



**Wilding Pine
Network**

ADVOCACY
—
ADVICE
—
ACTION

Wilding Pine Network 2023-2024 Annual Report



Image : Te Ara Whakahou o Waingake - Waingake transformation programme

[Waingake transformation programme | Gisborne District Council](#) The Waingake transformation programme aims to create vital native forest. In partnership with mana whenua, Maraetaha Incorporated supported by Ngai Tāmanuhiri, Gisborne District Council is transitioning 1200 hectares of pine plantation to indigenous forest. The goal is to regenerate the environmental and cultural heritage of Waingake, while also ensuring the protection and resilience of Tairāwhiti's water supply. Tairāwhiti has experienced massive historic losses of ecosystems and biodiversity. Just 7% of the Tairāwhiti district is classified as native bush today.

1. Chairs Report

Welcome to the 2023/24 Annual Report. This is my last Report as it is time to hand over the Chair's role. My decision to hand over the Chair's role gives me cause to reflect on the Wilding Pine Network and its achievements over that time. In my view the WPN has become the 'core of the culture' that drives the national Wilding Conifer Control Programme. We promote and build support from the grass roots and bring this into a collaborative hub involving affected landowners, local communities, local and central Government agencies, industry sectors, researchers and service providers. This partnership has provided a very powerful means to promote wilding conifer control and to progress us toward our long-term goal of a 'wilding free Aotearoa'. Much has been achieved over the last five years, but we still have a long way to go.

The highlight of last year for me certainly was the WPN Conference in Taupo from 16-18 October. Despite the stringent times we are in there was an excellent turnout and my thanks to all who attended and contributed to its success. It was great to see that despite the issues we face with funding that morale and commitment amongst everyone to 'a wilding free Aotearoa' remains high. I'm sure that this year's one in Twizel will be equally successful.

The other milestone was the Funding Summit held in Blenheim on 9 October. We know now that Biosecurity Minister Andrew Hoggard, who attended, understands our case and is sympathetic, however he needs to get the support of his colleagues in Cabinet. We are now working up the options for alternative sources of funding identified in the Summit.

At the December meeting of the national programme Governance Group, it was made clear that the Government had no spare funding to go into wilding conifer control and this was unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. I don't think we should take this as a 'fait accompli' – Governments can and do change their minds – especially as pressure is applied and when election looms. So, we need to do everything we can to keep reinforcing the messages we have been putting to our MPs and to any Ministers we can get the ear of. We must keep the political pressure up across all of New Zealand.

During the year the WPN has submitted on a range of legislative and policy issues where we have identified the risks that uncontrolled wilding conifer spread poses to various aspects New Zealand's economy, environment and our social and cultural fabric. We believe we are a strong, credible voice on these issues and that our submissions are helping to generate better outcomes. My thanks to our Coordinator Jo Ritchie who has led the charge on this as well as to management committee members and others who have contributed to the submission processes.

I'd also like to thank the members of our advocacy 'ginger group' including Rob Phillips, John Simmons, Kate O'Connell, Alan Johnstone and Peter Russell. They have focussed their skills and expertise on getting our messages to decision makers through direct contact as well as indirectly through mainstream and social media. Although it can be a slow and frustrating process to capture the attention of Ministers, we are making progress as we move toward national elections late in 2026.

In closing I'd like to thank the members of Biosecurity New Zealand especially Sherman Smith as national programme leader and his team members including Alan Tinnelly, Adam Ross, Randall Milne, Johnno Tunnell, Leigh Strange, Sarah Fish and Sarah Vernon. All have been incredibly supportive, and this list should extend to include members of DOC and LINZ and the CRIs who have all contributed in many ways to our very effective national partnership.

Finally, I'd like to propose a special vote of thanks to our Wilding Pine Network Coordinator, Jo Ritchie. She has worked tirelessly over the last 12 months to use every possible means at her disposal to promote the wilding conifer messages across New Zealand and to encourage and assist the 25 or so community-based wilding groups within the network. We would not have made the progress we have to date without her dedication and effort.

In stepping down as the Chair I wish my successor and the Wilding Pine Network all the best for the future where we will 'complete the job' and will achieve a 'wilding free Aotearoa.

Richard Bowman

Chair – Wilding Pine Network

12 March 2025



Image: Funding summit October 2024 - Blenheim

2. Highlights from the Year 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

2023 Annual Conference – Wildings in the Backyard

Always a popular event with our 2023 conference held in Queenstown. Since thanks to our sponsors – MPI, Boffa Miskell, SPS Automation, Orion Agriscience, Queenstown Lakes District Council, My Agency Marketing, Scion, Eradus and Tipping Point wines. Thanks also to Whakatipu Wilding Control Group, Central Otago Wilding Control Group and Arrowtown Choppers, Otago Regional Council and Central Otago District Council for assistance with organisation and especially field trips.

Around 130 people attended with much discussion and lively debate and many interesting and informative talks. Simon Upton the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment presented a strong case for sustaining the gains and ensuring that our unique landscapes and native species as well as our productive land could eventually be free of wilding pines and conifers. Conference presentations from 2018-2023 are available on our website [Conference Presentations - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#).

Ginger Group and Get in Behind Campaign

We established a Ginger Group (a group within WPN seeking to influence its direction and activity) after being contacted by some of our members wanting to do more to highlight the challenges of reduced funding. Peter Russell, John Simmons, Rob Phillips, Richard Bowman, Kate O’Connell, Alan Johnson are our core members. They bring a wealth of biosecurity, conservation, advocacy and local and regional government experience and have been instrumental in our initial Get in Behind campaign and our current Let’s Finish the Job campaign [Let’s finish the job - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#). Like many of our other stakeholders they are tireless campaigners.

The power of a community voice in the media

We would like to acknowledge the tireless work of wilding groups in the community who take every opportunity they can to get media attention for the wilding challenge and/or to promote events to control trees and to maintain consistent levels of funding but also to recognise significant achievements. These included the removal of the last seeding trees out of the almost 67,000-hectare Shotover Management Area and the removal of pines from the Half Mile Recreation Reserve – both in Otago.

Community based articles in the media generate local interest and improved understanding but they also give those from outside of these geographic areas a better understanding of why we are committed to solving the wilding challenge by using actual examples on the ground and information from experienced people. A couple of examples are below:

- Wilding Free Mackenzie’s initiative with some well-known New Zealanders – Nadia Lim, Grahame Sydney and Al Brown and a great You Tube Video [Iconic kiwis on wilding pines - YouTube](#) that highlighted the plight of the Mackenzie basin Canterbury which contains the largest and least modified intermontane basin in New Zealand, but which is under siege from wilding pines
- Opinion pieces from Otago Regional Council Councillors and Central Otago Wilding Conifer Group on the damaging consequences of cutting funding for environmental regeneration and reductions in government funding [Short term gain, long term pain: - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#); [Pulling government funding](#)

[from wilding pine programmes poor planning - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#) and [Fears war on wilding pines is losing ground. - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#)

- Podcast with Steve Satterthwaite from Muller Station in Marlborough [Awatere Valley farmer calls for urgent action around Wilding Conifers crisis | Articles | rova](#). Steve talked about his perspective as a high-country landowner and the challenges of getting people to understand the scale of the challenge in our remote not often seen alpine landscapes.

More resources to help the community

Information is power and in the right form can help people make a change. Most people want to do good by the environment but often don't have the time to research how and the most cost-effective way to do what they would like to do. That's where the wilding network comes into its own. Two great examples in 2023-2024 are:

- ECAN produced a great wilding pine 'go to guide' control handbook for landowners and the wilding community [ECAN WILDING PINE HANDBOOK - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#) that included some information from the WPN handbook. It's an excellent resource
- Pete Oswald from Central Otago Wilding Conifer Group recognised the importance of shelterbelts to farmers in Central Otago and that many contain pines that are seed sources and/are of damaging species such as Pinus contorta. However, to remove shelterbelts landowners need information on what alternatives they can plant instead so Pete and WPN developed a shelterbelt alternatives guide to hand out to landowners and at local field days - [Finding solutions to big challenges... a great example from Central Otago - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#)

Keeping the wilding challenge front and centre with politicians and regulators

Thank you to all the people (including our WPN committee members) who assisted with a couple of submission we did. These included the following:

- A discussion document on proposals to redesign the permanent forest category in the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme. This document included the opportunity to have permanent (carbon) forests included in the NES-PF which has now been amended and is called the NES-CF – the National Standard for Commercial Forestry [National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry | Ministry for the Environment](#). This is an important change as previously carbon forests were excluded from this standard and had little regulation. This also prompted a review of a key tool used to determine the suitability of sites for exotic forestry plantings – the wilding pine calculator so it could include permanent forests.
- A submission on the Otago Regional Council Air, Land and Water Plan to ensure that the toolbox of techniques required for wilding control was not restricted
- Proposed changes to the IVL (International Visitor Levy). We supported the increase of the levy from \$35/head to \$100/head [International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#) which was subsequently done. We along with several groups and agencies working in the wilding space see this levy as a key way to increase funding for wilding management. It was pleasing to see \$7 million from this fund allocated to wilding management in the 2023/24 financial year [What a difference \\$7 million made | Wilding Pines](#). We acknowledge the significant work of Department

of Conservation and MPI personnel to achieve this and all the work of the people on the ground who managed and did the work.

We know where the wildings are, but where did they spread from?

Nick Ledgard one of our most experienced wilding practitioners and scientists shared his knowledge on this subject [We know where the wildings are but where did they spread from... - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#). Nick's investigations concluded that wildings are a result of three sources – erosion plantings, commercial plantations, and private woodlots/amenity plantings. The work includes a list of sites with notable spread from erosion control plantings, and we formulated the map below from this information.



3. Financial Review and Summary

- Our funders are hugely important to us. We would like to acknowledge MPI who are our most significant funder. These funds contribute to the costs of our Coordinator but also to the conference which is undertaken in partnership with MPI. Our conference is also made possible by a range of sponsors whose funding helps keep our conference registration down and in the case of our wine industry supporters – provide a stunning range of South Island wine for after session get togethers at the annual conference.
- We would also like to acknowledge the community groups, NGO's and government agencies that are annual subscriber funders. These collective contributions are hugely valued and carefully spent. We acknowledge that we are in a period of very challenging funding for conservation generally, so what you provide us is even more precious and appreciated.
- We would like to thank the Department of Conservation whose community fund provided us with resources to undertake a variety of work including producing and printing our community wilding control guide, hold workshops on various subjects around the country, establish and maintain our social media platform, support the establishment of new groups and help them develop operational plans. Funding allocated has now ended.
- We would also like to acknowledge Christine Clemow, a Chartered Accountant who continues to provide her services free of charge assisting our coordinator and maintaining a watching eye over our financial management system based on Xero. This ensures a professional and transparent system for setting our annual budget and operating within that budget.
- Please refer below for the executive financial summary to 30 June 2024.



Image: 2-year-old Pinus contorta about to send its seeds of destruction out across the landscape

Executive Summary

New Zealand Wilding Conifer Group Incorporated

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	2024	2023	2022	YEAR TO DATE
Cash				
Cash received	179,396	254,334	150,689	179,396
Cash spent	199,545	242,408	138,329	199,545
Cash surplus (deficit)	(20,149)	11,925	12,360	(20,149)
Closing bank balance	79,795	99,944	88,019	79,795
Profitability				
Income	176,103	178,497	125,725	176,103
Direct costs	125,823	148,245	86,977	125,823
Gross profit (loss)	50,281	30,251	38,748	50,281
Other income	-	-	-	-
Expenses	37,744	61,335	26,762	37,744
Profit (loss)	12,537	(31,084)	11,986	12,537
Balance Sheet				
Debtors	11,730	20,700	11,730	11,730
Creditors	2,580	6,687	-	2,580
Net assets	82,084	69,548	100,632	82,084
Sales				
Number of invoices issued	53	50	28	53
Average value of invoices	2,195	4,043	4,490	2,195
Performance				
Gross profit margin (%)	29	17	31	29
Net profit margin (%)	7	(17)	10	7
Return on investment (p.a.) (%)	15	(45)	12	15
Position				
Average debtor days	24	42	34	24
Average creditor days	8	16	-	8
Short term cash forecast	9,150	14,013	11,730	9,150
Current assets to liabilities	10	4	(113)	10
Term assets to liabilities	-	-	-	-

4. Community Groups

There are 25 groups on this map but there are several more we know of. We acknowledge the hard work you all do and commend you for the advocacy and on the groundwork, you do both in your communities and beyond. You are an essential part of the national wilding programme, and we would be lost without you all. For more information on our groups please visit our website and specifically [Community Groups Archives - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#).

If you want to set up a group, your group information on our website changes or you would like to be included as part of our network, please contact Jo our Coordinator jo@wildingpinenetwork.org.nz. Also visit [Start a group - Predator Free NZ Trust](#). Although this is an animal pest-based website the 'Start a Group' toolkit is excellent.



5. Wilding Pine Management Committee

There are 14 members on our committee representing community groups, regional councils, DOC, Federated Farmers, Pamu (Landcorp farming), NZFOA, MPI and Scion.

We were saddened by the loss of Peter Oliver from NZFOA who passed away in 2024 from a terminal illness. Peter was always available to provide advice and comment on forestry issues and various submissions and is missed but has been replaced by Rachel Millar, NZFOA's environment manager. Our representation from Federated Farmers changed from Angela Johnson to Phil Holland. We thank Angela for her contribution and welcome Phil. We also now have a LINZ representative – Shaun Thomason and are pleased to have this appointment.

We also continue to be committed to getting iwi representation and are working on a joint project with MPI and Scion to improve our collective opportunities for iwi to be both represented and involved at the governance/decision making levels of wilding pine management. Our current committee members are listed below. Those with an asterisk form our executive committee.

Name	Organisation	Organisation Type
Richard Bowman (Chair)*	Mid Dome Wilding Trees Trust	Community Group/Trust richard@wildingpinenetwork.org.nz
Ket Bradshaw (Deputy Chair) *	South Marlborough Landscape Restoration Trust	Community Group/Trust ket.bradshaw@gmail.com
Sam Stephens	Bay of Plenty Regional Council	Regional Council (North Island) Sam.stephens@boprc.govt.nz
Carl Diamond (Treasurer)*	Environment Canterbury	Regional Council (South Island) carl.diamond@ecan.govt.nz
Jim Ward	PAMU/Landcorp farming	Industry Group wardj@landcorp.co.nz
Phil Holland	Federated Farmers	NGO pholland@fedfarm.org.nz
Graeme Loh	Forest and Bird	NGO gloh@earthlight.co.nz
Rachel Millar (replaced Peter Oliver)	NZ Forest Owners Association	Forestry Rachel.Millar@nzfoa.org.nz
Grant Hensman	Whakatipu Wilding Control Group (WCG)	Community Group/Trust grant@beaver.net.nz
Nick Ledgard	WELRA/NZ Farm Forestry Association	Community Group/ Trust/ Industry nick.ledgard@xtra.co.nz
Sherman Smith (Observer/non-voting)	MPI	Central Government sherman.smith@mpi.govt.nz
Sandra Wotherspoon* (Observer/non-voting)	DOC	Central Government Swotherspoon@doc.govt.nz
Shaun Thomason (Observer/non-voting)??	LINZ	Central Government SThomason@linz.govt.nz
Thomas Paul (Observer/non-voting)	Scion	CRI (Crown Research Institute) thomas.paul@scionresearch.com

6. What's planned for 2024-2025

Please note the below is based on our financial year which runs from 1 July to 30th June.

Governance and Financial

- **Opportunities to expand our funding base** to have more funding to assist groups with advocacy material such as training and community workshops, publications and to leverage off the MPI funding for the national programme. The latter would include a portfolio of community-based projects in partnership with groups to attract philanthropic and corporate funding.
- **Maintain our positive financial position** where we always run Network finances true to budget and 'cut our cloth' to the funds available and meet the needs of our funders and stakeholders
- **A series of hui with Māori in partnership with MPI and Scion with** to both seek advice and implement systems that achieves better understanding of Māori needs and aspirations regarding wilding management and how to enable Māori representation as it relates to wilding programme governance, strategic planning and decision making
- **Continue to build on our beneficial relationships with our stakeholder groups and communities** and ensure that they feel adequately represented by WPN including being able to provide advice, ideas and ask for help.

Information Sharing/ Community Engagement

- **Continue to act as a core information source and central point** for people wanting information and help with wilding pine issues. This includes communities, iwi, landowners and those wishing to undertake wilding control
- **Continue to hold an annual conference and expand our network of stakeholders** and encourage the bringing together of diverse ideas, innovations, and research as well as lessons learnt in the field.
- **Support any stakeholder initiatives** when help is requested whether this be assisting with a workshop/training day, submission, planning document or publication, access to information or specialist advice

Policy and General Advocacy

- **Continue to advocate for increased funding for the national programme** including the re-establishment of a community fund to assist groups with local work. Our advocacy is focused on having sufficient ongoing funding to maintain the gains. Two thirds of critical national programme operational work has been deferred since 2023/24 financial year due to a significant reduction in funding. We are at a tipping point.
- **Maintain our ability to respond in a timely manner to any policy**, strategic documents and submission to ensure that the wilding issue is front and foremost in the minds of politicians and regulators
- **Continue to provide the community voice** on the MPI national programme governance, technical and operational advisory groups and DOC wilding community of interest forum and share key information with stakeholders primarily through our website news and quarterly newsletters.

If you have any ideas of work you would like to see us do or need help with, please contact our new chair Ket Bradshaw on ket@wildingpinenetwork.org.nz or our coordinator on jo@wildingpinenetwork.org.nz. Finally ngā mihi nui mō tō mahi me tō tautoko – many thanks to our wide and diverse wilding whanau for your work and unwavering support.