

Memorandum

31 January 2018

To:	All elected members
Subject:	Update on response to myrtle rust incursion
From:	Phil Brown – Biosecurity Manager

Purpose

- To update elected members on Auckland Council's response to the myrtle rust incursion.

Summary

- There are currently 34 recorded myrtle rust sites in Auckland, including Wairua Reserve in the Ōrākei Local Board area.*
- The Ministry for Primary Industries is leading the response to the myrtle rust incursion. However, Auckland Council is preparing to increase its role as it is expected that MPI will down-scale their involvement in the near future.*
- Auckland Council has been asked to support the national seed collection programme.*
- Education materials are available to local boards and other community groups upon request.*

Context

- Myrtle rust is a fungal disease affecting plants in the myrtle family, including pōhutukawa, rātā, and mānuka. As of January 2018, there are 34 recorded sites in Auckland, including one council reserve. The table below illustrates the number of recorded sites in each local board area.

Table one: Number of recorded sites by local board

Local board area		Number of recorded sites
Albert-Eden	Greenlane and Owairaka	3
Hibiscus and Bays	Orewa	1
Ōrākei	Remuera and Greenlane	27
Rodney	Waimauku	2
Whau	Blockhouse Bay	1
	Total	34

- The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) remains responsible for leading the incursion response. However, Auckland Council is preparing to take on a larger leadership role.

Discussion

- It is anticipated that an official declaration that the eradication attempt has ceased will be issued by the Minister for Biosecurity. At that point, overall responsibility for managing the incursion will transfer to landowners (including council). MPI will continue to invest in myrtle rust science. Staff are investigating the potential to establish a part-time role to coordinate council's response to myrtle rust, particularly on council-owned land.
- Wairua Reserve in the Ōrākei Local Board area was the first council reserve to be confirmed as having myrtle rust infected trees. MPI removed the diseased branches of three pōhutukawa to reduce the risk of further spread. No further action is required at this time.
- Facilities management contractors have been briefed on how to mitigate any risk of further spreading the disease to other parks, and have been provided with general hygiene guidelines.

Next steps

7. At the request of MPI and the Department of Conservation, Council staff will support the collection of myrtle species seeds as part of a national programme. The seeds will be stored at the New Zealand Indigenous Flora Seed Bank based at Massey University.
8. This will aid conservation of myrtle species by ensuring species (and the genetic diversity within species) are not lost completely under a worst case scenario.
9. The Ministry for Primary Industries has been requested to provide advice to councils on future plantings, and information that can be shared with community restoration groups. Current advice to councils is not to halt the planting of myrtle species, but to diversify plantings to limit numbers of susceptible species.
10. Further information on myrtle rust can be provided to local boards and community groups on request.