

## **Pest Control Operation in Lake Taupō Forest - June 2021**

LTFT administers 34,000 ha of land, of which around 10,000 ha is in natural forest. A key part of the Trustees' role as administrators is to look after all the whenua, including the ngahere and manu on the lands.

We are very aware that introduced pests are doing damage to our taiao, particularly possums, stoats and rats. We need to keep on top of this, by making sure that adequate pest control is taking place.

The joint Government / farmer entity 'Ospri' also wants to control possums in the area, as possums are known to carry Bovine tuberculosis. Bovine Tb is a disease of cattle and deer herds, and if it is present in herds the farmer is unable to sell or move their stock, effectively putting their whole operation on hold. For this reason, Ospri has been applying to do possum control on LTFT lands for several decades, every few years asking to control pests over 4 – 8,000 ha of our lands. The bulk of this they do with aerial 1080 operations, with typically around 10 – 20% of the area done using ground-based techniques – particularly around river and streams.

When Ospri makes such a request, we call a meeting of owners to discuss it before giving Ospri an answer. Often many of the owners who attend these meetings are strongly opposed to 1080, and ask that we don't approve the operation, and use other methods to control pests. Trustees weigh this up against the knowledge that with the tools available, it is not possible to control 34,000 ha of land without at least some aerial 1080 use, and that a 1080 operation not only kills possums, but it also kills rats and stoats, and so provides a high level of protection to our bush and birds. We also consider that Ospri pays for the work – each operation typically costing \$150,000 – \$300,000.

The latest operation is about to happen in June, when around 2,600 ha at the southern end of Lake Taupō Forest is being treated, together with around 6,000 ha on the neighbouring Hautū Rangipō Whenua lands (see map). This operation was requested back in 2019, and a meeting of owners was held in Turangi to discuss the request. Despite some opposition from the approximately 50 owners who attended, the Trustees decision was that we should approve it, provided we could build in a trial using alternative methods.

Trustees are fully aware that many of our owners do not like 1080. Trustees too would prefer not to have to use 1080, but at the same time they are reluctant to allow the pest numbers to get out of control. In an effort to understand whether we can realistically look at reducing our reliance on 1080 we have arranged to do have 1,000 ha of the upcoming operation treated using ground-based techniques. This is being done as a trial, and is expected to take about 2 months to complete. If successful, we will look to do more of this type of pest control in the future.

The trial itself is aligned with a parallel piece of work being done by LTFT, in conjunction with the Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust, Hautū Rangipō Whenua Ltd and the Opepe Farm Trust. This is to develop a Pest Control Strategy, and has involved input from pest control experts, workshops with owners, and now trials of alternative pest control techniques. We are hoping that over time we will be able to reduce our reliance on aerial 1080, while at the same time keeping our lands, bush and birdlife healthy.

### Map of June 2021 Pest Control Area

