Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party

Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 1:00 pm

AGENDA

Northland REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā rohe o Te Taitokerau

Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party Agenda

Meeting to be held in the Council Chamber
36 Water Street, Whangārei
on Wednesday 12 March 2025, commencing at 1:00 pm

Please note: working parties and working groups carry NO formal decision-making delegations from council. The purpose of the working party/group is to carry out preparatory work and discussions prior to taking matters to the full council for formal consideration and decision-making. Working party/group meetings are open to the public to attend (unless there are specific grounds under LGOIMA for the public to be excluded).

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BIOSECURITY AND BIODIVERSITY WORKING PARTY

Chairperson, Councillor Jack Craw
Councillor John Blackwell
TTMAC Representative, Niki Conrad
NRC Chair Geoff Crawford
TTMAC Representative, Michelle Elboz
TTMAC Representative, Nyze Manuel
TTMAC Representative, Mira Norris
Councillor Marty Robinson

KARAKIA

RĪMITI (ITEM) **Page**

Karakia

Ka tū i te waonui a Tāne Ka tupu ake rā Te rākau roa Te rākau nui Te rākau rangatira Ko te Kauri Ko te Tōtara Ko te Manuka Ko te Kahikātea Ko te Pūriri Ka toro atu rā ngā peka kia hono ki tētahi Haramai te toki Haumie hui e TAIKI E!	Stand strong in the realm of Tāne Where the tree develops, endures, grows and where prominence reveals itself Tis the Kauri Tis the Tōtara Tis the Manuka Tis the Kahikātea Tis the Pūriri Reach out far, bind together Bring forth unity Tis done!

TITLE:	**Record of Actions – 5 November 2024**
From:	Sandra Harris, Personal Assistant - Pou Tiakai Taiao
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 04 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to present the Record of Actions of the last meeting (attached) held on 5 November 2024 for review by the meeting.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Attachment 1: Record of Actions - 5 November 2024

Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party
5 November 2024

Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party Record of Actions

Meeting held in the Council Chamber
36 Water Street, Whangārei
on Tuesday 5 November 2024, commencing at 1pm

Tuhinga/Present:

Chairperson, Councillor Jack Craw
Councillor John Blackwell
Councillor Marty Robinson
TTMAC Representative, Mira Norris (online)

I Tae Mai/In Attendance:

Jono Gibbard Tāhūhū Rangapū - Chief Executive Officer
Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM - Biosecurity
Ruben Wylie, Pou Tiaki Taiao - GM Environmental Services
Lisa Forester Biodiversity Manager (online)
Nicola Hartwell, Kaiwhakahaere Moana Ora (online)
Joanna Barr Biosecurity Weeds and Freshwater Manager (online)
Kaeden Leonard, Biosecurity Marine Manager
Janice Kirk, Personal Assistant GM Biosecurity
Nicky Fitzgibbon, Biosecurity Manager - Incursions and Response
April Nordstrom, Kaitātari Kaupapa Wai Māori
Leon Keefer, Policy Specialist - Freshwater
Andrea Milovan (observer)
Dai Morgan, Biosecurity Partnerships Manager (joined online at 2.30pm)
Sandra Harris, Personal Assistant Pou Tiaki Taiao

The meeting commenced at 1.04pm with mihi and karakia by Cr Craw.

Ngā Mahi Whakapai/Housekeeping (Item 1.0)

Ngā Whakapahā/Apologies (Item 2.0)

TTMAC Representative, Michelle Elboz
TTMAC Representative, Niki Conrad
TTMAC Representative, Nyze Manuel (joined online at 1.45pm)
NRC Chair Geoff Crawford

Record of Actions – 14 August 2024 (Item 4.1)

Presented by: Cr Craw

Agreed action points:

- Record of actions taken as read

Receipt of Action Sheet (Item 4.2)

Presented by: Cr Craw

Agreed action points:

- Myrtle rust presentation for a future meeting in 2025
- Deer update. Removal of 59 deer to date – three definitely located in Russell two males, one x hind possibly in fawn
- Caulerpa update – Ngati Paoa leading business case, due end of November. The business case for funding to be presented and shared to a future Council Workshop.
- Wetland mapping update. Use and purpose of mapping is accessible by Māori Technical Advisor Group (MTAG). Sensitivities around data currently working through with MTAG, prior to recommendation to Council to go live - update to be provided at future meeting in 2025.

Review of the Regional Pest and Marine Pathways Plan (Item 4.3)

Presented by: Leon Keefer, Policy Specialist - Freshwater and April Nordstrom, Kaitātari Kaupapa Wai Māori

Agreed action points:

- Gold clam to be presented to Council Workshop 6 November.
- Noted facilitation with communities through documentation and the website. A comprehensive document will be made available online for public access. The draft document is scheduled to be presented to the council in March 2025.
- Kauri dieback to remain in the RPMP list. Discussion with hapu currently underway.
- Discussion on including the Black swan onto candidate species list and an action to follow up on its status as “native” or introduced.

Direction to continue as per report and agreed actions:

1. That the Biodiversity and Biosecurity working Party note the contents of the report
2. That the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Working party endorse the draft candidate species list for a council decision on November 26 2024.

Biosecurity Annual Report 2023-2024 (Item 4.4)

Presented by: Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity

Agreed action points:

- Noted and acknowledged the Operational Plan and staff contribution. The updated version of the report will be provided electronically to the Chair to facilitate comments on language considerations.

Direction to continue as per report and agreed actions:

1. That the Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working party note the contents of the agenda item and attached Biosecurity Annual Report 2023-2024.

2. That the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Working Party support the adoption of the draft Biosecurity Annual Report by council as a record of the actions and results that have occurred during the 2023-2024 year.

Biosecurity Act Amendments (Item 4.5)

Presented by: Leon Keefer, Policy Specialist - Freshwater; and April Nordstrom, Kaitātari Kaupapa Wai Māori

Agreed action points:

- Council approval of the submission is scheduled for the council meeting 26 November with the submission to MPI to be made 28 November.
- Enforcement of infringement notice to be included in the submission.

Direction to continue as per report and agreed discussion:

1. That the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Working Party receive the report.
2. That the working party endorse council staff undertaking a review of the amendments.

Karakia by Cr Robinson

Whakamutunga (Conclusion)

The meeting concluded at 4.04pm.

TITLE:	**Receipt of Action Sheet**
From:	Sandra Harris, Personal Assistant - Pou Tiakai Taiao
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 04 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to enable the meeting to receive the current action sheet.

Nga mahi tutohutia / Recommendation

That the action sheet be received.

Attachments/Ngā tapirihanga

Attachment 1: Receipt of Actions ⇩

Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party – Schedule of Actions

Meeting date	Item	BABWP action	Responsible staff	Status	Notes
1 December 2023	Myrtle Rust (Item 4.5)	Dr Beccy Ganley's presentation deferred till 2025	GM	Pending	A date for this presentation will be confirmed for a future working party meeting.
Caulerpa	Marine Biosecurity Update item 4.6	An update on progress with Ngāti Pāoa engagement for business case for research, control and elimination of Caulerpa	Kaeden Leonard	Pending	Business case has been completed and this is expected to be made public later in March.
Wetland mapping	From the previous action table	An update on data progress with MTAG	Justin Murfitt	Pending	MTAG has been asked for feedback on indicative wetland / mapping tool from a tangata whenua perspective. To date advice from MTAG has not identified any significant concerns but this will be confirmed at the next opportunity. MTAG advice will inform communications and ongoing QA process for indicative maps.

14 August 2024	RPMS Review (item 4.3)	The development of a first draft RPMP for consideration by council at its November meeting with the purpose of commencing wider stakeholder consultation.	Leon Keefer / April Nordstrom	Pending	Agenda item
14 August 2024	Sea spurge	A further update to a future working party be provided	Jo Barr	Pending	Funding of $80k has been allocated by MPI and a programme of works underway. **New sites** • A new sea spurge site found on the 5th of February by a member of the public. This was 0.5km south of an existing site (the Gap). Six juvenile plants were found and removed. Plant specimens were sent to Cawthorn Institute for research. T **Sea spurge site summaries** **Te Oneroa-a-Tohe sites:** • **Hukatere - 'The Gap' (11km North up the coast from Hukatere beach access.)** *Te Aupōuri is taking the lead on surveillance and control at this control site.* • A follow up search at the large sea spurge infestation site was undertaken on the 5th of February 2025. It was found that all plants controlled with herbicide in early December of 2024 had completely died. Five small seedlings were found. The next follow up visit will be in 4 weeks' time and will include a detailed survey of a 50metre radius from the control site.

					Waipapakauri sites (numerous plants along 8km of coastline) *NgaiTakoto will take the lead on surveillance and control at these sites.* *A small number of seedlings continue to be found at Karaka stream.* *An extensive search and survey 15km north and south is still required* • **Ahipara** *Te Rarawa and the Ahipara Kaitiaki rangers are taking the lead on surveillance and control at these sites.* Single plant found. With no plants found since. The Ahipara Kaitiaki rangers have done extensive searching along this coastline and have spent many hours distributing flyers and educating Te Oneroa a Tohe beach users about Sea spurge over the summer period. **Other sites:** **Mitimiti** An extensive 30km beach survey led by Te Akau Roa Kaitiaki was undertaken on the 22nd of January. No further infestations were found. The occasional seedling is still emerging from the infestation site at Moetangi Bay. **Waipoua** A single seedling plant was found at the Waipoua River mouth early this year by a local Te Roroa resident. DOC will be over seeing this site and are currently engaged with Te Roroa Environs who they are hoping will lead ongoing inspections and surveillance at this site. **Pouto** DOC are managing this site and have been undertaking quarterly inspections; they have been finding the odd

					seedling at each inspection round. Te Uri O Hau are aware of the site.
5 November 2024	Biosecurity annual Report 2023-2024 (Item 4.4)	Updated version of the report to be provided electronically to the chair to facilitate comments on language considerations.	Janice Kirk	Complete	Annual report confirmed by council and is available on the NRC website

Please note: All items completed will be removed current Schedule of Actions.

TITLE: Urban Pest Control

From: Dai Morgan, Biosecurity Manager - Partnerships and Joanna Skyrme, Biosecurity Specialist - Tiakina Whangarei Project Lead

Authorised by Group Manager/s: Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 05 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

Tiakina Whangārei (TK) is a community-led initiative that helps people engage in conservation activities to protect and enhance Whangārei's native biodiversity. The programme has three core workstreams which include boosting community cohesion, ecological knowledge, and social wellbeing; fostering kaitiakitanga (environmental guardianship); and protecting and enhancing Whangārei's native biodiversity.

The programme mirrors, albeit at a smaller scale, similar urban restoration projects in other large cities such as Wellington, Dunedin, Auckland and Predator free Taranaki and the publics engagement within Whangārei seems to be growing steadily.

Looking ahead, a revision of the current operations plan for Tiakina Whangārei is underway aimed at including a stronger focus on pest plant management. In addition, staff are developing a plan for urban pest control in Kerikeri to begin in 2025-2026 that would be funded through existing programmes.

Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommended actions

1. That the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Working Party note the contents of this report.

Background/Tuhinga

Tiakina Whangārei is a community-led initiative that helps people engage in conservation activities to protect and enhance Whangārei's native biodiversity. Supported by the Northland Regional Council Long Term Plan (2019-20), it is currently funded for 10 years and launched in August 2019.

Tiakina Whangārei operates in urban Whangārei and adjacent forest fragments such as Parihaka and Pukenui, and as a part of the wider Predator Free 2050 Whangārei project (see Map 1), and plays a crucial role in enhancing that landscape-scale biosecurity project.

In addition to supporting existing projects across the city over the last year, Tiakina Whangārei have also supported the formation of three new weed and pest animal community groups, distributed an additional 383 rat traps to backyard trappers, conducted fieldtrips or visits to six ECEs or schools, and held eight community events or workshops. Furthermore, we have also helped larger projects by supporting 1080 and cyanide operations in Pukenui, and increasing weed management in Parihaka by commissioning weed management plan for Mackesy Bush Reserve and engaging contractors to work on some of the recommendations of that plan (with input from the existing volunteer weeding group).

Across New Zealand there are several other urban conservation projects that are funded (or partly funded) by Regional Councils; for example, Predator Free Dunedin, Predator Free Wellington, Towards Predator-Free Taranaki, and Pest Free Auckland. The kaupapa of each project differs from being highly agency-led through to a stronger focus on supporting community-led projects. The primary focus of Tiakina Whangārei is to initiate, promote, and support pest control activities by Whangārei residents to protect native biodiversity; however, the initiative also has a wider mandate

to enhance the connection residents have with their environment through conservation activities to increase environmental awareness and help build community cohesion. Engagement from the public with Tiakina Whangārei is likely to be very high but difficult to quantify as there are so many ways that people can participate, from maintaining a backyard pest trap, taking part in a school or community workshop, or volunteering on or coordinating a Landcare group.

Map 1. An aerial image showing how Tiakina Whangārei fits into the wider Predator Free Whangārei project.

Tiakina Whangārei aims to deliver on objectives across three core work streams:

1. Increase community cohesiveness, ecological knowledge, and social wellbeing

Tiakina Whangārei aims to increase community cohesiveness, ecological knowledge, and social wellbeing through activities that will provide educational opportunities and create a stronger

connection between people and their environment. Furthermore, the project aims to 'normalise' conservation activities so that people consider it part of their everyday lives.

A number of different methods are used to address this kaupapa; for example:

- Tiakina Whangārei runs public events and workshops, including stalls at community markets, to provide information on urban biosecurity and pest control equipment. At least four events are held annually.
- The project engages with Whangārei schools, delivering workshops to teachers and in-class sessions to 48% of primary, intermediate, and secondary schools. Workshops are also provided at Northland Kindergarten Association training days and other early childhood education centres. The project often works with the Enviroschools programme when outcomes align, and a two-lesson resource has been developed.
- To keep the public informed, Tiakina Whangārei uses social media, primarily Facebook, where weekly posts reach over 2,000 followers. Articles are also published on the www.tiakinawhangarei.co.nz website, in print media like The Northern Advocate.
- The Tiakina Whangārei project lead and Partnerships team are well connected urban conservation groups and key stakeholders, which allows people to be connected to existing projects. Furthermore, when people want to start new projects, Tiakina Whangārei will help them develop appropriate pest management and/or health and safety plans.

2. Encourage kaitiakitanga/guardianship of the environment

Increasing the number of Whangārei residents actively engaged in pest control will foster kaitiakitanga and is likely to have both social and conservation benefits.

The project aims to identify and remove the factors that discourage Whangārei residents from engaging in conservation activities. Our anecdotal research suggests that that main barriers include the cost of purchasing traps, not knowing how to control pests, or not seeing the value in doing urban conservation. Accordingly, Tiakina Whangārei is removing these barriers by:

- Providing the public with pest control hardware and consumables at no cost or subsidised rates. Over 300 devices are distributed annually, a trap library is available for larger pests, and a partnership has been established with the Whangārei Men's Shed that allows them to sell discounted rat traps to the public.
- Supporting new and existing groups in Whangārei. Grants to purchase hardware are given to groups that have established track records and agreements, similar to those used in the CPCA programme, have been established with other high performing projects. Tiakina Whangārei has also helped establish several new projects in areas where there is strong community interest in pest control. These projects include Predator Free Onerahi, Predator Free Te Kamo, Waimahanga Track Action, and the Pukenui RIPers. In addition, to providing resources, Tiakina Whangārei also helps these projects with health and safety plans, training on pest control best practise, and field support.
- To promote the benefits of engaging in urban conservation. Workshops and other information sharing events are delivered regularly to the public or in educational institutions (see above).

3. Protect and enhance native biodiversity within Whangārei

Reducing pest populations to very low levels has beneficial consequences for native biodiversity. Accordingly, developing or supporting predator control across Whangārei urban areas and adjacent forests is needed to realise biodiversity gains. To do this, Tiakina Whangārei encourages people to maintain predator traps in their backyards, join an existing conservation project, or start a new project.

Annual monitoring shows the largest mammalian pest populations are along urban waterways and in forest fragments near the CBD. Bird monitoring indicates these large forest fragments are our key habitats for native species; although, native species are also detected in areas away from forest fragments too, albeit, in smaller numbers.

Increasing pest control in large forest fragments should boost native bird numbers in these areas and lead to more wildlife visiting urban backyards. This could motivate more residents to engage in conservation activities, as seen in other cities like Wellington.

To accelerate this process, Tiakina Whangārei administers annual Whangārei District Council LTP funding for pest control in the Parihaka Reserves and supports the Western Hills Pukenui Forest Trust with strategic advice and resources for pest control in Pukenui adjacent to the city.

Urban Pest Control going forward

In 2025, we will continue to deliver on the workstreams mentioned above but also develop a revised operations plan. In addition to continuing to deliver on the workstreams reported on above, a revised operations plan will be developed in 2025. The operations plan will build on the success of the previous plan but also have a stronger focus on promoting pest plant management within Whangārei. Furthermore, Biosecurity Partnerships is developing a plan to initiate a similar project across urban Kerikeri (Tiakina Kerikeri), which we aim to start in 2025-26 and will be funded through existing programmes (e.g. Mid North HVA, Biofund).

Ngā tapirihanga / Attachments

Nil

TITLE:	**Mid and Far North Biosecurity Partnerships Update**
From:	Dai Morgan, Biosecurity Manager - Partnerships
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 04 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

As part of the 2024-25 Long Term Plan, the Northland Regional Council (NRC) established the Mid- and Far North Partnerships Biosecurity Fund, allocating $472,000 annually. This fund aims to support biosecurity work in areas where there has been little investment in community/hapū led pest control in the past due to lack of funding and community capacity.

This paper will provide an overview and update on the progress of two five-year projects, each receiving up to $200,000 annually from this new fund.

Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommended actions

1. That the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Working Party receive the report.

Background/Tuhinga

The NRC Biosecurity Group supports numerous community-led projects across Northland through funding programmes such as Community Pest Control Areas (CPCA) and High Value Areas. It is not the intention of the NRC to entirely fund these projects; instead, the NRC enters into a partnership agreement with the community with an expectation that they will also seek resources through in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labour and securing additional funding from other grant funders.

This partnership funding model works very well in many parts of Northland and >170,000ha of habitat are currently under some form of pest management. However, in some parts of Northland it is often difficult for the community to provide significant levels of in-kind contributions toward potential projects due to a lower population density or there is a lower socio-economic demographic.

Some of the places where NRC Biosecurity has not historically supported many community-led projects have been identified as areas of high biodiversity value and many of these areas are in the mid and far North. Accordingly, an increase in pest control activity in these regions would result in large benefits to native populations of flora and fauna.

To help address some of the historical under investment in community-led conservation in these areas, additional resourcing was confirmed through the 2024-25 Long Term Plan. As such, an extra $472,000 per annum was secured and tagged for new work in mid- and far north areas of Northland.

Projects that will be supported using this new fund will fall under the current CPCA programme, and as such they must meet this programme's criteria (e.g. have tangible conservation outcomes, an approved project plan and milestones, land access agreements, etc). There are different conditions around the types of in-kind contributions the projects supported under this new fund will need to provide and there is now an expectation that funding provided by the NRC is leveraged to secure additional resources from other organisations, such as Foundation North, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), the Department of Internal Affairs, or philanthropic partners to fully fund their project.

Two projects are currently being supported by this new fund and a summary of these follow.

Te Ohonga o Mahuri

During the 2023-24 financial year, the NRC and Ministry of Social development (MSD) supported the Kaikohe-based Te Korowai Arahi Charitable Trust (hereafter: the Trust) to initiate a 6-month pilot restoration project (see: https://www.nrc.govt.nz/our-northland/story?Id=80040). The Trust is made up of Ngāpuhi, Ngati Kahu, and Ngati Hine leaders and has been established as a vehicle to empower their people to be leaders while restoring their forest, wildlife, air, rivers and sea through tikanga, good practices, training and employment. Due to the success of the pilot project, a larger five-year project was developed which aims to reduce plant and animal pest populations across an approximately 1,200 ha block of Māori land in the Taheke / Punakitere area. The project is called 'Te Ohonga o Mahuri', which means the awakening of Mahuri, our ancestors, and it will draw on local community to deliver the on-ground work. The NRC is contributing up to $200,000 annually over the five-year duration of the project.

Very little management has occurred across the project area (see below) in the past; however, an annual work plan which details an animal and plant pest management and monitoring programme has been developed by the Trust and NRC Biosecurity staff. This plan will be updated annually.

Funding for Te Ohonga o Mahuri began in the 2024-25 financial year, and the NRC contribution has been successfully leveraged by the Trust to secure additional funding from MSD ($274,092) and SkyCity Community Trust ($30,000) to fully resource the project this year. As part of the project, 10 kaimahi and one field leader have been employed by the Trust to carry out the on-ground work across the project area.

The initial focus of the pest animal part of the project is to establish a network of pest control infrastructure across the ngahere, with the aim to do a possum and rodent knockdown in late winter to reduce the populations of these species prior to the bird breeding season. Weed management mahi along the riparian zones of the Punakitere, Otaua, and Taheke rivers, which was started during the pilot project, has been extended to include a greater suite of weed species and work is also being planned in the adjacent forest blocks to reduce the risk of reinvasion into the riparian zones.

Towards the end of the 2024-25 financial year, NRC Biosecurity staff will assist the Trust with reporting requirements and the development a new work plan for the follow year. The Trust has also begun discussions with other agencies for funding during the 2025-26 financial year.

Te Ohonga o Mahuri project area in the Taheke area approximately 20km west of Kaikohe.

Te Aupouri Restoration

Te Rūnanga Nui o Te Aupōuri will deliver this restoration project across their rohe which boasts a diverse range of habitat types that support native populations of threatened flora and fauna. Te Rūnanga Nui o Te Aupōuri has been previously successful in gaining Jobs 4 Nature funding, which supported the employment six kaimahi and a field supervisor to work in the Te Ārai area of their rohe. Jobs 4 Nature mahi included the construction of fencing around the reserve, golden wattle removal, and removing wilding pines. Te Rūnanga Nui o Te Aupōuri leveraged Jobs 4 Nature funding with the NRC to establish a three-year CPCA agreement. The CPCA agreement supported the procurement of pest control hardware and consumables and labour to deploy and service pest control devices was paid for through the Jobs 4 Nature funding and both Jobs 4 Nature and the CPCA finished during the 2024-25 financial year.

The current Te Aupōuri Restoration project aims to build on the success achieved from the work completed under Jobs 4 Nature and the CPCA by increasing both the scope of the mahi, and the number of areas across the rohe where management will be undertaken. Accordingly, work will continue at Te Ārai Reserve but extend east to also include Kokota Spit (see below). In both areas, mustelids, rodents, feral cats, possums and wild pigs will be management and the scope of pest plant management will also be broadened to include a wider variety of species, with the strongest focus on removing species such as oxylobium, wilding pine, Sydney golden wattle, spartina and (if discovered) sea spurge. The NRC has committed up to $200,000 annually over the five-year duration of the project.

Te Aupouri project areas: (**a**) Te Ārai, (**b**) Kokota Spit.

Furthermore, as part of the wider project the Rūnanga plan to also provide educational opportunities for the kura and community, protect dune systems through stabilisation work, and start a lake monitoring programme for invasive species.

Funding for the current project began during 2024-25, and as such has utilised the remaining Jobs 4 Nature funding for the 2024-25 financial year ($285,380), which ran out in early 2025, to ensure that four kaimahi and a field lead can continue be employed to deliver against the project's outcomes.

Like the support the NRC will provide to the Te Ohonga o Mahuri project, NRC Biosecurity staff will help the Rūnanga with annual reporting and to development a new work plan for the 2025-26 financial year. The Rūnanga is currently preparing a proposal to Foundation North for additional funds to fully resource their project during the 2025-26 financial year.

Ngā tapirihanga / Attachments

Nil

TITLE:	**Regional Pest Management & Marine Pathways Plan Update**
From:	April Nordstrom, Kaitātari Kaupapa Wai Māori and Leon Keefer, Policy Specialist - Freshwater
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 04 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga | Executive summary

The Regional Pest Management & Marine Pathways Plan is currently progressing with consultation, cost-benefit analyses, and rule development. Specific updates for each work stream are set out below. Each work stream is being undertaken concurrently with the aim of satisfying the requirements of the Biosecurity Act 1993 for plan preparation; notably:

- sections 70, 71, and 72 with respect to the Regional Pest Management Plan process; and
- sections 81, 82, and 83 with respect to the Marine Pathway Management Plan process.

Based on our progress to date, our original timeframes may need to be extended to enable a more complete drafting process and to incorporate outcomes sought by our communities.

Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommended actions

1. That the Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party receive this report.
2. That the working party support an adjusted timeframe to complete the Plan review during 2026 rather than 2025 as originally described thus enabling a more comprehensive and meaningful outcome.

Tuhinga | Background

Consultation updates

Consultation is being undertaken with our communities across multiple areas, including:

- Government agencies (Central Government and District Councils);
- Iwi/hapū and representative groups;
- Industries/businesses and representative organisations where possible;
- Special interest groups (such as KiwiCoast, WeedActionNetwork, etc); and
- The general public.

The approach taken seeks to test our current pest management rules and proposed new candidate species with the above groups. Feedback has largely been constructive and is still being received. We expect to be able to summarise this feedback in a report to be circulated back to the Working Party shortly after the conclusion of our preliminary consultation in early March.

Our communications have been undertaken through numerous channels:

- Online, radio, and print media campaign directing interested people to a dedicated consultation website (run by our Comms and Engagement team)
- In-person presence at large public events (A&P shows, Waitangi Day, etc.)
- Direct email and mail communications with businesses (e.g. nurseries and pet shops)

At the time of writing this agenda item, we have held online and in-person meetings with government agencies, iwi/hapu, and industry representatives where possible, including:

- Te Roroa, Te Uri o Hau Environs, Ngāti Kuri, Te Parawhau, Ngāti Rēhia (Te Ahutai) and a range of kanohi ki te kanohi events for tangata whenua including Muriwhenua, Hokianga, Whangaroa, and Whangārei.
- NZTA
- Whangarei District Council's Parks and Roading managers
- Horticulture NZ
- Auckland Council
- Predator Free 2050 Pewhairangi Whānui project leads
- KiwiCoast
- Save the Kiwi
- Project Island Song
- Multiple land care groups

At the time of writing this agenda item, staff are still pursuing conversations with:

- Fish and Game Northland
- Far North District Council
- Kaipara District Council
- Marine, nursery, and pet business interests.

Cost-benefit analysis

Qualitative cost-benefit analyses are being prepared for each of the pest species to be considered for inclusion (the candidate species). This undertaken is a requirement of the Biosecurity Act, but also helps consolidate and record our knowledge of each species into a single document that can be publicly accessed. The analysis undertaken for each candidate species will be based on staff experience and observations in the field, reviews of literature, other Regional Pest Management Plans, and through consultation with the groups outlined above. Consultation is a critical component of the process, as it enables us to also consider social, cultural, and to some extent the economic impacts associated with the management of the pest.

Species that are currently managed in our RPMP are also being reviewed, with potential changes to management regimes and rules that will require analyses. These are being undertaken by our in-house experts.

We are limiting this analysis to a qualitative examination of the costs and benefits of management as we do not have the resources to undertake a full quantitative analysis at this stage however a qualitative analysis is satisfactory, and this meets the requirements of the Act. The proposed plan may be challenged regarding the banning of certain pest pet species and plant nurseries may also challenge some species that we have listed as candidates, but we are looking to avoid large submissions through our current engagement process.

Rule development

The review of our existing rules, and drafting of new rules, is being undertaken concurrently with our consultation and cost-benefit analyses. In drafting these rules, we are focusing on rules that:

- can be monitored and/or enforced;

- respond to existing or potential pest impacts;
- will achieve a better outcome than the status quo; and
- are not superfluous to existing laws and regulations from other agencies.

Development of the tangata whenua aspirational statement

At the request of Te Ruarangi members that sit on the biosecurity / biodiversity working party, the inclusion of a tangata whenua aspirational statement was recommended. Following the consultation period and once feedback is collated, staff will work alongside Te Ruarangi members to develop this section.

Several submissions received so far have highlighted the issue of a lack of reference in the Biosecurity Act 1993 or the National Policy Statement for Pest Management 2015 that requires regional councils to ensure that they are engaging with tangata whenua to set visions or objectives for Te Ao Māori.

Through the Regional Policy Statement (RPS, 2018) there are clear issues that are laid out for tangata whenua, indigenous biodiversity and taonga species. Clause 2.2(b) also specifically lists pest species as a key pressure on indigenous species and their ecosystems. Council has also made a commitment to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi through the implementation of Taiki ē, and the development of tangata whenua aspirations.

Staff will draft options of how improvements could be made to the pest plan to reflect the above issues and work alongside the working party sub-group to finalise this section.

Timeframes

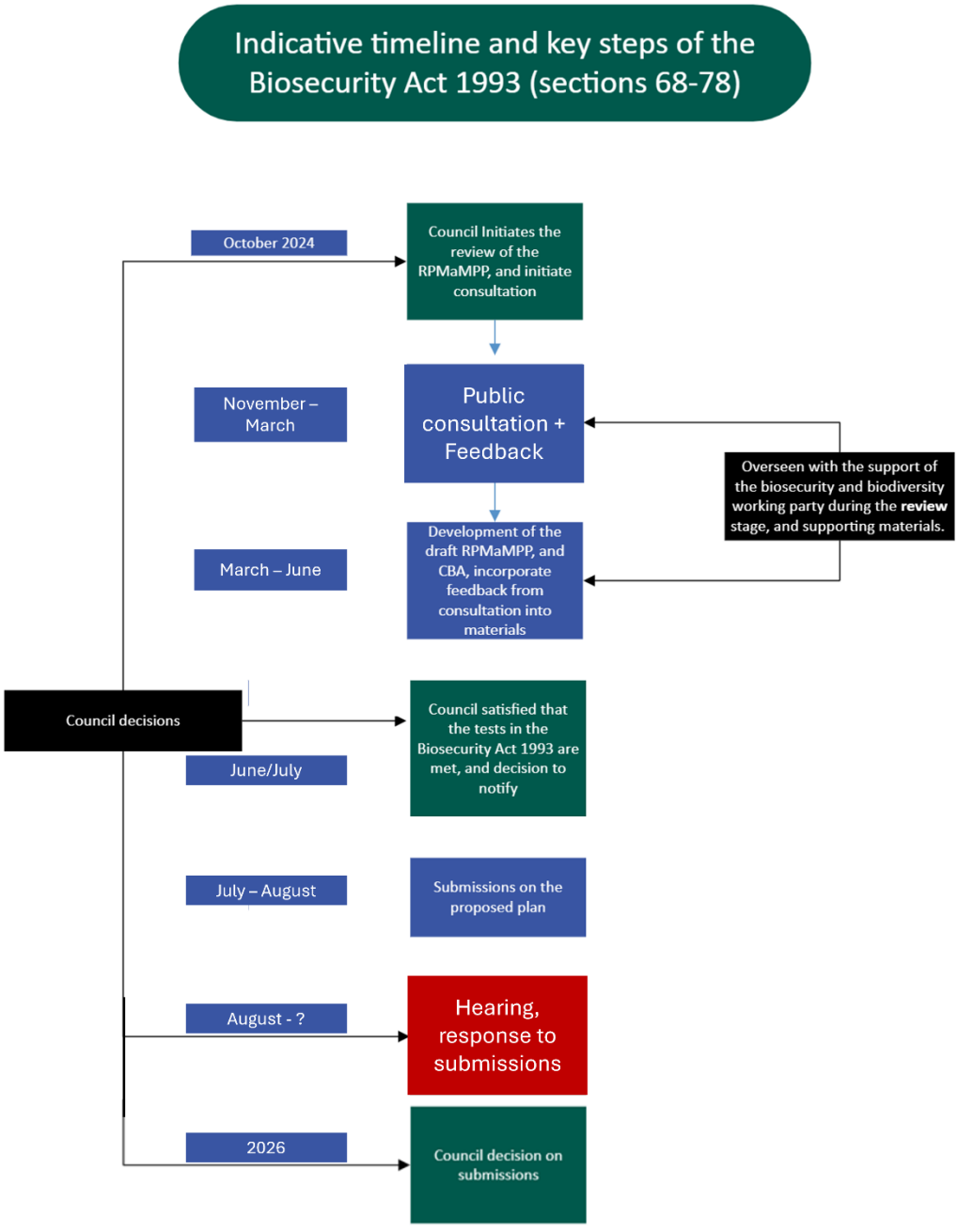
Staff have been progressing with the plan review with our original indicative timeframes in mind which planned for formal public submissions in April/May of 2025. This would require that a finished draft plan is provided to Council for approval in March at the latest. At this stage, staff recommend that this timeframe is adjusted to enable the drafting of a more complete and comprehensive proposed plan that fully considers the consultation feedback which is still being received. In addition, further evidence for potential changes to rules and pest species will be required to incorporate the desired outcomes raised by our communities, staff, and subject experts.

Implementation of the rules and the development of strategies to achieve desired outcomes will also require further discussions and collaboration with other governmental agencies, iwi/hapu, and non-governmental organizations.

The above issues combined with upcoming elections and the requisite stand-down period, it is considered more appropriate and beneficial to look at releasing a proposed RPMP in 2026. This has further benefits:

- Our Freshwater Pathway Management Plan, which is in development and will address risks associated with Freshwater Gold Clam, will be more fully formed and potentially completed;
- The Biosecurity Act reforms will have progressed. We may even see a draft Bill this year.
- The NRC Biodiversity Strategy is being finalised, and implementation could see co-benefits with some biosecurity programmes, partnerships, and community aspirations.
- The additional time will enable our staff to develop workable and effective rules.

Therefore, staff recommend a revised timeframe, moving to notify a proposed plan and adoption in 2026. This window can be narrowed as we progress through rule development and the incorporation of consultation outcomes.



Ngā tapirihanga / Attachments

Nil

TITLE:	**Madagascar Ragwort Update**
From:	Joanna Barr, Biosecurity Manager Pest Plants and Nathan Arcus, Biosecurity Officer Pest Plant
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 04 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

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Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommended actions

1. That the working party note the information
2. That staff prepare a paper seeking council funding for the preparation of a business case that sets out the funding needs, predicted impacts and costs of inaction.

Background/Tuhinga

Madagascar ragwort is a yellow flowering member of the daisy family which causes animal health/welfare issues and economic losses. The plant is poisonous and can be fatal to stock, remaining toxic even in hay or silage, with no treatment available for affected animals. Cattle and horses are most susceptible. It is widespread in the far north and outcompetes favourable pasture species and reduces forage for stock.

This aggressive pasture weed is thought to have arrived in the far north on equipment from Australia about 20 years ago. Infestations are increasing in Kerikeri and other areas in the mid-north, and further south. Its presence in NZ was confirmed through DNA analysis. Prior to that it was believed to be the almost identical gravel groundsel (Senecio skirrhodon).

Much of NZ is climatically suited to Madagascar ragwort and its native and invasive range overseas indicate that most of the North Island would be susceptible, and climate modelling suggest significant areas of the South Island would be as well. It is dispersed by wind and contaminated equipment, hay/ silage, and stock movements from infected areas. The plant can establish in all types of soils but has a competitive advantage in low fertility soils and pasture damaged by drought or overgrazing.

Current treatment options are limited and costly however farmers in unaffected areas can reduce spread risk through checking machinery is clean, and hay/sileage are from uninfected sources.

Once an infestation is well established, farmers have few options. Manual/physical control must be ongoing and is not achievable at scale. Pasture improvement and grazing control with sheep can help limit germination and spread, but it isn't feasible for many farm types. Current herbicide-based control methods are expensive and must be repeated frequently as they do not reliable control all age classes, and Madagascar ragwort is able to set seed and geminate year-round.

AgResearch is investigating current agrichemical control options on behalf of Northland Regional Council, to formalise current control advice and to identify options for further trials in New Zealand. Following the completion of this study, funding may be needed for a second stage of this work to establish field trials and/or progress registrations for products currently not available for use in New Zealand.

Biocontrol is another significant avenue for investigation for weeds that are widespread and difficult to control through conventional methods. Biocontrol can be a highly successful and cost-effective tool. However, identifying potential agents and testing them for suitability for release is an intensive process, with no guarantee of success. In 2023, NRC commissioned a Biocontrol Feasibility study for Madagascar ragwort, which is the first step for initiating biocontrol projects in New Zealand. This study found that the potential agents that have already been identified and tested in previous and current testing in Australia had proven to be unsuitable and provided recommendations for subsequent steps that could be undertaken to identify further potential agents. The first two of these next steps would be to undertake further genetic analysis of Madagascar ragwort across its' native range (South Africa, Zimbabwe and Madagascar) to determine where the New Zealand and Australian infestations originated from, and then to survey in that area to identify new insect and pathogen agents for further testing. The approximate cost of these steps has been estimated to be $250,000. A survey to identify potential natural enemies of *S. madagascariensis* in New Zealand is also recommended to help identify associated invertebrates and pathogens that may affect the efficacy of potential biocontrol agents, and to help identify if there are any potential biocontrol agents already present. The estimated cost of this work is $60,000.

Regional regulation

NRC can regulate local pests through the Regional Pest Management Plan and staff are in the process of making a change to our current plan so that an existing boundary control rule applies to Madagascar ragwort (having been previously applied to Gravel groundsel, prior to the DNA confirmation that it had been misidentified).

A limited boundary control rule is predicted to be largely ineffective because of the plant's wind-blown seed, and it would be very expensive to administer and ensure compliance. If this rule is retained in the new plan, significant additional resource would be required to enforce it. A boundary control rule can impose a requirement on a landowner to ensure his/her boundary is clear of a pest species up to a set distance from neighbouring properties (which is enforced on receipt of complaint from an affected land occupier, provided their boundary is also clear). Set back distances for the existing rule, once corrected, would be 50m. It is likely that if a regionwide boundary control remined in place in the new Plan, as well as the significant administrative load of the enforcement process, the NRC would be required to undertake ongoing rounds of boundary spraying for properties that had defaulted on Notices of Direction.

Outcome sought from central government

The Minister of Biosecurity, Andrew Hoggard visited Rangiputa station, one of Pāmu farms (formerly Landcorp) in the Far North, on 4th February to see firsthand the extent of Madagascar ragwort across pasture and was accompanied by agency and industry representatives. The Minister advised that he wanted to see agency and industry reps work together to determine what can be done to control Madagascar ragwort.

Staff have been liaising with Pāmu farms to form a working group with industry and agency representatives aimed at progressing a plan which will assess the impacts, options for management and the costs. Government, council and sector collaboration will deliver better outcomes by working together and there is a need to raise awareness and reduce the risk of spread, support the next phase of biocontrol investigation and secure funding for any control trials. Staff will be encouraging industry to co-fund with council and Ministry for Primary Industries to progress the next steps (genetic analysis and surveys) involved in finding a biocontrol solution.

Other options may also be available (e.g. to improve effectiveness and reduce the cost of herbicide treatment) and further herbicide trials could be worthwhile while biocontrol is investigated.

Ngā tapirihanga / Attachments

Nil

TITLE: Dune Lakes Update

From:	Jacki Byrd, Biodiversity Specialist - Freshwater and Lisa Forester, Biodiversity Manager
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Ruben Wylie, Pou Tiaki Taiao, on 05 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

This report fulfils the recommended action from the Biosecurity and Biodiversity Working Party meeting of 06 August 2024 to bring a dune lakes progress report to the first working party meeting of 2025.

A summary of work undertaken so far in the dune lakes of Te Taitokerau in the 2024/25 financial year is provided below as well as an outline of work planned for autumn 2025. The report covers lake ecological surveys, planning for pine tree removal at Rototuna and Rotokawau, and pest plant control and surveillance.

Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommended actions

1. That biodiversity staff bring a progress report on dune lakes to the working party meeting in August 2025.

Background/Tuhinga

Northland dune lakes are fragile, closed ecosystems with many lakes are in decline due to nutrients from land use and pest plants and fish. High nutrient levels and pests threaten rare biodiversity, water for farming, recreational and cultural values. Rare species have already become extinct from a number of dune lakes in Northland.NRC is continuing to work with iwi/hapū and landowners to reduce the threats and improve the long term health of dune lakes. This includes an expanded programme of annual lakes ecological monitoring, pest plant control, weed surveillance and partnerships with tangata whenua and landowners to improve lake health.

Lakes Ecological Monitoring

Two lakes ecological survey weeks are being held in 2025. The Far North monitoring was completed 9-14 February. Nine lakes in Te Hiku were visited and one lake at Pākaraka. NIWA divers undertook Lake Submerged Plant Index surveys in eight lakes. NRC staff undertook fish, plant and bird surveys and also took eDNA samples with permission from landowners and iwi/hapū in lakes which had not been sampled previously. NRC staff completed an assessment of the distribution and status of the small Threatened – Nationally Critical plant *Trithuria inconspicua* in Lake Ngatu finding healthy populations at several sites. NRC and NIWA staff supported a wānanga at Wahakari organised by Te Aupōuri, running four learning stations for 80 tamariki from local Te Kao kura. The second lakes ecological survey week will be held at Poutō 9-14 March. Reports in the form of lake report cards with recommendations will be available online by the end of the financial year.

Pine tree removal from Rototuna and Rotokawau (Poutō)

This is a joint project between NRC, Te Uri O Hau, Waikāretu Marae, the Department of Conservation and Kaipara Moana Remediation. NRC is providing funds to remove the large pine trees, which were damaged by Cyclone Gabrielle and are impacting on the health of both lakes. Pine needles and resin can have serious effects on lake health, smothering kākahi beds and native plants and staining lake water, so light can’t penetrate, and submerged plant beds die back.

The project is complex. The pine trees are growing on marginal strips – Public Conservation Land – managed by the Department of Conservation. Both lakes have archaeological sites so Authority to Modify permission from Heritage New Zealand is required before works can proceed. The pines are on track to be felled at Rototuna this financial year. The trees have no value and removing them for timber would cause too much erosion damage on a very steep slope so the pine trees will be left to rot on site. It is planned to plant the area up slope of the pines with natives after the work is complete using DOC and Te Uri O Hau to carry out weed control and site preparation. An application to KMR has been made for native plants and fencing.

Hornwort control

Tenders for hornwort control using a drone were invited and selecting the successful tenderer is in progress. Hornwort control will start at Roto Waikanae in the Far North in March. Follow up hornwort control from last year will be undertaken at Roto Tutaki, Mt Camel and Karaka in an effort to eradicate the weed. No hornwort has been seen in Lake Egg since January 2024 and the lake will be checked again in March 2025, and annually until 2029 to see if eradication has been achieved.

Lagarosiphon (African oxygen weed) control

This weed was controlled in Lake Ngatu in September 2020 and surveillance for lagarosiphon has been undertaken every year since and in February this year. All surveillance results so far have been negative. The final survey will be undertaken in September this year. If no lagarosiphon is seen, eradication can be declared.

Plant pest surveillance for high-risk lakes

As recommended by the Northland Lakes Strategy 2012, annual surveillance for serious pest weeds such as hornwort and oxygen weed is undertaken around access points at lakes where public access is considered to put them at high risk for pest invasion. This year the Biosecurity Marine team divers and the Maritime team assisted with the surveillance at Taharoa, Waikare, Kai Iwi and Ngatu. No target weeds were recorded.

Ngā tapirihanga / Attachments

Nil

TITLE:	**Operational Planning - looking to the year ahead**
From:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity
Authorised by Group Manager/s:	Don McKenzie, Pou Tiaki Pūtaiao - GM Biosecurity, on 04 March 2025

Whakarāpopototanga / Executive summary

A requirement of the Biosecurity Act 1993 is a Biosecurity Operational Plan which describes actions and performance measures for the coming year and is due within three months of the end of the current financial year.

The 2025-2026 Operational Plan is predicted to overlap with the council's adoption of a revised Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) in 2026 and therefore staff are recommending no major changes be made to the current Operational Plan at this stage.

Once a revised RPMP is adopted there will be a requirement to also revise the Operational plan so that it reflects any new rules and expected outcomes of the RPMP.

Ngā mahi tūtohutia / Recommended actions

1. The Working Party note the contents of the agenda item.
2. The Working Party support the carry forward of the current Biosecurity Operational Plan performance measures for 2025-2026.
3. That the Working Party note any minor amendments to the performance measures will be brought to a future working party and prior to council adopting the Operational Plan 2025-2026.

Background/Tuhinga

A Biosecurity Operational Plan (the Plan) is proposed each year for the coming 12 months in accordance with section 100B of the Biosecurity Act. The plan establishes performances measures and sets out how the Regional Pest and Marine Pathways Management Plan 2017-2027 (RPMPMP) will be implemented over that period. A link to the current Operational Plan 2024-2025 can be found at 2024 2025 Biosecurity Operational Plan (PDF 3.04 MB)

The current Plan has performance measures (KPI's) that relate to programmes of work which are expected to continue for several years – examples include the wild deer eradication, Pf2050, kauri protection, our partnerships work and multi- year projects underway in pest plants. The current KPI's have been carefully considered over several years by the Biodiversity and Biosecurity Working Party and it is not envisioned at this stage these should change in any substantial way once a new RPMPMP is adopted. However additional KPI's may be required for new species e.g. caulerpa and gold clam that are included because of the outcome of consultation and council decisions.

The Act requires that council review the Plan annually and rather than make any major changes at this stage it is proposed to carry the current Plan forward into the 2025-2026 year until the new RPMP is adopted by council. Staff are reviewing performance measures to ensure they are still

relevant and clear, and any minor changes would be brought to a future working party and prior to the Plan being adopted by council.

A revised RPMP is expected to be adopted by council during 2026 and a new Operational Plan will be required to align with this.

Ngā tapirihanga / Attachments

Nil