

Consulting on the protection of native taonga species in Pirongia – Te Kauri Park

The Department of Conservation's Waikato District plans to reduce possum and rat numbers to protect native species at risk from local extinction in Pirongia and Te Kauri Park.

Pirongia Mountain was named 'Pirongia te aroaro ō Kahu' (the fragrant presence of Kahu) by a tohunga of the Tainui canoe in honour of his wife.

Pirongia Forest Park contains nationally significant examples of ecosystems and threatened taonga species. Its ancient forest and beautiful streams are home to many iconic native birds. Grey warblers, fantails, tomtits, pipits, harriers, kingfishers, New Zealand falcons, kererū, tūī, rifleman, bellbirds and whiteheads can still be seen but kiwi are no longer seen in the area. North Island Robin and Kōkako have only recently returned to the maunga and translocation programmes are continuing to ensure the survival of their populations. Mt Pirongia is home to the national critical long-tailed bat.



Dactylanthus taylorii. Photo: DOC



Newly fledged Kokako chick on Mt Pirongia. Photo: Amanda Rogers

On Mt Pirongia, towering rimu and tōtara are found at lower altitudes, along with tawa and tree ferns. Higher up, the forest changes; hardy plants like kāmahi, tāwari, horopito and mountain neinei grow on exposed ridges. Near the summit, thick mats of mountain flax, coprosmas and ferns are common. In addition, *Dactylanthus taylorii* (Wood rose/Pua ō te reinga) a rare and endangered plant, is New Zealand's only completely parasitic flowering plant and grows partially underground.

Why we are controlling possums and rodents

Reducing the number of possums in Mt Pirongia and Te kauri forests means fewer trees will die and new plants

will have a chance to get established. The result – a healthy forest.

A healthy forest improves the stability of the catchment, reducing the amount of soil eroding into the surrounding rivers and streams and sediment into Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan harbours. A healthy forest also acts like a sponge, 'catching' and temporarily 'absorbing' rain, so less water ends up in rivers and streams when it rains heavily.

In the Waikato, The Department of Conservation in partnership with Waikato Regional Council, is planning to carry out predator control to help protect Kokako from possums and rats over 16,000 ha (see attached map). This will give the Kokako population a chance to breed and for their chicks to reach adulthood.



Long tailed Bat. Photo: DOC

Predator control works

DOC's intensive species monitoring shows that nesting success of species such as rifleman and kōkako increased significantly within areas that have had predator control.

Consultation – Have your say.

DOC has consulted closely with its Treaty Partner, Waikato Tainui. It has been agreed that 16,000 ha of Pirongia Forest Park and Te Kauri Park Scenic Reserve area will be controlled by:

using cereal baits containing biodegradable 1080 applied aerially over 16,000 ha of Pirongia Forest Park area. Helicopters with calibrated buckets will distribute bait along pre-determined and monitored flight paths.

The Department is consulting on the effects of predator control and wants your views. We are here to listen to you.

Staff from EcoFX Ltd would like to visit you at a convenient time to discuss the proposed operation; how it affects you, and what we can do to mitigate these effects. (refer to map)

Use of a range of predator control methods to protect species.

Aerial application of cereal pellets containing 1080 is the most effective control method over large areas. It is the only viable method in remote, rugged terrain. Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, however the number of possum, rodents and stoats can overwhelm trapping networks. In those areas aerial 1080 may be used to supplement the existing ground-based work. Aerial 1080 operations target rodents and possums. Stoats are also reduced effectively as they eat rodents and possums.

Time frame

At this stage, this operation will occur between 1st July and 30th September 2020. The operation is weather dependent.

A notification fact sheet will be distributed closer to the time to confirm any changes to the area as a result of the consultation and the timeframe

Also, DOC's contractor EcoFX Ltd will contact all neighbours, advertise in the local newspaper and place warning signs at entrances to public conservation land immediately prior to the operation starting.

Planning

DOC engages and works closely with iwi, its Treaty Partners for all predator control. The Department consults with stakeholders, affected landowners and communities.

Following feedback from this consultation decisions will be made on what changes can be made to the operational plan to mitigate the effects of the operation on you.

The Department will also contact iwi, landowners and stakeholders after the operation inform them the operation has been completed successfully, including details of reduction of predator levels.

Use of 1080 requires permission from the local Public Health Protection office of the Ministry of Health.

DOC assesses vertebrate predator control operations that use a toxin on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). DOC staff follow procedures approved by the EPA. These regulations ensure that the toxin is applied safely to safeguard the public and the environment.

Key Facts: What you need to know.

1080 is a manufactured, biodegradable toxin. Its active ingredient, fluoroacetate is salt that occurs naturally in poisonous plants in Australia, Africa and Brazil. It does not accumulate. It is broken down naturally by micro-organisms, fungi and plants into harmless compounds and does not leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants or animals.

The Department of Conservation complies with all relevant regulations and takes a precautionary approach to the aerial application of biodegradable 1080.

All operations begin with an aerial pre-feed of non-toxic bait to prime possums/rodents to eat the toxic bait that will be applied afterwards.

- The toxic cereal bait pellets contain 0.15% of 1080. They are about 3cm long, cylindrical and dyed green.
- Non-toxic pre-feed cereal pellets are about 3cm long, cylindrical and sandy coloured (not-dyed).

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. Dogs are highly susceptible. In areas where the toxin has been applied, the risk to dogs will remain until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated, which can be more than six months.

These risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area

Toxic baits and carcasses are **DEADLY to DOGS**

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These warning signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and animals. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area.

For more information

Biodiversity Ranger
Department of Conservation Waikato District Office
PO Box 20025
Te Rapa
Hamilton 3241
Ph: 07 850 8378

Project Manager
Waikato Regional Council
Private Bag 3038
Waikato Mail Centre
Hamilton 3240
Ph: 0800 800 401

www.doc.govt.nz/tiakina-nga-manu

Pirongia Forest Park and Te Kauri Park

