

Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032

Rautaki Tiakitanga
Taiao o Waikato

Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato

Biosecurity partnerships and programmes effectively contribute to a healthy environment, strong economy, and vibrant communities in the Waikato.



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Waikato Regional Council would like to sincerely thank the communities and stakeholders whose input has been invaluable in preparing the *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy*. While a non-statutory document, the council is committed to working collaboratively with stakeholders, groups, communities and individuals to implement the strategy to achieve good biosecurity outcomes for the Waikato region.



“ The truth is: the natural world is changing. And we are totally dependent on that world. It provides our food, water and air. It is the most precious thing we have, and we need to defend it. ”

– Sir David Attenborough

Foreword

Whakapuakitanga

Biosecurity helps to protect the things we love and our way of life from harmful organisms. From the outdoor environment where we fish, farm, hunt and explore, to the rich biodiversity of our unique ecosystems; and even the food we grow, eat and export. It takes all of us to protect what we treasure. *Ko Tātou This is Us*.

The 2022-2032 *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy* sets out Waikato Regional Council's blueprint for ensuring we operate and maintain a collaborative, cohesive and comprehensive biosecurity system within the Waikato region over the next 10 years. The strategy, which is non-statutory, integrates the council's regulatory and

non-regulatory biosecurity functions, including the 2022-2032 *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP)* and all other biosecurity activities such as monitoring and surveillance, research, incursion responses and collaborative action.

Our biosecurity partnerships and programmes contribute to the purpose of the council's 10-year strategy of working together for a Waikato region that has a healthy environment, strong economy, and vibrant communities.

Our vision

The mighty Waikato: Caring for our place, empowering our people.

Waikato mārohirohi: Manaaki whenua, whakamana tangata.

Strategic goals and regional priorities

In operating and maintaining the biosecurity system within the region, our goals as a regional council are to:

- prepare for and deal effectively with new incursions of harmful organisms to our region
- work with others to prevent inter-regional spread of harmful organisms
- support regional and national biosecurity and biodiversity initiatives to help protect our full range of ecosystem types and services
- ensure plant and animal pests included in the council's RPMP are excluded, eradicated, progressively contained or managed, and that the protection of high value sites is supported through pest management programmes
- contribute to maintaining our way of life and the Waikato region's favourable reputation for primary production, tourism and industry.

To achieve our long-term goals, the following strategic regional priorities have been identified to guide the delivery of biosecurity activities across the Waikato region over the next 10 years.

- **Maintaining effective leadership and governance** – to support the biosecurity system and champion the further involvement of regional communities to help us meet our goals.
- **Working together as a region** – to create a culture of shared responsibility for biosecurity.
- **Valuing and building on our investments** – in biosecurity activities and key regional programmes.
- **Better surveillance and intelligence systems** – to support consistent, evidence-based decision making.
- **Bright ideas and better ways** – to share ideas and promote innovation within biosecurity so that everyone benefits.



A volunteer with a northern rata at Mahikarau Forest Estate. Photo: Sara Smerdon

Strategy implementation

This strategy will be implemented through a series of actions identified under each regional priority, supported in the following ways.

- Support given to national biosecurity programmes and plans.
- Development and implementation of regional pest management plans and pathway management plans.
- Implementation of biosecurity control programmes.
- Monitoring of emerging regional biosecurity issues (organisms of interest).
- Active participation in biosecurity and biodiversity forums.
- Facilitation of communication, co-operation and partnerships among those involved in biosecurity delivery and support functions.
- Provision of biosecurity advice and information.
- Investment in, and implementation of, improved biosecurity tools.

Outcomes

By implementing this strategy effectively, we will deliver the following outcomes.

- Our leadership and governance will build cohesion, a sense of common purpose and responsibility for biosecurity across the region.
- Our biosecurity activities will help reduce and minimise the impacts of harmful organisms on the region's economic and social values and protect and enhance the region's indigenous biodiversity.
- Participants will understand their role in the wider biosecurity system.
- The value of investment in plant and animal pest programmes will be recognised and celebrated.
- Research and innovations in biosecurity, which are relevant, practical and accessible, will be supported.
- Communities will be supported through timely access to information and advice on controlling pests and harmful organisms.

The strategy will guide the delivery of the council's biosecurity activities over the next 10 years and is an important part of the biosecurity policy framework for the region. The council, with support from key biosecurity agencies and communities, will deliver more effective biosecurity for the region through its implementation.

A photograph showing two men in high-visibility work gear (orange and navy blue jackets) and hats, kneeling in a forest. They are focused on a black rectangular box, likely a biosecurity sample container. One man is holding a white paper, possibly a checklist or map. The background is a lush green forest with trees and undergrowth.

Our biosecurity activities will help reduce and minimise the impacts of harmful organisms on the region's economic and social values and protect and enhance the region's indigenous biodiversity.



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Part 1

Setting the scene

Te whakarite kaupapa





Partnerships in biosecurity are valuable, as a spotlight survey at Mahakirau Forest Estate reveals. Photo: Sara Smerdon

Introduction

Kupu whakataki

This strategy is our blueprint for ensuring we operate and maintain a cohesive and comprehensive biosecurity system across the Waikato region over the next 10 years. It provides an overview of the national biosecurity system and the different organisations, roles and responsibilities within that system, so we all can see where we fit and how we collectively contribute to better biosecurity outcomes.

Importantly, this strategy sets out our vision and strategic goals for biosecurity within the Waikato region, the

principles which will guide Waikato Regional Council's work, the priority areas we will focus on to achieve our vision and goals, and the regulatory and non-regulatory tools and approaches we will use to support our biosecurity work and the work of others. The priorities identified in the strategy will guide how we work with others in the regional biosecurity system and underpin our decision making to help keep the system effective.

What is biosecurity and why is it important?

He aha te tiakitanga taiao, ā, he aha i whakahirahira ai?

Biosecurity is a strategic and integrated approach to analysing and managing risks¹ from harmful organisms to the economy, the environment, human health and a range of social and cultural values.

The world of biosecurity is getting more complex and the challenges to the system are increasing.

A number of species introduced to New Zealand are now considered harmful organisms (refer Appendix A) in the Waikato, with the potential to alter landscapes, devastate biodiversity, impact the productive sector, and prevent us enjoying our natural environment.

Some of these harmful organisms were introduced for trade and industries, while others arrived accidentally and acclimatised.

As an island nation, we are reliant on travel and trade. More people want to visit New Zealand for tourism and business; and every year, more parcels, cargo and containers enter this country. This puts pressure on the biosecurity system, and challenges to the system are increasing.

To compound this, climate change is altering our environment. Changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, severity of weather events and sea level have implications for biosecurity. These changes make our environment more vulnerable to the establishment of new pests and diseases, and more amenable for existing pests and diseases to proliferate and spread.

By managing harmful organisms to enhance the ecological integrity of the region's indigenous ecosystems, we help to make them more resilient to climate change and enable them to sequester higher levels of carbon. Biodiversity/

biosecurity has been identified as a critical pathway in the this council's Climate Action Roadmap, to help reduce emissions and adapt to the changes we are already experiencing.¹

Harmful organisms have, or have the potential to have, a major impact on the Waikato region. The Waikato is the fourth largest region in New Zealand, comprising about 25,000 square kilometres in land area (22 per cent of the North Island) and 10,000 square kilometres of coastal marine area. It has a high level of unique local (endemic) native species and a wide range of indigenous ecosystems, including alpine tussock grasslands, montane scrub, forests, lakes, wetlands and coasts; and is one of the most productive agricultural regions in New Zealand.

As a regional council, we are responsible under the Biosecurity Act 1993 for providing biosecurity leadership within the Waikato region to ensure we protect our way of life, our natural and productive resources, and our biodiversity from the effects of harmful organisms (refer figure 1).

We need a system that is resilient, flexible and adaptable to change. We are faced with an expanding number of future threats, while at the same time having to manage harmful species that are already here. We are expected to learn from our past experiences, to respond faster and more comprehensively, and to make the best use of the knowledge and resources we have. The way we have done things in the past may not work in the future.

¹ WHO, FAO

² Climate Action Roadmap/Āwhinatia, hei āpōpō ka pūawai ai. Waikato Regional Council.

Overview of New Zealand's biosecurity system

Te pūnaha tiakitanga taiao o Aotearoa

New Zealand's biosecurity system prevents or manages risk from harmful organisms, like pests and diseases, and helps to protect our economy, environment, human health, and a range of social and cultural values.

To protect New Zealand and our way of life, biosecurity is implemented through a risk management system that involves many participants. The system spans activities offshore (global), at the border (national) and within New Zealand (national, regional and local) (refer figure 1), which together contribute to the protection of four interlinked values:

- **environmental** – including indigenous biodiversity, ecosystems, landscapes, taonga species and valued exotic species
- **economic** – including primary industries, trade and tourism
- **cultural** – including Māori cultural and spiritual values
- **social** – including New Zealanders' lifestyles, health and wellbeing, our national identity, and recreational and historical values.



Tree wētā grow to adults at Mahakirau Forest Estate thanks to sustained pest control. Photo: Dave Abbott | Liquid Action Films

Figure 1: New Zealand's biosecurity system (adapted from the Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement).





Northern gecko. Photo: Sara Smerdon

Who are the key participants in New Zealand's biosecurity system?

There are many agencies, organisations, businesses and individuals that together make up New Zealand's biosecurity system (refer figure 1). These include:

- the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), which has a 'whole of system' leadership role for biosecurity in New Zealand, and as such has substantial operational roles in relation to offshore risks (pre-border), border control, incursion response and long-term pest management
- other government agencies, including the Ministry of Health, the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), which have a range of statutory roles and responsibilities for decision making and operations
- regional councils and unitary authorities, which lead pest management in their regions
- territorial authorities, which support and undertake pest management where appropriate
- industry organisations, under the Government Industry Agreement, which have entered a formal partnership with MPI to share responsibility for decision making and funding of agreed readiness and response activities and are involved in wider engagement across the system
- Māori/iwi, who are partners with the Crown through Te Tiriti o Waitangi, are kaitiaki (guardians) of New Zealand's taonga, and increasingly have statutory roles in the management of natural resources
- various organisations, such as OSPRI, which implement national pest management plans to manage significant pests
- industry and businesses, which have a role and a responsibility to manage the biosecurity risks to, and caused by, their operations
- scientists, research organisations and collaborations, in developing knowledge and tools for managing biosecurity risks
- landowners and occupiers, including agencies that manage public lands, who have a responsibility to manage pests on their land
- community groups, non-governmental organisations and other groups of people who come together to protect what they value
- every individual, including in their capacities as travellers, educators and consumers (for examples, refer Appendix B).

Why develop a biosecurity strategy for the region?

Te mahere rautaki ā-rohe mō te tiakitanga taiao, he aha tōna pūtake?

The council has regional leadership for biosecurity activities in the Waikato. This regional leadership role is mandated, enabled and defined in the Biosecurity Act 1993.

To fulfil this role and ensure the regional biosecurity system is cohesive, the council works closely with mana whenua, communities, central and local government and other key agencies and groups.

Ways that the council provides regional leadership include:

- promoting alignment of pest management in the region
- facilitating the development of a regional pest management plan (RPMP) and pathway management plans (PMPs) in the region
- advocating for regional interests and concerns in the development of national pest management plans (NPMPs)
- promoting public support for pest management
- facilitating communication and co-operation among those involved in pest management to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of programmes
- promoting coordination of pest management between regions
- implementation of priority pest programmes supported by evidence-based scientific research.

With the country's biosecurity system under increasing pressure, it is important that we stay one step ahead to maintain the resilience of Waikato's biosecurity system and to protect what we treasure – our environment, economy, culture and way of life.

With these ongoing challenges and limited resources, a strategic approach is required for how biosecurity is delivered across the Waikato region. To this end, the strategy is as follows.

- **Inclusive** – this is a strategy where everyone can contribute. It has been designed to be accessible by all, clearly setting out where the region is heading, what we as a regional council will do, what others can do, and how we can all work together to contribute to better biosecurity outcomes.
- **Supports the national vision for biosecurity, Ko Tātou This Is Us** – we're helping to build a biosecurity team of 5 million New Zealanders.
- **Responsive** – we know that biosecurity is a dynamic field, and it is impossible to predict what may or may not become an issue for the region. For this reason, we have kept the focus of this strategy at a high level: how we will deliver on our vision and strategic goals, and how we will work with others within the system.

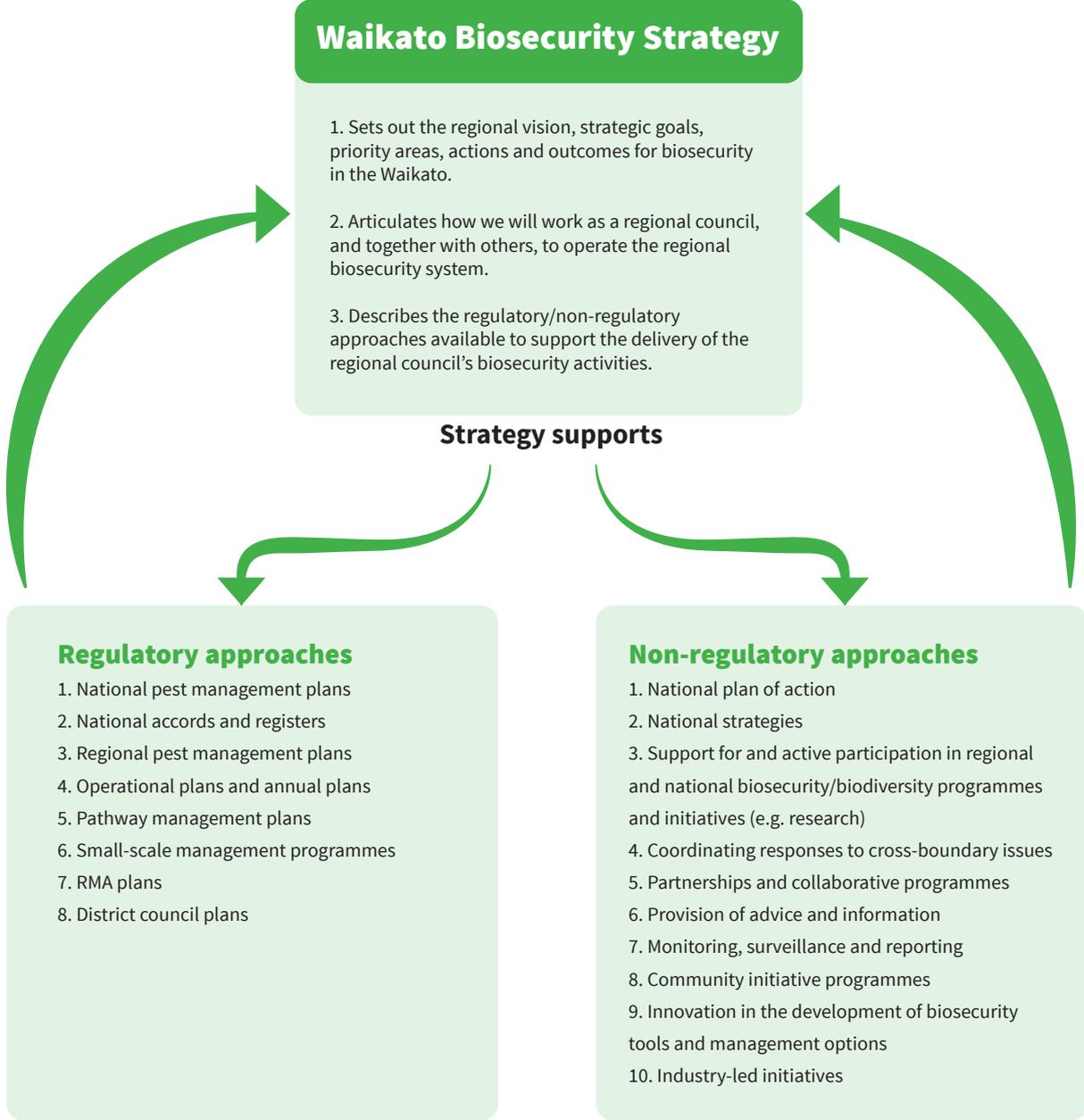


Elegant gecko are found from south of Northland to central North Island.

What does the Waikato Biosecurity Strategy cover?

The scope of this strategy is detailed below (figure 2), with the regulatory and non-regulatory approaches by regional councils outlined.

Figure 2: Relationship of strategy to regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.





The Karioi Project, based in Raglan, aims to recreate Mt Karioi as a seabird mountain.

Part 2

Regional priorities and actions

Ngā whakaarotau ā-rohe me āna mahi



Strategy for biosecurity in the Waikato region

Mahere rautaki a Waikato mō te rerenga rauropi

This part of the strategy sets out how the council intends to lead the biosecurity system within the Waikato region over the next 10 years. The vision and goals for biosecurity within the region are supported by five priority areas which define how we will work together with others and what we will focus on. Actions have been identified for the council under each priority area for delivery over the next 10 years.

Vision, goals and outcomes

Mata whānui, ngā whāinga, ngā hua

The council's vision for the Waikato region biosecurity system is:

The mighty Waikato: Caring for our place, empowering our people
Manaaki whenua, whakamana tangata

In operating and maintaining the biosecurity system within the region, our goals as a regional council are to:

- prepare for and deal effectively with new incursions of harmful species to our region
- work with others to prevent inter-regional spread of harmful species
- support regional and national biosecurity and biodiversity initiatives to help protect our full range of ecosystem types and services
- ensure plant and animal pests included in the council's RPMP are excluded, eradicated, progressively contained or managed, and that the protection of high value sites is supported through pest management programmes
- contribute to maintaining our way of life and the Waikato region's favourable reputation for primary production, tourism and industry.

By implementing this strategy, we will deliver the following outcomes.

- Our leadership and governance will build cohesion, a sense of common purpose and responsibility for biosecurity across the region.
- Our biosecurity activities will help to reduce and minimise the impacts of harmful organisms on the region's economic and social values and protect and enhance the region's indigenous biodiversity.
- Participants will understand their role in the wider biosecurity system.
- The value of investment in plant and animal pest programmes will be recognised and celebrated.
- Research and innovations in biosecurity, which are relevant, practical and accessible, are supported.
- Communities will be supported through timely access to information and advice on controlling pests and harmful organisms.



Photo: Ngā Manu

Regional priorities

Whakaarotau ā-rohe

To achieve our strategic goals and outcomes, the following regional priorities have been identified to guide the delivery of biosecurity activities within the Waikato region over the next 10 years.

- **Maintaining effective leadership and governance** – to support the biosecurity system and champion the further involvement of regional communities to help us meet our goals.
- **Working together as a region** – to create a culture of shared responsibility for biosecurity.
- **Valuing and building on our investments** – in biosecurity activities and key regional programmes.
- **Better surveillance and intelligence systems** – to support consistent, evidence-based decision making.
- **Bright ideas and better ways** – to share ideas and promote innovation within biosecurity so that everyone benefits.

These priorities will guide how we work with others in the regional biosecurity system and underpin our decision making to help keep the system efficient and effective. Further detail on each priority area is set out in the following pages, along with what we will do to deliver on them. While actions may deliver on more than one priority area, they are listed under the area which is most applicable. Case studies are also provided to demonstrate these priority areas in action.



Figure 3: Regional priorities for biosecurity



Effective leadership and governance

Within the region, our stakeholders and communities look to us to provide effective leadership and direction when it comes to managing the effects of harmful organisms. Effective leadership is not only about ensuring transparency in decision making, monitoring and reporting. It's also about working with and empowering others in their efforts towards achieving effective biosecurity outcomes. When others are brought on the journey, a resilient and robust biosecurity system is built.

The council will undertake the following actions to provide effective leadership and governance for regional biosecurity.

Actions for effective leadership and governance

Supporting mana whenua

Ensure Māori have formally acknowledged roles and responsibilities as kaitiaki within our key biosecurity programmes. Barriers to participation will be identified and addressed, and Māori values and mātauranga will be realised when decisions are made.

National/multi-regional approaches

Advocate for national and sub-national management/pathway plans to control unwanted organisms³ that require a national/multi-regional approach, for example, the development and implementation of:

- a national pest management strategy for kauri protection (see case study on page 19)
- a national Pet Trade Accord
- a national Marine Pathways Plan.

Partner with MPI to manage high threat/low incidence unwanted and/or notifiable organisms⁴ to reduce their adverse effects, including:

- providing advice and information to the public on the adverse effects of unwanted and notifiable organisms included in pest animal (e.g. alpine newt) and plant programmes (e.g. National Interest Pest Responses Programme (NIPR)⁵) led by MPI
- undertake management activities on behalf of MPI when required.

Education and empowerment

Provide up-to-date educational material, information and advice on harmful organisms and their management. For example:

- ensure information on the council's website is easily accessible and describes best practice for pest management
- provide advice to the community to reduce adverse effects of pest fish.

Where there is a need, establish forums with key community groups and industry to share information and advice on biosecurity issues of concern to those groups. For example:

- the development of community-led action for high interest organisms that are not included within the RPMP, such as Canada geese and yellow bristlegrass.

Integrated management

Ensure that council's strategic and regulatory plans are well integrated and provide for improved biosecurity outcomes in objectives, policies, rules and methods. Seek, where possible:

- enhanced biosecurity outcomes when undertaking and implementing council works and projects in other areas such as catchment management and operations
- strategic alignment of projects that provide biosecurity benefits
 - particularly, to apply an integrated and multi-level approach where these relate to site or landscape-scale projects and biodiversity outcomes.

³ An unwanted organism is an organism declared unwanted under the Biosecurity Act that cannot be sold, propagated, bred, multiplied, communicated, released, caused to be released or otherwise spread. A register of unwanted organisms is administered by Ministry for Primary Industries.

⁴ Notifiable Organisms Order

⁵ NIPR Programmes

A national pest management plan for kauri protection

The National Pest Management Plan for *Phytophthora agathidicida* will provide an essential national framework for the protection of our majestic taonga kauri.

The Waikato region is home to significant populations of kauri (*Agathis australis*), a taonga species and one of the world's largest and longest-lived conifers. Our region has ancient stands in the Coromandel Peninsula and Kaimai, Hunua and Hakarimata ranges, abundant regenerating kauri, and the most southerly stands of kauri south of Ōpārau.

These remnant and regenerating populations of kauri have survived past logging and clearance but are now under threat from a kauri disease (formally referred to as kauri dieback disease) caused by the microscopic pathogen *Phytophthora agathidicida* (Pa). This disease is currently incurable and most often fatal for kauri that it infects. To date, only three areas have been confirmed with Pa in the Waikato region, all in the eastern Coromandel Peninsula at Whangapoua, Hukarahi and Tairua.

Because this disease threatens kauri across its range in northern New Zealand, iwi, regional councils, DOC, and community groups all strongly advocated for increased actions to protect kauri, including a national approach to managing it. Following extensive consultation, a National Pest Management Plan for *Phytophthora agathidicida* (Pa NPMP) has been developed under the Biosecurity Act 1993 by MPI, and is due to be enacted by mid-2022.

The Pa NPMP, coordinated through a newly created Kauri Protection Agency, will provide a framework for consistent approaches and regulation for managing the risks and impacts of Pa to kauri. The Pa NPMP has rules that support the protection of kauri trees and will impact all people

who interact with kauri and/or interact in areas where Pa may be. These rules include:

- an obligation to report kauri trees which present symptoms of kauri disease
- the need for publicly accessible tracks to be mitigated to a set standard
- obligations for plants producers to meet kauri protection standards.

To support people to meet the rules, more funding has been made available by the Government through MPI. The regional council received \$1.28 million towards its kauri work programme for the 2021-2022 financial year.

The funding allows the regional council to support the community to meet the new Pa NPMP rules. The council has employed an additional 4.6 staff, on fixed term contracts, to deliver kauri outreach programmes into various sectors of the community. The aim of their work is to ensure kauri protection actions are integrated into any off-track activities in kauri areas. The team is focusing its efforts around the most ecologically significant kauri in the Waikato, within 3 kilometres of old growth kauri stands and high value sites.

The council's programme involves:

- national and regional advocacy and education, advice and support for landowners, community groups and industry undertaking works in kauri areas
- development of internal kauri protection procedures
- funding for landowners fencing off kauri areas from stock.



A trunk injection of phosphite helps boost kauri immunity and give the tree better defence against Pa. Photo: Genavée | BioSense

Working together

A partnered approach to biosecurity management with strong regional leadership will ensure efficient allocation of resources to effectively target biosecurity risks in our region. Working with agencies like MPI, DOC and LINZ, neighbouring regional councils and territorial authorities, and empowering iwi and communities in regional and inter-regional responses will ultimately provide the best outcomes for the Waikato region. Coordinating biosecurity programmes will help prevent fragmented responses by connecting and optimising available resources.

The regional council will build and maintain relationships with these groups and individuals, including in the development of agreements and management plans, for the effective management of harmful organisms to protect biodiversity and other values at specific sites. Successful control of harmful organisms relies on the goodwill, co-operation and commitment of land occupiers and communities, working in partnership with the council, to achieve biodiversity goals and aspirations.

This coordinated partnership approach is imperative to achieve the goals of this strategy and gives greater access to funding, for example, from initiatives like Predator Free 2050. Together, we can achieve more intensive or landscape scale pest management operations.

The regional council has a unique relationship with Māori and is committed to working in partnership with iwi and hapū on key biosecurity issues. Māori bring a unique knowledge and perspective (mātauranga Māori) to biosecurity in their role as kaitiaki (guardians) of New Zealand's taonga. The unique knowledge and perspective of Māori will be recognised through our actions and the regional council will continue to ensure that Māori/iwi actively participate as kaitiaki at all levels in the regional biosecurity system.

The council will undertake the following actions to continue to promote and facilitate everyone working together to achieve regional biosecurity outcomes.



Volunteers help set traplines as part of the Karioi Project in Raglan. Photo: Karioi Project

Actions for working together

Support mana whenua

Continue to engage with mana whenua regularly on biosecurity issues. Identify where mana whenua may have an interest and understand how they wish to be involved. For example:

- assist iwi to incorporate biosecurity management into their environmental management plans and/or animal and plant pest management plans
- help iwi to build their pest management capacity and capability.

Māori values and mātauranga Māori will be considered when designing and implementing key biosecurity programmes. This will include:

- fostering high trust relationships
- exploring the development of new biosecurity tools
- partnering with mana whenua on biosecurity initiatives to address issues that impact on biodiversity values of significance to mana whenua (including working with the Māori Land Court if no trust is in place for a Māori owned property)
- engaging with mana whenua to build their capacity and capability in biosecurity.

National/multi-region approaches

Work in partnership with central government agencies (e.g. DOC, MPI, LINZ) and other management agencies (e.g. Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH), OSPRI) on programmes that have a regional biosecurity benefit. For example:

- national incursion responses, such as for marine pests and alpine newt
- national programmes such as for *Phytophthora agathidicida* (Pa), wallabies (see case study on page 22), velvetleaf (see case study on page 23)⁶, wilding pines, kiwifruit and NIPR.

Collaborate with central government agencies to:

- identify, assess and profile high priority key biosecurity threats/risks to New Zealand and the region to ensure responses are effectively planned and coordinated.

Form collaborative partnerships with neighbouring regional councils on shared biosecurity issues and programmes.

Within region partnerships

Continue to maintain and build on existing relationships with DOC. For example:

- collaborate in the implementation of a joint regional strategic plan for feral goat control to protect high value biodiversity sites and catchments.
- Collaborate on the development of a freshwater pathways plan to reduce the spread of invasive fish species.

Explore a strategy to define how the regional council will support or undertake the delivery of Predator Free 2050 pest management activities in the Waikato region.

When administering the rules of the RPMP, the regional council will work proactively with landowners and occupiers to help them understand which rules apply to their land, what their responsibilities are, and provide advice and support.

Support community initiatives for pest management activities and encourage wider collaboration.

Showcase and celebrate significant biosecurity achievements where communities and groups have achieved significant biodiversity, amenity, cultural and social gains.

Work collaboratively with industry sectors to develop biosecurity management protocols to protect their business and the Waikato region's economy. For example:

- develop and implement pathway management plans for agricultural weeds like yellow bristlegrass.

Work in collaboration with the Nursery and Garden Industry Association (NGIA), other regional councils and government departments to support MPI in coordinating, developing and managing the National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA). For example:

- monitor the sale, propagation and distribution of unwanted organisms listed in the NPPA through the nursery trade.

⁶ An MPI website: Information on velvetleaf

⁷ Velvetleaf landowner obligations

National Wallaby Eradication Programme

The National Wallaby Eradication Programme is a great example of agencies working together to tackle a common pest management issue.

Five species of wallaby were introduced from Australia to different parts of New Zealand from the late 1800s. Of these, dama wallaby (found through the central-eastern North Island, including in the eastern Waikato region) and Bennett's wallaby (central/southern eastern South Island) have naturalised most widely. All wallaby species are now classified as unwanted organisms under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Dama wallaby is the only wallaby species currently naturalised in the Waikato region. They were released near Lake Ōkāreka in the Bay of Plenty in 1912, but have now expanded their distribution into the region west of Rotorua. Dama wallabies have significant impacts on pastoral and natural ecosystems. They compete directly with livestock for pasture, damage newly planted pine plantations and destroy the understorey of natural areas by browsing seedlings and understorey plants, preferring native species such as kāmahi, māhoe, hangehange and porokaiwhiri (pigeonwood).

In 2020, wallaby pest management received a significant funding boost of \$27.4 million from the Government's

Jobs for Nature Programme to augment funding that regional councils were already investing in their regions. The national wallaby management programme is a partnership between MPI, iwi, regional councils, DOC, industry groups (for example, Federated Farmers) and landowners. The programme fosters and strengthens partnerships with mana whenua, increases operational activities and funds research into all aspects of wallaby management.

In the Waikato and Bay of Plenty, the wallaby programme is led operationally by the regional councils. The priority focus is on containing the wallaby population. Surveillance has been undertaken to determine the current wallaby distribution, with control of any individuals located outside the containment area.

Surveillance and control, however, has been difficult as wallabies are cryptic in the environment, neophobic, shy and nocturnal.

Wallabies are nocturnal so difficult to find.





Rusty, the velvetleaf sniffer dog.

Winning against velvetleaf

By working collaboratively with MPI and landowners, the regional council is making a difference against a tenacious agricultural weed.

Velvetleaf is a serious pest plant when it comes to cropping land. Once established, velvetleaf can cause an up to 70 per cent reduction in crop yields, according to overseas experience, and be incredibly difficult to eradicate.

There are a number of reasons why velvetleaf is regarded as one of the world's worst cropping weeds: it's resistant to herbicide, and traditional weed management practices can't control it; adding to that, a single plant can produce up to 33,000 seeds, and the seeds can survive in the soil for up to 50 years.

As such, prevention and early detection are key when it comes to managing velvetleaf. Because of the significant threat velvetleaf poses to arable farmland throughout New Zealand, its management is led at a national level by MPI under a long-term biosecurity management programme. Other key players in this highly successful programme are regional councils (including Waikato Regional Council), Federated Farmers, agricultural seed producers, Ag Research, agricultural merchants (Farmlands, PGG Wrightson), Rural Contractors Association, DairyNZ, the Farming and Arable Research industry collective, and the landowners themselves. Across the programme there are clear roles and responsibilities, with everyone playing their part. Waikato Regional Council, with MPI, have successfully implemented the velvetleaf programme in the Waikato by undertaking surveillance, direct control work, education and advocacy.

The key message to farmers in relation to velvetleaf, and other biosecurity threats to their property, is to treat the farm gate as a border. Ensure machinery and gear coming onto your property is free of seed, soil and plant debris, and only bring in supplementary feed from 'clean' crops

(free from pests like velvetleaf). Learn how to identify velvetleaf and look out for it in your maize crop in hotspots such as around gateways, the perimeter of crops and in the first few rows.

When an infestation of velvetleaf is found on a farm, the council produces farm plans for the infested property, in consultation with the landowner. These farm plans include:

- best practice guidelines on the movement of stock, fodder and machinery on and off the property
- identifying a clean-down area for all machinery and gear following activity that may result in the transfer of seed off the property
- requirements for stock to be kept out of infested areas for at least 48 hours after harvesting, and to use any silage or maize crops grown in infested areas 'on-farm' and not sell them off the property.

After an infestation is detected, the council also undertakes tracing of the movement of maize harvesting equipment and any silage sold, with inspections undertaken for potential velvetleaf infestations at those traced properties.

Farmers who have spotted velvetleaf in the early stages of establishment, and contacted the council immediately, have managed to get infestations down to very low levels. In fact, many farmers who had infestations detected early now don't find any velvetleaf on their property at all. Unfortunately, if velvetleaf infestations go unnoticed and become well established, it may take many years of intense management to keep it contained.

Valuing and building on our investments

Investment in biosecurity takes many forms, including expenditure to:

- respond to incursions
- deliver management programmes
- research and develop new tools
- provide manpower to manage and maintain the biosecurity system.

It is therefore important to be able to identify where time and resources are best directed, and how to best allocate funding across the biosecurity system.

The council aims to provide cost effective biosecurity management for the Waikato region. To do this, all management actions are assessed and prioritised on a cost versus benefit basis. Cost benefit analyses consider:

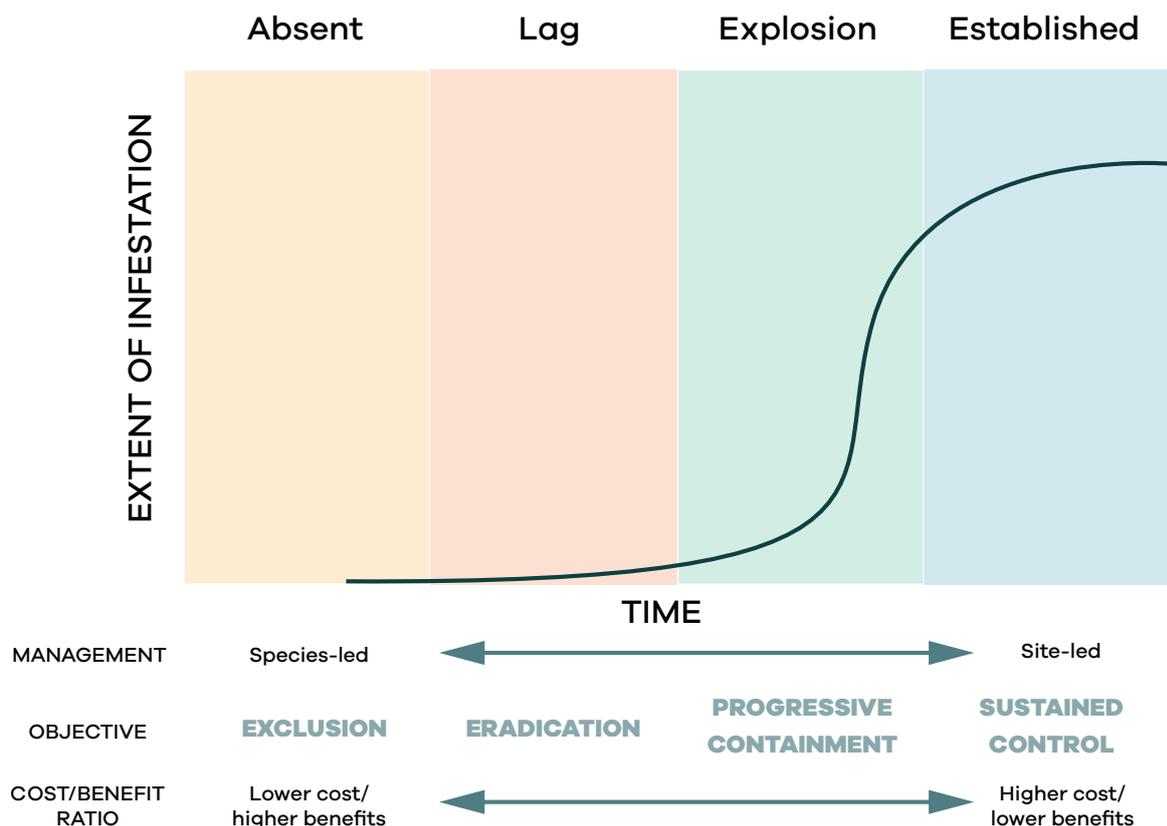
- the impact of the organism to the regional economy and the environment
- the stage of the organism’s invasion
- the regional distribution and potential future distribution
- the availability, effectiveness and practicality of control methods.

The pest invasion curve (refer figure 4, below) is used to help determine which control programme is appropriate. The lower a pest is on the curve, the more cost effective it is to control. Therefore, for an organism in the early stages of infestation, progressive containment or even eradication may be feasible, preventing or delaying them from becoming widespread problems later. Further along the invasion curve, the cost of control becomes much higher and eradication is unlikely for many organisms.



Photo: Moehau Environment Group

Figure 4: Pest invasion curve



Where a regulatory approach is required, pest management programmes with a positive cost benefit analysis are prioritised through the RPMP (i.e. the benefits outweigh the costs of management). Some harmful organisms are best managed on a site-led basis, where multiple species are controlled at a particular site to protect the values of that place.

The council will undertake the following actions to protect regional investment into biosecurity programmes.

Actions for valuing and building on our investments
National/multi-regional approaches
Work in partnership with territorial local authorities, DOC, LINZ and other key agencies on biosecurity initiatives where this provides efficient, effective and collaborative outcomes and optimises control. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• under the National Pest Management Plan for <i>Phytophthora agathidicida</i> (Pa NPMP), give support to the Kauri Protection Agency, work with and support iwi, other government and non-government partners, and meet any obligations in the implementation of the Pa NPMP (see case study on page 19).
Support incursion responses by other agencies, including MPI, LINZ and DOC, where appropriate.
Utilise the Biosecurity Act 1993 to implement small-scale programmes where there is an incursion of an unwanted organism not previously present in Waikato.
RPMP programmes
Utilise the rules and powers in the RPMP to achieve the goals of the RPMP.
Work with communities and stakeholders to identify sites which may be suitable for inclusion in the RPMP site-led programme.
Supporting communities
Leverage funding and operational initiatives such as Predator Free 2050 and the Biodiversity Forum at a regional level to increase funding available for pest management activities and encourage wider collaboration.
Provide support to people and communities involved in volunteer initiatives that optimise the control of harmful organisms to provide improved biodiversity, landscape, amenity, cultural and social outcomes.
Maximise investments
Ensure all biosecurity management activities are undertaken cost-effectively to maximise benefits.



Preparing for rook control.

The value of investing in alligator weed management

Persistent surveillance and management efforts are the only way to thwart this challenging pest plant.

Alligator weed is one of the most significant weed threats in the Waikato region due to the wide range of habitats it can potentially occupy and the potential severity of its impacts. It is regarded as one of the world's worst weeds. Alligator weed can:

- completely smother smaller waterbodies, impeding access and drainage, and promoting sedimentation and flooding
- degrade water quality and impacts on biodiversity values
- be a major competitor in maize and pasture
- when grazed, potentially cause photosensitivity, skin lesions, liver damage and death in cattle, calves and lambs.

Alligator weed is dispersed by fragmentation of stems and subsequent stem movement either by water or human activities. The largest infestations of alligator weed in the region are centred in the lower Waikato River and associated waterbodies and wetlands downstream from Hamilton. There are also scattered infestations on productive farmland across the region and in Hamilton city as a result of the movement of soil and machinery from infested sites.

An infestation of alligator weed has the potential to result in:

- productivity loss in horticulture, on dairy, sheep and beef farms and on arable/grain farms associated with the cost of infestation
- reduced on-orchard and on-farm labour productivity due to time spent monitoring for alligator weed and managing infestations (or additional contractor costs where management of the weed is outsourced)
- higher management and mitigation costs when waterways, water intakes and hydroelectric facilities become clogged.

The council has invested heavily in an alligator weed management programme over the last 20 years. Investment has included treating all known sites at least annually and sometimes up to three times per year, the development of an awareness and education programme around good machinery hygiene to limit spread between sites, and investment in the biocontrol agent *Agasicles hygrophila* (alligator weed leaf beetle).

Alligator weed is a progressive containment pest plant within the council's RPMP. Any reduction in the current investment and control effort would result in the further spread of alligator weed in the Waikato region. This would undo the significant gains of previous years' control work, rapidly escalating future economic and environmental costs in the Waikato region.



Alligator weed can completely smother waterbodies.

Better surveillance and intelligence systems

Understanding the extent of the biosecurity challenges that the region is facing is important. Providing good information to the right people at the right time can be crucial to fast and effective responses to emerging issues, and good intelligence and information sharing capability can help reduce uncertainty and add confidence to biosecurity decisions and actions.

This means that, as well as gathering information from a wide range of sources and improving the region’s own data gathering in terms of quality, there is much to be gained by improving the ability to share information and adopting more efficient data management processes. Benefits include improved ability for strategic planning across the regional and national biosecurity systems, better evaluation of risk and mitigation, and more effective and efficient surveillance and prioritisation. Engagement with other parts of the system is also dependent on a high-quality evidence base that is readily available to those affected across the biosecurity system.

The council will undertake the following actions to improve surveillance and intelligence in regional biosecurity.



Actions for better surveillance and intelligence systems

Risk assessments

Undertake risk assessments of harmful organisms that are not yet present in the Waikato region but which may have the potential to cause significant harm if they were to establish. Collaborate with neighbouring councils where they are also investigating the same organism.

Data management systems

Complete development and implementation of a new data capture tool (Plantell) for pest control work undertaken in the Waikato region (see case study on page 28).

Monitoring and surveillance

Continue to foster relationships with mana whenua to enhance monitoring and surveillance relating to RPMP pest management programmes.

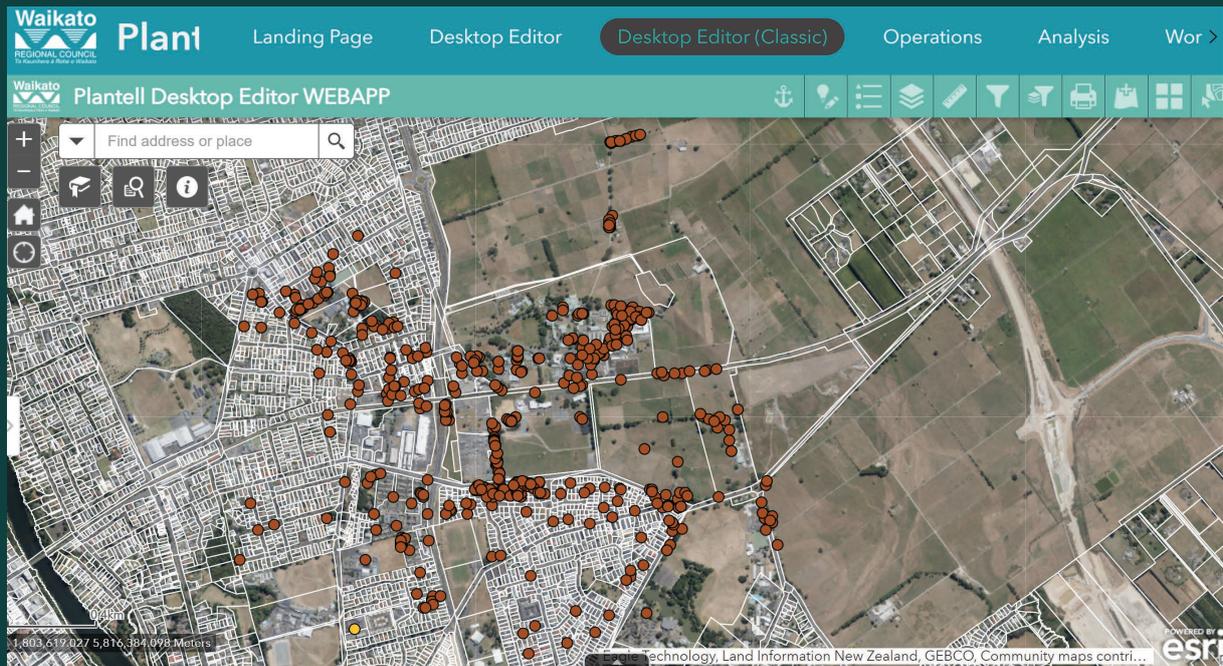
Monitor and report on the state of the environment, including the current and future impacts of harmful organisms on biodiversity and water quality.

Undertake monitoring and surveillance of all pests in the RPMP and administer the rules to achieve the plan’s objectives. For example:

- continue to partner with Bay of Plenty Regional Council on the delivery of the dama wallaby management programme.

Empowering communities

Investigate new ways to share information on biosecurity issues and successes with communities and groups. This will include investigating how spatial information can be shared, such as monitoring and trapping programmes, and simple innovative ways to report on progress.



Plantell

A new data capture tool to underpin more efficient and effective decision making and pest management by the regional council.

Waikato Regional Council is developing a regional pest data capture system to inform and guide direct control work and surveillance of pests across the region. Called Plantell, it is a geospatial-based system that will be modelled on an existing database belonging to Bay of Plenty Regional Council, with refinements made to suit regional pest issues in the Waikato.

The data captured will be accessible to council pest contractors, so they can identify their work areas and see what work has previously been undertaken at sites. Contractors and staff will be able to add information about sites, such as the size and nature of infestations, and any control work they undertake.

Intelligence captured via Plantell will enable the council to produce a range of reports, including on the numbers and sizes of infestations and the extent and types of control work undertaken (e.g. herbicides used, number and size of infestations detected or controlled). It will also provide a geospatial overview of pest populations throughout the region via maps, something the council has not been able to do previously. This will inform the planning of future pest control work and budget allocations for yearly work plans, and help determine the efficacy of the control work undertaken. The regional council will also be able to use the data in collaborative pest control projects with neighbouring regional councils.

Bright ideas and better ways

Increasing community expectations around pest management continues to drive up the costs of managing harmful organisms within the region. In addition, increasing biosecurity risks from different sources require responses and pre-emptive action to reduce the impacts and likelihood of establishment of harmful organisms.

Ongoing innovation across the system is necessary to manage costs, reduce impacts of existing harmful organisms and stay one step ahead of new challenges in biosecurity. Innovation can:

- encourage behavioural change
- make new and improved tools to increase pest management capacity and capability
- improve the gathering and use of information.

The council will undertake the following actions to encourage innovation in regional biosecurity.

Actions for bright ideas and better ways

Best practice and technologies

Continue to support and invest in the development of industry best practice standards for pest management and control.

Advocate and educate people and communities on the best technologies available and new innovations to detect and manage harmful organisms where these provide more efficient, effective and humane control techniques. For example:

- the use of trained detector dogs to locate pest plants like alligator weed and evergreen buckthorn.

Review ways of delivering existing pest management programmes to improve utilisation of technology and innovation, including delivering programmes alongside mana whenua. For example:

- work with NZ Pig Hunters Association, NZ Deerstalkers Association and DOC to proactively manage feral pigs and deer through the establishment of a trial landowners/farmers/hunters assist programme.

Research

Contribute to and facilitate regional, national and international research on improved tools for controlling and monitoring harmful organisms. For example:

- continue to support the National Biocontrol Collective (see case study on page 30) and other biocontrol initiatives where appropriate.

Prioritise research to target harmful organisms that pose the greatest threat to the region and, where possible, work collaboratively with other organisations so that research is cost effective to the regional council and can be of value to more people. For example:

- continue to support in-house research projects on the impacts of Canada geese
- support research that enables a better understanding of pathogens (such as *Phytophthora agathidicida* that affects kauri) and their impacts on natural ecosystems, particularly research on surveillance/detection methods, management tools and prevention of pathogen transmission.





The National Biocontrol Collective has contributed substantially to the approval of 25 biocontrol agents for 14 weed species in New Zealand.

National Biocontrol Collective

Biocontrol agents are key novel tools in the management of widespread problem pests.

Biological control (biocontrol) is the use of living organisms, such as insects or pathogens, to control pest populations. The underlying principles of modern biocontrol are safety (including minimising non-target impacts), self-sustainability and cost-effectiveness. In New Zealand, these principles have been followed since the early 1900s and have led to the introduction of a number of biocontrol agents to control some of New Zealand's worst weed and insect pest species.

Waikato Regional Council is part of the National Biocontrol Collective (NBC), a consortium of regional and unitary councils and DOC staff who collaboratively work together to implement a national programme to identify, test and establish suitable host-specific biological control agents for agreed priority weeds. The NBC, formed in 2002, pools resources to fund its programmes and collaborates with researchers around the world to find biological solutions to pest problems here in New Zealand. This has allowed work to be undertaken on some serious weeds that are currently low incidence, such as lantana (*Lantana camara*), which would otherwise be difficult to support.

Over the past 19 years, the NBC has invested more than \$8.5 million into weed biocontrol, which has contributed substantially to allowing 25 new biocontrol agents to be approved for 14 weed species present in New Zealand. Several projects appear set to be highly successful. Recent large outbreaks of the broom gall mite (*Aceria genistae*), woolly nightshade lace bug (*Gargaphia decoris*) and green thistle beetles (*Cassida rubiginosa*) have severely damaged their target weeds. Recently released tradescantia beetles (*Neolema* spp., *Lema basicostata*) are already also causing impressive damage at some infestation sites.

By working together through the NBC and leveraging both research and funding, substantial progress into biocontrol methods and agents can be made. Biocontrol delivers significant ongoing economic benefits through a reduced reliance on conventional chemical and mechanical control methods.

Part 3

Strategy

implementation

Te whakatinanatanga o te mahere
rautaki





Regional councils have responsibilities for natural and physical resources.

Implementation of the Biosecurity Strategy

Te whakatinanatanga o te Rautaki Tiakitanga Taiao o Waikato

The council will implement the strategy through regulatory and non-regulatory approaches (refer figure 2 on page 13).

Regulatory approaches to the management of harmful organisms

The legislation and policy instruments that underpin or authorise the council's biosecurity-related programmes and activities are summarised below.

Biosecurity Act 1993

The scope and mandate for the council's regulatory biosecurity activities comes from the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Regional Biosecurity Leadership

The Biosecurity Act mandates regional councils to provide regional biosecurity leadership (section 12B of the Act) and the power to create and implement RPMPs, regional pathway management plans and small-scale management programmes (section 13(1) of the Act).

An RPMP provides a regulatory framework for the management of pest animals and plants. The aim is to reduce their adverse effects and to maximise the effectiveness of pest management actions through a regionally coordinated approach. In implementing the RPMP, the regional council must prepare an operational plan and provide an annual report on progress (section 100B of the Act).

Regional pathway management plans set out the rules

to prevent harmful organisms from being transported into new or different areas (sections 88-98 of the Act). Currently, there are no regional pathway management plans in the Waikato region. However, these may be developed in the future and could apply on a regional or multi-regional basis.

Small-scale management programmes can also be utilised for any unwanted organism (sections 100v and 100W of the Act). To undertake a small-scale programme, the council must put out a public notice, and can then immediately undertake direct control without needing to prepare or review the RPMP. This enables the regional council to be reactive to new incursions of harmful organisms to the region.

National biosecurity programmes

The Biosecurity Act provides for a number of management options for harmful organisms declared unwanted and/or notifiable and which pose a threat at a national level, for example, across regional boundaries. These include creating and implementing:

- a national pest management plan (under sections 59-67 of the Act)
- a national pathway plan (under sections 79-87 of the Act)
- incursion responses (under part 7 of the Act).



The regional council is mandated to support and undertake activities in relation to these national plans under section 14 of the Act and becomes involved where they are relevant to the region. The council also has a role in advocating for and preparing relevant plans. In addition, the council supports other initiatives like the National Interest Pest Responses (NIPR) species led by MPI.⁸

Other legislation and plans

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) sets out the statutory purpose of councils. Under the LGA, councils prepare a long term plan (LTP) that sets out the council's strategy, programmes and budgets in detail for the coming three years and in broad outline for the further seven years. For the regional council, this includes funding for biosecurity activities.

Regional councils also have responsibilities under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) for natural and physical resources. Adverse effects are managed through regional policy statements (RPS), regional and district plans and resource consents. Regional policies and plans can manage activities so they do not create or exacerbate biosecurity risks. The regional council's RPS and regional plan contain policies and methods to manage biosecurity effects.

Non-regulatory approaches to the management of harmful organisms

The regional council undertakes a variety of non-regulatory activities that support our wider biosecurity work. Non-regulatory approaches include a wide range of options to support regulatory work, and work towards biosecurity objectives in other ways.

Partnerships and collaborative programmes

The regional council works in partnership with DOC, MPI, LINZ, iwi, industry and neighbouring regions in a variety of ways that relate to biosecurity in the region. For example, the council and DOC are working together to improve the management of feral goats and pest fish in the region.

The council also supports iwi/hapū-led biosecurity projects through technical advice and capability/capacity building in areas such as iwi environmental management plans and animal and plant pest control.

Provision of advice and information

Providing advice and information to the wider community supports them to use biosecurity best practices and achieve their biosecurity and biodiversity goals. For example, information on pest plants and animals is available online, and regional council staff visit community, environmental and school groups in the field.

Monitoring, surveillance and reporting

It is important to respond quickly if a new animal or plant is detected, or a harmful organism spreads into new areas. Having a good surveillance programme will enable us to report on and react to these new incursions.

⁸National Interest Pest Responses programme

Community-led projects and programmes

Around the region, communities take the initiative to implement control programmes for pests at a range of scales and using various approaches. The Karioi Project⁹ is one example. Supported financially by the regional council through its Natural Heritage Fund, this community-led conservation project has more than 350 volunteers and more than 2000 traps over 2300 hectares of Mt Karioi in Raglan.

Aside from funding grants, the council also supports community-led projects and programmes with resources and advice.

Innovation and development of biosecurity tools

The council supports innovation and development of novel and improved biosecurity tools and management options. For example, the council takes an active role in the use and spread of biological control agents where these have been approved for release. The council supports the development and release of biological controls by providing release sites, helping to collect and move agents, and investing in research.

Coordinated responses to cross-boundary issues

Plants and animals that may cause a problem do not respect boundaries. Therefore, coordination of pest management efforts may be required between neighbouring landowners or neighbouring regions.

Support of and active participation in regional and national biosecurity/biodiversity programmes and initiatives

National and inter-regional coordination of programmes and initiatives reduce the potential for duplication of effort and resources. Active participation enables the regional council to be aware of programmes that could be beneficial to the region and to influence the direction of this work.

The council also encourages research that provides useful information that can then be applied to biosecurity management. Research includes:

- better ways to control pests
- pest density reductions required to release indigenous species from predator pressure
- home ranges of pest animals to optimise trap placement
- repeat control timeframes to effectively maintain low numbers
- biological control options
- understanding the impacts that pests have on different values like biodiversity or production.

Advocacy

Advocacy is particularly relevant to biosecurity issues that are likely to benefit from an interagency approach. The regional council actively advocates for key agencies to act in their roles in the national biosecurity system, and for inter-agency and national integration around biosecurity issues.

Projects at particular sites

Depending on the specific values of a site, the regional council supports and undertakes projects that aim to control invasive plants and animals in a site-led approach to protect those values. These may be environmental, economic, social or cultural values, and the projects or programmes may be undertaken within or outside of the RPMP.



A volunteer works the traplines on Mt Pirongia.

⁹ Karioi Project

Monitoring of strategy implementation

The actions contained in this strategy outline how the regional council will deliver its regional biosecurity leadership role over the next 10 years. They will guide the delivery of council biosecurity projects and activities. The council is committed to operating in accordance with these actions to mitigate the impacts of harmful organisms within the region.

The council will prepare an operational plan, in accordance with section 100B of the Biosecurity Act 1993, within three months of the RPMP becoming operative.

This sets out how the council will administer the RPMP. The operational plan will be reviewed and amended as required. Annual reports are prepared to give an overview of progress.

This strategy will be reviewed and updated if required after the first five years and subsequently thereafter. New projects and activities may be identified and prioritised. The outcomes of any reviews will also be used to inform the 10-year review of the RPMP.





Velvetleaf is regarded as one of the world's worst cropping weeds and is found in the Waikato.

Appendices

Āpitiḡanga



Appendix A – Organisms covered by this strategy

Harmful organism

Harmful organisms are plants, animals or other organisms capable of causing harm to our environment, communities or economy. Not all harmful organisms can or should be managed through the Waikato's RPMP, and this strategy identifies how the council will respond to all organisms that cause us harm. Within this strategy, harmful organisms include 'pests', 'unwanted organisms' or 'organisms of interest' and other species not covered by rules.

Pests

The plants and animals listed in Waikato's RPMP are legally declared as pests under the Biosecurity Act 1993. This means the council can set enforceable rules to manage them. The RPMP is reviewed every 10 years in accordance with the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Organisms of interest

Only some harmful organisms are designated as pests in the Waikato's RPMP, however, many others present a biosecurity risk of some kind. The council can provide advice on organisms that are of interest to the Waikato and that may be candidates for pest status in the future, depending on changes to their distribution or degree of impact, as well as our ability to successfully control them. This strategy articulates how organisms not listed in the RPMP can be managed in other ways.

Unwanted organisms and notifiable organisms

An unwanted organism is an organism declared under the Biosecurity Act 1993 that cannot be sold, propagated, bred, multiplied, communicated, released, caused to be released or otherwise spread. A number of lists and registers of unwanted organisms are administered by MPI, including the National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA)¹⁰. Unwanted organisms may be controlled at a national, regional or local level, and may or may not be included in an RPMP.

Notifiable organisms are pests and diseases that must be reported to MPI if spotted in New Zealand. A register of organisms declared notifiable under the Biosecurity (Notifiable Organisms) Order 2016 is held by MPI.¹¹

Appendix B – Contributing to biosecurity in the Waikato region

For many people, 'biosecurity' means biosecurity officers in hi-vis vests conducting property searches for harmful organisms like the Queensland fruit fly, or officers from MPI and sniffer dogs checking through luggage at international airports. Biosecurity is much more than this and is relevant to all of us. It is everyone's business.

It takes all of us to protect what we have. The following describes ways that we can all get involved in protecting our region from harmful organisms.

Lookout for new pests and diseases

Everyone can help protect the Waikato region from new pests and diseases. One of the best ways to do this is to lookout for anything unusual and report what you find.

You can take a photo, note its location and contact the council's biosecurity team and/or the Biosecurity New Zealand pests and diseases hotline run by MPI on 0800 80 99 66. There are also apps like iNaturalist, Pest Detective and Find-A-Pest that you can use to easily identify suspected pests.

Arrive clean, leave clean – for all machinery and recreational equipment

It's very easy to spread pests and diseases without realising. Soil, seeds and fragments of vegetation can attach to clothing and pets or become stuck in machinery or tyres. Freshwater and marine pests can spread in just a droplet of water, on the undersides of boats or on fishing gear used between waterways. The best way to combat spread is to make sure you arrive to any destination clean and leave clean, including all footwear, clothing, machinery, tools, boats, bikes and even the dog. Further information on how to do this can be found on the Ka Tāoutou This Is Us biosecurity webpage at thisisus.nz.

¹⁰ NPPA, MPI Registers and lists for pests and diseases

¹¹ Notifiable Organisms Order 2016

In kauri areas, to help protect kauri, it's important to arrive dirt-free, not move dirt within the area and leave dirt free, stay on tracks and boardwalks, and respect track closures and rāhui when they are in place. Further information on measures to protect kauri from kauri disease, including what to do when walking your dog, hunting, horseback riding, mountain biking, walking or running in kauri areas, is available at kauriprotection.co.nz.

Take extra care when visiting pest free places

When visiting pest free islands and fenced sanctuaries on the mainland, ensure you don't bring any unwanted visitors with you. Pests, including rodents, introduced skinks, insects and seeds, could be hiding in your backpack or equipment. Help protect these special places by checking your gear before you go and following the advice of rangers or information panels at the entry to these sites.

Look after your own property

Become familiar with the regional council's RPMP so you know what pest plants and animals you are required to control on your property. Information on other harmful organisms is also included on the council's website at waikatoregion.govt.nz/biosecurity. Information on unwanted and notifiable organisms and other pests and diseases are on the MPI website.

Ensure that your green waste is properly disposed of. If in doubt, the regional council's biosecurity team is always happy to provide advice on the best thing to do. Further information on weeds and pest animals can also be found at weedbusters.co.nz, nzpcn.org.nz and doc.govt.nz.

Stop pets becoming pests

Escaped pets can also become pests and present a real threat to our native species and our environment. Don't release unwanted pets into the environment (for example, red-eared slider turtles), or keep animals that are pests as pets (for example, wallabies, possums).

Protect our biodiversity from pests

Trap and monitor animal pests in your backyard. Backyard trapping has heaps of benefits. It contributes to the nationwide effort to make New Zealand predator free¹², protects our native biodiversity and makes your garden a safe haven for native birds, insects and lizards.

Become a biosecurity champion and join or start a community restoration group. Or inspire the next generation to be biosecurity guardians by helping out with school or kindergarten programmes¹³. There are lots of community groups within the Waikato region and across Aotearoa working to make our country predator free, restore our native ecosystems and to share their knowledge and passion.¹⁴

Be aware when shopping online or importing

Ensure you are not buying prohibited seeds, plants or animals from overseas. Be aware of what you can and can't import into New Zealand before shopping online. Your seed purchase on the internet could turn out to be an unwanted organism or weed that could cause havoc in your neighbourhood. Where possible, buy seeds and plants from reputable local sources. Only import seeds that are approved in MPI's Plant Biosecurity Index or via an authorised seed importer who must follow strict biosecurity requirements.

Unwanted pests and diseases could also be hiding in packages from overseas. Pests like brown marmorated stink bugs (BMSB) could enter New Zealand inside parcels, invade and stink up our homes, ruin the fruits we love, and more. Sometimes pests are also found inside packaging of products such as fruit bought from supermarkets. You can help protect New Zealand from such pests by checking your parcels and grocery shopping for any unwelcome hitchhikers.

If you think you've spotted something suspicious, please report it to the MPI pest-and-diseases hotline on 0800 80 99 66.

¹² Predator Free 2050

¹³ For example, *Enviroschools in the Waikato region*

¹⁴ For example, *Landcare NZ Trust and Weedbusters*

He taiao mauriora

Healthy environment

He ōhanga pakari

Strong economy

He hapori hihiri

Vibrant communities

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