

Thousands of seedlings planted to replenish kahikatea forest

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Volunteers plant thousands of native trees on a Waharoa farm to replenish the kahikatea forest.

A group of volunteers has replenished a Waikato forest that was once torn down to make butter boxes in the early 1900s.

Around 80 volunteers planted just over 1900 native trees on June 12 to replenish the understorey and send future canopy giants on their way in a kahikatea forest, near Waharoa.

In the early decades of the 20th century, most kahikatea forests were cleared for dairy farming and used to make butter boxes and cheese crates for exports.

In eight years, kahikatea numbers were reduced by 63 per cent.

Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research ecologist Norman Mason said reversing the almost total loss of kahikatea forests from the flood plains of the Piako may seem like a daunting prospect, but the community is one step closer to protecting its forests for future generations.

The planted area connects a council-owned scenic reserve and a privately owned QEII National Trust conservation covenant.

The freshly planted seedlings will help improve connections between these two fragments and increase resistance to weeds and weather extremes.



More than 80 volunteers showed up for planting day in Waharoa.

“This is a great example of what can be achieved when landowners, the community, government agencies and conservation charities work together,” Mason said.

“None of this would have been possible without the many hours of volunteer time.”

The event was part of Connecting the Waitoa – a partnership between the Piako Catchment Forum and Waikato Regional Council – which aims to preserve and connect the remaining forests and wetlands of the Waitoa catchment.

Volunteers included QEII National Trust, New Zealand Landcare Trust, Waikato Forest and Bird, Matamata-Piako District Council, Waikato Regional Council and the community.

“It looks like a recipe for success in reversing biodiversity decline is emerging in the Piako,” Mason said.

“The hope is that positive events like this will give other landowners more confidence to seek assistance in protecting and enhancing native ecosystems on their own farms.”

Source: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/125510089/thousands-of-seedlings-planted-to-replenish-kahikatea-forest>