

Wilding Pines projects part of Government Covid-19 recovery package

- Date: 27 April 2020
- Media contact: MPI media team
- Telephone: [029 894 0328](tel:0298940328)
- Email: media@mpi.govt.nz

The Government has announced new projects to control Wilding Pines in Northland and the McKenzie Basin, funded through the Government's \$100 million regional support package.

Minister for Biosecurity Damien O'Connor says the government is actively looking to bring forward wilding control work to support people whose employment is affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

"Forestry workers are among the most seriously impacted by the downturn, and Wilding Pine control aligns well with normal harvest and pre-harvest activities for forestry," Minister O'Connor says.

The projects will provide jobs for around 79 people over the next three months. Locations were chosen to ensure workers can avoid unnecessary travel.

"We've selected sites where work can begin quickly, matching control work needed to the skills of people available nearby," Minister O'Connor says.

Work in Northland will focus on infestations surrounding the Awanui River, where problem trees are creating a flood-risk for Kaitaia, and in Waipoua, to remove wildings that are regenerating on Iwi-owned land. In Canterbury work will focus on protecting the McKenzie Basin from infestations in Twizel, Tekapo and Ohau, protecting farmland and conservation land in the area.

Minister O'Connor says more projects are expected following the pilot.



“More than a quarter of New Zealand is at risk from wilding pines, including some of our most iconic landscapes, and unique natural habitats. Accelerating this work to control wilding pines will remove major seed sources and prevent more infestations” Minister O’Connor says.

“The prevalence of Wildings Pines infestations throughout New Zealand means the government is well placed to find work for people near where they live, allowing people to stay in work while the economy recovers”.

“This work needs to be done, and doing it now saves money, as the cost of removing wilding pines rises by 30% each year. There are opportunities for similar projects in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, and Central North Island. We are looking at the potential for more projects in Marlborough, Otago and Canterbury”.

Forestry workers interested in Wilding Control projects should contact MPI at wilding.conifers@mpi.govt.nz

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.
- The National Wilding Conifer Control Programme uses the term wilding pine to refer to all wilding conifer species as this is the term most widely understood within New Zealand.
- 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.