**Environmental Biosecurity Webinar of Bay of Plenty Regional Council**

 Transcript

Bay of Plenty Regional Council

A Regional Perspective on NZ’s National Collective Funding Model for Biocontrol of Weeds Research

Presented in 2023

**Presented by:**

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*[Opening visual of slide with text saying, ‘Bay of Plenty Regional Council Toi Moana with Crest (logo),’ ‘Bay of Plenty Regional Council,’ ‘A Regional Perspective on NZ’s National Collective Funding Model for Biocontrol of Weeds Research, ‘Webinar 5 – Overview’, ‘2023]*

**Shane:**

welcome, everybody. Thank you for tuning in and for the opportunity to present to you. My name is Shane Hona, and I'm coming to you from Rotorua in New Zealand, and I'm going to talk about a regional perspective on New Zealand's national collective funding model for Biocontrol of Weeds research.

I've got a background in biosecurity and environmental work, and I've been working for the Bay of Plenty Regional Council for approximately ten years, and the Bay of Plenty Region is in the north island of New Zealand. It's the blue area on the map and as well as that, I've also been involved in biocontrol from the research perspective, working for the biocontrol of weeds team at Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research and I've been the Bay of Plenty Regional Council rep on the New Zealand National Biocontrol Collective for approximately five or six years.

And by my count in the Bay of Plenty Region, we've released 46 biocontrol agents to target 21 pest plant species to date. So, in New Zealand we have our two levels of government. We've got the central government based in Wellington and then we have our local government. The country is divided into 15 regions. There's nine in the North Island and six in the South Island.

We don't have the state level that you have in Australia. Just the local level and then the central government. And one of the roles of the regional authorities is to provide regional leadership and pest management. And this is usually delivered via Regional Pest Management Plans, RPMPs and pathway management plans. And this is all done under the Biosecurity Act, which is our national legislation for managing pests.

And yet generally the focus is on emerging low incidence pests, which are the things that we can try and manage before they're widespread. And then once pests become widespread, biocontrol is one of the tools we have available to sort of support the community with managing these pests. So, the biocontrol funding sources, in New Zealand, we have the National Biocontrol Collective which is providing money to the scientists and the main provider for biocontrol research is Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research.

They can also receive central government funding through the Ministry for Primary Industries from Wellington. There are also other providers that can also provide biocontrol research such as AgResearch, Scion and NIWA. But the main outfit that we all work with ss Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research. So, the National Biocontrol Collective was formed in 2002 and it was to provide coordinated funding for priority pests and participation is voluntary. The bulk of the members are regional councils and unitary authorities, as well as the Department of Conservation. And the Department of Conservation administers approximately 30% of New Zealand's land area through national parks and other protected land.

The research provider is Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, and the funding is based on voluntary contributions, and they’re based on the ratepayers per region. So, for example, Auckland City is our largest city. They have approximately 1.7 million ratepayers. Versus a smaller area like Gisborne with less than 50,000. So, the amount of income that each region has dictates the amount that they pay into the collective.

So, to date the funding from all the members of the collective has resulted in the release of 25 biocontrol agents for 23 pest plant species. And as well as that there's a number of other projects at different stages of the progress from initial research to permission to release. And a couple of examples on the right is the woolly nightshade lace bugs.

And then on the left, more recently, was the moth plant beetle. So unfortunately, there are more target weeds that could be researched for biocontrol than there is money available. So, decisions have to be made on how the funding is used and that can result in a little bit of a tug of war because the different regions will have different priorities.

So, for a number of years, each region had an equal vote on which species should be targeted, and the species that got the most votes would receive funding. But there was also the option for members of the collective to provide additional funding for target species that were high priority for them. For example, the Bay of Plenty Regional Council provided additional funding for woolly nightshade and Waikato Regional Council has provided additional funding for yellow flag iris.

So, one of the tricky things about choosing which weeds to target is that different weeds have different impacts in different parts of the country. So, to the left there are a couple of weeds that are really bad in the northern, warmer parts of the country, which include woolly nightshade and alligator weed. And then in the middle, the sort of more dry inland areas are fighting with other weeds, such as serrated tussock and Chilean needle grass.

While the colder southern areas are really struggling with Darwin’s barberry and old man's beard to name a few. So, what could be done to improve how this collective works? Well, rather than just having an equal vote for each collective member. Recently the move has been to using decision support tools to identify the higher priority pest plant species and the biocontrol agents that should receive priority for research.

The contributions from the members have also been used recently to leverage for further funding. So, for example, a large research project received funding from the central government and part of that was because of all of the collective members that were providing additional funding, which also went into that research project and in future other large landowners or managers and the country could become involved in the collective.

So, we have some of our large landowners like forestry companies, farming companies, hydro generation companies, the defence force, Māori land blocks and corporations. KiwiRail that manages all the railway land and Waka Kotahi that manages the state highways. So, they would all receive benefits if invasive weeds on their land were managed. And another key thing that's going to change in the future is working with Māori.

So rather than in the past where the research is all done, it's time to release the agent and then permission is sought from Māori as to whether they support it. We're seeing a move that Māori tribes and iwi want to be involved as partners earlier in the process and want to be involved throughout the process rather than just at the end and this can be fairly complicated.

For example, the region that I'm based in has the most Māori tribes and subtribes in the country. So, we have 40 iwi and 200 subtribes and as you could imagine, that would be quite a lot of logistics to engage with all of them if the weed was found across all their land. So, in summary, the National Biocontrol Collective has proven to be a successful funding model with a great track record to date.

The challenges are that we have differing priorities across the country for different targets, but there are some options on how we can improve in future. Thank you very much.

[End of Transcript]