

## **Submission by Environment Network Manawatū on the Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan**

ENM is the environment hub for the Manawatū region, connecting and inspiring communities to take environmental action.

The proposed review of the Regional Pest Management Plan is of high relevance to the interests of our member groups. Members within our key pou of Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement and Climate Action have first-hand experience in dealing with the issues posed by rampant invasive flora and fauna so they appreciate the magnitude of the task set for Horizons at a regional scale. A coordinated, prioritised and, where possible, science-based approach is clearly what is required. The dedicated team at Horizons is a great boon to the collective conservation effort.

### **Member Priorities**

While we acknowledge that horticulture and agriculture are key industries within the Horizons region, our members have particular focus on protecting and restoring the biodiversity of wilderness areas. We believe that what benefits native and biodiverse ecosystems also benefits the wider human community, including those engaged in food production. These benefits are realised through erosion prevention, pollinator services, water treatment, climate regulation, predation on pest insects etc., as well as the social and emotional benefits of time spent within natural environments.

The operating area of Environment Network Manawatū, as defined by the bounds of our Environmental Initiatives Fund, is the wider catchment of the Manawatū river. This evinces the importance we place on the health of our waterways and the direct effect that human activity, for better or worse, can have on the quality of aquatic habitats. Our members share this view and believe that, at this time, particular emphasis should be afforded to those pest species that are diminishing the mauri of waterways. In addition we stress the importance of protecting and enhancing the well-being of those very few remnants of ancient native vegetation, especially in the areas of high human occupancy.

### **Species of Concern**

In talks with our members, two species arise as being of particular concern, due to the deleterious effects they have on the wider biome.

**Phragmites Karka** – Our groups focussed on our catchment and estuary have repeatedly raised their fears of a Phragmites karka takeover of precious waterways. The spread to date has been marked and we urge Horizons to prioritise and list this species

under the RPMP. We acknowledge the research efforts already undertaken and would support further study in biological and chemical controls. The current priority should however be the effective, though admittedly expensive, mechanical control.

**Deer** – Deer are a regular topic of discussion within our member groups. They are a pest that bridges the divide between the interests of agriculture and conservation. Reduction of pest ruminant animal populations holds massive potential for improving the quality of forest understory ecosystems, increasing success of habitat restoration efforts and for increasing the carbon sequestering potential of existing native forests. For these reasons, ENM supports the use of all legal available means to decrease populations of all species of wild deer within the Horizons region.

### **Public Outreach**

It has also been noted that there is little to no public awareness of the pest plants that our members are endeavouring to control. Stories abound of people planting a beautiful, ornamental pest and jasmine in gardens that border on reserves, which then spreads and infests the protected native vegetation. I have personally been “gifted” a banana passionfruit plant by a very kind community gardener. This issue is made worse by the common practice of nurseries selling pest species to an uninformed public.

In some instances, pest plants are installed prominently in public spaces, as is the case at the recently renovated Arena Manawatū which features an avenue of Phoenix palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), as well as the planting of the invasive pest karaka (*Corynocarpus laevigatus*) beside the Karaka Bridge, karaka being serious problem outside its natural range, especially for those plants which are not descended from cultivars selected by Māori. This is a failure on the part of PNCC to lead by example and is evidence of a wider apathy and/or ignorance of the potential harms caused by pest plants.

### **Old Man’s Beard**

The memorable campaign against Old Man’s Beard (*Clematis vitalba*) has come up as an example of a concerted awareness effort that brought that species under scrutiny in the wider community. But sadly this species is now increasingly spreading through the Manawatū, and often from council-managed lands, impacting on others' conservation efforts.

Because of these sorts of problems, ENM believes that the RPMP should include some aspect of mass public education on pests of concern, particularly in cases where it would progress Horizons’ wider goals. We are well situated as an organisation to assist Horizons in generating and spreading content and messaging that relates to pest management issues.

The membership of Environment Network Manawatū collectively represents hundreds of years of experience in combating invasive plants and animal species in our specific regional biome. We stand as a representative body and a conduit for the knowledge and experience of our membership. As such we hope to be involved in the RPMP review at later stages as appropriate and invite further consultation as would be conducive to the development of an effective, responsive and appropriate Regional Pest Management Plan.