

Funding boost for Arrowtown's wilding pine control programme

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Biosecurity New Zealand has announced \$175,000 for wilding pine control in the Arrowtown area.

"This money will mean the wilding pine control work started in 2017 now has sufficient funds to be completed," says Sherman Smith, head of the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme.

In the past two decades, wilding pines have become a more prominent feature in the Arrowtown landscape, taking over native tussock. Three years ago, concerned locals got together to form the Arrowtown Wilding Group with the intention of undertaking wilding pine removal on 676 hectares surrounding Arrowtown

"People said the job was too tough, that it would be too hard, but over the last two and a half years we have shown what can be done," says Mr Benjamin Teele, Arrowtown Wilding Group organiser.

"The community has come together to do the work. We have volunteer days where lots of people come to help, as well as large numbers of regular volunteers who remove trees and seedlings in evenings and weekends."

"We were able to undertake this work once the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) decided to carry out an early harvest of the Coronet Forest. These trees are in the process of being removed and this means the risks of re-infestation from the Douglas firs within the forest has been removed."

Mr Smith says that unlike commercial forests, wilding pines are weeds.



“Wilding pines are self-seeded trees which have not been intentionally planted. Once they get established, they spread quickly. Wilding pines overwhelm our native landscapes, killing native plants and forcing out native animals.”

“Without action, these pest trees could cost New Zealand’s economy as much as \$4.6 billion in lost productivity, losses to primary production, lost water and spending on fire prevention. The National Wilding Conifer Control Programme is bringing New Zealanders together to tackle this significant national problem,” says Mr Smith.

“It’s important to act early, both here and across the country. If we don’t take steps now, more than a quarter of New Zealand is at risk. And every year we wait, the cost of removing the wilding pines rises by 30%.”

The National Wilding Conifer Control Programme is run by Biosecurity New Zealand. Over the last three years, the programme and its partners have surveyed and controlled wilding pines across approximately 1.8 million hectares. Areas include the central North Island, Marlborough, Canterbury, Otago and Southland.

The Arrowtown project is a collaboration between a large number of organisations, including the Arrowtown Village Association, Arrowtown Promotion and Business Association, the New Zealand Wilding Conifer Group (NZWCG), QLDC, the Otago Regional Council, QEII National Trust, Land Information New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, private landowners and National Wilding Conifer Control Programme.

Last reviewed: 17 Apr 2020

Key facts about Wilding Pines

- Wilding pines are trees which have self-seeded and are growing where they are not wanted - they are the wrong tree in the wrong place. Unlike commercial forests, wilding pines are weeds.
- A conservative estimate is that wilding pines affect at least 1.8 million hectares (almost 6%) of New Zealand's land area. The actual area affected is likely to be much larger.
- Wilding pines spread fast - within 30 years they could cover more than a quarter of New Zealand. They not only threaten our natural environment but also overwhelm farmland, recreational land and areas of cultural importance.
- Around 1.8 million hectares of New Zealand's unique natural environment are infested with wilding pines. This includes some of our most iconic landscapes like Mt Tongariro, the Coromandel, the MacKenzie Basin, and Kai Iwi Lakes in Northland.
- We could lose up to 7.5 million hectares of New Zealand to wilding pine invasion. This would have an economic cost of \$4.6 billion, due to the negative impact of wilding pines on primary production, biodiversity, hydroelectric power generation and irrigation.
- The National Wilding Conifer Control Programme is led by Biosecurity New Zealand, working with the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). Other key players include the Defence Force, regional and local councils, local communities, researchers, industry and private landowners.
- So far, the programme has successfully controlled wilding pine infestations across 1.5 million hectares of vulnerable New Zealand landscapes. This active control means we have protected more than 3 million hectares, or just over 11 %, of New Zealand.

More information and media assets are available at wildingpines.nz. Email wilding.pines@mpi.govt.nz for details.