

REPORT

Meeting Date: 25 February 2020

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Subject: Operations Report

Work programme highlights for DOC Aotea/Great Barrier Island since the last meeting include:

Biodiversity

- **Weeds contract:** Weed Sites for this summer season have been identified and the contract is well underway. Booster funding for aerial pampas control at Rakitu and the Mokohinau island group has been applied for in the 2020/21 financial year.
- **Hirakimata Good Nature Project:** Scoping of the track lines for the Good nature grid of traps around Hirakimata began in December and will continue through until at least April. Steep terrain, thick understory and large slips from the big storm make this a very challenging undertaking.
- **Aotea Annual Bird Counts:** Six DOC staff participated in the Annual bird counts in December, counting transects at Te Papanahi, Coopers Castle and Rakitu.
- **Freshwater Fish Survey:** Several DOC staff collaborated with the Auckland Council Freshwater team to undertake freshwater fish surveys in December looking for giant kokopu and surveying for the presence of any pest freshwater fish species. No pest freshwater species were found but an introduced marine/estuarine species was caught in the lower reaches of Kaitoke (bridled goby). This species has been present in NZ waters since 1996.
- **Rakitu:** It is now over 1 year since the aerial operation at Rakitu. Five tracking tunnel runs have been completed in that time with no sign of any rodents. The caution period for the island has finished and warning signs removed.
- **New Bio Team Member:** Mahi the dog has joined the Bio team. Mahi is in training to be a rodent detection dog and will provide valuable assistance with the Mokohinau Islands and Rakitu, as well as helping with Biosecurity checks.

Recreation / Historic

- **Tracks and huts:** Tracks and huts remain in very good condition, with the second round of track cutting for this year well underway. In late November, inspections and feedback from the DOC visitor asset inspectors again highlighted the high standards we continue to maintain for our huts and tracks on Aotea.

- **Heritage sites:** Archaeological maintenance has been completed for some of our actively managed heritage sites—the Harataonga Pa, Harataonga Homestead Graves and the SS Wairarapa Graves.
- **Campgrounds:** This summer, campground hosts were on site at five of our six campsites for a minimum of three weeks over the holiday period, with hosts staying on longer at Harataonga and Medlands campgrounds until mid-February. Feedback about our campgrounds and camp hosts has been very positive, particularly for the Harataonga campground. The change to a 'Pack In Pack Out' rubbish system following the changes in waste management on the island has gone well to date with campers taking responsibility for their waste and recycling.
- **Other visitor assets:** Cottage 110 in Akapoua has undergone extensive essential maintenance recently, including but not limited to replumbing of showers, replacement of ceilings, waterblasting, and painting. The cottage is now operational and awaiting systems setup before becoming available as bookable accommodation.
- **Kauri dieback protection:** NZ Trackworks Ltd, along with local contractors, completed their contracted kauri protection capital upgrade works in late December 2019. The tracks with mitigation work completed are: Bridle, Old Lady Walk, Warren's, Withey's, Line W, South Fork, Kiwiriki and Tramline South tracks. All tracks were open prior to the busy summer season. Our two Kauri Dieback Ambassadors for the 2019-20 season have been active on the tracks, particularly Windy Canyon and Hot Springs tracks, since Labour Weekend. It was noted that the Hot Springs track received very high visitor numbers over the Christmas / New Year period this year, highlighting the benefit of our ambassadors interacting with the public with information about the disease. Kauri dieback educational material has also been shared with a number of community groups and stakeholders in the form of a storytelling presentation by one of our ambassadors.

Community

- **DOC Community Fund:** DOC recently announced the recipients of the 2019 DOC Community Fund for Aotea/GBI. The Windy Hill Rosalie Bay Catchment Trust, the Kotuku Peninsula Charitable Trust and the Motu Kaikoura Trust were all successful and received fund grants.
Applications for the 2020 DOC Community Fund will open on the 24th February 2020 and close on the 24th March 2020. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions in July 2020
<https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/funding/doc-community-fund/>
- **Takoketai/Black Petrel Open Day:** Biz and the team recently held open days for the community. We recently accompanied Okiwi and Mulberry Grove schools on visits to Hairakimata to meet the team and talk about work with this nationally vulnerable species.
- **Advocacy and support:** The team have been working these past months either leading or supporting these aspects - Conservation week, Aotea Conservation Collaboration Workshop, Kauri protection advocacy, Bird aversion training, School Holiday Programme and Community Beach Clean ups