

Integrated Community and Agency-Led Wilding Conifer Management across the Marlborough Region, New Zealand

Jono Underwood¹

¹Marlborough District Council, Blenheim, New Zealand
(jono.underwood@marlborough.govt.nz)

Summary In 2016, with new government funding, New Zealand embarked on a nationwide operational programme addressing the threat of wilding conifers. The Marlborough region has no shortage of wilding conifer issues from a legacy of will-intended attempts at erosion control or other plantings of species which turned out to be prolific invaders. With the impending ramping up of wilding conifer management programmes in the Marlborough region, as a small unitary authority – Marlborough District Council (MDC) recognised early that it cannot deliver it all on its own. As a result, MDC embarked on establishing a truly collaborative partnerships between all the players actively delivering management programmes in the region. This involved two Community Trusts, the Department of Conservation Wairau/Renwick, St Arnaud & Waitohi/Sounds Area Offices and MDC as the local unitary authority. There was also input by the National Wildings programme team at Biosecurity New Zealand and Land Information New Zealand.

In addition, an early bottom-line principle established was that all programmes were to be tenure-neutral and focused on addressing the threat - not getting hung up on land ownership boundaries. To their credit, all players bought into that notion which likely led to the success being seen. A ‘Regional Steering Group’ platform was established and chaired by a MDC Environment Committee Member then coordinated and facilitated by MDC staff. With the backbone relationships in place, MDC was then able to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of various programmes receiving NWCCP investment in Marlborough. This including exploring new contracting and project management models, and was all delivered within existing staff resource. MDC was able to demonstrate a focus on achieving the best possible outcome in the most efficient manner.

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