

## Kickstart of a new Sustainable Farming Fund Project

Over the last year the New Zealand Wilding Conifer has been active to secure new funding from the Ministry for Primary Industries through a new application to the Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF). Our efforts have been successful and we looking towards three years of funded research that will help to manage wildings in New Zealand's unique landscapes better.

With the support from MPI, contributions from the WCMG members and Scion we will be able to carry out focused and targeted research to support the many groups, councils and affected parties in their operational work to control and manage wildings.

Setting up and supporting groups in their monitoring efforts and providing information to estimate better the costs of control will help us all to be more efficient and provide evidence for the need of management of wilding conifers.

Furthermore we identified a strong need to improve our understanding of production and plantation conifers like Douglas-fir in terms of their cone production and potential

degree of self establishment in various climates and site conditions. This will support stakeholders and forestry managers in their management decisions now and in the future.

As SFF projects are focused on stakeholder needs the input and support from you will be required to make this a successful research project. Input and support from stakeholders in establishing the monitoring network and to find study sites will be essential to make this project a success.



Mt. Cook Station: Fire as an option for wilding control?

With the increase in work that the project will require we also will add some capability to the team with Scion adding an

operational manager to the wilding team. Annette Brockerhoff will take on this challenge and will manage the groups finances as well as will plan and manage the programme to help the NZ WCMG to achieve its goals.

### Meet the newbie in the team

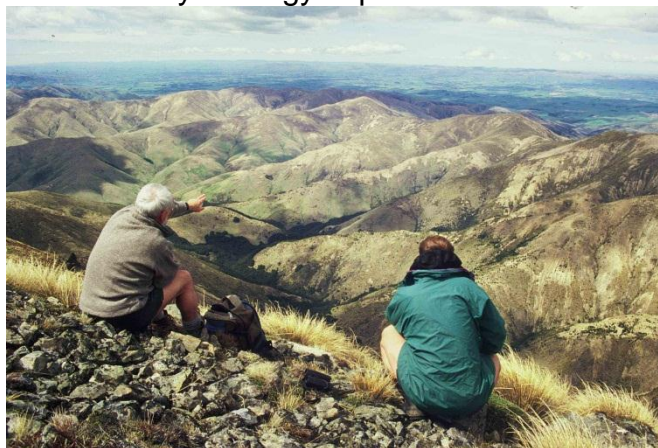
Annette Brockerhoff has a background in biological sciences and joined Scion in 2012 as a project manager. She has managed various research projects and supports the scientists in the Forest Economics and Environment team. With such a background she is well experienced and capable to help the group to make this new SFF project successful. Annette is based in Christchurch and provides therefore a contact point for the South Island for general operational questions for the project.



## A National Strategy for wilding conifer management

As you might all know a national strategy for wilding conifers is currently developed by the Ministry of Primary Industries. This was recommended in the status report previously published and was endorsed by the Minister for Primary Industry (MPI). MPI was appointed to be the lead agency for preparing such a strategy and the NZWCMG was seen as the important stakeholder group to interact with. Sherman Smith and Jane Bowden Dobson have been charged with the task to develop the strategy supported by a working group, which many members are part of the New Zealand Wilding Conifer Management Group. The group had so far three meetings. If you are interested, the minutes from the first (March) and last meeting (May) can be found on the WCMG website

([www.wildingconifers.org.nz](http://www.wildingconifers.org.nz)) in the news section. MPI aims to have the first draft of this non-statutory strategy in place in mid-2013.



Mid-Dome – one of the priority areas for wilding control identified in the strategy?

### Community groups in control

The increasing awareness of the wilding problem has triggered the creation of community driven groups that now actively carry out wilding control and management in many parts of the High Country of New Zealand. They are supported by the Department of Conservation and the local regional and territorial authorities and made a significant contribution over the last 10 years promoting their case and reducing the risk of further spread in many areas. Their success in raising funds over the last years, despite the harder present financial times, speaks for itself. Here are three examples:

The **Mid Dome Wildings Trees Charitable Trust** established in 2006 has just recently obtained additional funding of 1.2M, which will allow them to bring initially later planned control work forward, enabling them to target areas that are identified as seed sources earlier and preventing additional spread over time.

The **Wakatipu Wilding Conifer Management Group (WCG)** has spent nearly NZ\$ 400,000 for wilding control in 2012-13 with great input of time and effort by volunteers, which was estimated to nearly NZ\$120,000. Newest efforts will include the active replacement of wilding conifers with planted native species on a number of sites.

The **Marlborough Sounds Restoration Trust** has been very successful in wilding control in the Sounds with an annual budget of NZ\$ 200,000, extending its sphere of influence now to areas as far as D'Urville Island to remove Radiata Pine and Maritime Pine mostly by stem poisoning allowing native vegetation to reclaim the sites. The example has been taken up now by the **Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust** to remove wilding pines inside the National Park (annual budget NZ\$150,000).



## Wilding symposium in Dunedin

Late in January this year the VII international Southern Connection Congress hosted a wilding conifer workshop in Dunedin which brought together wilding practitioners and researchers from overseas and New Zealand. The workshop was well attended and it highlighted that New Zealand's wilding problem is not a singularity in the Southern Hemisphere. It became evident during the workshop that the international community can learn from each other and operators can benefit from the pool of international expertise. The range of presentations painted in some cases a daunting picture (e.g. South Africa) but provided also good insights how to manage invasive tree species. If you are interested – the presentations are available on our website [www.wildingconifers.org.nz](http://www.wildingconifers.org.nz)



Bugger!

## New research results

This years commissioned research was aimed to improve the national picture of the wilding problem in terms of size and spatial distribution.

A research project shared with the Rural fire service estimated the affected area using an aerial imagery based inventory across potential wilding areas. The used design allows us to estimate the wilding affected area currently to be between 287,897 and 355,614 ha (95% Confidence Interval) providing the first time some statistical confidence around the affected wilding area in New Zealand (fig1).

Grasslands, as expected are the most affected vegetation types, with 182,204 ha (CI  $\pm$  26,753 ha) having some presence of wildings and this excludes areas that are now fully dominated by wildings forming a forest cover, estimated to occupy between 11,088 and 22,248 ha (95% CI). Further research is required and planned for this year to incorporate additional ground based inventories to validate and improve our estimates by intensifying our sample grid.

We also carried out a review and survey project looking at the current monitoring

practices and their purpose and methods. Monitoring will be increasingly important to provide evidence regarding control and the provision of funding. Many do surveys after controls but often no statistical design is used or quantitative data is collected making it hard to identify changes that occur.

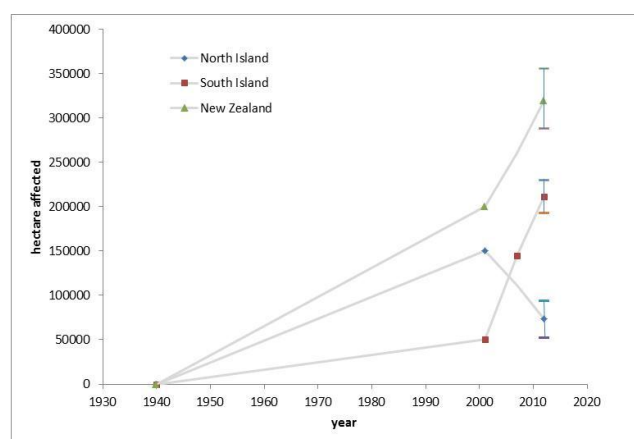


Figure 1: estimated changes in wilding affected area across New Zealand.

## Wilding Conifer Management Group Meeting and field trip

The next annual meeting will be held on the **22<sup>nd</sup> August** in Nelson (Richmond) at the Council Office (starting at 10.00 till 4.30). Andrew Macalister offered to organise the meeting that will be combined with a field trip on the following day (**23<sup>rd</sup>**). On the field trip we will look at some of the unique wilding situations in the Sounds and the Red Hills. Points on the meeting agenda will include among others the research programme of the upcoming SFF project and an update on the National Wilding Strategy.

Please register (free event) with [thomas.paul@scionresearch.com](mailto:thomas.paul@scionresearch.com) if you want to attend the meeting and/or field day. The agenda details can be found on [www.wildingconifers.org.nz](http://www.wildingconifers.org.nz).



Field day last NZ WCMG near Queenstown: Demonstration of Spray-packs

*An annual newsletter produced by the New Zealand Wilding Conifer Management Group, To report on the Group's work and to inform on wilding matters generally*

The 2006-2009 SFF-funded project was initially overseen by the South Island Wilding Conifer Management Group (SIWCMG). In 2009 this became the New Zealand WCMG. The Group continued in the last years serving as a stakeholder group under a Ministry of Primary Industries 'umbrella' and will now oversee a new SFF funded project to support the strategy for wilding conifer management.

Current Group members are Dept of Conservation, High Country Federated Farmers, major forest plantation owners, Land Information NZ, Tasman District Council, Marlborough District Council, Environment Canterbury, Environment Southland, Otago Regional Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Environment Waikato, Hawkes Bay Regional Council, Horizons Regional Council, Landcorp Farming, Molesworth Station, the Royal NZ Forest and Bird Society and Scion.

At present, Hamish Roxburgh, a North Canterbury farmer, remains as Chairman of the group, with Thomas Paul of Scion as the research leader and Annette Brockerhoff as the operational manager for the new SFF project.

[www.wildingconifers.org.nz](http://www.wildingconifers.org.nz)