Hobson Bay Riparian Planting (reeds etc instead of mangroves)

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Stage 1 Trial 2017

Update:
The Sarcocornia (red/green succulent) in particular could be said to be thriving in the raw reclaimed soils. This plant has very high value as an erosion protecting and land building species. Note well sea level rise planners. It seems to transplant well and grow strongly in the artificially dry planter in spite of the endless high tides we have been having. While it is among the toughest of the plants, it is encouraging to see how well it establishes.

The other aesthetically dominant plant of the area is the soft looking but spiky Stipa grass. This is a very slow grower but has so far, slowly but steadily established.

The other species are progressing happily enough given the constraints. I still have two species potted but not planted for both space and time and niche requirements.

The only invasive weed species so far is Atriplex, a native. It also seems to have been a very poor mangrove seeding year and the only propagules seen seem to have dried up and gone.

In terms of the greater soil health, the crabs seem to have happily re-established at a level they are happy to live in (Chart datum 3.0 -3.1m) and the density probably indicates a relatively healthy micro environment.

While it is still too early to judge the success of the concept, it is obvious that with little effort the plants and with time the greater ecology of this depleted environment can probably be successfully re-established. The plants are inherently very tough (as they need to be to grow in these places) and with a little thought can be used to restore this environment.

NIWA/Univ of Akld are still interested in working in this concept and are actively seeking funding

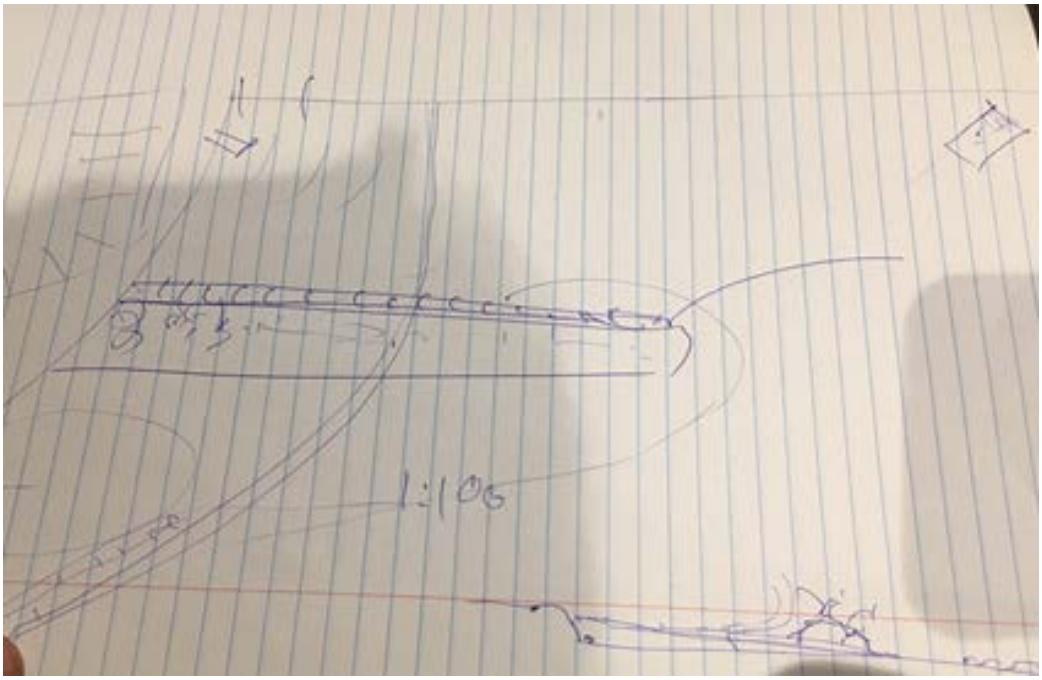
Wilsons Marsh - Stage 2

The small planter trial has survived an initially dry summer and, more significantly, a season of exceptional high tides. Using a brutally honest construction soil, ie a very low quality soil and a very late planting, the trial has produced very pleasing results. Significant points from the trial at this stage are:

- The native, local, salt marsh plants are, on the whole, easily propagated and transplanted.
- Appropriate substrates can be created from waste construction soil.
- At this stage, weeds have not been an issue, including mangrove.
- Growth and establishment has been rapid.
- The only negative so far is an apparent Pukeko issue with some reeds.
- Input from passers-by has always been positive.

The results of the trial encourage a larger trial with a greater plant range and more significantly an active engagement with the issue of consented works in the Marine Reserve. It is proposed that a second trial might usefully address these issues and in the process create a more lasting landscape feature.

Proposal



Create a small “relict sandbar” feature at the Palmers Nursery end of the existing walkway to concentrate fresh water flows and provide:

- A fresh to saltwater transitional marsh planting zone
- A coastal “sandbar” planting area
- An additional and enhanced experimental zone for trailing salt marsh establishment.

Advantages

- This small feature can be beneficially enhanced at any future stage with additional stormwater captured from adjacent roads or drainage enhancement in the Wilsons Field reserve. Any increase in flow will better support a transitional marsh.
- The marsh will allow enhanced stormwater scrubbing of the Palmers carpark flows and could easily capture flows from the adjacent road.
- The location would allow an “off road” access to the project area.
- Aesthetic improvement of the area and enhancement of the walkway experience.
- Facilitate an active engagement with Consent issues.

Consent issues.

Further work can probably be done under an extension of the “scientific research” Consent loophole that stage 1 was apparently done under. Please note; I suspect no consent was ever given because it was too hard to actually deal with, and in spite of widespread interest in the concept, there is no apparent legal pathway.

This issue must be addressed at a high level to start the process in making this type of work ever feasible.