al.* (1997) outlined the intention of research and management agencies to form a "Duneland Research and Management Working Group". The "Coastal Dune Vegetation Network" (CDVN) was launched in 1997 with the explicit intention to provide an integrated forum for the free exchange of information on the sustainable management of coastal dune ecosystems with emphasis on practical restoration. Now in its second year, the CDVN is operational with over 80 groups and individuals participating and contributing to CDVN events. The CDVN is financially supported by 14 agencies all of whom contribute ideas for research and vote to prioritise research projects. The information is freely available to those with an interest in ecological restoration of the coastal environment.

The direct links between scientists, resource managers and community members has proven both challenging and rewarding for all parties. The science undertaken is directly applicable to "real world problems" and the results are applied well before there are published. This integration of local community, management and research, although focussed on coastal vegetation, is a useful model for restoration programmes in other ecological environments.

Bergin, D. O.; Dahm, J.; Herbert, J. W.; Spence, H. 1997: Restoration of coastal sand dunes using indigenous species - integration of research, management and community. Proceedings of the *Issues in Ecological Restoration Workshop, Christchurch, February 1995*. Landcare Research, Lincoln: 51-57.

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