

## Discussion Document

In truth, we have not been able to stem the tide of invasive organisms and their impact on New Zealand both from a biodiversity and economic perspective. While we have been able to eradicate a variety of invasive mammals from some offshore islands (and this has been a major step forward), as well as control weeds and pest animals in localised areas, the rest of New Zealand suffers from the insidious damage caused by a multitude of invasive organisms.

Currently, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) manages pests that are considered a national priority under the Biosecurity Act 1993; the Department of Conservation manages pests on conservation estates, and the 16 Regional Authorities are responsible for controlling pests within their geographical boundaries. In addition to these agencies, there are numerous other organisations involved in pest research and management, for example; Forest & Bird, NZ Landcare Trusts, District Councils, Animal Health Board, WWF, Landcare Research, HortResearch, AgResearch, NZ Biosecurity Institute, National Pest Control Agencies, and Tertiary institutions etc. Even though there are some excellent synergies between these organisations and many collaborate quite closely, we still have hundreds of invasive species impacting on our biodiversity and livelihoods. The questions arise: what is working, what is not, and how do we get even better results?

As mentioned, we have many organisations working on invasive species but depending on their expertise, function, funding timescales, and even political agendas they can have quite conflicting management strategies and information (provided via websites, signposts and brochures). Although well intentioned, this information is sometimes contradictory and confusing. Further, it is not unheard of for one organisation to “pass the buck” and say that this is not our concern and suggest speaking to “Organisation X” instead. With this, people may feel even less inclined or empowered to want to manage their pests. Thus, it is no wonder that many people do not know what is going on, where to turn to, and more importantly, how they could actually assist.

The problem for landowners, be they iwi, communities and trusts, farmers, foresters, and volunteer neighbourhood groups (wishing to look after their own “backyard”) is that New Zealand does not have a single agency/portal (a one stop-shop) to provide these groups with the information they require. Currently, it is rather fragmented. Even neighbouring regional councils have differing 5 year regional pest management strategies (RPMS) because they are governed by elected representatives with their own budgets/agendas. Central government also seems to be withdrawing from certain responsibilities (e.g. biosecurity and conservation) in favour of letting the “volunteer” community manage their own issues/land.

In the 2008 report to Regional Councils on “The Future of Pest Management in NZ: a Think Piece”, Enfocus Ltd identified and made recommendations to remove highly fragmented institutional arrangements, be more coordinated with standardised guidelines, provide clarity about roles, responsibilities and boundaries, introduce tenure neutrality, establish a statutory purpose, and develop a coherent and efficient Crown funding system. It is now 2012 and many of these issues have not been resolved.

Therefore, what I'd like to discuss is whether we should establish a single over-arching agency with responsibility for managing invasive pests within NZ. The workshop objective is to discuss the pros and cons of such an idea, how it might actually work, and more importantly, how could this agency get better community buy-in and interest in pest management so we can make some significant improvements. It is possible that with one agency, one portal, and one team of experts we might actually start winning and gaining public support and momentum. Thus, I'd like to put the challenge out there to see what others have to say.

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