

REPORT

Meeting Date: 18th September 2018

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Subject: **Operations Report**

Biodiversity

1. **Pateke Protection:** Cat trapping around the margins of the Whangapoua estuary has continued with a moderate number of cats being caught.
2. **Rabbit Control:** Apart from the annual rabbit control contract work in May/June, there has been intermittent control work done on Okiwi Station on certain nights when conditions have allowed. Numbers still support this year's findings of lower densities.
3. **Myrtle Rust:** Preparation for Myrtle Rust surveillance and seed collection work is underway. In October there will be a team undertaking these duties. Although Myrtle Rust has not been confirmed to be present on Aotea/GBI, detecting presence is more likely as the weather warms up after the winter. At the time of this report, there is still no sign of flowering at the 3 sites that have ramarama (*lophomyrtus Bullata*).
4. **Rakitū Rodent Eradication Project:** The first aerial bait application was completed on the 10th of August. There was initial disruptive behavior experienced at both Port Fitzroy and the Okiwi office during the morning. Protesters boarded the Aotea 3 at Port Fitzroy. The Police boat "Deodar", which was en route to assist with the operation, was directed to Port Fitzroy and helped persuade protesters off the Aotea 3. At Okiwi, a large chain and lock was placed on the main front gate to prevent access to and from the site. Access was reinstated soon after and local Police also assisted on site.

The opportunity for the second and final bait application still hasn't presented itself. A suitable weather window is required.

Weka

The sample population of Weka at Pukaha/Mt Bruce remains in good health.

7 dead Weka were presented to the DOC office at Okiwi on the 24th of August by members of Aotea Poison Free. These Weka were taken from Rakitū after the recent aerial bait application. The Weka were handed over to DOC and are now stored accordingly. Discussion with the group included possible liability for offences under the Wildlife Act by removing the Weka from Rakitū and holding them.

5. **Plague Skink Project:** as stated at the recent Local Board workshop, DOC and Auckland Council have agreed to go ahead with the option of further research into control/eradication methodologies. Also, the investment in more infrastructure to possibly provide the option of eradication of Plague Skinks on Aotea in future. The

year ahead will be telling in terms refining the methodologies and understanding what will be required should eradication still be an option. Initial indications suggest that if eradication is still possible, a great deal of investment will be required in future.

Recreation/Historic

6. **Tracks and huts:** Further signs have found to be missing over the past month. This has added to the total of replacement signs and work required. This incident has placed the users at risk given they are general track information signs and primarily at decision points along the track. Temporary signs are in place and new signs are being fabricated.



Location of missing signs

7. **Campgrounds:** Campsite hosts have been confirmed for the upcoming season. Contracts for management, waste disposal and maintenance are being finalized and preparation of the sites for the upcoming season will be done over the next months.
8. **Kauri Dieback Work:** Planning for further work associated with Kauri Dieback for the 2018/2019 financial year is being done. Mitigation work on tracks, advocacy and Kauri ambassadors have been a proposed focus for the coming year. Alignment with other agencies (AC, MPI) is also being considered given similar intentions particularly by Auckland Council.

Further investigation for capital upgrade work (Capex) was undertaken in early August on the Kiwiriki track. This may result in a contract to be tendered alongside the South Fork track work to be done this upcoming construction season.

Submissions for the first round of track closures (Whangaparapara Peak track, Whangaparapara Pack track and part of the Old Lady track) have closed and have been assessed. The next round of consultation will follow for these proposed closures.

Community

9. **Rakitū:** Most of the community focus during the last reporting period has been supporting the operation both on the ground, administration and messaging. Continued support through ensuring the communication log and plan is maintained plus notification of the final bait application.
10. **Conservation Week:** this year will see further planting around the Okiwi Station site to provide more habitat for birds. This includes enabling and assisting the restoration of a site identified the Okiwi School.
11. **Te Pukenga Atawhai:** Planning for this training to occur in late October. This training is primarily for DOC staff to help understand te Ao Maori and how this relates to DOC.
12. **Future events 2018:**
 - Conservation Week 15th – 23rd September
 - Wharf to wharf 6th October
 - Te Pukenga Atawhai dates late Oct

Staffing and Infrastructure

13. Scott Van Leeuwen started as Ranger – Recreation/Historic. Scott and his wife Sandi have been settling in well.
14. Ian McNickle has started as Supervisor to fill in for Sarah Dwyer while she is on Maternity leave. Ian, his wife Amy and his two children Patrick and Maggie have also settled in well to life on Aotea.