

5 April 2018

Chairperson of the  
Environment Select Committee

The Kauri Dieback Programme was launched in 2009 to manage and respond to the spread of kauri dieback disease, and is a partnership between regional councils, Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation and iwi.

Kauri are a New Zealand icon and urgent and effective action is needed to protect and preserve this taonga for future generations.

This is also a key area of importance and focus to the incoming coalition government, who have clearly signaled their intention to immediately strengthen efforts to protect kauri.

These measures, discussed later on in this submission, include mandatory hygiene practices, consistent regulations that apply nationally, stronger governance and access to funding.

### **History of Kauri**

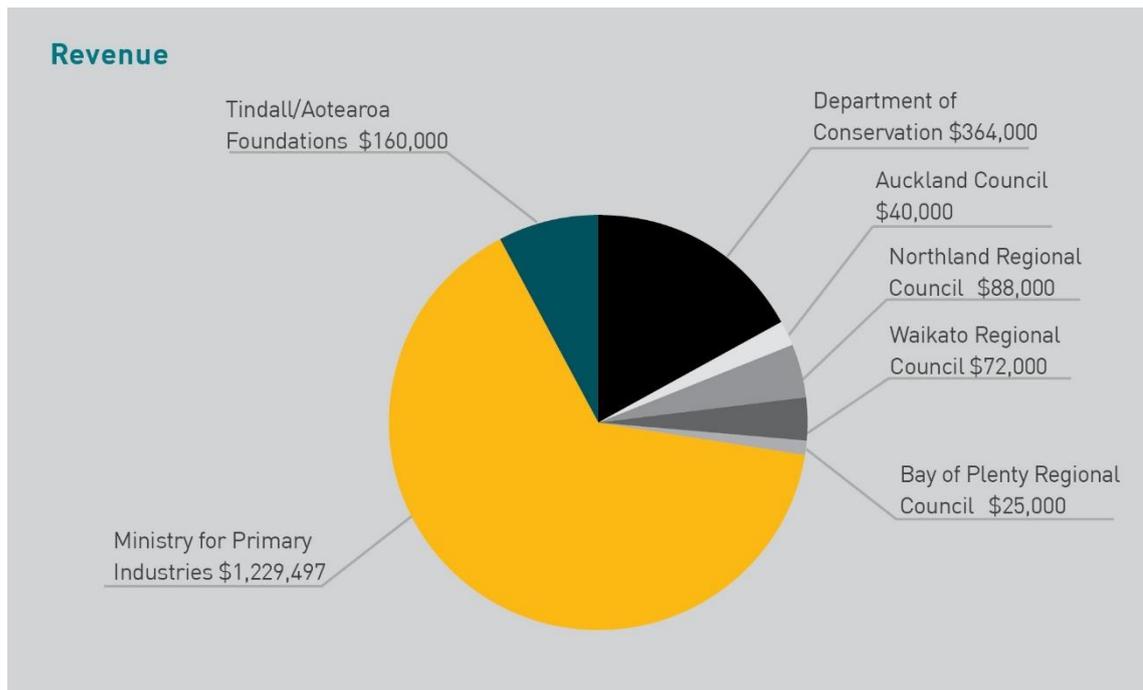
1. Kauri is a taonga species and highly valued by New Zealanders.
2. Estimates of the extent of kauri forest before European settlement in New Zealand are between 1 million and 1.5 million hectares (ha). This was reduced to 7,000 ha (0.5% of original extent) by exploitation for timber or destruction by fire and clearance in the late 19th and early 20th century. An estimated 60,000 ha of secondary forest and scrubland contain some stands of younger kauri regenerating after this harvest.

### **What is Kauri Dieback Disease?**

3. Kauri are at risk from a disease known as kauri dieback disease, which is caused by a fungus-like pathogen *Phytophthora agathidicida* (PA) that infects tree roots and damages the tissues that carry nutrients and water. It is suspected that this disease has been killing kauri since the 1950s; only in 2008, however, were scientists able to identify the pathogen and its role in killing kauri.
4. Kauri dieback disease is specific to New Zealand kauri and can kill trees of all ages. No natural resistance to the disease is apparent and there are limited tools that are effective in protecting trees from the disease, as well as no known cure.
5. Kauri dieback disease spreads by soil movement, and the biggest source of soil movement is people. Good hygiene is critical to stopping the spread of the disease. Therefore the key messages for people are to clean footwear and equipment (remove all visible soil) when entering or exiting a kauri forest and to stay on open tracks.

## History of the Kauri Dieback Programme

6. The Kauri Dieback Programme (the programme) was established in 2009, largely at the initiative of the Auckland Regional Council, when widespread disease was evident in kauri in the Waitākere Ranges. The then Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) biosecurity team assessed the outbreak, declared the PA pathogen to be an 'unwanted organism', and initiated a response to determine the management options.
7. The programme is a multi-agency government and community response to managing the spread of kauri dieback disease. It is a collaborative partnership between the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Department of Conservation (DOC), Northland Regional Council, Auckland Council, Waikato Regional Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, and Māori. The programme is governed by a governance group which has representation from all partners including the Tangata Whenua Roopu.
8. The programme operates under a charter which details how the partners will work together and provides funding principles.
9. The first five-year funding period of the programme involved modest investment of approximately \$2 million per annum from all sources, with approximately \$1 million of that allocated through the governance group. The remainder of funding was allocated by DOC and Auckland Council on the basis of their own priorities.
10. In 2013 Independent Quality Assurance New Zealand conducted an independent review of the programme. The review found that overall good progress had been made to address a complex issue using a partnership based programme, and concluded that:
  - a nationally consistent approach was required
  - the programme needs a formal statutory basis, and
  - the programme can succeed but needs stronger systems, secure long-term funding, and commitment from all partner agencies.
11. Full details of the Independent Review report are publicly available at: [https://www.kauridieback.co.nz/media/1382/kauri-dieback\\_iqanz-report-final-17oct2013-v12-pdf.pdf](https://www.kauridieback.co.nz/media/1382/kauri-dieback_iqanz-report-final-17oct2013-v12-pdf.pdf)
12. A business case for improving the programme was developed following the completion of the independent review, which drew on the advice from the report along with other insights from partners. This culminated in a budget bid for MPI and DOC and commitments from regional councils to pursue increased funding through their own processes.
13. In 2014, the Government allocated \$26.5 million to fight kauri dieback disease. Of that, DOC received \$21.6 million over four years to reduce the risk of spread on DOC land, including improving tracks. MPI receives about \$1.2 million in Crown funding a year (until 2024). Partner agency and charitable funding brings that annual budget to approximately \$1.9 million.



*Kauri Dieback Programme Revenue 2016-17, excluding operational funding from partners or external sources of science funding*

14. In 2015, the programme commissioned advice on boosting the regulatory approach for managing kauri dieback disease. That advice recommended that a National Pest Management Plan (NPMP) be developed under the Biosecurity Act 1993, supported by non-regulatory national policies and frameworks. At the time this recommendation was not accepted by all programme partners and therefore plans to develop further national regulations were put on hold.
15. Further detail relating to programme activities and expenditure is publicly available at: <https://www.kauridieback.co.nz/media/1474/2016-2017-kauri-dieback-annual-report-web.pdf>

### **Tangata Whenua Roopu (TWR) and Governance**

16. The TWR was established at the commencement of the programme, to support participation in governance, planning and programme delivery. TWR is self-governed and they are responsible for electing their two representatives for the programme governance group and representatives on the programme workstream teams through their own independent process.
17. The TWR is expected to engage with all Māori who have an interest in kauri dieback disease. MPI funds that participation via a budget of approximately \$180,000 per annum for the activities of the TWR, which includes an agreed fees structure.
18. Te Roroa (Waipoua forest) have one representative on the programme governance group.

19. Te Roroa expressed an early interest to be represented separate to the TWR on the programme governance group, because of their role as kaitiaki over Waipoua forest (home of Tāne Mahuta and other iconic kauri).
20. The programme has funded some targeted capability building with Te Roroa so that they could undertake soil sampling and monitoring within Waipoua forest.
21. While no other iwi have formally approached the programme to be represented on the governance group to date, DOC and councils are expected to lead on local level engagement with Māori.

### **Treaty of Waitangi and the Kauri Dieback Programme**

22. MPI is conscious and respectful of its relationship and commitments to Māori arising from the Treaty of Waitangi and Treaty settlement agreements.
23. In relation to the programme, MPI engages with Maori using the TWR structure referred to above, DOC and Councils. There are also treaty partners such as Te Kawerau ā Maki that the programme is engaging with.
24. Under the terms of its Treaty settlement in 2014, the special relationships Te Kawerau ā Maki has within a number of areas within the wider Auckland region are acknowledged.
25. By Deed of Recognition, the Crown is obliged to consult with Te Kawerau ā Maki on certain areas, in particular, Motutara Scenic Reserve and Goldie Bush Scenic Reserve.
26. DOC has been the lead agency on behalf of the Crown in those discussions. Aside from these statutory obligations, the Crown has an overarching obligation to act in good faith in all its dealings with tangata whenua. This is also the approach that both MPI and the programme take in relation to Treaty Settlement legislation.
27. Auckland Council and DOC as the respective landowners manage their requirements under the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008.

### **Programme Strategy**

28. A national programme Strategy was developed soon after Government's decision to ramp up kauri protection in 2014. This sets out the overall vision and outcomes for the programme.
29. The overall goal of the programme is that by 2024, the mauri (lifeforce) and integrity of kauri forests are sustained in the presence of PA; we understand the disease; and tangata whenua, communities and stakeholders are all active in the management of kauri dieback disease.

30. The programme goals are:

- Delivering effective operations – the work on the ground
- Building knowledge and tools – science, surveillance and decision-support
- Engaging and enabling people and communities – behavior change and communications
- Managing the programme – aligning efforts of the partners.

### **Delivering effective operations**

31. Operational delivery (work on the ground) within the programme is primarily the responsibility of Auckland Council and DOC and largely includes improving track and hygiene infrastructure, closures of tracks and sites, collecting soil samples for diagnostic testing and pig control work in some places. While the programme seeks to influence operational decisions, Auckland Council and DOC are ultimately accountable for funding and decisions on operational matters.

32. These matters are expected to be covered more fully in their evidence to the committee.

### **Building knowledge and tools**

33. The programme is building a deeper understanding of kauri dieback disease and options for managing it through a science programme focused at the more applied end of the science spectrum. Intelligence gathering is another critical component and involves conducting kauri dieback disease surveillance and assessment of disease spread risks.

34. Since 2014, the programme has had an annual budget of approximately \$865,000, to build knowledge and operational tools to help combat kauri dieback disease. Investment in kauri dieback disease research also comes from other sources, such as universities and Crown Research Institutes, but the Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) provides the majority with approximately \$1.9 million per annum in current funding commitments.

35. Programme research has focused on building the foundations required for ongoing management, including: identifying and understanding kauri dieback disease and how it spreads, developing surveillance and diagnostic tools and methodologies, developing ways of managing the disease, undertaking baseline surveillance to determine disease presence, and developing a behavior change campaign.

36. Better understanding of how kauri dieback disease spreads and its vectors – aids the programme's control and management of it. It is thought that people are responsible for the most rapid spread of kauri dieback disease – through the PA pathogen being carried in soil on boots and shoes, and on car tyres and machinery. Surveillance confirms this – as disease spread has been strongly noted near walking tracks.

37. As with pathogens that affect other species of plants and animals, scientists assume some kauri may have, or may build, a natural immunity to kauri dieback disease. The programme hopes to find kauri that show or develop natural resistance (the Healthy Trees, Healthy Future Project) and use these trees to breed and re-plant disease-resistant kauri in infected areas.
38. For individual trees, there is a temporary treatment that can boost the tree's natural defences and help reduce the impact of the disease. This is done using a chemical called phosphite, which is injected into the infected tree. As a result of programme research, best-practice guidance for phosphite use is being developed for kauri trees.
39. The programme and its partners currently focus research on human behaviour change: getting people to clean their footwear before they go into a forest and when they leave it, and to stay on the tracks while in there. This includes social research, to drive behaviour change and improve the design of forest hygiene stations.
40. The programme has recently awarded contracts to three mana whenua groups that are undertaking Mātauranga Māori-based research into using Cultural Health Indicators in the monitoring of kauri dieback disease over a three year period. This mahi includes upskilling mana whenua to perform their role as Kaitiakitanga. This research will also help embed a Mātauranga Māori approach within the programme.
41. The programme has also built upon the baseline aerial surveillance with the near completion of a comprehensive aerial photo survey of northern New Zealand, recording all kauri trees or kauri stands (groups of kauri trees) that show potential symptoms of dieback disease.
42. The areas surveyed to date exclude Waipoua Forest and Auckland City/Waitākere each of which are covered by a separate aerial surveillance programme.
43. The remaining areas to be surveyed are Aupouri and Kaitaia, which MPI expects to be completed by the end of April. Once finalised, aerial surveillance results will be made publicly available.
44. The next steps will be for DOC and Regional Councils to review the survey results and undertake their own analysis to determine prioritisation of sites for follow up.
45. Follow-up may include ground truthing and soil sampling if required.

### **Engaging and enabling people and communities**

46. Since the programme was established, the focus has been on a largely voluntary approach to managing the risk of people spreading kauri dieback disease. The key focus was on raising awareness, providing hygiene equipment and upgrading tracks to keep people away from mud and kauri roots.

47. Public awareness of kauri dieback disease in the areas it exists is high, with two out of three people understanding in 2016 what kauri dieback disease is and how to prevent its spread (compared with one out of three people in 2011). Despite this knowledge, compliance with the hygiene standards has remained consistently low.
48. Regulation was used in a relatively minor way to attempt to drive behaviour change, drawing on the Biosecurity Act 1993, Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991, Conservation Act 1987 and Reserves Act 1977.
49. Work is underway to look at how awareness can be more effectively translated into behaviour change – getting people to consistently follow the correct hygiene practices if they visit areas with kauri.

### **Managing the Programme**

50. The partnership model, with shared accountability for all decisions except operational delivery, involves eight separate organisation and creates a complex basis for decision-making and national coordination. Most of the partner organisations in their own rights are large and complex, with multiple branches engaged in some way on kauri dieback disease management (e.g. policy, communication, operations, technical, legal etc).
51. MPI is responsible for coordinating the work of the partners and does this through chairing and administering the governance group, as well as funding key staff positions for delivery of the operational plan, such as the programme manager and workstream leads.
52. Despite considerable coordination effort the current partnership model and charter has proven cumbersome and poorly suited to the sort of adaptive management that kauri dieback disease management requires.

### **The next phase of the Programme**

53. Despite efforts to ramp up kauri protection since 2014, the programme still faces some major challenges. These include:
  - High levels of spread at monitored sites
  - High levels of non-compliance at hygiene stations using a voluntary approach
  - An inconsistent national approach to operational policy, planning, delivery, data and analytics
  - Variable regulation across regions and districts using both the Resource Management Act 1991 and Biosecurity Act 1993, in some cases being arbitrated through the environment court
  - A limited management toolkit
  - A fragmented approach to kauri dieback science.

54. Programme partners have agreed that this points to several changes that are required:
- A process to update the Kauri Dieback Strategy and drive nationally consistent planning and delivery of all necessary kauri dieback disease management work
  - Replacing voluntary hygiene requests with legal obligations and enforcement activities
  - Greater national prioritisation, alignment and uptake of collective science investment and effort.
55. The programme is taking a three-pronged approach to protect kauri from kauri dieback disease, through the Accelerating Protection for Kauri project. The goal of the Accelerating Protection for Kauri project is to fast-track improvements to the programme by refreshing strategic direction, developing a National Pest Management Plan (NPMP) to provide regulatory support, and establishing a road map and change process to drive key programme improvements and accelerate transition to NPMP implementation.
56. Development of a NPMP under the Biosecurity Act 1993 provides a statutory planning mechanism that will allow us to refresh the strategy and drive the changes to the way the programme operates and priorities for action, but it will take approximately 18 months to complete based on experience from developing other NPMPs.
57. In the interim we have committed to provide short-term legal hygiene requirements using the Controlled Area Notice provisions of the Biosecurity Act 1993 and to establish a Kauri Dieback Strategic Science Advisory Group to drive improvements in the way kauri dieback science is prioritised and delivered. There will also be opportunities to implement improvements identified from the Accelerating Protection for Kauri Project well in advance of 18 months expected for the NPMP.

### **Controlled Area Notice (CAN)**

58. A CAN gives MPI the power to restrict the movement of risk goods and equipment into and out of controlled areas/sites, for example by the Chief Technical Officer issuing a CAN to make hygiene standards for footwear and equipment mandatory. A CAN cannot be used to restrict the movement of people, however, and it should also be noted that the Biosecurity Act 1993 does not give MPI the power to close sites to the public.
59. However, Auckland Council, DOC and other land owners (e.g. District Councils and private land owners) can close access to areas under their ownership or management.
60. On 20 February 2018, Auckland Council (the Environment and Community Committee) proposed to close the forested areas of the Waitākere Ranges Regional Park, with some exceptions, by 1 May 2018. The exceptions would be tracks that are able to meet the hygiene requirements of a CAN.

61. Following agreement by the governance group to implement a CAN, a draft CAN was developed and tested at a workshop on 7 February 2018 with Auckland Council, MPI, DOC, AsureQuality and Te Kawerau ā Maki.
62. The workshop discussed and progressed:
  - Proposed location of the CAN for initial implementation within the Auckland region
  - Legal standards in the CAN, enforcement and compliance thresholds
  - Agreement on respective roles and responsibilities for implementing the CAN
  - The next steps operationally for implementing the CAN.
63. The committee also proposed closing further high-risk tracks in the Hunua Ranges Regional Park by 1 May 2018, subject to consultation with mana whenua and the Franklin Local Board.
64. MPI is awaiting advice from Auckland Council as to which major park areas they would like to be covered by a CAN. This will be confirmed post the Auckland Council meeting scheduled for 10 April 2018.
65. Work is underway to fine-tune the draft CAN, develop a monitoring plan to gauge its effectiveness and confirm a compliance/enforcement approach.
66. A joint communications approach is also being developed by MPI, DOC and Auckland Council.

### **Kauri Dieback Strategic Science Advisory Group (KDSSAG)**

67. The Kauri Dieback Strategic Science Advisory Group (KDSSAG) has been established to provide independent, high-level advice on the strategic direction and coordination of kauri dieback disease research, reporting to the programme governance group.
68. The KDSSAG will work across Government agencies, Crown Research Institutes and other research institutes, to maintain oversight and ensure any kauri dieback disease related research is cohesive and complementary, and that funding of priority research provides practical, cost-effective and timely management tools that will enable more effective management of the impacts of kauri dieback disease in New Zealand.
69. Membership is comprised of MPI and DOC Departmental Science Advisers, tangata whenua, senior New Zealand researchers with expertise in relevant fields and an international PA expert.
70. The first meeting of the KDSSAG, was held in late March 2018, where a programme and timeline to prepare a science plan and prioritisation process was discussed.

71. There will continue to be a focus within the programme on immediate operational tool development needs, for example developing better surveillance and treatment tools.

### **Kauri Dieback National Pest Management Plan (NPMP)**

72. In 2018 the governance group decided that a proposed NPMP for kauri dieback disease be developed. This is the most significant regulation that can be applied for an established pest under the Biosecurity Act 1993 and offers several important benefits:
- Potentially boosting compliance rates by making good hygiene practices mandatory.
  - Painting a much more coherent national picture of the 'why, where and how' of operational work to protect kauri.
  - Bringing consistency and clarity to the regulations that apply throughout kauri-lands (regional pest management plans would be superseded).
  - Increased governance and management rigour and clearer accountability to the Minister of Biosecurity.
  - Flexibility on who delivers the plan, e.g. an existing agency could be the designated management agency or an independent management agency could be established (such as with the OSPRI and Kiwifruit Vine Health models).
  - Additional mechanisms for funding and more secure funding than commitments under the current partnership model.
  - A high-profile, transparent and rigorous process for ensuring there is an agreed annual management plan in place and annual reporting against the plan.
73. The Biosecurity Act 1993 and National Policy Direction (for pest management) details the process for the development of a NPMP, which includes development of a cost/benefit analysis and extensive consultation throughout the process. The total timeframe to complete the project is approximately 18 months, with this timeframe including the parliamentary process to assess and approve a NPMP.
74. A discussion paper outlining a proposed scope for a review of the current programme strategy and initial NPMP development work was discussed by the governance group on 15 March 2018. As part of these discussions, iwi engagement was raised and this will be encompassed into the development of the NPMP.
75. The project brief for the strategy review and the initial phase of the NPMP development is currently in the process of being endorsed by the governance group.

76. The Accelerating Protection for Kauri project is geared to deliver early improvements and accelerate transition to a NPMP and associated arrangements with setting up a new management agency if required, and the corresponding budget.

This includes delivering:

- **By end of July 2018** – Strategy refresh and a road map for programme improvements.
- **From August 2018** – A focused change management process underway to implement key improvements and accelerate transition to NPMP implementation.
- **By end of December 2018** – NPMP proposal development, consultation completed and submission to the Minister for Biosecurity.
- **By September 2019** – Ministerial approval for proposal to proceed through the Parliamentary approval process, and 10-year budget secured for the management agency from 2019/20.

77. I trust that the evidence provided in this letter addresses the Committee's requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Dunne  
Director-General