

Labour commits to stronger protection for our native kauri

- **Rolling out a National Pest Management Plan – the strongest tool available under the Biosecurity Act – to manage kauri dieback disease with the investment of an additional \$32m over five years.**

Reason for action

Kauri forests are among the most ancient in the world and play an important role in the health and biodiversity of their local ecosystems. Kauri is a taonga species for Māori. But at the moment, the future of kauri is under threat.

The mighty kauri are threatened by a pathogen that is colloquially known as kauri dieback disease. This disease was potentially undetected in New Zealand for decades, before being formally identified in 2008.

Kauri dieback kills nearly all trees it infects with limited treatment options, and no cure. The disease is spread by soil movements, such as in rainwater run-off, on equipment or the soles of boots, and through the movement of animals.

To stem the impacts of kauri dieback, there have been calls from individuals, community groups, local iwi, scientists and the wider public for a National Pest Management Plan (NPMP), which is a tool available under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

An NPMP will show that we are serious about protecting kauri. It is the strongest piece of regulation available and provides nationally consistent rules, ensures mandatory hygiene practices, strong governance and continued access to funding.

Since 2018 extensive consultation has been carried out to discuss a NPMP for kauri dieback. Labour is committed to an NPMP and believes that it will be crucial in stopping the spread of kauri dieback.

National Pest Management Plan for kauri dieback

An NPMP is a legal framework for bringing the work of government, councils, local iwi and NGOs under an umbrella agency that will oversee all kauri dieback activity.

At the moment there are various programmes of work being undertaken. We have an opportunity to enhance this work with a collaborative approach, and co-ordination under an NPMP.

Once set up the NPMP will lead the Government's strategy to protect against kauri dieback. The NPMP will also ensure that councils, iwi, and NGOs are at the decision making table and involved in the strategic direction and day-to-day response to kauri dieback. This is an upgrade to our efforts to protect kauri and is what advocacy groups have been asking for. A partnership approach is critical to achieve success.

The NPMP will:

- Create a strategy for protecting kauri that includes clear national objectives and coordination across government, councils, local Iwi and NGOs to better control the spread of kauri dieback.
- Create a management agency that can give effect to the NPMP strategy and lead, the response with the sector.
- Provide the strongest regulatory tool and powers available under the Biosecurity Act that can require specific actions of people that use, or come into contact with kauri trees and forests
- Ensures that the funding across the sector is coordinated.

There are currently three NPMPs in place, one for PSA-V in kiwifruit, one for Bovine Tuberculosis, and one for American Foulbrood in bees. This will be New Zealand's fourth NPMP. The other three plans have been extremely useful in aligning work streams, creating clear planning, responding to change, and ensuring a consistent strategic direction. For Bovine TB, the difference made over 22 years has been:

Year ending 30 June	Infected herds @ 30 June	Number of TB test-positive animals slaughtered	Number of animals confirmed with TB
1998	1,042	4,864	2,898
2020	36	515	91

An NPMP will be extremely useful for stopping the spread of kauri dieback.

Labour will commit to an additional \$32m of funding over five years. To progress an NPMP the Minister has to be satisfied that there is adequate funding for the implementation of the plan. The additional \$32 million will ensure this requirement is met, by complimenting the existing funding streams for kauri dieback. The combined funding will allow for the establishment of the agency and for protection activities including through kauri research, surveillance and monitoring, and track upgrades and maintenance.

MPI will lead the work to establish an NPMP. This will include setting up a management agency with oversight for stopping the spread of kauri dieback which will work with local iwi, councils, central government agencies and NGOs.

We expect the objectives of the plan would be to:

- Reduce the spread of kauri dieback
- Maintain kauri dieback-free areas
- Reduce the impact of kauri dieback within infected sites
- Locally eliminate kauri dieback within infected sites
- Protect kauri trees and stands with special values from kauri dieback
- Control access when necessary
- Provide for Māori knowledge, values and approaches to manage kauri dieback disease and prevent its spread

Building on the work to date

The development of an NPMP will build on the current Kauri Dieback Programme. This is a partnership between Biosecurity New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, Auckland Council, the Northland, Waikato and Bay of Plenty Regional Councils, Te Roroa, and Tangata Whenua Roopu.

The programme, established in 2009, has undertaken a considerable amount of work. This has included the commissioning of about 70 science and research projects, upgrading of tracks, placing cleaning stations in high use areas, tightening regulatory restrictions on the movement of soil and plant material, and educational and behaviour change initiatives.

Over the past three years in government we have invested over \$60 million to combat kauri dieback, for science and research efforts, a kauri sanctuary and upgrading tracks. This includes funding in the current financial year by Biosecurity New Zealand and the Department of Conservation of over \$14 million for kauri protection activities.

In addition the Northland Regional Council has allocated \$70,000 for operational activity, the Waikato Regional Council has allocated \$508,000 and the Auckland City Council has allocated \$10.6 million for operational activity and capital projects for this financial year.

The \$32 million announced today will add to these efforts and ensure funding is coordinated and targeted through the NPMP for kauri.

The ecosystem

Kauri are a cornerstone of the indigenous forests of the upper North Island and play a vital role in supporting other native trees and shrubs including tōtara, tānekaha, taraire, tawa, miro and rewarewa. Orchids and epiphytic plants often found perching in the branches of kauri trees. The plants, animals and ecosystems that kauri create and support are indirectly under threat from kauri dieback disease, which makes stopping the spread of kauri dieback even more important.