



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

In-Confidence

Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 3 February 2020

Seen by Hon Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 Kauri dieback and myrtle rust

Myrtle rust

- Three positive myrtle rust infections on Public Conservation Land (PCL) have been reported in January 2020. These are the first reports on new PCL areas since March 2019.
- A new find at Lake Rotoiti was reported to you two weeks ago. Since then, DOC staff have found two further myrtle rust infections on ramarama in the Coromandel Forest Park, as well as a single infected ramarama tree along the Motu river in the Raukumara Forest Park.

Kauri dieback

- DOC staff are meeting with Biosecurity NZ staff on 4 and 5 February to begin planning the development of a Kauri Dieback Operational Plan.

Contact: [REDACTED]

1.2 RMA advocacy

DOC's recent RMA work is as follows:

Submissions

Glen Ayr Ltd – surface water take in Otago region

- The Director-General submitted on two RMA water take consent applications for primary and secondary water allocation in Shepherd's Creek, a tributary of the Taieri River near Patearoa, Central Otago on 24 January.
- This application is not a deemed mining permit replacement. Threatened longfin eels / tuna are present at and below the take site and populations of non-migratory galaxiids exist above these takes.
- Issues outlined in our submission include: consent duration, the size and reliability of the secondary supplementary water allocation block, lack of hydrology information, lack of fish screen detail (the current proposed screening is not consistent with the NIWA (2007) Fish Screening guidelines), and the need for a review clause.
- A prehearing meeting has been requested.

Thames-Coromandel District Council District Plan Review

- The Thames-Coromandel District Council have publicly notified a proposal to include rules in the urban zones to prevent the spread of kauri dieback disease. The Director-General lodged a submission on 24 January in support of this proposal.
- These provisions are already included in the rural and conservations zones as a result of a previous appeal by DOC. This change will make the rules consistent across all zones in the district.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1 Next steps for the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment report: 'Pristine, popular... imperilled? The environmental consequences of projected tourism growth'

- In December 2019, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) released a report summarising the environmental and cultural impacts of tourism in New Zealand, and what ongoing 'business-as-usual' growth could mean both for the environment and the tourism sector.
- The report finds that tourism places a myriad of pressures on the environment and that government policy is currently insufficient to manage impacts. The PCE concludes that under current policy and regulatory settings, environmental pressures are likely to grow in line with the size of the tourism sector.
- The report focuses on problem identification rather than policy solutions. The PCE plans to address possible policy solutions in a second report later in 2020.
- To inform this second report, the PCE has invited departments to provide feedback on the initial report and input on options for tourism and environmental management and regulation. Several teams across DOC helped inform the initial report and we are working to coordinate DOC input into the second report.
- We will provide you with a memo summarising the initial report and our analysis of possible implications and opportunities for DOC in February

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 Consultation on Fisheries NZ measure to protect yellow-eyed penguins

- Fisheries New Zealand is consulting on a new measure to protect areas adjacent to hoiho/yellow-eyed penguin nesting sites near Stewart Island.
- Hoiho numbers in Southland and Otago have declined, with recent counts indicating a significant drop in nest numbers on Stewart Island compared to previous years (Status Report of 4 November 2019 refers).
- While the decline is believed to be driven by a number of factors, set netting near nesting sites poses a real and proven risk, particularly in the context of low and declining penguin numbers.
- Birds foraging from nesting sites on mainland Southland and Otago coasts are partially protected by a ban on set netting within four nautical miles, introduced in 2008. However, there are currently no similar protections for Stewart Island and adjacent islands, where hoiho are also known to nest.
- If approved, the measure would require a commercial fisher using a set net within 1 nautical mile of the north and east coast of Stewart Island and adjacent islands to stay within 100 metres of their net, and to actively monitor and avoid accidental capture of yellow-eyed penguins or other seabirds. It would be introduced under the Fisheries (Commercial Fishing) Regulations 2001.
- This is an interim measure which would be reviewed in a year's time by Fisheries New Zealand in the context of further risk assessment they will be undertaking and as other mitigation measures are put in place.
- Consultation will commence shortly and run until mid-February. Fisheries New Zealand is expecting to provide updates on the results of the consultation and any decisions in late February. We will update you once this information is available.
- We will also provide a briefing to you shortly, in consultation with partners in the Hoiho Governance Group, to bring you up to date about the results of the public

consultation process and to confirm the next steps in finalising the Hoiho Strategy / Te Kaweka Takohaka mō te Hoiho.

- Officials are available to meet with you should you require further details.

Contact: _____

2.3 Forthcoming paper on public opinion towards gene drive

- The article, *Public opinion towards gene drive as a pest control approach for biodiversity conservation and the association of underlying worldviews*, will be published this week in a special issue of the journal Environmental Communication. The lead author works for the Department.
- The publication is part of the NSC Biological Heritage project “Public perceptions of the use of novel pest control methods” which was led by DOC’s manager of social science.
- Four segments emerged from the data which had various environmental and social views which influenced their opinion towards the use of gene drive.
- Results from the research have been made public numerous times via public talks and can be found on You Tube.
- The survey data on which this research is based included a question about political ideology which has been detailed in a previous briefing to you (23 April 2019)
- A copy of the abstract has been provided to your office
- As per the NSC guidelines, the paper, survey, and data set will be made publicly available.
- This is in accordance with SSC guidance received after the Department advised them of the survey question on political ideology.

Contact: _____

Proactively Released

3 Director-General Engagements

January/February

- 27 Jan–14 Feb Lou on Annual Leave, Rachel Bruce acting DG
- 13 February Chief Executive's Environmental and Economic Forum, Wellington
(Bruce Parkes attending)
- 18 February DG Stakeholder BBQ, DOC Wellington
- 19 February DOC/FENZ Leadership Teams meeting, Fire and Emergency,
The Terrace, Wellington
- 20 February State Sector Senior Leaders Retreat, Ohariu Wellington
- 20 February NZ Conservation Authority, DOC Wellington
- 20 February NZer of the year Awards Cordis, Auckland

March

- 3–4 March SLT Retreat, Pounui
- 18 March Environment NGO Forum, DOC Wellington
- 20 March Senior Leaders hui, Wellington
- 30 Mar–9 April Raoul Island, TBC

April

- 16 April NZ School of Forestry 50th Anniversary, Canterbury
- 17 April NZ Conservation Authority, Blenheim

4 Addendum

None this week.



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Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 10 February 2020

Seen by Hon Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

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1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 RMA Advocacy

Last Chance Irrigation Company Ltd – Surface Water Takes in Otago region

- The Director-General lodged a submission on 30 January 2020 opposing a suite of 22 water take applications to replace mining privileges, for an irrigation scheme covering five catchments on the Old Man Range between Alexandra and Roxburgh.
- Main areas of concern raised related to freshwater values, allocation regime, minimum and residual flows, and effects on public conservation land.
- Although the Otago Regional Council has recently announced its intention to limit water permit terms to a duration of seven years, this application has not been captured by that timeframe, so the consent duration will be evaluated on its merits through the Council hearing process.

Contact: [REDACTED]

1.2 Kauri Dieback and Myrtle Rust

- There are no updates for kauri dieback or myrtle rust this week.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1 West Coast storm damage update

While we have made significant progress in addressing the damage from the storm in December, we are having to reassess impacts, risks and priorities following the February storm. Below are updates on some of the major areas of work.

7-8 December storm event recovery

- We now have a clear picture of the damage and are in the recovery phase.
- Repair work has been identified and moved into our Asset Management and Information System (AMIS). Work to repair has been planned and is being scheduled over the coming months.

2-4 February Event

- The major impact is in the Franz Josef Glacier Valley. The upper valley walking track has been lost in a series of sections. Full assessment is not yet possible as the river is too high to access the upper valley by foot safely.
- The lower valley road is also damaged but the river is still too high to fully assess the impact.
- Significant pressure has been put on the armouring on the causeway at Slippery Face. Work was in progress prior to this event to strengthen this section of armouring and road with new rock. The previous planned work may require revision depending on the assessment of the latest damage.
- We will update you via the status report when we have a clear picture of the damage.

Paparoa Track Great Walk full opening

- The track over the November slip is now reinstated. All other remaining tasks are on track to be completed by the end of February. This includes the installation of the three Waharoa (Cultural Gateways) at the track entrances (Pororari, Punakaiki, and Blackball). Ngati Waewae have requested that an unveiling and blessing of these Waharoa occurs before the full track is opened to visitors. This is planned for Saturday 29 February. You have been invited to this event.
- A Pou Whenua is also planned for the upper Paparoa Range and Escarpment section of the track and is currently under construction.
- There is an opportunity for you to join Ngati Waewae with the unveiling of this Pou sometime in mid-April. We will liaise with your office on this.

Fox Glacier

- The December and February storms have affected progress on the ten Fox Glacier visitor experience projects due to staff being needed for emergency works, the availability of contractors, and access due to SH 6 being closed for periods of time.
- We intend to make the experiences available to visitors on a staged basis as works are completed.
- Full completion will be late autumn to early winter. A formal opening to celebrate the completion of the full package is now more likely to be late May early June.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 PF2050 Strategy Launch

- Plans for the Predator Free 2050 Strategy launch are in progress, involving a multi-platform approach.

- The launch will occur in early March, exact date TBC. We are working with your office to determine the details of the media appearance, including the Prime Minister's potential involvement.
- A video will be publicly released at the start of the launch week, highlighting the role and aspirations of New Zealanders in protecting our native species by becoming predator free. This video will be suitable for use beyond the period of the launch.
- Design of a unifying programme tohu (symbol) is underway, to be introduced during the week of the launch.
- The launch will use a largely digital story-telling approach supported by partner agencies, PF communities and DOC staff. These stories will be shared by social media and in national and regional media.
- A hashtag #OneStepCloserPF2050 is being promoted to PF stakeholders and communities to use when sharing their stories via social media during the week of the launch. A package of information has been sent out this week to show groups how to participate in this online storytelling.
- We're pitching story ideas exploring aspects of the strategy and the challenges and opportunities it offers to national broadcast, online and print media outlets and highlighting local PF2050 success stories to regional media.
- DOC is preparing digital content summarising key aspects of the strategy as well as DOC's own PF2050 work – this will include blogs, web pages and social media posts.
- Internal communication is underway to strengthen understanding of the strategy among DOC staff and encourage them to share their own professional and personal PF2050 activities using internal comms channels.
- Our broader strategic comms sitting alongside this launch will continue to highlight the biodiversity in crisis and the need for urgent action.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.3 Release of Land Cover Database (LCDB), Version Five

- The latest update of the Land Cover Database (LCDB) is now complete.
- LCDB 5 (and 6 (circa 2022)) have been funded by a consortium of: Ministry for the Environment, Te Uru Rākau (Ministry for Primary Industries) and Department of Conservation.
- LCDB has been used since 1996 for policy, research, environmental reporting and decision-making at national and regional levels.
- It differentiates the New Zealand landscape into 33 types of land cover and provides a record of change over time.
- LCDB 5 contains land cover as of late 2018, making it a significant update in showing decline in wetlands, intensification of grasslands, and increase in built-up areas since version 4 (from 2012/13).
- Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research has released the data and other summary information on their LRIS portal as of January 31, 2020.
- DOC's Design and Evaluation Team (Planning and Support, Biodiversity) will use the data in this year's Annual Reporting, as well as in other programmes of work.
- Officials are available to meet with you should you require further details on this matter.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.4 International trade of shortfin mako shark specimens approved by NZ CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) officials

- Shortfin mako sharks were listed on Appendix II of CITES (Schedule 2 of the Trade in Endangered Species Act 1989) following the 18th Conference of the Parties to CITES in 2018.
- Before international trade of mako shark specimens is permitted, CITES requires the national Scientific Authority of participating countries to determine if the export and/or import from the high seas of mako are sustainable (a “non-detriment finding”), and requires the Management Authority to determine if such specimens were legally acquired.
- Shortfin mako are sustainably managed under the Quota Management System (QMS) administered by Fisheries NZ of the Ministry for Primary Industries. This sets a total allowable catch of 276 tonnes per year within the New Zealand Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Fisheries research shows that the population in the EEZ is stable or increasing, but our stock is shared with countries in the southwest Pacific.
- The NZ Scientific Authority has determined that mako caught within the QMS can be exported with no detrimental effect to the survival of the species. The NZ Scientific Authority has furthermore determined that 20 tonnes of mako can be imported from the high seas each year. This is equivalent to half of the combined quota for recreational and customary take within the QMS, which is nowhere near filled each year.
- The non-detriment finding will be used by the CITES Management Authority (administered by the DOC Operations Group) as part of the process used to issue export permits, and will be shared on the CITES website, and especially with colleagues in the SW Pacific in order to assist them to make their own scientific determinations.
- Officials are available to meet with you should you require further details on this matter.

Contact: _____

2.5 Coronavirus – refunds for cancelled bookings

- From the week beginning 3 February, DOC has introduced a policy for refunds for cancellations to bookings for Great Walks and other accommodation where coronavirus is given as a reason (e.g. a cancelled tour or flights).
- The policy is to grant a 100% refund where the cancellation is seven days or more from the date of arrival.
- Where the cancellation is less than seven days from the date of arrival a 100% refund will be granted at the discretion of the relevant manager.
- This policy remains in force until it is determined that coronavirus is no longer a concern.

Contact: _____

2.6 Hakatere/Ashburton Lakes water quality issues

- In September 2019 you received an update on water quality issues in Hakatere/Ashburton Lakes (Status report 89 refers).

- On Friday 24 January, a hui was hosted by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (TRoNT) and Arowhenua rūnaka. In attendance were representatives from DOC, Environment Canterbury, Ashburton District Council (including Mayor Neil Brown and Councillor Stuart Wilson), LINZ, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Te Taumutu Rūnanga.
- This hui was to identify options for individual and/or collective action on water quality issues.
- A decision was made by Arowhenua/Ngai Tahu to hold a further hui with landowners invited, including Lake Clearwater hut holders, to inform them of the significance of the water quality issue and to seek their contributions on option identification. The date and location of this is to be confirmed.
- LINZ and Environment Canterbury stated they would continue to work through their internal processes to ensure all possible legislative options are identified, up to and including compliance actions. DOC reaffirmed support of Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua and our commitment to this process. We will continue to provide staff time and financial resources to achieve on the ground actions as well as enabling the analysis of options and the decision-making forum.

Contact: [REDACTED]

3 Director-General Engagements

February

27 Jan – 14 Feb	Lou – Annual leave (Rachel Bruce Acting)
13 February	Chief Executive's Environmental and Economic Forum, Wellington
18 February	DG stakeholder BBQ. DOC Wellington
19 February	DOC/FENZ Leadership Teams meeting, Fire and Emergency, Wellington
20 February	State Sector Senior Leaders Retreat, Ohariu, Wellington
20 February	NZ Conservation Authority, DOC Wellington
20 February	New Zealander of the Year Awards, Cordis Auckland

March

03-04 March	SLT retreat, Pounui
18 March	Environment NGO Forum, DOC Wellington
20 March	Senior Leaders Hui, Wellington
30 March – 09 April	Raoul Island, TBC

April

16 April	NZ School of Forestry 50 th Anniversary, Canterbury
17 April	NZ Conservation Authority, Blenheim

4 Addendum

This section includes content that is sensitive or is being considered by the Minister of Conservation or other Ministers. This information is not being released proactively.

Subject headings of content in this section are:

- Announcement - Waitaiki Historic Reserve Management Plan
- Brook Sanctuary Orange-fronted parakeet/kākāriki karaka release
- PF2050 Conference
- Taranaki Crossing photo opportunity
- Mackenzie
- Trademark

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1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 RMA Advocacy Update

Submissions

Marlborough District Council – Picton/ Waikawa water supply take

- The Director-General (D-G) submitted on an application from the Marlborough District Council (MDC) to take groundwater for community supply purposes. The application seeks to re-consent the existing community supply take for Picton and Waikawa. The D-G opposed the original application in 2004 due to the lack of understanding and assessment of the effects of the groundwater take on the Para Swamp. This concern remains relevant with the current application.
- The submission lodged on 10 February 2020 opposes the groundwater take unless better conditions are placed on the consent to understand the effects of the take on the Para Swamp.

Waikato Regional Council – Puke Coal Ltd vegetation clearance/contaminant discharge

- The D-G lodged a submission on 10 February 2020 in opposition to the limited notified application to clear vegetation to expand a coal face, and discharge storm/wastewater and leachate from a landfill to a tributary of the Waitawhara Stream.
- The D-G concerns as outlined in the submission include: habitat loss for New Zealand pipit through vegetation clearance, impacts on long-finned eel through contaminants entering the waterways, lack of alignment with the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River (under the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010), and a general lack of ecological assessment undertaken as part of the assessment of effects.
- The submission sought that the consent be declined unless additional assessments are undertaken and surety provided that the consented activity will result in the protection and restoration of the water quality of the Waikato River and its catchments.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2 Updates

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

2.2 Operations

- Due to the number of events that operational teams around the country are facing at present (e.g. storm and flooding damage in Southland, Fiordland and West Coast, and the Northland droughts) the status report is light on updates this week.
- We have recently updated you on some key matters such as West Coast storm damage and are endeavouring to keep you and your office updated directly on critical matters as they emerge.
- I will provide a further verbal update on the current issues at the status meeting on Monday.

Contact: _____

Proactively Released

3 Director-General Engagements

February

18 February DG Stakeholder BBQ, DOC Wellington
19 February DOC/FENZ Leadership Teams meeting, Fire and Emergency –
The Terrace, Wellington
20 February State Sector Senior Leaders Retreat, Ohariu Wellington
20 February NZ Conservation Authority, DOC Wellington
20 February New Zealander of the year Awards, Cordis Auckland

March

03-04 March SLT Retreat, Pounui
18 March Environment NGO Forum, DOC Wellington
20 March Senior Leaders hui, Wellington
30 March -09 April Raoul Island visit

April

16 April NZ School of Forestry 50th Anniversary, Canterbury
17 April NZ Conservation Authority, Blenheim

May

06 May Public Service Leaders' Summit, TSB Arena
14-15 May State Sector Senior Leaders Retreat, Martinborough
21 May TIA Stakeholder function, TRENZ Christchurch

Proactively Released

4 Addendum

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Subject headings of content in this section are:

- Ombudsman Complaint relating to OIA

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Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 24 February 2020

Seen by Hon Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

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1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 RMA Advocacy Update

Submissions

Otago Regional Council – Water Permit Plan Change

- On 14 February, DOC's Director Operations, Southern South Island provided Schedule 1 consultation comments on Otago Regional Council's short-term plan change 7 (Water permits). Otago is the home of a suite of threatened Galaxias non-migratory fish. Deemed mining permit water takes under section 417 of the RMA expire on 1 October 2021. The intention of the plan change is to create a framework whereby short-term permits could be consented in the interim for up to seven years while a new NPS Freshwater compliant regional plan water is prepared. The submission seeks to refine the objective, policies and rules, and apply a default residual flow in the interim.

Other

Marlborough District Council – Proposed Variation (Onapua Aquaculture Management Area) to the Marlborough Environmental Plan

- On 11 February, we responded to Marlborough District Council's request under Schedule 1 of the RMA for Minister's comments on the draft variation to the Marlborough Environment Plan.
- The draft variation is to change zoning in Onapua Bay in the Tory Channel to become an Aquaculture Management Area.
- We have reviewed the variation and noted your expectations for coastal plans to give effect to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, and indicated that DOC would likely be involved in any future Schedule 1 notification process.

Contact: [REDACTED]

1.2 Update on kauri dieback and myrtle rust

Kauri dieback

- Following meetings with programme partners, Biosecurity NZ has scheduled a meeting on 4-5 March to progress the next steps for the long-term management of kauri dieback.
- DOC will be represented at the meeting, along with other partners (regional council and treaty partners) to address governance transition, strategic planning and resourcing for future kauri dieback long-term management.

Myrtle rust

- To date, there have been no myrtle rust reports in new areas on Public Conservation Land.
- Citizen science has informed us of multiple myrtle rust reports in urban areas; Richmond (5), Whangarei (2), Auckland (2), Nelson (4), and Taranaki (1).
- The infections have been seen on the young leaves of pōhutukawa, ramarama, and exotic Syzygium varieties, and the fruits of common myrtle (Myrtus communis).
- DOC will continue to keep an eye on myrtle rust reporting.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1 Release of research report: A survey of environmental and pest management attitudes on inhabited Hauraki Gulf islands

- In the week of 17 February, DOC published “A survey of environmental and pest management attitudes on inhabited Hauraki Gulf islands”.
- The research, led by DOC’s Social and Behavioural Science team, focuses on four different inhabited island communities in the Auckland region (Aotea, Rakino, Kawau, Waiheke) and compares the results with the adjacent mainland community. It seeks to understand the site-dependency of attitudes to pest management among islands with different biogeographies, social profiles and pest management histories, and to understand the underlying drivers of attitudes, and how these differ among islands.
- The study includes measures of environmental and pest management attitudes, as well as measures of other variables known to be associated with environmental attitudes (e.g. conservation participation, place attachment, attitudes to science). Questions relating to political preferences are not included in the survey.
- Results suggest that respondents have more overarching support for pest management and conservation in general than those from the mainland, reflecting greater levels of environmental concern. However, strong positive environmental attitudes did not consistently translate into strong positive attitudes towards pest management, suggesting that the support of island communities for predator management cannot be taken for granted.
- Results also indicate that successful pest eradication may have long-term positive effects on attitudes, with the residents of the only island from which rats have been eradicated (Rakino) having consistently more positive attitudes towards pest control.
- The findings of this study will help identify areas for future community engagement and ways in which barriers to achieving pest eradication can be overcome.
- We have provided a copy of the abstract for this publication to your office.

Contact:

2.2 Hauraki Gulf Forum

- The Hauraki Gulf Forum held its first meeting of the new local body political term on 17 February.
- The forum resolved to appoint two Co-Chairs, with one elected by all members and the other elected by the six tangata whenua representatives. The majority of members supported the move to a “co-governance” model to more appropriately reflect a modern Treaty Partnership.
- Pippa Coomb (Auckland Councillor for the Waitemātā and Gulf Ward) was elected by all members as one Co-Chair. The other is still under discussion between tangata whenua representatives.
- The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, under which the forum is constituted, provides for the election of a Chair (s. 25 of the Act refers). It does not explicitly provide for Co-Chairs.
- We will investigate if the Co-Chair arrangement can be confirmed under the Act and will provide you with advice by mid-March.

Contact:

2.3 Drought Impacts on Auckland Inner Islands

- Drought conditions across the Auckland Inner Islands have increased the fire risk and are also the likely cause of poor health and kiwi mortality:
 - On Motuora, three underweight North Island brown kiwi have been sent to Auckland Zoo in recent weeks, one of which was later euthanised. Four kiwi were also found drowned in an open water tank.
 - One little spotted kiwi was found dead on Tiritiri Matangi, and
 - One North Island brown kiwi was found dead on Hauturu.
- On Motuora, feed supplements and holding pens will be used to assist stressed birds, the open water tank has been fixed to allow kiwi to exit. Drinking troughs are being filled, and birds that cannot be managed on-island will be moved to Auckland Zoo.
- Vegetation is stressed and fire risk is elevated on all Auckland Inner Islands. The risk is heightened on Motutapu as there is no active grazing. We are advising staff and entities across the islands to restrict any activities that could cause sparks.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.4 *Te ara ki mua* – The path ahead – Developing a response to increasing deer abundance

- This update shares what we are hearing through broad engagement with stakeholders, and updates you on next steps. The first stage of this project is focussed on understanding the nature of the problem of increasing deer abundance.
- Indications are that deer are now seen in greater numbers around the country, and in places where they have not previously been known. In particular, this appears to be the case with fallow deer.
- Our engagement with stakeholders consistently identifies the build-up of wild deer herds on farm/forest margins in lowlands and front country as a key issue. Landlocked small reserves and private forest remnants with ready access to adjacent pasture are considered to have become safe havens for deer breeding. The vegetation composition and density in QE II covenants and other small reserves is being impacted in many places and the use of deer fencing is increasingly being looked at by farmers and for small covenants to exclude deer.
- Monitoring of deer populations and associated ecosystem impacts on conservation land has not been prioritised and this lack of data hampers the quality of discussions between stakeholders and good decision making around deer impacts, trends and solutions in our large national and forest parks. Cost-effective techniques to assess changes in ungulate abundance and ecosystem health appear to be required as part of the response measures required.
- Emerging technology such as thermal imaging could, in time, increase the effectiveness and efficiency of deer control operations, but needs developing further.
- Given that the distribution of deer and the associated impacts is not uniform across the country, a site or regional based approach to building a response will likely be the mechanism to deliver many of the outcomes required ecologically, culturally and socially.
- There is also significant variation in how regional councils regard deer in their Regional Pest Management Strategies, and we need to consider this in any coordinated management of deer across New Zealand.

[REDACTED]

- We will complete a report of the findings before the end of June, and this will form the basis for the next stage of the project to develop the preferred response. Establishing the preferred approach is due to be completed by the end of the year.
- We will keep you updated as the response develops.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.5 Seabird captures in the surface longline fishery

- A Fisheries New Zealand observer notified DOC and Fisheries NZ of seabird captures that occurred on a single vessel in the surface longline fishery, targeting bigeye in the Bay of Plenty, between 7 and 14 February.
- Nine seabird captures occurred on seven of eight longline sets. The observer identified five black petrels, all of which were dead, and four flesh-footed shearwaters, all of which were released alive and uninjured. Both species are classified as Nationally Vulnerable (with declining population trends).
- The observer reports indicate that the vessel was using mitigation as required by regulations (a tori line and setting gear at night in this instance). This is to be verified by Ministry for Primary Industries compliance.
- These captures demonstrate the need for ongoing improvement to seabird bycatch mitigation in fisheries with high potential for seabird bycatch, such as surface longline.
- A DOC fishery liaison officer has contacted the vessel to provide advice on how to further improve bycatch mitigation practices.
- The vessel involved had already been identified as a priority for provision of Hookpods as part of the DOC and Fisheries NZ initiative to roll out hook-shielding devices to the fleet. Supply of Hookpods to this vessel is due in the coming month.
- The roll out of hook-shielding devices and the improved mitigation standards to be adopted in the National Plan of Action: Seabirds 2020, will provide mechanisms to achieve improved mitigation and reduce bycatch.
- DOC publicly reports protected species captures in the Conservation Services Programme Annual Research Summary, published subsequent to the completion of the fishing year. These captures will therefore, be publicly reported towards the end of 2020.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.6 Improved conservation in South Pacific fisheries

- The 8th annual South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) Commission meeting concluded on 18 February. DOC worked closely with the interagency delegation to this meeting and we are pleased to report some good conservation outcomes.
- An amendment to the bottom fishing measure was agreed that sets a more precautionary threshold for bottom trawl encounters with vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) - a reduction for stony corals from 250kg to 80kg. When triggered, the encounter protocol requires vessels to cease fishing in the area pending a review process.
- A more comprehensive review of the bottom fishing measure is scheduled to take place at the next Scientific Committee meeting. We will be working closely with MPI to prepare for this meeting and promote further improvements to protection of VMEs based on scientific assessment.

- A new conservation measure was agreed that for the first time puts in some management rules for the large squid fishery and includes a requirement for observer coverage.
- Following a presentation by New Zealand, the Commission also agreed the need for 10-25% observer coverage across all SPRFMO fisheries to inform bycatch estimates of seabirds and other species of concern.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.7 DOC Community Fund update – round opens

- The DOCCF opens for applications for community-led projects focused on conserving New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity on 24 February.
- \$4.6 million is available for community groups and private landowners with a further \$1 million available for community conservation hubs.
- Applications close on 24 March and the usual regional panel approach will support the assessment of applications across the nine DOC regions (plus a national category).
- A separate panel made up of departmental and external representatives (e.g. Predator Free Trust) will assess the hub applications.
- In April/May, we will provide you with the opportunity to comment on and discuss funding recommendations for both the general and the hub rounds before funding decisions are confirmed by the DDG Partnerships.
- We will work with your office to set up these meetings and provide you with papers beforehand.
- We anticipate communicating funding decisions to applicants and starting public media announcements by July 2020.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.8 [REDACTED]

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Contact: [REDACTED]

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Contacts: [REDACTED]

3 Director-General Engagements

March

- 03-04 March SLT Retreat, Pounui
- 18 March Environment NGO Forum, DOC Wellington
- 20 March Senior Leaders hui, Wellington
- 30 March -09 April Raoul Island visit

April

- 16 April NZ School of Forestry 50th Anniversary, Canterbury
- 17 April NZ Conservation Authority, Blenheim

May

- 06 May Public Service Leaders' Summit, TSB Arena
- 14-15 May State Sector Senior Leaders Retreat, Martinborough
- 21 May TIA Stakeholder function, TRENZ Christchurch

4 Addendum

This section includes content that is sensitive or is being considered by the Minister of Conservation or other Ministers. This information is not being released proactively.

Subject headings of content in this section are:

- NHF update
- Predator Free “re-launch” and supporting campaign

Proactively Released