

REPORT

Meeting Date: 15 May 2018

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Subject: **Operations Report****Biodiversity**

1. Pateke Protection: Cat trapping around the margins of the Whangapoua estuary for the season has recommended for the extended 9-month season between January and September using contractors from the Glenfern Sanctuary. Steady numbers of cats have been caught to date with a cat dog in training working well. Pukeko control also continues and well as a low level of rabbit control including some burrow ripping completed.

Flock counts were conducted on three consecutive weeks over February to try to determine whether the indicative declining trend showing in recent years is real. Results from these counts indicate a slight increase to the numbers counted for the previous year.

2. Myrtle Rust: survey work for seed collection for the various Myrtle species on the island for which seed that was unable to be collected last year has occurred. Sites were revisited to collect seed when ripe. This work was undertaken in partnership with Auckland Botanic Gardens staff. Further surveillance for presence of Myrtle Rust in the Ramarama species was requested by the National Myrtle Rust team. The island has very little-known sites for Ramarama in comparison to the mainland. This work is now being planned.
3. Takoketai/Black Petrel Protection and Monitoring: the first pulse of cat trapping has been completed around the summit area of Hiramata with no cats caught. Historically, most cats are caught occur in the second trapping pulse which is April/May.

Support has also been provided for the Wildlife Management International contractors who have stayed on the summit for several weeks monitoring during January-March to determine which birds have returned, what pairs have formed, and the nesting success of those with eggs laid. A later visit in April will also fit transmitters on a sample of the birds to determine where in the Hauraki Gulf they are feeding during the nesting period.

4. Weed Control: The weeds contract for 2017-18 year is well underway with progress as follows:

Location	Target Weeds	Progress
Te Papanahi Conservation Area	Pampas, Kikuyu, Mothplant, Boneseed	In progress
Whangapoua	Smilax	Complete
Kiwiriki Estuary & Wairahi Forest	Pampas, Mothplant	Complete

Kaitoke Swamp and Dunes	Pampas, Banksia, Mothplant, Royal Fern, Boneseed, Grey Willow	Complete
Wiltshire Lane	Woolly Nightshade	Complete
Port Fitzroy	Smilax	Yet to commence
Awana	Kahili Ginger	In progress
Okiwi	Kahili Ginger	In progress
Medlands	Woolly Nightshade	Complete
Haratoanga	Madeira Vine, Lantana, Macrocarpa (Seedlings only), Pampas	Yet to commence
Whangaparapara	Climbing Asparagus	Complete
Tryphena	Climbing Asparagus	Yet to commence
Kaiaraara	Pampas	Complete
Burgess Island Mokohinau Group	Bromus, Agave, Gorse, Tree Mallow Monkey Apple, Arum Lily	Yet to commence

5. Rakitū Rodent Eradication Project: The planning for this operation is well advanced with the delivery of the aerial bait application planned for a suitable weather window between the 1st of June and 1st of October. The weka capture program has progressed well with 38 Weka captured and transferred to Pukaha/Mt Bruce after the first week of programmed capture.
6. Mokihinau Island Group: Regular planned visits to carry out the required monitoring has been undertaken. A recent incident where a yacht run aground prompted a biosecurity response. Initial inspections with the use of a dog indicated no presence of rats but further inspections are required to confirm this.
7. Plague Skink Response: work has continued with the joint Auckland Council / DOC funded Plague Skink infestation response in the Tryphena - Shoal Bay area.

Most significantly, in November 2017, plague skinks were captured outside of delimitation fence at eastern roadside end, and along ridgelines spanning between the centre-south and east of the management area. The November captures have placed serious pressure on the capacity of the field team, the programme managers and technical advisory group to respond appropriately.

Current priorities with existing resources are

- Continue with experimental testing of eradication techniques in fenced cells which are all in place with chickens. Analysis of the various methodologies
- Complete containment fence
- Implement a modest level of additional delimitation work to estimate the number and extent of skinks outside of the fence, and install a short term back up containment fence to contain skinks detected outside existing fence line.

Recreation / Historic

8. The final portion of the Stage II Kauri Dieback capital contract works on Forest Road was completed. Workshops have been held to decide on preferences for mitigation or closure of other remaining tracks not currently comprising the Aotea Track. Some of these decisions are not possible until the outcome of the new Great Walks process is known. The first cut of proposed track closures identified Whangaparapara Peak Track, Whangaparapara Pack Track and a section of the Old Lady Walk for closure. The public consultation process for this is currently underway. Further operating expenditure for Kauri Dieback mitigation work has been made available. Mitigation work will continue over the coming months and into the next financial year.
9. The Great Walks process has progressed to the next stage. The Aotea Track still sits on the shortlist of possible new Great Walks having met the original criteria. The process now looks to align any new proposals for Great Walks with feedback provided by the Minister of Conservation.
10. Volunteer campground hosts were again utilised for the Christmas /New Year period to one couple remaining on as roving hosts until the end of January. While camp usage remains relatively low all visitors have had a good time despite a couple of stormy days during the holiday period. Easter numbers were well up on previous years due to the timing of Easter and great weather. Future planning needs to include Easter for servicing of campgrounds and compliance.
11. Regular asset maintenance has earned general high praise as to the standard of visitor facilities on the Island.

Community

12. Work has commenced in getting funding agreements in place for the 3 successful recipients of this year's community fund allocation as detailed below:
 - The Windy Hill Rosalie Bay Catchment Trust has been awarded a \$40,000 DOC Community Fund grant. This will fund predator control across 770 hectares, including land that's privately owned and public conservation land
 - The Motu Kaikoura Trust has been awarded a \$20,000 DOC Community Fund grant. This will fund the trust's rat control programme on Motu Kaikoura island for another year
 - The Kotuku Peninsula Charitable Trust has been awarded a \$40,000 DOC Community Fund grant. This will fund pest control - targeting rats, mice and feral cats - and conservation awareness work at the Kotuku Peninsula Sanctuary.
13. Support has been given to the Rakitū Project to focus on the communication plan

Staffing and Infrastructure

14. I commenced in the role of Operations Manager on 14 February and have had a 2 week overlap with Paul McArthur who assisted with my induction and transition into the role.
15. Daryl Stephens, Ranger – Recreation/Historic has moved to another role in the Auckland Region. Daryl will take up the role of Senior Ranger – Recreation/Historic with the Auckland Inner Islands team based from North Head. Recruitment for Daryl's former role on the Aotea/Great Barrier island team is now underway.