

11.3. Biosecurity Update

Prepared for: Regulatory Committee
Report No. EMO1863
Activity: Environmental: Land
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PURPOSE

- [1] To update Council on the following matters:
- National bid for Wallaby funding
 - Collaboration with Environment Canterbury on Wallaby Control
 - National bid for wilding conifer funding (phase two)
 - Proposed Pest Management Plan and Biosecurity Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council:

- 1) **Receives** this report.

NATIONAL BID FOR WALLABY FUNDING

- [1] Wallabies have been identified in recent years in New Zealand as an increasing emerging threat at a national level. Wallabies compete with domestic livestock by fouling and grazing pasture, agricultural crops, tussock grasslands, and damaging native bush and production forestry.
- [2] In the North Island the Dama wallabies are the species that have established in the Bay of Plenty and more latterly spread to the Waikato. In the South Island the Bennett's wallaby is the species of concern. The Bennett's wallaby species since being released in 1874 in the Waimate area in South Canterbury, have in recent years have showed significant spread within southern Canterbury. In Otago there has been constant and increased activity since 2011.
- [3] As a result of the widespread threat a number of agencies banded together and prepared a national bid for wallaby funding. The format was very akin to the funding bid for the National Wilding Conifer Strategy. The bid was led by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). Other parties involved in preparing the bid included; Waikato Regional Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Environment Canterbury (ECan) ORC, Department of Conservation, Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) and Landcare Research.
- [4] The main thrust of the bid was to gain funding for research and development into new techniques and tools that enabled wallabies to be located when in low numbers over

vast geographical areas, and funding toward the control of wallabies in the field. One of the big challenges is being able to identify wallaby populations when they are in very low numbers amongst many terrain types and cover, and over huge tracts of land. The current thermal technology is expensive and requires more field trials before there can be confidence in it. A national programme would provide the opportunity to look into this and other tools as they emerge. A national collective would mean the costs, trials and results can be shared among the parties.

- [5] On 30 May 2019 MPI were informed that while Treasury and the Minister for Biosecurity were supportive of the wallabies bid, and the case that was made for funding, there has been no funding allocated by the government in the coming financial year.

COLLABORATION WITH ENVIRONMENT CANTERBURY ON WALLABY CONTROL

- [6] Staff of ORC and ECan are working together on the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wallaby control. A first draft is being revised to include more detail on what the collaboration between ORC and ECan is expected to achieve. The MoU will provide most value if it defines a clear set of desired outcomes and objectives (the “what”) and not just a process by which operational activities are aligned (the “how”). The final draft will be brought to Committee for endorsement.

NATIONAL BID FOR WILDING CONIFER FUNDING (PHASE TWO)

- [7] The Wilding Conifer funding budget was announced on 30 May 2019. The government has committed 10.5 million a year for two years. (\$21 million in total). It is yet to be determined how much of the funding will be spent in Otago. In the coming weeks all parties involved will be prioritising their operational areas and identifying the MU’s in which the work will be carried out in line with the budget allocation.

PROPOSED PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN AND BIOSECURITY STRATEGY

- [8] Hearings are underway for the Proposed Pest Management Plan and Biosecurity Strategy for Otago. 360 public submissions were received on the Plan and/or Strategy and 27 submitters wish to be heard. The Panel is comprised of Crs Robertson (Chairperson), Lawton and Noone and Mr John Simmonds (Biosecurity Consultant). The Panel will commence deliberations on 18 June 2019.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil