



7 June 2023

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (the Department), received on 11 May 2023 in which you asked for:

OIA 1: The types of documents and/or file formats that are available regarding internal processes/procedures relating to the identification of invasive plant species that are currently in use across the Department of Conservation, the Ministry for the Environment, and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

and

OIA 2: The annual budget (with breakdown were reasonable and easy to attain within a short timeframe...) for the past 3 years as it pertains to the eradication of invasive plant species. Including but not limited to: Identification software, Identification personnel, identification associated costs, appx. Number of operations dedicated to the management &/or eradication of invasive plant species nationally, 3x management operation cost breakdowns with line items for associated overhead (we don't need every operation costs nationally, we're just trying to understand what's average.), Number of operations dedicated to the restoration of managed areas using native species nationally, - 3x restoration operation cost breakdowns with line items for associated overhead (we don't need every operation costs nationally, we're just trying to understand what's average.).

On 17 May, you spoke to Clare Stringer (Biosecurity Manager) who clarified that your request relates to the identification of invasive plant infestations in the landscape rather than to the field identification of invasive plants. Clare emailed you on 18 May with some publicly available information related to the topic of your request – I hope this was received and proved useful.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *The types of documents and/or file formats that are available regarding internal processes/procedures relating to the identification of invasive plant species that are*

currently in use across the Department of Conservation, the Ministry for the Environment, and the Ministry for Primary Industries.

The Department's standard operating procedure (SOP) for weed surveillance is available on our website at: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-policies-and-plans/our-procedures-and-sops/weeds/>. Although the Department has undertaken and supported several research projects related to the use of remote sensing (including LIDAR, drones, satellite imagery) for the detection of invasive plants, at present these techniques are not part of our standard processes/procedures.

2. *OIA 2: The annual budget (with breakdown where reasonable and easy to attain within a short timeframe...) for the past 3 years as it pertains to the eradication of invasive plant species. Including but not limited to: Identification software, Identification personnel, identification associated costs, appx. Number of operations dedicated to the management &/or eradication of invasive plant species nationally, 3x management operation cost breakdowns with line items for associated overhead (we don't need every operation costs nationally, we're just trying to understand what's average.), Number of operations dedicated to the restoration of managed areas using native species nationally, - 3x restoration operation cost breakdowns with line items for associated overhead (we don't need every operation costs nationally, we're just trying to understand what's average.).*

The Department manages invasive plants as part of the suite of pressures/threats that affect our most valuable sites for biodiversity. As such, we do not have an accurate budget breakdown that covers all of your areas of interest. We do not have separate software and systems or personnel for the identification of invasive plants or have a record of the number of activities that the Department undertakes nationally with regard to invasive plant management or restoration using native species. We must therefore refuse this part of your request, under section 18(e) – that the information requested cannot be identified.

The table below includes information on the planned cost of weed control in 2020/21 and 2021/22 – this information was provided to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) as a contribution to his report *Space Invaders*, which is publicly available on the PCE website.

Weed "category"	2020/21	2021/22
Climbers	\$1,972,784	\$1,477,738
Ground cover and herbaceous weeds	\$2,131,495	\$ 1,881,444
Pioneer woody	\$4,300,392	\$3,874,815
Shade tolerant woody	\$145,107	\$99,778
Wilding conifers	\$4,102,397	\$6,085,056
Totals	\$12,652,175	\$13,418,831



Please note that these figures are for planned spend, not actual spend. The Department does not collect "actual spend" data at the weed or pest/pressure level because our site management prescriptions are integrated, meaning that all management costs sit within the same budget line. Planned costs are direct costs only - that is there are no overheads or technical support budgets included. Planned costs do include salaries, wages and operational expenditure. The Department manages approximately 200 weed species per year so to make budget reporting easier for staff species are amalgamated into broad weed categories.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.



Nāku noa, nā



Hilary Aikman
Director Terrestrial Biodiversity
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai