

## Restoring one of Auckland's rarest ecosystems – Lava rock forest.

Mrs Miranda Bennett<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Auckland Council*

Lava rock forest is the native forest vegetation cover which eventually forms on basalt boulder fields after a volcanic eruption. The Auckland volcanic field once contained 29 cones and associated lava rock forest would have covered 5000+ hectares of the Auckland isthmus. Today just 29 hectares of lava rock forest remains, fragmented and spread across public and private ownership and in varying states of ecological health. Lava rock forest is a variant of Puriri, taraire forest (WF7) and has been classified as a threatened forest type in the Auckland region. Urbanisation, roading and quarrying have removed much of Auckland's lava rock forest. Continued pressure and threat from development, introduced weeds and pest animals is further reducing and degrading this vulnerable ecosystem.

The central city suburb of Epsom is perhaps better known for its prestigious schools and heritage architecture, but it is also home to the three best remaining fragments of lava rock forest – Maungawhau, Withel Thomas and Almorah Road. This presentation focuses on Auckland Council's restoration of the Almorah Road rock forest where a 5 year ecological restoration programme is being implemented to control invasive pest plants and animals. The highly urbanised setting, small landscape scale and rare ecosystem have made this project challenging. We will outline the strategies we are using to restore this urban forest and how we are working collaboratively with community and other agencies to protect one of Auckland's rarest ecosystems.