Have your say on the Proposed Regional Pest Management Plan

Tāmaki Makaurau - Auckland's Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) was last reviewed in 2007. A lot has changed since then, both in terms of the pests themselves and changes to the Biosecurity Act. Auckland Council is now reviewing the existing RPMS and producing a new plan to align with the National Policy Direction for Pest Management 2015. The new plan will provide a statutory and strategic framework for the effective management of pests in Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland.

Engagement on the revision of the plan has been ongoing since 2014 with elected members, mana whenua, council and council-controlled organisation staff, industry representatives, and the wider public. A detailed consultation summary document has been prepared setting out input received so far (available at shapeauckland.co.nz). Pest management approaches contained within the proposed plan have been drafted to take account of common concerns raised through engagement, alongside technical considerations explored through cost benefit analysis of available options.

Auckland Council is seeking feedback on the Proposed Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP). Your feedback will help shape the pest management objectives and programmes for Tāmaki Makaurau – Auckland for the next 10 years.

What is pest management?

Pests are invasive plants, animals, or pathogens that can have adverse effects on our culture, environment, economy and health. Pest management is an important tool in ensuring the protection of Aotearoa-New Zealand's biodiversity, as well as a healthy society and strong economy. Pest management can take many forms, such as banning invasive plants or animals from sale, eradicating a certain pest from a particular place or reducing the numbers of a pest species in an area to protect the values of that place.

What are the key issues?

The review of the RPMP is an opportunity to address the future management of pests in Tāmaki Makaurau - Auckland. The key aspects of the Proposed Regional Pest Management Plan are outlined below.

Managing pests on parks

The current level of pest management on council parkland will, over time, result in wide scale canopy collapse and the loss of ecological and amenity values. Pest plants on council parkland are also highly visible, resulting in frequent public complaints.

The proposed plan sets out programmes for the control and monitoring of pest plants on council parkland with Significant Ecological Areas. The proposed programmes will enhance the council's investment in protecting its parkland and coordinate the efforts of the council, transport corridor operators and private land owners through an enforcement approach to ensure maximum biodiversity benefits are achieved through collective action.

The proposed plan incorporates control of pest animals including rats, stoats, possums, pigs, and cats across ecologically significant parkland. The Waitākere and Hunua Ranges are particularly high value parkland, representing the two largest tracts of forest ecosystems on

the region's mainland. These areas have been prioritised for additional protection for some species, such as deer and goats.

The proposal for managing pests on parks through the proposed plan will be to:

- protect ecosystem function for all Significant Ecological Areas on parkland, protecting $251 million to $375 million of ecosystem service benefits derived from parkland over 10 years
- protect threatened species
- ensure that the council leads by example on its own land
- catalyse coordinated effort by the council, neighbours and transport corridor operators
- protect the safety of staff, volunteers, and the public.

Kauri dieback

Human movement of soil is the key risk pathway for the spread of kauri dieback. Existing efforts to control the spread include awareness and behaviour change programmes, hygiene stations and research. Ongoing spread continues throughout the region, but the disease is still not detected in the Hunua Ranges or the Hauraki Gulf islands (with the exception of Aotea-Great Barrier).

The proposed plan prioritises the protection of these disease-free areas with the implementation of exclusion zones and increased hygiene measures. No movement of plants or soil will be allowed into the Hunua zone, unless from an approved disease-free site. No movement of kauri plants to the Hauraki Gulf Islands will be allowed. This will be supported by a programme seeking to minimise spread around the remainder of the region.

The proposal for the management of kauri dieback spread through the proposed plan will be to:

- substantially increase the likelihood that kauri dieback is kept out of the Hunua Ranges and Hauraki Gulf Islands
- slow the rate of spread elsewhere in the region.

Managing pest spread to Hauraki Gulf Islands

Auckland Council runs the Treasure Islands awareness and behaviour change programme in partnership with the Department of Conservation to protect the outstanding biodiversity values of the Hauraki Gulf islands. Over 40 commercial transport operators have gained a 'Pest-free Warrant' to certify steps taken to reduce risk of accidentally transporting pests to islands. Combined with extensive networks of on-island traps and other biosecurity devices, this programme has been successful at protecting the islands of the gulf. However, on-going invasions are still a problem, especially for small and easy to overlook species such as Argentine ants and plague skinks.

The proposed plan extends the Pest-free Warrant programme to a regulatory approach for commercial transport operators in the Hauraki Gulf Controlled Area, complemented by species-specific rules in some cases. The Pest-free Warrant is also extended, on a voluntary basis, to other high risk businesses such as nurseries, building supplies and quarries, to reduce the risk of their products containing stowaway pests when being moved to offshore islands. The Treasure Islands awareness programme will be continued with an enhanced social science evidence base and monitoring of effectiveness. On-island surveillance and incursion response using devices and dogs will also be continued complemented by a community-based responsible pet ownership awareness and behaviour change programme.

The proposal for managing pest spread to the Hauraki Gulf Islands through the proposed plan will be to:

- continue the successful protection of the islands from pest mammals
- reduce the spread of ants, skinks and other pests
- protect investment in past and future island eradications.

Aotea / Great Barrier Island

Mustelids and possums have never reached Aotea / Great Barrier and it is a key regional priority to keep it this way. Aotea / Great Barrier's distance from the mainland has also slowed the arrival of pest plants such as moth plant and woolly nightshade and other garden escapees that are common on the mainland. Often it is possible to remove pest plants on the island before they become widely established, but with human movement to the island comes the risk of stowaway pests. Argentine ants and plague skinks have invaded Aotea / Great Barrier in recent years. Goods such as landscape supplies pose particularly high risk of containing undetected ants or skinks.

The proposed plan targets low incidence pests for control on Aotea / Great Barrier, and addresses risk of new invasions through the Pest Free Warrant programme described above. The proposed plan will also see rabbits, rats, mice and cats managed at high biodiversity value sites while council works with mana whenua, the Great Barrier Local Board, the Department of Conservation and the local community to progress conversations around ways to achieve a mammalian pest-free Aotea / Great Barrier in the future, taking into account diverse community perspectives.

The proposal for the management of pests on Aotea / Great Barrier Island through the proposed plan will be to:

- contain plague skinks
- stop 43 plant and animal species from establishing on the island (such as woolly nightshade)
- protect high biodiversity value sites from rabbit, rodent and cat impacts
- protect threatened species including tāiko-black petrel, and pāteke
- protect the ecosystem function of the island's high biodiversity value sites, and the benefits generated from this island's ecosystems, worth an estimated $363 million to $437 million over 10 years.

Waiheke Island

Waiheke is home to many native species that are threatened by pests, and has the potential to be home to new threatened species, such as kiwi, if pests are removed. Waiheke is within swimming distance of other pest-free islands, and while pests such as rats and stoats remain on Waiheke this also poses a risk to surrounding islands.

The proposed plan includes the eradication of rats, stoats and pigs on Waiheke Island. It is proposed to fund rat and stoat eradication through a strategic partnership model, with 70 per cent of operational expenditure funded by partners such as philanthropists and corporate partners. The Pest Free Warrant programme will be critical in preventing reinvasion following eradication.

The proposal for the management of pests on Waiheke Island through the proposed plan will be to:

- protect Significant Ecological Areas on Waiheke
- protect investment in nearby pest-free islands

- create opportunities for threatened species introduction.

Kawau Island

Kawau Island holds the only population of wallabies in the region. This poses a risk to the mainland, with wallabies having severe impacts on native forests as well as farming. Expanding populations of wallabies in regions south of Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland also pose a risk to the region.

The proposed plan aims to eradicate wallabies from Kawau and maintain the wallaby-free status of the remainder of the region. However, eradication of wallabies, alone, from Kawau has the potential to have perverse outcomes, such as advantaging rats, possums or pest plants. In recognition of this, the proposal combines the wallaby eradication programme with Kawau eradication programmes for possums, rats and stoats. Again, the Pest Free Warrant programme will be critical in preventing reinvasion following eradication.

The proposal for the management of pests on Kawau will protect the whole region from the impacts of wallabies, minimising the risk human aided movement to the mainland. This will benefit farmland, native forests and human safety.

Possums

Effective possum control is currently limited to 28 per cent of the mainland, causing ongoing damage to primary production and the loss of native ecosystems.

By controlling possums over large landscape-scale areas, it is possible to substantially reduce costs, both through economies of scale and purchasing power as well as by reducing reinvasion from surrounding uncontrolled areas. The proposed plan implements possum control across the entirety of rural mainland Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland, controlling possums to low levels benefiting primary production and native ecosystems.

Freshwater biosecurity

Freshwater pests are already present in waterbodies across the mainland. However, Aotea / Great Barrier is free of all the main freshwater pests, and has retained extremely high biodiversity values. The proposed plan prioritises the protection of Aotea / Great Barrier to keep freshwater pests off the island. On the mainland, although most waterbodies have some pest species present, there are still benefits to preventing further spread. Because humans are the main cause of freshwater pests spreading to new waterbodies, the proposed plan addresses freshwater pest spread through education and awareness, modelled on the successful Treasure Islands approach and ‘Check, Clean, Dry’ programmes in other regions. Some mainland sites retain high freshwater biodiversity values, but these ecosystems are at imminent risk of collapse and regional extinction. The proposed plan recommends the management of a suite of pest plants and animals at two top priority lakes, Tomarata and Rototoa, in conjunction with mana whenua, local communities, and the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA).

The proposal for the management of freshwater pests through the proposed plan will be to:

- keep Aotea / Great Barrier waterbodies pest-free
- prevent further spread of freshwater pests across the region.
- manage pests at Tomarata and Rototoa to protect and restore these ecosystems.

Whole region

While many of the programmes in the proposed plan are targeted to defendable geography and sites of highest biodiversity, some programmes are applied to the entire region, including:

- the eradication or containment of low incidence pest plants to prevent these species becoming serious future pests
- enforcement to reduce impact of rabbits and low incidence primary production pest plants to reduce impacts on primary production
- pest plant biocontrol
- regional control programmes to contain or prevent the establishment of low incidence animal pests
- banning the sale of new and existing pest plants and animals. Inspection of nursery and pet trade, and education and advice to encourage responsible pet ownership and gardening practices, response to public enquiries.
- surveillance and enforcement to manage Dutch elm disease

Budget required for implementation

The budget required to support the full suite of programmes contained within the proposed plan is set out below. As the final level of funding available to implement the plan will not be known until the Long-term Plan has been adopted in June 2018, the proposed plan may be subject to change as a result of receipt of public submissions and the amount of funding that is allocated to the proposed plan through the Long-term Plan process.

The costs outlined in the cost: benefit and cost allocation analyses are estimated costs of implementation for the full plan as annual averages over a generic 10 year period. In practice, costs for programmes would vary inter-annually, and would be phased in at the beginning of the plan, accounting for some variation between values cited in these analyses and those estimated for plan implementation over the Long-tern Plan period of 2018-2028. Both sets of costs are presented here.

Programme grouping	**10 year cost included in cost: benefit analysis**	**10 year cost for 2018-2028**
Managing pest plants and animals on parkland	$154.11m	$142.44m
Kauri dieback and Dutch elm disease	$51.48m	$51.48m
Hauraki Gulf island programmes	$37.28m	$35.28m
Aotea / Great Barrier	$1.17m	$1.16m
Kawau	$2.25m	$1.85m
Waiheke	$7.26m	$5.91m
Regional possum control	$40.81m	$40.41m
Freshwater pest programmes	$5.53m	$5.53m
Region wide exclusion, eradication, progressive containment pest plants	$3.83m	$3.83m
Region wide sustained control, progressive containment and exclusion pest animal programmes	$10.93m	$10.62m
Region wide sustained control pest plants	$8.67	$8.55
Total over 10 years	**$323.32m**	**$307.15m**