

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

In relation to

Project Yellow



DESERT ROAD INVASIVE LEGUME CONTROL GROUP

Between

Ngā Waihua o Paerangi
New Zealand Defence Force
Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust
Genesis Energy
Department Of Conservation

Waikato Regional Council
Horizons Regional Council
New Zealand Transport Agency
Transpower

2025 to 2037

This **Memorandum of Understanding** is made on July 1, 2025.

1. Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalises the agreement of nine organisations to work collaboratively to protect the Desert Road landscape from the adverse effects of three legume pest plants: broom, gorse and tree lupin.

2. Background

The Central North Island Desert Road tussock-lands are special, containing unique landscapes and ecosystems that are highly valued.

The area is also of immense cultural significance to Ngāti Rangī with a number of wāhi tapu located within an area called Te Onetapu.

Te Onetapu (The Sacred Sands) is described as the sandy portion of the Rangipō Desert on the Rangipō-Waiū block. According to Ngāti Rangī elders, the area became sacred following the killing of the ancestor Taiteariki (an ancient ancestor of Ngāti Rangī from 41 generations ago), at a site located within Te Onetapu (within the current boundary of Tongariro National Park), in the vicinity of the headwaters of the Waikato River and the summit of the Desert Road.

Taiteariki was the son of Whirotetipua, after whom Karioi nui a Whiro was named. Whiro was a famous navigator from Rarotonga who traversed to Aotearoa prior to the great migration and made the Murimotu district his permanent home. He came in pursuit of the sacred fires of Te Kāhui Maunga.

The site of Taiteariki's killing is known as Te Roro o Taiteariki (literally 'the brains of Taiteariki'). It has immense significance to Ngāti Rangī and is one of a number of wāhi tapu located within Te Onetapu.

The road is bordered to the west by Tongariro National Park. Land to the east is mostly managed by the NZ Defence Force. Figure 1 shows the extent of the project area and the focus of this MOU. Crown agencies, iwi, landowners and regional authorities have diverse interests in the threatened ecosystems and surrounding land, as do power and roading infrastructure providers. Several organisations carry out broom, gorse and lupin control in parts of the area for their own purposes. Until the advent of this project there was no overall co-ordination of effort to understand and manage the legume weed invasion.

The density and distribution of invasive plants varies across the landscape. Aerial mapping from 2012 to 2020 shows progress made to control broom and gorse since 2012 (refer to 'change maps' in Appendix 1). This data allows for development of more efficient and integrated management plans in future between the interested parties, (Peterson et. Al. 2023). Much of the landscape is legume-free but there are some large infestations along road verges and in more remote areas out of sight of State Highway 1. Roads, roading activities and vehicles exacerbate the constant risk of weeds moving across the landscape and are the most important 'pest pathway' to manage.

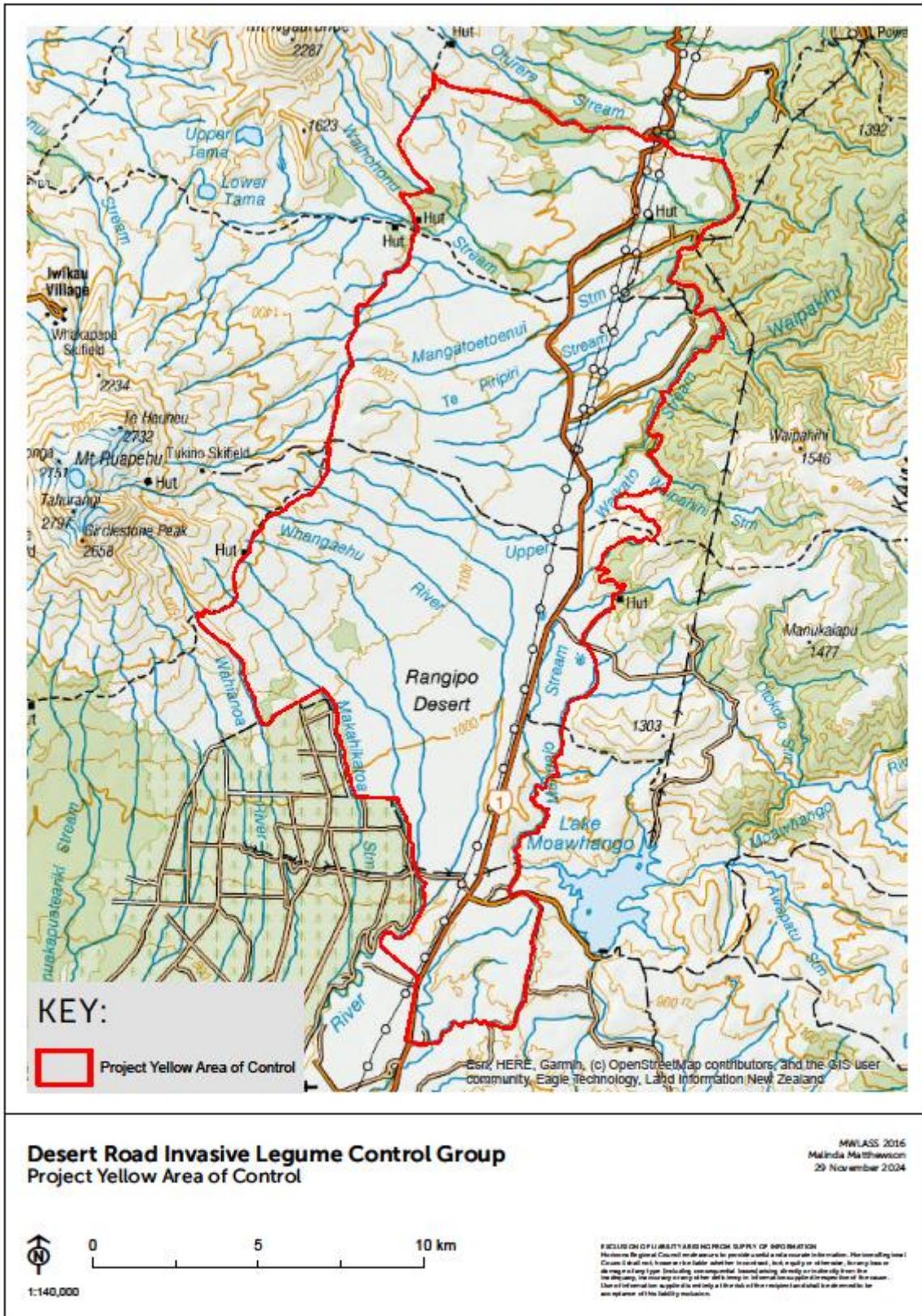


Figure 1: Project Yellow Area of Control.

The Desert Road Invasive Legume Control Group (DRILCG), comprising all of the MOU organisations, has been established to oversee the project and to achieve the vision outlined below. The project is branded as Project Yellow.

While the DRILCG is the 'governance structure' providing project oversight, higher level guidance may, from time to time, be given to the DRILCG via executive management teams or elected members from the MOU signatory organisations.

3. The vision

"The unique natural environment, iconic vista and cultural significance of the Desert Road area is protected from invasive legumes".

4. Project principles

- Collaboration and sharing of data
- Coordinated and prioritised control of invasive legumes, using surveillance legume mapping to guide control and pathway management
- Monitoring and reporting of progress
- Clear advocacy on the benefits of control and the risks of doing nothing
- Best practise control guidelines established through adaptive management
- Keeping all interested parties updated on progress

5. Objectives and methods

The parties to this MOU acknowledge that there are a number of overlapping goals related to protecting the Desert Road landscape, ecosystems and cultural significance. These goals can be achieved by focusing on five key objectives and methods:

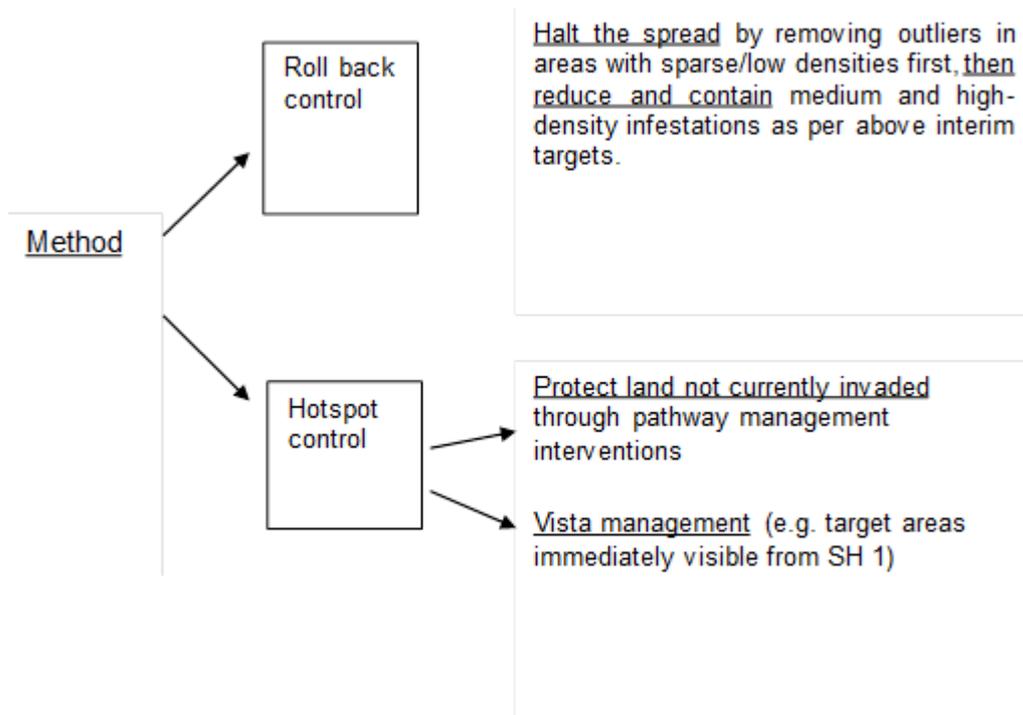
- I. Wide-ranging and genuine cooperation between the parties to achieve sound landscape and pest management outcomes over the life time of the project.

Method: support for the Desert Road Invasive Legume Control Group, regular attendance at group meetings, sharing data and planning for Desert Road pest plant control and at least an annual review.

- II. Introduced legumes in the project area are measurably reduced in density by 2037.

Interim targets: (a) Keep clear land clear (b) near zero density in known sparse/low density areas by 2037, (c) a measured reduction in moderate density areas by 2037 and (d) containment of high density areas, and eliminate risk of spread from these sources, by 2037.

(More detailed measurement criteria will be contained in the partners' individual Operational Plans).



- III. Trend monitoring carried out to assist with annual reporting on progress against the control objectives.

Method: Each weed species will be aerially mapped on a three yearly rotation, for example, lupin in year one, broom year two and gorse year three then lupin again in year four. This is for the purpose of monitoring progress and to help drive future control operations along with annual reporting by and to each organisation as appropriate.

- IV. Advocacy to stakeholders, other interested parties and the public that is timely, clear and appropriate.

Method: The parties will discuss on an annual basis, (during the annual meeting), how to promote the project within their own organisations and to the wider public. Such initiatives include signage and reporting on social media and websites as appropriate. Decisions reached will be implemented during the year following the annual meeting.

- V. Better overall control is achieved through adaptive management techniques and the recognition of 'best practice' evolution.

Method: Various control methods (e.g. bio-control, manual control techniques or different agrichemicals and application means and rates) will be trialled, where appropriate, to advance "science learnings" and ensure cost efficiencies are ever present for all parties.

6. Parties to the MOU

a) The Crown

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is a government department charged with conserving New Zealand's natural and historic heritage under the Conservation Act 1987. One of the key DOC activities is stopping the decline of indigenous biodiversity by managing threatened species and ecosystems on public conservation land.

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) is a government agency founded under the Defence Act 1990. Its role is to secure New Zealand against external threat, protect sovereign interests and to take action to meet likely contingencies in New Zealand's strategic areas of interest. NZDF comprises the three main services, Navy, Air Force and Army and other smaller divisions. The NZ Army has one of its key

bases at Waiouru, at the southern end of the Desert Road, and its lands extend well into the project area. Land management, including pest plant control, is a key part of their operations. The NZDF undertakes extensive annual wilding conifer, legume and willow control, (and other invasive plants), across the training area.

b) Regional Councils

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) and Horizons Regional Council (HRC) are local authorities under the Local Government Act 2002. Both councils have responsibilities under the Resource Management Act 1991 to maintain and enhance indigenous biodiversity within their regions. The councils also have a number of Biosecurity Act 1993 functions to control unwanted organisms. Managing pest plants (e.g. broom and gorse) that threaten environmental and economic values are carried out through the development of Regional Pest Management Plans. Management interventions include but are not limited to: undertaking direct control work, enforcing strategy/plan rules, monitoring and advocacy.

c) Crown entities

The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) is a Crown owned entity tasked with promoting safe and functional land transport. The NZTA plans, operates and maintains the 11,000 km State Highway network. State Highway 1, The Desert Road, bisects the project area and is a vital transport corridor nationally. State Highway 1 is also a principle vector for the spread of pest plants by nature of its high usage and maintenance requirements. NZTA has an obligation to manage invasive pests along this network under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and is actively managing pest plants along with other vegetation controls.

Transpower New Zealand Limited (TPNZ), established in 1994, is the State-owned Enterprise responsible for electric power transmission in New Zealand. As the owner and operator of the National Grid, (high voltage transmission network), it connects power stations with consumers throughout New Zealand. Transpower and its contractors require access for servicing and maintenance of pylons and communication towers. While not a landowner, Transpower is a key organisation involved in achieving this projects' vision. Transpower is committed to working with communities to manage their environmental impacts.

Genesis Energy (Genesis) is a State-owned Enterprise power generation and retailing company, founded in 1999. Genesis operates the Tongariro Power Scheme, which involves scheme infrastructure and associated land in the project area. Genesis has an obligation to manage invasive pests on its land under the Biosecurity Act 1993. Genesis has a sound environmental philosophy with regard to projects of this nature, where care is needed to manage pests in special landscapes.

d) Other parties

The Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust (LRFT) was established in 1973 to represent the interests of owners of 85 separate Maori land titles located on the slopes of Mounts Pihanga, Tongariro, Kakaramea and Kuharua, around the shores of Lakes Rotoaira and Otamangakau and in the Upper Whanganui River Catchment. There are almost 10,000 owners and nearly 23,000 hectares of land, of which 40 per cent is in productive plantation forest. LRFT has an obligation under the Biosecurity Act 1993 as land managers to manage invasive pests on lands (commonly referred to as the Rangipo North Blocks) within the project area.

Ngā Waihua o Paerangi Trust is the charitable organisation for Ngāti Rangi registered under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957 and the Charities Act 2005. The purpose of Ngā Waihua o Paerangi is to uphold the aspirations of uri as given expression through Rukutia te Mana (the Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act, 2018); for cultural, economic, environmental and social advancement.

Ngāti Rangi have, since time immemorial, maintained mana motuhake and exercised rights and responsibilities in relation to their rohe and to their whanaunga in accordance with their kawa, tikanga and ritenga. Sacred sites within the rohe of Ngāti Rangi include nationally significant and iconic sites and places, including the sacred maunga Ruapehu, Te Waiū-o-te-ika (Whangaehu River); the Waiouru

Defence Lands and Tangiwai. As well as being of deep spiritual importance to Ngāti Rangī, these places are also of particular importance to the cultural and environmental heritage and economic development of Aotearoa.

7. Commitments made by parties to the MOU

a) Communication

- The parties will be active members of the DRILCG and participate in regular meetings at least annually (ideally in early September), to discuss progress towards stated goals and co-operate to achieve the project vision and principles.
- The parties agree that any printed (e.g. signage, flyers) or electronic material (e.g. media releases) produced for advocacy purposes is approved in advance through the DRILCG group.
- Other organisations may have close interests in this project and are possible valuable advocacy partners to achieve the project vision, but are not MOU signatories. The organisations include but are not limited to: Ngā Iwi o Mokai Patea Services Trust, Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board, Project Tongariro, Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board, Advocates for the Tongariro River, Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research, Tukino Skifield, Ruapehu District Council and Taupo District Council.

b) Roles and responsibilities

- The parties will have due regard to, and promote the vision and principles of this project whenever possible, within and outside their organisations.
- The parties will maximise opportunities for data and knowledge sharing through the DRILCG.
- The relevant parties will coordinate the planning and development of work programmes (e.g. invasive legume control operations) through the DRILCG in ways that are consistent with the project vision and principles.
- The relevant parties will undertake and fund to a practical extent, the control of invasive legumes on lands they own or administer, in the project area, in ways that are consistent with the project vision and principles of the DRILCG during the MOU period (including meeting Biosecurity Act 1993 obligations, participating in best practice trials, consideration of managing pathways of pest spread and acting to mitigate them).
- The parties will contribute funding, (or other resources in kind), where practicable, towards monitoring/photography costs and other initiatives determined by the DRILCG during the MOU period.

8. Commencement, review and termination

This MOU commences on July 1, 2025 and will remain in force until November 30, 2037.

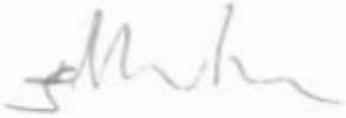
The parties agree to review the MOU as and when required, to ensure it remains effective, up-to-date and complies with current law.

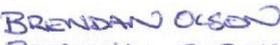
This MOU may be terminated by any party in writing to all signatories. The termination will not abrogate a terminating party from any legal obligation under and current law with regard to this project.

9. Reference

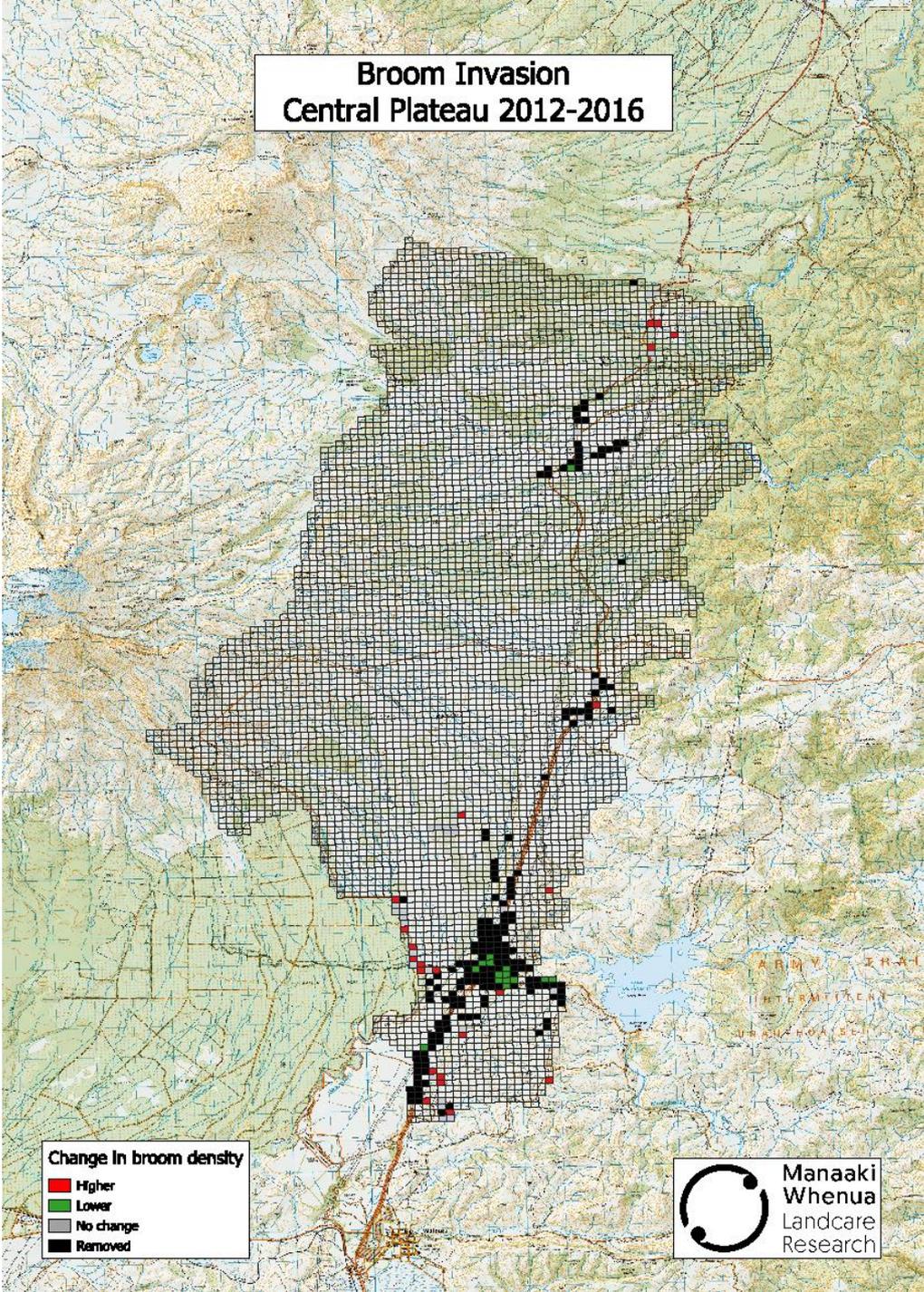
Peterson, P.G.; Shephard, J.D.; Hill, R.L.; Davey, C.I. 2024. Remote sensing for management of invasive legumes on the Central Plateau, New Zealand. *Remote Sensing*16, 2503.

10. Implemented by the parties as a binding Memorandum of Understanding:

<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Ngā Waihua o Paerangi Chairperson, Te Tōtarahoe o Paerangi</p>	<p>Name: Tomairangi Mareikura</p>  <p>Signature: _____</p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Department of Conservation</p>	<p>Name: Damian Coutts Director Operations Central North Island</p>  <p>Signature: _____</p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: NZ Defence Force</p>	<p>Name: Rob Owen Director Environmental Services</p>  <p>Signature: _____</p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust</p>	<p>Name: Topia Rameka CEO</p>  <p>Signature: _____</p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Waikato Regional Council</p>	<p>Name: Patrick Whaley</p>  <p>Signature: _____</p>

<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Horizons Regional Council</p>	<p>Name: Jon Roygard</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  Jon Roygard Group Manager Catchment Operations </p> <p>Signature: </p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: New Zealand Transport Agency</p>	<p>Name: Roger Brady</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>Signature: </p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Genesis Energy</p>	<p>Name: Holly Molesworth</p> <p>Signature: </p>
<p>Signed for and on behalf of: Transpower</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>Name:  REGIONAL SERVICE MANAGER LOWER NORTH ISLAND</p> <p>Signature: </p> <p>Signature:</p>

Appendix 1:
Change maps for broom and gorse between 2012 and 2020



Gorse Invasion Central Plateau 2013-2020

