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Regional Pest Management Plan  
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**RE: Regional pest management plan discussion document**

I am writing on behalf of the Waitakere Ranges Protection Society (WRPS) to submit on *Regional Pest Management Plan Discussion Document* (the plan) in relation to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (WRHA).

**Background on the WRPS**

The WRPS was incorporated in 1973. Its purpose is the conservation and protection of the Waitakere Ranges and to oppose any activity that may threaten or adversely affect the natural environment in the area.

WRPS and its members are strong advocates for the conservation and protection of the natural environment of the Waitakere Ranges and was one of the key groups promoting the concept of the WRHA for 35 years before it was achieved through the 2008 Act.

**General comment**

The WRPS supports ongoing pest management in Auckland and recognises the significant benefits it brings to the region such as environmental protection from destruction and enhancement of habitats for native fauna and flora, benefits from tourism for the local economy, and social and wellbeing benefits from Aucklanders being able to access pest free and controlled areas.

Our submission provides feedback under each of the nine questions posed in the discussion document. Our feedback is specifically on pest management relevant to the WRHA.

### **Q1: What should Auckland Council's role be in pest management?**

Auckland Council (AC) has an important role in managing its land, and the land of its Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs), as well as supporting individuals and groups in managing private and shared land. AC needs to provide leadership for the region including best practice pest management on its land and ensuring best practice on the land owned by CCOs, especially Auckland Transport (AT) and Watercare. AC should also enforce pest management rules and prosecution for breaches, particularly for the spread of identified pests.

The Council also needs to lead on undertaking and funding research on pest species only found in Auckland, or having a significant impact in Auckland, and ensure relevant action, for example, where plants are identified as a risk to Auckland changing their status so they cannot be sold within the Auckland region.

AC needs to enable community and individuals to work together. It should provide information, guidance and funding for individual and community group projects. The Council should also assist with facilitating projects, prioritising resources and ensuring minimum duplication of efforts. AC should also support groups with funding and resources to enable restorative planting of areas weeded, particularly on Council land, to inhibit reinvasion.

It should also look into household surveys and whether it can undertake or facilitate through community groups pest control on individual properties where the owners are unable to do control themselves but would allow access for others to their properties, such as EcoMatters is doing in Piha for climbing asparagus.

AC could also assist with coordinating mapping of pest invasions and control work with GIS, in conjunction with other organisations such as UoA's Catch-IT. Detailed mapping and data could enable prioritisation of areas for control e.g. small gaps in existing control work that could be joined up to create larger controlled areas.

### **Q2: What plant species should be added or removed from the regional pest management plan?**

No species should be removed from the plan. Widespread weeds currently listed as under surveillance in the strategy should be retained in the new plan and placed under 'sustained control programme' with the aim of containing and commencing control on these species.

The WRPS supports adding bangalow palm as a pest plant to the pest management plan. We suggest at a minimum it is placed in a 'progressive containment programme' to contain and reduce its spread. Information should be provided to home owners on the issues with bangalow palms along with details on how to remove and dispose of existing plants and how to identify seedlings, especially in high priority areas for control. AC may need to make provision for free disposal of large palms.

### Q3: How should council manage pest plant species?

WRPS considers that the following plants should be considered for Total Control/Eradication programme

- *Phragmites karka*
- *Equisetum spp.*
- *Drosera spp (exotic spp only)*
- *Kennedia rubicunda*
- *Passiflora apetala*
- *Macfadyena unguis-cati*
- *Ochna serrulata*

#### *WRHA and weeds*

The WRPS considers that the WRHA should be prioritised as an area for pest management and particularly the management of widespread weeds. We recommend the plan draws on the Waitakere Ranges Strategic Weed Management Plan July 2015.

The WRPS considers that local or area eradications for the following plants in the WRHA (subject to CBA) should be considered:

- *Pteris cretica*
- *Actinidia deliciosa (wild populations only)*
- *Alternanthera philoxeroides*
- *Arbutus unedo*
- *Cotyledon orbiculata*
- *Fuchsia boliviana*
- *Gazania linearis, Gazania rigens*
- *Gunnera tinctoria*
- *Myoporum insulare*
- *Agapanthus praecox*
- *Succulent spp. on coastline*
- *Freshwater aquatic pest plants*

The WRPS recommends the plan include permanent suppression of pampas on the western coastline from Whatipu to Muriwai and control of the pampas infestation on the northern end of the Awhitu Peninsula to prevent infestation of the WRHA. In addition, the plan should include permanent suppression of *Agapanthus praecox* from the WRHA coastline and coastal villages.

#### *Bio controls*

While we recognise that bio-controls have an important role to play in the management of widespread weed pests, we think that very careful consideration of any bio-controls are needed before implementation.

#### *Prioritisation*

We consider that highest priority should be given to preventing new weeds, followed by controlling new and emergent weeds and highly invasive widespread weeds. To achieve this goal, increased funding of biosecurity is essential.

### Q4: What animal species should be added or removed from the regional pest management plan?

No animal species should be removed from the Plan and consideration should be given to raising the status of the plague skink.

### Q5: How should council manage pest animal species?

We support AC using various methods to control pest animal species as appropriate to the identified location and specie(s) and recognise this may include poison control. We recommend AC considers how to build community engagement and support for wide scale pest control which will be vital to ensure ongoing increases in land that is pest free or pest controlled.

We recommend consideration of where new mainland, fenceless sanctuaries with control of mammalian pests could be developed or existing ones extended in Auckland with AC and community support.

We consider that possums should be controlled to two percent residual trap catch or below in perpetuity within the WRHA. The Auckland Regional Council's Operation Forest Save in the 1990s had an immediate and positive effect on the forest recovery by the reduction in possum numbers.

The WRHA should also be prioritised as an area for control of pest animal species and along with rodents, mustelids, possums and goats, pigs and wasps should be considered for control and eradication.

#### *Red-eared slider turtles*

We support the restriction of breeding, sale and distribution of red-eared slider turtles. Ongoing monitoring of potential wild breeding of the turtles should be undertaken and an appropriate response plan for eradication prepared in the case of breeding occurring.

#### *Goats*

We support the use of a Goat Permit Zone in the Waitakere foothills and a buffer area to reduce the reinvasion of feral goats in the Ranges as long as this would still enable responsible goat owners to farm them for appropriate purposes. We also encourage programmes to eradicate feral goats from the Ranges.

### **Q6: How should the special nature of Tikapa Moana/Te Moananui ā Toi - the Hauraki Gulf be reflected in the new regional pest management plan?**

We have no feedback on this question as it is outside the purpose of our organisation.

### **Q7: How might the issue of marine pests be addressed?**

Marine pests should be addressed in the plan including identifying pests and management programmes in the same way as weed and animal pests. Biosecurity for preventing potential new pests should also be included.

Given the relatively low incidence of marine pests on the Auckland West Coast, consideration should be given to higher marine protection for this area and an emphasis on ensuring new pests do not establish.

### **Q8: How can the council best continue to support pest management community groups?**

The ongoing AC support for community initiatives such as Ark in the Park is critical. Increased funding for community and Landcare groups along with individuals or collectives of individuals should be considered and included in the Annual Plan and next Long-Term Plan.

AC should focus on improving online resources and information for community groups including management of weeds and how to access funding. It should also continue communication between groups such as the Pest Liaison Group.

The draft plan should provide for site-led programmes for community groups and include examples of what could be included for us to better understand the meaning and implications of these programmes.

**Q9: Do you have any additional comments on pest management in the Tāmaki Makaurau-Auckland region?**

Within the WRHA, it is critical that AC has a clear management plan and that AT is controlling weeds in the transport corridors and Watercare on its land and catchments. The AC should also adopt a nursery hygiene standard for all nurseries within the WRHA or supplying plants for planting in natural areas in the WRHA.

AC should submit to the National Biocontrol Collective that Mexican daisy *Erigeron karvinskianus* be included as a national priority for biological control research.

The plan should identify and include management programmes for pathogens (e.g. kauri dieback) and fresh-water aquatic weeds (e.g. salvinia at Te Henga) and/or how national level programmes will be implemented in Auckland. In particular, Kauri Dieback (*Phytophthora agathidicida*) is a major risk to the Auckland region and the Waitakere Ranges and needs to be considered a pest in the plan with an appropriate response programme to contain the disease and prevent spread to healthy trees.

Weed prevention measures including restoration plans for major disturbances/eradications should be included to indicate how native plants will be prioritised and reinvasions of weeds avoided.

The plan should include actions to minimise vegetation dumping and provide for safe disposal of weeds.

When considering new activities that enable transit of pests including construction of infrastructure, quarrying etc., AC needs to ensure a robust and enduring 'off-setting' scheme is in place including protected funds for ongoing pest management and eradication of any new introduced species. In too many cases, funds for pest management are often absorbed into general funds or provision is only made for a few years of pest management, rather than the lifetime of funding required to address impacts.



Yours sincerely  
John Edgar  
President