

# Kawau Island Pest Eradication update to KIRRA AGM

## **Update on Argentine Ants- recent discovery at Little Vivian Bay:**

Argentine Ants are amongst the world's top 100 most invasive pests. They are included in Auckland's Regional Pest Management Plan 2020-2030 and the Hauraki Gulf Controlled Area Notice for pests as they are aggressive and can kill native insects, birds and reptiles. Unlike other ant species, they form large colonies which can swarm and bite people when disturbed. They take over large areas and are very costly to eradicate.

They were discovered in Vivian Bay in 2013. A huge search effort was mounted over 23ha by Auckland Council with the help of residents, community volunteers and industry to locate and destroy their nests and to minimise further spread. Twice- yearly surveys and targeted pest control programmes have been undertaken since, and results have been encouraging, with an overall reduction in the number of nests at Vivian Bay to present day. Native ant species are increasing in sites where Argentine ants had been located and treated.

Unfortunately, Argentine Ants have recently been found at Little Vivian Bay. Council staff working with Key Industries will be checking and surveying this 6ha area across 20-22 March to determine the extent of this infestation, and simultaneously running a treatment programme to control the ants. Eradication is still the aim for Vivian Bay.

## **Proposed removal of rats, possums, wallabies and stoats: feasibility update**

Under the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) [2020-2030](#), Auckland Council has an obligation to protect the natural ecological values of the Hauraki Gulf Islands from the threat of pests and diseases.

One of the plan's commitments is the proposed removal of rats, possums, wallabies, and stoats from Kawau Island. The Hauraki Gulf Controlled Area Notice 2020 will support the proposed project by preventing reinvasion of pests from the mainland.

### **Expected outcome/ benefits:**

Removing rats, stoats, possums and wallabies from Kawau would lead to significant gains for biodiversity and contribute to the recovery of several threatened species and ecosystems. Situated in close proximity to Tāwharanui and Shakespear Open Sanctuaries, as well as other pest-free islands, Kawau has the potential to become home to many more native birds if invasive mammals are removed from the island and habitat regenerates.

Should the proposed project proceed, there is potential to be community driven, in a model similar to Te Korowai o Waiheke –reflecting the community's shared values, investment, interest and involvement in the island. Te Korowai o Waiheke is a charitable trust established by the local community to eradicate predators from the island.

In addition to the biodiversity gains, the pest eradication project has the potential to improve living conditions for residents and landowners, ultimately reduce the risk of fire, and potentially enhance visitor experiences to Kawau Island.

Strategically, the project is also of critical importance to New Zealand's predator free vision, paving the way to other inhabited islands within the Hauraki Gulf and elsewhere.

### **What has been achieved to date?**

The project remains in the feasibility assessment stage.

In recognition of the ambitious nature of the project and the high level of buy in required from the community, Auckland Council commissioned the NGO, Island Conservation, to assess the project's feasibility. Kawau is predominantly privately owned, and the project's success is intrinsically dependent on support from the community. Eradication of rats, for example, is contingent on the cooperation of all land holders on the island and to prevent reinvasion, stakeholders must be willing to support ongoing biosecurity measures.

### **What next?**

To complete the feasibility assessment, the following four key steps are required:

- Confirmation of a delivery model. Working with the Kawau Island community to establish this model starts with nominating a working group or committee who can represent the community.
- acceptance of the technical feasibility of this project confirmed by our major funding partners to secure their funding commitment. The feasibility report is currently being reviewed.
- Formation of a funding strategy and plan to secure third party funding
- Completion of a cultural impact assessment, to reach a final conclusion on the position of iwi on the project