



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

In-Confidence

Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 21 January 2019

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Seen by Hon Eugenie Sage
Minister of Conservation

Productively released

1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 Kauri dieback

National Pest Management Plan

- We are waiting for an update from MPI on the timeline for this work in the new year. MPI has begun final stakeholder meetings prior to preparing for the third round of consultation.

[Redacted]

- [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Behaviour change research

- Behaviour change research is underway at several of the new DOC cleaning stations throughout the summer period.
- The research is trialling a number of behaviour change treatments, with the aim to improve full and correct compliance.

Track upgrades

- The suspension of work on the Waitemarama and Hauturu Highpoint Tracks in Northland has been lifted.
- Work began on 14 January to upgrade the tracks to prevent the spread of kauri dieback. Work had previously been suspended due to hygiene concerns.

Contact: [Redacted]
[Redacted]

1.2 Myrtle rust

- In January 2019, myrtle rust was observed to be reproducing sexually in New Zealand on an exotic species in an Auckland garden. Previously only asexual reproduction had been seen.
- Sexual reproduction may increase genetic variation in the current strain present in New Zealand, increasing the probability of myrtle rust evolving to a more virulent strain in the future.
- DOC staff are now looking for the presence of sexual and/or asexual spores, to allow us to understand if this is a widespread phenomenon. We will reassess management of myrtle rust if new information comes to light.
- The Strategic Science Advisory Group will begin to develop a Myrtle Rust Science Plan in February, following on from the Myrtle Rust Symposium that was held on 13 and 14 December 2018.

Contact: [Redacted]
[Redacted]

1.3 RMA advocacy

DOC is considering the following RMA decisions:

Declarations

- None this week

Submissions

- None this week

Appeals

NZTA Mount Messenger Bypass:

- DOC is likely to appeal specific aspects of the Notice of Requirement for designation and resource consents for the Mt Messenger Bypass. Appeal notices are due to be lodged by 22 January. The Commissioner's decision largely reflected agreements made between DOC and NZTA at the hearing, although for a couple of matters the Commissioner favoured the NZTA position. The areas DOC intends to appeal are:
 - to obtain clarity/certainty on pest management and planting requirements
 - kiwi management
 - additional monitoring locations for fish passage, for two higher gradient culverts which pose a greater risk of impeding fish passage
 - more objective measures for construction-related effects on freshwater ecological values and further clarity on processes should a high-sediment event occur.

Designations

- None this week

Water Conservation Orders

- None this week

Other

- None this week

Contact: _____

2 Updates

2.1 Potentially significant diesel contamination at Piopiotahi Milford Sound

- DOC staff are working with Environment Southland to investigate what may be a serious historic diesel contamination at Milford Sound.
- This was found following test drilling undertaken by Milford Sound Tourism Limited (MSTL) contractors in November 2018.
- The source is currently unconfirmed, and an investigation will need to be completed. On the completion of the investigation, DOC and other government agencies will determine the next steps.
- We will keep you updated as we learn more about this issue.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 Citizen Initiated Referendum – proposed question

- In November 2018, we were invited to comment on the proposed wording for a Citizen Initiated Referendum by the Clerk of the House of Representatives.
- The proposed wording is:
“Do you agree that ALL cruel and inhumane poisons be prohibited – including 1080 (sodium monofluoroacetate), brodifacoum, pindone, PAPP and cholecalciferol – because they inflict such intense and prolonged suffering that their use can never be justified?”
- We submitted a response to the Office of the Clerk on 9 January, which stated our perspective that the proposed wording fails to clearly convey the purpose and effect of the question.
- Our submission proposed that, as the question focuses on animal welfare, and is implicitly complex, other important parties should be consulted. The Office of the Clerk has agreed to this and shared our submission with MPI, EPA, and Forest and Bird for their comment.
- A copy of our submission is with your office.
- The Citizens Initiated Referenda Act requires the Clerk to determine the final wording with the agreement of the promoter within 3 months of the proposal being received, i.e. by 7 February.

Contact: Amber Bill, Deputy Director-General Biodiversity ([REDACTED])

2.3 Southland Water and Land Plan appeal

- You requested an update of DOC’s involvement in the Southland Water and Land Plan (SWLP) appeal, particularly concerning the Waituna Lagoon. You also asked if DOC has been working with the local Fish and Game Council.
- DOC appealed the SWLP in May 2018 on seven specific points. DOC’s appeal on Policy 16 (Farming activities that affect water quality) directly relates to Waituna Lagoon. This appeal seeks to strengthen the policy in relation to new intensive farming and dairy farms in close proximity to regionally significant wetlands, including Waituna Lagoon.
- DOC also joined 18 appellants as a section 274 party. As such, DOC is party to most water quality provisions which relate, at some level, to the management of Waituna Lagoon.

- DOC staff have met with Fish and Game, Forest and Bird, and Ngāi Tahu to discuss appeal positions.
- We continue to work closely with Fish and Game as a s274 party to their appeal. We have offered internal expertise if required.
- We are in the process of drafting evidence for Topic A (high level Objectives and Policies) of the SWLP appeals. This hearing is scheduled for May 2019. Topic B (specific Policies and Rules), which includes most of DOC's appeals, is likely to be mediated mid to late 2019.
- Further information on DOC's appeal can be provided should you require it.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.4 Potential stoat incursion on Aotea / Great Barrier Island

- On 4 January, Aotea staff received a report of a possible sighting of two stoats in the Medlands area of Great Barrier Island.
- We set up a CIMS incident structure to manage the possible incursion, supported by a technical advisory group (TAG) made up from DOC and Auckland Council staff.
- Initial action consisted of searching with conservation dogs, followed by putting in place tracking tunnels, traps and trail cameras.
- The dogs have not yet given any indication of an incursion, but more potential sightings have been reported. These reports are being addressed by the response team as they are received.
- On 9 January, we handed over management of the potential incursion to Auckland Council.
- The response continues to be led by Auckland Council, supported by DOC and contractor staff, with guidance from the TAG.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.6 Proactive release of Cabinet papers

- On 3 September 2018, Cabinet agreed that Cabinet papers will be released proactively and published online within 30 business days of final decisions made by Cabinet (18-B-0103 refers).

- This is to advise you that the policy will be in effect from the first Cabinet meeting of this year, on 29 January.
- All future Cabinet papers will be considered for proactive release (except APH papers) and will contain a paragraph stating this.
- You will be consulted prior to the release of Cabinet material on the Department's website.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.7 New Zealand Minerals Forum, 28–29 May 2019

- The New Zealand Minerals Forum is organised by Straterra (the minerals industry advocacy group).
- It is a two-day conference and exhibition covering mining in New Zealand.
- Agenda items of note are:
 - Day 1 - address from Minister Woods (including an update on the Government approach to minerals) and a session on West Coast alluvial gold mining (access considerations, alluvial gold economy and future opportunity for growth).
 - Day 2 - a session titled 'Focus on the West Coast Region: Framing our economic contribution to the sector' (lead is Mike Meehan, CEO, West Coast Regional Council) and a 'Political Leaders Debate' that will include Jonathan Young, Shane Jones and Megan Woods.
- Minister Woods attended the conference last year and announced the release of the clean-tech mineral prospectivity data.
- DOC officials from the Planning, Permissions and Land team will attend the Forum.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.8 New Wellington Conservation Management Strategy

- The new Wellington Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) will become operational on 20 January.
- The document will 'go live' on the DOC website on that day and all submitters will also be advised that the approved final version of the CMS is available.
- A hard copy of the CMS will be sent to your office later this week.
- We are producing reactive messaging, in case there is media interest in the document.
- Key submitters who did not get the changes they sought in the CMS are aware of the content of the CMS (i.e. owners of private accommodation in the Orongorongo Valley and Ocean Beach in the Wairarapa).

Contact: [REDACTED]

3 Events, Announcements and Media Opportunities

None this week.

4 Director-General Engagements

January

- 23 Jan NZCA Induction - new NZCA appointments, DOC Wellington
- 23 Jan Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki Conservation Relationship Agreement, signing event, Motutapu Island
- 28 Jan–15 Feb Lou on annual leave
Kay Booth acting Director-General

February

- 6 Feb Waitangi Day Bledisloe Reception, Government House
- 13 Feb Public Sector CE's Breakfast, State Services Commission
- 13–14 Feb NZ Conservation Authority, Wellington
- 21 Feb Meet with new Walking Access Commission Board, Wellington
- 27 Feb DOC Stakeholder BBQ, DOC Wellington
- 28 Feb The Localism Symposium, Harbourside Function Centre, Wellington

March

- 1 March Mackenzie CEs field trip, Canterbury
- 6–7 March SLT Retreat, Pounui
- 08 March Tourism Policy School, Otago University
- 13 March DOC/Ngāi Tahu Governance hui, Christchurch
- 25–29 March World Protected Areas Leadership Forum, Melbourne

5 Addendum

None this week.



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1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 RMA advocacy

DOC is considering the following RMA decisions:

Declarations

- Forest & Bird has taken declaration and enforcement order proceedings regarding the recent decision by Hutt City Council to delay the notification of a plan change to identify Significant Natural Areas and provide rules to protect these.
- We have decided not to join the declaration proceedings given that there is limited additional value that could be provided to the process by DOC becoming involved. There seems to be no need for technical input and there has been no previous involvement by DOC in the plan change process.
- We will monitor the outcome of the declaration process. There will be an opportunity to advocate for protection of significant biodiversity through engagement in the District Plan change process once the plan change is amended by the Council and notified for submissions this year.

Submissions

- None this week

Appeals

- None this week

Designations

- None this week

Water Conservation Orders

- None this week

Other

- None this week

Contact: _____

1.2 Ramp Up Programme

Budget 2018 – \$181.6m recruitment report

- Roles advertised 18 December 2018 to 22 January 2019:
 - Geospatial Information Coordinator (Nelson)
 - Business Analyst (Booking System) (Wellington)
 - Principal Strategy and Investment Advisor (Wellington)
 - Senior Strategy and Investment Advisor (Wellington)
 - Strategy and Investment Advisor (Wellington)
 - Strategy and Investment Advisor (Wellington)
- Roles provisionally appointed 18 December 2018 to 22 January 2019:
 - Experience Design Manager (Hamilton)
 - Government Services and OIA Advisor (Wellington)
 - Senior Advisor, OIA (Wellington)
 - Business Analyst (Booking Services) (Wellington)

Contact: _____

1.3 Kauri dieback

National Pest Management Plan / Management Agency

- We will work with Biosecurity NZ on providing responses to your detailed questions regarding the management agency proposals. (19-B-0033, due 8 Feb).
- The next Governance Group meeting is on 15 February. We anticipate getting an update on progress, consultation and timelines at this meeting.

Waipoua Lookout Track

- Te Roroa and DOC are close to finalising the Deed to build a new Lookout Track in Waipoua Forest. The new route will avoid being close to kauri.

Kauri Dieback Programme Behaviour Change Research

- We are engaging with iwi/hapū on further behaviour change research being undertaken by the Kauri Dieback Programme.
- This work focuses on the Barrel & Grate cleaning stations and complements our Mark 2 Cleaning Station research work currently underway.
- Ten DOC sites have been identified (in Whangarei, Kauri Coast, Auckland, Great Barrier Island and Tauranga) for the research.

Contact: [REDACTED]

1.4 Myrtle rust

- There have been two new finds of myrtle rust close to or on public conservation land: Waitawheta track in Kaimai Mamaku Conservation Park and on private property in Nydia Bay, Pelorous Sound, which is near conservation land.
- Both finds are on our most susceptible native species, Ramarama.
- We will be notifying operations staff that myrtle rust was found in these areas and reminded to be vigilant for additional finds.
- We are working through the proposed management response now that the goal is long-term management rather than eradication.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2 Updates

2.1

- On 3 December 2018, the Prime Minister and senior Ministers met with the Farming Leaders Group to discuss the policy programmes over the coming year that will impact on the primary sector.
- [REDACTED]
- Ministers signalled that climate change and fresh water work would proceed as agreed by Cabinet, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- We expect that the impacts of the NPSIB will vary across regions and districts, with stronger impact in areas where councils have not yet identified Significant Natural Areas, but less so in other areas where councils are already well advanced in biodiversity management under the Resource Management Act 1991.
- We also see co-benefits of the policy work on climate change, fresh water and biodiversity. For example, restoring riparian areas for water quality management could have significant biodiversity gains if they are planted with the appropriate species, are actively managed, and if riparian areas are prioritised strategically for the greatest connectivity or buffering of ecosystems nearby. Similarly, the implementation of the NPSIB could be complementary to the Government's water quality and climate change goals, by preventing some vegetation clearance which could have otherwise caused sedimentation in waterways or released carbon to the atmosphere.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.2 EPA Self Assessment Report on release of *Glomus iranicum* var. *tenuihypharum* fungus

- On 22 January 2019 the EPA released a Staff Assessment Report (SAR) on an application to make the fungus *Glomus iranicum* var. *tenuihypharum* available for release in New Zealand. The fungus, and products derived from it, are claimed to promote growth and yield in agricultural and horticultural crops.
- We are concerned that, because the fungus has an extremely broad host range, there is likelihood that it will impart substantially increased vigour to a wide range of weeds, compete against native fungi, and destabilise ecological balances in natural ecosystems.
- The EPA SAR recommends the application be approved, despite opposition to the proposed introduction by multiple submitters. The submitters include experts in leading research institutions, Tangata Whenua and DOC.

- The EPA SAR has proposed that no formal hearing is necessary, however we have requested a hearing to present our concerns to the EPA's Decision-making Committee.
- We will update you via the Status Report as this matter progresses, and officials are available to meet should you wish.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.3 Concession (lease) application to retain Mataatua marae facilities on Public Conservation Land, Mangere, Auckland

- In 2017 DOC received an application from the Auckland Mataatua Marae Society Incorporated (the Society) for a new lease over the Auckland Mataatua Society Marae Recreation Reserve in Mangere, south Auckland.
- The marae was established in 1975 by members of Ngāti Awa who had moved to Auckland/Tāmaki Makaurau from their Bay of Plenty rohe.
- Ngāti Awa, who have historical connections to the Auckland area and are related to Auckland iwi, followed a tikanga process to ensure that they had support from Auckland iwi and the Māori Queen for the establishment of a marae in Auckland.
- The former Department of Lands and Survey worked with Manukau City Council to identify and set aside suitable land in Mangere for the marae. A lease was issued in 1978 for 33 years which expired in February 2011. The lease contained a right of renewal which was not exercised.
- Te Ākitai hold mana whenua status in the south Auckland area. An Agreement in Principle (AIP) has been agreed for their Treaty settlement and identifies the marae site for transfer to Te Ākitai as cultural redress, subject to protection of the third-party rights held by Ngāti Awa.
- Te Ākitai oppose granting of a new lease for the 30 years sought by Ngāti Awa and have proposed a term of eight years. They expect Ngāti Awa to have moved their marae to another location by the end of the eight-year lease.
- A decision in principle is likely to be made before the end of January. The decision will be made under delegation. It has been re-assigned by the Operations Director (Auckland) to the Operations Director (Hauraki-Waikato-Taranaki) to avoid a conflict of interest.
- The length of term is the critical decision that must be made. The intention to grant a lease will need to be publicly notified, and a final decision made following consideration of any public submissions.
- The decision in principle is unlikely to satisfy either iwi, and one or both iwi may raise this with Ministers or the media, including during your visit to Waitangi. We will provide further material about the decision for inclusion in your Waitangi briefing package.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2.4 Kākāpō Recovery breeding season update

- The bumper breeding season is progressing well. All females on Pukenui (Anchor Island), and most females on Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) have now mated, and earlier than expected (beginning in December, as opposed to January as predicted). Breeding has not yet begun on the third breeding island, Hauturu (Little Barrier Island).

- So far, we are seeing low fertility rates, as is usual with kākāpō - 46% on Pukenui and 55% on Whenua Hou.
- By applying Assisted Breeding techniques (artificial insemination under supervision by international experts), we aim to minimise the loss of genetic diversity by increasing representation from the original Stewart Island birds who have not yet produced offspring.
- To make the most of the early start to breeding, we plan to remove clutches that are laid before 15 February and hand rear chicks, which may result in the birds laying a second time. It is too early to say how successful repeat mating will be, but it is an opportunity to increase productivity.
- To directly support the breeding season, Meridian Energy (DOC's National Partner for Kākāpō Recovery) has committed an additional \$60k toward the season over and above their partnership agreement. This is funding two experimental projects – Assisted Breeding and Smart Eggs. Smart Eggs are an innovative upgrade from dummy eggs used in the past to keep mother birds sitting on the nest when eggs are removed for artificial incubation. The Smart Egg technology makes sounds like a real egg about to hatch, to better prepare the mother bird for when their chick is returned to the nest.

Meridian Energy's Kākāpō Recovery promotional campaign

- Meridian launched an off-beat promotional campaign, with support from DOC, on 13 January. The campaign premise revolves around the recruitment of a "saxy saxophonist" to "help the birds really get in the mood."
- The goal is to raise awareness for kākāpō, enabling us to tell the wider story of the innovations used in saving the species. Meridian has been a National Partner for the Kākāpō Recovery Programme since 2016.
- The saxophone will not be played to the birds – this is an advocacy and awareness tool.
- Just 11 days into the campaign we have already achieved significant reach and media pick up. For example:
 - A range of media enquiries (both domestic and international) from the *Wall Street Journal* to music industry media.
 - Our Threatened Species Ambassador appeared on TVNZ's *Breakfast* on Tuesday 22 January.
 - One Meridian Facebook post alone, showing the advertisement that appeared in the *Herald on Sunday* on 13 February, had a reach of 91,870 on launch day, with 7,932 engagements (i.e., shares, likes and comments).
 - Sharing the campaign on DOC's own social media channels to date has achieved 7,151 impressions on Twitter, and 79,825 reach on Facebook and Instagram, with an impressive 10.8% engagement rate across all three platforms.
- The Customer Engagement Team are available to meet with you should you require further details on this campaign.
- On a further note, on Wednesday 23 January the Prime Minister shared a picture of herself with Sir David Attenborough talking about kākāpō, illustrating the broad interest in the species at the moment.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.5 Hauraki Gulf Shellfish Restoration Project

- DOC is partnering with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on the Hauraki Gulf Shellfish Restoration Project [REDACTED]
- The project deployed 20 tonnes of mussels in December to create a reef in Mahurangi Harbour. A further 10 tonnes is planned for deployment in March 2019.
- Two PhD students (Auckland University) will be funded to increase knowledge on mussel reef restoration methods, ecosystem services benefits, improved monitoring tools and improved public understanding of the benefits of shellfish reefs.
- A mechanism to co-ordinate various parties' efforts in research, restoration, communications (etc.) is being developed. TNC are developing a discussion paper following support for such a mechanism at a meeting of interested parties held in December.
- DOC's Partnerships Group set up the TNC/DOC partnership. The work will now be co-ordinated through the Biodiversity Group.

Contact: Kay Booth, Deputy Director-General, Partnerships: [REDACTED]

2.6 Branding DOC's pest control operations

Context

- The Battle for our Birds (BfoB), has been the title of DOC's national predator control operations programme on public conservation land since late 2013. Tiakina Ngā Manu (care for/protect our birds) was added as a Māori subtitle in 2015. BfoB has featured on all collateral associated with DOC's public facing programme for the last 5 years.
- The BfoB name emphasises the outcome sought by predator control – flourishing species and habitats – rather than the control activity itself.
- The establishment of the Predator Free 2050 (PF2050) goal now incorporates the BfoB programme.

Planned way forward

- We plan to reverse the naming hierarchy for the national predator control programme to make Tiakina Ngā Manu the new title, with Battle for our Birds the subtitle (example of this in a logo format to the right).
- This enables us to align the programme name with the PF2050 framing. It also reflects DOC's drive for deeper engagement with iwi/hapū around the need for large landscape predator control in their rohe and to support their kaitiaki aspirations.
- This approach enables continuity as we transition from the former name to the new name and still meet the urgent need for production of refreshed communication resources ahead of the mega mast.
- Over time we will phase the BfoB name out and look to test and refine the title of the programme over the coming years if needed.



Current needs

- The predicted mega-mast in 2019/20 will require predator control over 1 million ha. of public conservation land.
- In addition to minimum consultation requirements set by the standard operating procedures for DOC predator control operations, We are also working with other stakeholders to engage with communities to help them understand the local context, the outcomes sought and post-operation results.

- Some DOC districts already have public engagement activity underway and information and promotional collateral to support engagement includes the refreshed branding. We will provide examples of this promotional collateral to your office shortly.

Contact:

3 Events, Announcements and Media Opportunities

No items this week.

4 Director-General Engagements

January

28 Jan–15 Feb Lou on annual leave
Kay Booth acting

February

06 Feb Waitangi Day Bledisloe Reception, Government House
13 Feb Public Sector CE's Breakfast, State Services Commission
14–15 Feb NZ Conservation Authority, Wellington
21 Feb Meet with new Walking Access Commission Board, Wellington
27 Feb DOC Stakeholder BBQ, DOC Wellington
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01 March Mackenzie CEs field trip, Canterbury
6–7 March SLT Retreat, Pounui
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13 March DOC/Ngāi Tahu Governance hui, Christchurch
25–29 March World Protected Areas Leadership Forum, Melbourne

5 Addendum

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