



PREDATOR FREE WHANGĀREI

PROJECT FAQS – AUGUST 2020

Predator Free Whangārei – Why here? Why now?

Initial discussions about the possibility of an ambitious predator free programme began in 2018 with community groups and the Northland Regional Council (NRC).

From these discussions it was clear that the community was ready to take on the challenge of becoming possum and eventually predator free. The funding application to Predator Free 2050 Ltd was approved earlier this year.

What are the project's environmental goals?

- Completely remove possums from the Whangārei Heads Peninsula
 - Intensively control mustelids between Whangārei and Te Whara / Bream Head
 - Intensively control rats in high priority sites
 - Intensively control possums between Whangārei and Pārua Bay to prevent their dispersal into Whangārei Heads
 - Develop an urban predator control programme in Whangārei City
-

What are the project's environmental objectives?

- Our native life – including many threatened and endemic birds, bats, invertebrates and plants – thrives
 - Tens of thousands of hectares of Northland forest and coastal habitats are protected and restored
-

What are the project's social, cultural, and economic objectives?

- Northlanders are inspired, supported and enabled to undertake predator control in their backyards
- Local hapū and iwi are supported and enabled to exercise kaitiakitanga over their whenua
- New education, training and employment opportunities are created
- Contribution to the success of national Predator Free 2050 initiative

Why Whangārei Heads?

Whangārei Heads was chosen as a key area for this project because it has an extremely high level of active community-led conservation groups and landowners already working hard on pest control.

As a peninsula, it is also defensible, making the possum-free goal achievable. Its close proximity to Whangārei City is also essential to grow awareness and engagement for future programmes in Northland

When did possums become a problem?

Fiordland and Northland were the last areas of New Zealand to be invaded by possums. In the 1960s there were hardly any possums in the region but by the 1990s there were 10-15 million possums living here.

The aim is to completely remove possums from Whangārei Heads peninsula (between Bream Head Scenic Reserve and Parua Bay) by 2025 and then protect it from incursions.

Why eradicate possums?

Possums are a serious pest animal in New Zealand and a threat to our forests and native wildlife. They eat leaves, flowers, leaf buds, fruit, eggs, birds, insects and snails, which threatens native species as well as their food supply.

Possums are the simplest of the three target predators to achieve eradication and the tools and technology are available now – learnings over the next 5 years will carve a path to allow possible expansion of the possum free area and/or eradication of mustelids or rats in the future as funding becomes available and methods are further refined.

The New Zealand Government currently spends over \$110 million per year on possum control.

How will we keep possums out?

Water is a natural barrier to possums and Whangārei Heads is surrounded by water (Whangārei Harbour to the South and Pataua Estuary to the North). The narrow neck of land between Parua Bay and the head of the Pataua Estuary will need to be defended, using a barrier, such as several lines of intensive trapping.

The possum population outside of the possum free zone will then need to be controlled to reduce the likelihood of incursion.

What are the long term benefits of achieving possum eradication?

Possum control will support an increase in growth and fruit production of our native forests, supporting native species, such as kākā and kererū, to safely breed. It also:

- Provides long term cost savings
 - Means less use of baits long term
 - Creates more time for watching the birds and enjoying a Predator Free environment
 - Eliminates the likelihood of Tuberculosis (TB) spreading
 - Increases resilience of forest during periods of drought
-

Is eradication of possums achievable?

Yes! Possum eradication at Whangārei Head's is achievable for the following reasons:

- **National expertise** - New Zealand has been a leader in eradication of predators from offshore islands for decades. In recent years, several organisations have been working hard to develop new tools and methods to achieve eradication of predators on the mainland... and huge achievements have been made! An example of this is [Zero Invasive Predators Ltd](#) who has achieved great success in recent years.
 - **Similar projects** - we have the benefit of learning from other landscape scale mainland eradication projects that are already well underway in other regions such [Hawkes Bay](#), [Wellington](#), [Dunedin](#) and [Taranaki](#).
 - **Our people** - Whangārei's community conservation groups are national leaders in their field and have already proven magnificent results can be achieved when we work alongside one another and get our hands dirty.
 - **Landscape** - Whangārei Heads is a peninsula, which makes the area naturally more defensible and reduces the likelihood of incursion once possums are eradicated.
-

How do predators damage our environment?

Because New Zealand evolved with no land mammals besides bats, our native birds never learnt to protect themselves from [predators](#). These predators:

1. Outcompete our native species for food and habitat
 2. Eat native bird eggs and kill chicks (less than 5% of kiwi reach their first birthday)
 3. Eat our native vegetation, slowing growth and stopping the production of forests
 4. Have forced many native birds - 53 to date - into extinction
 5. Cause damage to agriculture and forestry (and even the wires in your house)
-

How does predator suppression benefit the community?

Suppression of predators benefits the community in so many ways! It:

1. Brings the community together, encouraging us to get out and enjoy nature
 2. Provides employment
 3. Provides opportunities for re-introduction of locally extinct species
 4. Supports re-vegetation, protecting from erosion
 5. Benefits tourism by preserving our ecosystems
 6. Reduces the spread of diseases e.g. leptospirosis, tuberculosis etc
-

How will the project unfold over the next five years?

This project will be coordinated on behalf of the community by NRC. Project plans have been drafted to support community discussion about how we will work towards eradicating possums from Whangārei Heads.

Ongoing discussions and consultation will continue throughout the project with partners, hapū / whanau, landowners and the community to ensure everyone is comfortable with an agreed approach.

Who's involved?

Everyone!

This is a project for everyone in Whangārei! The project partners are NRC, Department of Conservation (WDC), Kiwi Coast, Iwi/Hapū/Whanau, WDC, QEII National Trust (QEII), Backyard Kiwi, Whangārei Heads Landcare Forum, Bream Head Conservation Trust, Tiakina Whangārei, Pukenui Western Hills Forest Trust, Tutukaka Landcare Coalition, Friends of Matakohē Limestone Island and many more community groups.

You can be involved too!

How are the project partners contributing?

All our project partners bring a wide range of valuable expertise to the project.

For example, DOC will provide technical expertise in predator eradication and control tools and methods and permissions for action on public conservation land.

The local community conservation groups bring a highly successful, motivated team of people on the ground with awesome local knowledge and established credibility in the community.

PF2050Ltd brings advice and support to achieve project outcomes.

I'm a landowner... what information can I expect?

- Face to face engagement
 - Public meetings
 - Request for permission to access property (Whangārei Heads area)
 - Request for permission to use and service traps and / or possum toxins on your property (Whangārei Heads area)
-

I'm a landowner... what can I expect on my land?

If you're keen to be part of Predator Free Whangārei, you can expect:

- Professional operators servicing the traps and/or bait stations
 - Opportunities to contribute to the possum eradication, predator control and/or biodiversity monitoring.
 - If you are doing pest control - keep up the good work! Your input and local knowledge, including reporting, is integral to the success of this goal!
-

How is the project supporting tangata whenua / mana whenua?

We are working closely with local hapū in the Whangārei Heads and across Whangārei to develop some specific hapū led pest control programmes on Māori land, and in certain areas of significance.

How will the project work with existing conservation efforts in Whangārei Heads?

This project has been made possible by the hundreds of community volunteers who have donated thousands of hours to predator control in the district over many years.

Over the coming months we hope to meet with each group to discuss how they might like to be involved / contribute to the eradication of possums and identify mutual benefits (e.g. promotion of group).

How will the project work with existing conservation efforts across Whangārei?

Predator Free Whangārei will work alongside existing community-led conservation groups to identify geographical gaps in existing predator control and build plans and support to achieve the mustelid, possum and rat suppression objectives.

What methods will be used for eradication?

The most important first step in eradication is engaging landowners, mana whenua / tangata whenua and agents such as DOC. Once we have support, we can then discuss the best methods for our communities.

The Government has invested heavily in new research and technologies which will be available in coming years and we are working closely with other landscape scale eradication projects across New Zealand.

Contact our team for information about more specific eradication methods.

What tools will be used for suppression?

We have a range of tools available in the 'suppression toolbox', including a wide range of baits and traps that are designed for different predators in different environments.

Because there is so much cutting edge research currently underway with predator control, we expect new methods to become available every year.

What is Predator Free 2050?

In 2016 the New Zealand Government announced a national goal to make New Zealand predator free by 2050. Predator Free 2050 aims to eradicate mustelids ('mustelids' includes all three mustelid species of stoats, ferrets and weasels), rats and possums.

Collectively, these animals inflict the worst damage of all the introduced pests on New Zealand's plants and wildlife.

Becoming predator free is not a new vision - over a century ago conservation pioneers were taking kākāpō and kiwi to predator free offshore islands to save them from the ravages of stoats and rats.

Leaders like Sir Paul Callaghan, Sir Rob Fenwick and Gareth Morgan have helped build today's predator free movement of dedicated community and individual trappers, conservation advocates, council workers, scientists, funders and inventors.

Who is Predator Free 2050 Ltd?

Predator Free 2050 Limited is a Crown-owned, charitable company established to help deliver the New Zealand government's ambitious goal of eradicating possums, stoats and rats by 2050.

PF2050 Ltd provides co-funding to enable predator eradication projects at large landscape scale and the breakthrough science needed to underpin them.

How will we measure success?

We have lots of ways to measure the success of this project:

- Community engagement and involvement
 - High quality data collection and analysis
 - Intensive detection network and timely response to predator sightings
 - Statistical modelling in partnership with Manaaki Whenua / Landcare Research and PF2050Ltd
 - Biodiversity outcome monitoring - call counts, bird sightings, FORMAK (Forest Monitoring and Assessment Kit)
 - Employment and training provided
 - School involvement
 - Meeting project milestones and holding regular reviews
 - Reporting to funders and project partners
-

What are the outcomes for the community?

There are so many awesome outcomes from this project for the community - here's just a few:

- Employment / training (including Treaty of Waitangi)
 - Education about predator control
 - Increase in active community participation in conservation related activities
 - Mental health and wellbeing
 - Sense of pride and place
 - Community connection - bringing people together
 - Return of Taonga species not otherwise able to thrive and survive in our backyards
 - Increased understanding of Mataranga Maori
-

How will Predator Free Whangārei fit in with existing mahi?

This project has been made possible through the support, and existing efforts over many years, of the district's community conservation groups. We are working alongside these groups to extend and intensify their efforts in several ways:

- Support and enable landowners to undertake their own pest control
 - Coordinate existing effort to align towards a common goal
 - Work in partnership to achieve the objectives of the project
 - Endeavour to secure funding beyond the 5 year scope of this program to support existing efforts and expand
-

How can I, and the community, get involved?

We'd love you to get involved, and there's so many great opportunities, like these:

- Participate in public conversations and consultation
 - Be open to visits to learn more (if you're a landowner)
 - Join your local Landcare group
 - Volunteer with your local community-led conservation groups
 - Join Kiwi Coast
 - Share information about the project with your school or business
 - Keep up to date on project progress - online dashboard and newsletters
 - Sign up to receive regular information about PFW
 - Talk to your neighbours about the project
-

Why is this project important?

We recently held a workshop with some of the local Landcare groups in Whangārei Heads and these are the reasons why they choose to be involved:

Protect my fruit trees, kiwi, bird life, eels

To help nature flourish

A trustee of the BHCT. Here in support of conserving our taonga of Whangārei Heads and building on the good work already being done

To restore the full ecological systems before humans arrived in Aotearoa and to share love of conservation

Increased biodiversity bringing more resilience

Love Aotearoa, birds and plants

Environment is a key part of Whangārei Heads lifestyle

We live in a very special place. We can build on what we already have and establish even greater biodiversity. We are on a journey but there is much more we can achieve.

My home is in the nook. All bush and coastline have spent 20 years with Bream Head Conservation Trust The needs to conserve and restore our biodiversity for the health of the nation

Because if we don't actively protect it the bush and birds as we know it and everything else will die

To support the natural environment

Protecting things and working with others

Healthy ecosystems

I am involved in a local tourism business, so I am engaging with visitors to the area and I

feel an ownership of this local taonga. I want to do my bit to make it as good as possible. I love it here!

Tamariki, native taonga, preserving our special place, listening to nature

To protect our existing bush and facilitate regeneration

To increase native birdlife, insect life, geckos etc

Protect streams and stream life

A treasure for the future

So, my kids can have some of the privilege we have had in enjoying this special place

To leave our native environment in a better state than when we bought it - for my kids and their kids

So future generations can experience and enjoy our environment

Appreciate what we have

Biodiversity and community engagement.

I love the ngahere and I want to see it flourish

Connecting people to their local environment

I participate to protect bush, birds and critters for all that follow - kaitiaki tangata

Feel good that we can contribute to it.

To make a difference to our natural environment

To join a community project

Listen to strong bird song

Birdsong, dawn chorus

Love the bush, landscape and birds

Passionate about doing anything that will protect them

Have your say

We'd love to hear from you about why this project is important to you, your community and your environment.

You can email the project team at pfwhangarei@nrc.govt.nz

