

19 April 2024

s9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe s9(2)(a)

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 25 March 2024, in which you asked for the following information in relation to weed control on Motutapu island:

- *I would like to know what weed plan is in place. How they are being managed and where the weeding is taking place?*
- *How much money through Jobs for Nature has been allocated to weeding? What has been achieved? How much has been spent on it?*
- *Who is overseeing the work which is tax payer funded. Is it MPI or DoC? Who allocated the funds?*
- *Who is doing the weeding under the heading of Jobs for Nature and as it is on DoC managed public land who is monitoring this work? What is occurring here?*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

I will address your questions in turn as follows:

1. *I would like to know what weed plan is in place. How they are being managed and where the weeding is taking place?*

The Department is currently producing a weed control strategy for Motutapu. The document is still in development, but it will set out a refreshed strategy for weed control on the island, including how we plan to work with mana whenua (particularly Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki) and other parties such as the Motutapu Restoration Trust and the Motutapu Outdoor Education Camp.

The objectives for the proposed new weed management strategy for Motutapu are:

- To protect indigenous ecological communities from weeds. This includes forest and wetland communities, and areas targeted for restoration and replanting.
- To protect archaeological and historic sites from weed impacts.
- To limit the spread of weeds from Motutapu to other islands, especially Rangitoto.

Many of the weed species present on Motutapu are wind or bird dispersed. Limiting the reinvasion of Motutapu by such species and limiting their spread from Motutapu to other nearby islands is a priority for the weed control programme. Permanent eradication of such weed species from Motutapu will not be possible in the short to medium term, as that requires weed control to be effective at source sites including on the mainland.

Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, the Motutapu Outdoor Education Trust and the Motutapu Restoration Trust all undertake weed control on the island.

The Department has granted funding to Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, through the Pou Tāngata Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Community Development Trust, for weed control work on Motutapu under the Jobs for Nature programme. To deliver this, the island has been divided into 'weed management zones'. Some weed management zones are prioritised over others because they contain areas of conservation significance like wetlands and relic forest, or are sites where restoration plantings are being undertaken.

A small (3.85ha) portion of the island is occupied by the Motutapu Outdoor Education Trust under a lease agreement. The Trust is responsible for managing weeds within this site.

The Motutapu Restoration Trust is the primary volunteer network active on Motutapu. They hold weeding days on the island on a weekly basis, primarily focused on tackling moth plant in an area in the middle of the island (known as the Centre Gully), and in the forest behind Home Bay.

Under their Treaty settlement, three areas of land on Motutapu (totalling 52ha) were transferred to Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki, to be managed by them as reserves. Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki are responsible for managing weeds in all three of these reserves.

The Department acknowledges the island has very visible infestations of a number of weed species. This is being addressed primarily by working with Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki and community volunteer groups to enable them to assist with controlling weeds.

*2. How much money through Jobs for Nature has been allocated to weeding? What has been achieved? How much has been spent on it?*

We have interpreted your question as applying to Motutapu Island only.

The Pou Tāngata Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Community Development Trust was allocated \$933,000 of Jobs for Nature funding by the Department in May 2021. The scope of this work includes but is not limited to weed control. The funding agreement does not identify the proportion of funding for each specific category of work to be delivered, so it is not possible to state what amount of this funding was allocated specifically for weed control. This project is the only Jobs for Nature funding allocated directly to Motutapu. To date, the project has received \$866,500 through Jobs for Nature.

For this project, key performance indicators for weed control are in the form of quarterly deliverable milestones for hectares of weeds controlled. Performance has been reported on up until the period ending 31 December 2023, and is measured on the basis of figures supplied by Te Haerenga o Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Ltd. For the reporting period ending on 31 December 2023, key performance indicators (deliverable milestones) the project reported 139.8ha of weed control had been completed.

Pou Tāngata Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Community Development Trust proposed a decrease to the weed control target as a variation to the funding agreement, which was accepted by the Department and signed in September 2023. The total project weed control outcome was reduced from 730ha to 297ha. Reasons cited by Pou Tāngata Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki for the project not achieving weeding milestones were the difficulty experienced with recruiting employees to work in the relative isolation of Motutapu, and COVID-19 restrictions that were in place during 2021 led to a delayed start to the project.

3. *Who is overseeing the work which is tax payer funded. Is it MPI or DoC? Who allocated the funds?*

The Department of Conservation is responsible for allocating and administering the Jobs for Nature funding granted for weed control on Motutapu.

4. *Who is doing the weeding under the heading of Jobs for Nature and as it is on DoC managed public land who is monitoring this work? What is occurring here?*

Jobs for Nature funding administered by the Department has been allocated to Motutapu Island under a funding agreement with Pou Tāngata Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Community Development Trust, an entity owned by Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki. The scope of work funded under this agreement is as follows:

1. Weed control of moth plant on Motutapu. Other weeds to be controlled include gorse, woolly nightshade, apple of Sodom, veldt grass, snapdragon vine, mile-a-minute and climbing asparagus.
2. Repairs and maintenance of farm and island infrastructure including fencing, water reticulation and other assets as agreed with the Department.

Employees whose roles are funded by the Jobs for Nature funding agreement may also cover general duties and team support when required. These employees are to receive training and development opportunities in the fields of environment, ecology, horticulture, archaeology, biosecurity, dog handling, weed and pest control and in operating machinery relevant to these fields.

Information about this grant can be obtained from the Department's website:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/jobs-for-nature--mahi-mo-te-taiao/projects-funded-by-jobs-for-nature/>

Monitoring of results has been based on reporting by the funding recipients. The Department has not had capacity to formally monitor weed control by other parties; however, Departmental staff do meet with recipients and undertake informal staff observations.

The Department employs staff, called Delivery Managers, to monitor and support Jobs for Nature projects. They are responsible for attending site visits each quarter to meet with project recipients and verify progress achieved. These site visits have not been undertaken for the Motutapu project for several reasons including limited capacity and travel complications. A new Delivery Manager has recently joined the Department and a site visit is being planned to take place shortly. Local Department staff have been undertaking some monitoring of the project and have regularly engaged with Pou Tāngata Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Community Development Trust.

### Advisories

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

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Nāku noa, nā

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Andrew Baucke  
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*Te Papa Atawhai*