



**Wilding Pine
Network**

ADVOCACY
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ADVICE
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ACTION

Wilding Pine Network 2024-2025 Annual Report



Image: Jo Ritchie, August 2025 - Ruataniwha Conservation Park looking towards Lake Ohau. Extensive control work has been undertaken in the area by High Country Contracting to protect biodiversity and stunning landscape views.

1. WPN Chairs Report 2024/25

Welcome to the Wilding Pine Network's 2024/25 Annual Report, my first since taking over from Richard Bowman in April 2025. Many thanks to Richard for his guidance and leadership and for ensuring the Network has a strong base. **The WPN's community groups remain the "heart and soul" of the NWCCP programme**, as acknowledged by John Walsh, Chair of the NWCCP Governance Group.

This has been a busy and challenging year. Through the WPN conference, NWCCP Governance, OAG and TAG meetings, I have seen more clearly both **the scale of the challenge and the seriousness of the funding crisis now facing us**.

Reduced government funding is starting to bite. We are struggling to stay ahead of maintenance; our deferred maintenance is increasing and we're unable to tackle any new infestations. Quite simply, **we are in an urgent and dire situation**.

Ross Ivey, Chair of Wilding Free Mackenzie, summed it up well:

"Without adequate funding, we'll lose the grip, and it'll go mental. It's like a cancer. For most pine trees, it takes 8 to 10 years to have viable cones, whereas these contorta trees only take 3 to 4 years."

That urgency has shaped my priorities as Chair. We need sustainable long-term funding for both treated and high-risk areas such as the Branch-Leatham, Kaweka, and the Spine of the South Island. We need the community partnership fund reinstated by 2026/27. We need progress on the \$200,000 Kaupapa of National Significance (KONS) work around a WPN and community group funding strategies, legal tools, training, restoration and advocacy. We need the significance of community input reflected in the updated National Wilding Conifer Control Strategy. We need to strengthen partnerships with iwi. We need stronger forestry sector accountability for wilding spread within the 50 km seed zone. We also need a levy or similar mechanism to help fund control and match government investment.

Against this backdrop, the **October conference in Twizel** was a real highlight. It drew our biggest crowd yet, with 180 delegates attending when we had expected 120. My thanks to the Mackenzie and ECAN teams for helping make it such a success. The conference reinforced the strength of our alliance of iwi, agencies, researchers, landowners, NGOs and community groups, and that collaboration continues to drive both control work and advocacy.

This partnership remains one of our greatest strengths. It gives our 25 or so community groups real backing in their local advocacy, with the credibility and support of a respected national organisation behind them. That helps them access resources, build influence with stakeholders, and have a stronger voice in both local and national decision-making.

Since conference community groups have continued to host politicians, often voluntarily and at their own cost. That effort is making a difference. Wilding pines, and the need for increased continuous funding, are now being talked about widely across government and by multiple political parties.

But we must keep the pressure on. **Continuous funding needs to become an election issue.** Wilding pine management remains one of New Zealand's most significant biosecurity issues, with major impacts on biodiversity, agriculture, horticulture, tourism and hydro generation. Every year of underfunding compounds the cost of control by 30%.

We have been working with Jim Ward and Federated Farmers, who recently put the case to the Prime Minister for a **\$50 million annual NWCCP budget**. That level of funding is needed to address the current and deferred maintenance, tackle new infestations and restore the community partnership funding pool.

To help build wider support, the Wilding Pine Network is launching the ***We Can't Lose / Help Save* campaign**. The message is simple: without more funding now, we all stand to lose a great deal.

My thanks to our advocacy “ginger group” - Rob Phillips, John Simmons, Kate O’Connell, Alan Johnson, Peter Russell and Grant Hensman - for getting our message in front of decision-makers. I also **thank Biosecurity New Zealand**, especially Sherman Smith and his team, along with DOC, LINZ and the BSI, for their ongoing support.

Finally, **thank you to Jo Ritchie, the Management Committee and our community groups** for keeping the Network strong, connected and effective.

Ket Bradshaw
Chair, Wilding Pine Network



Ket's with Contorta pine and part of the 2025 “Lost backcountry volunteers”, Branch Leatham

2. Highlights from the Year

1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

2024 Annual Conference – Wilding Free Aotearoa: The Hīkoi

Back to the North Island for the 2024 conference with a successful event held at the Great Lake Centre in Taupo that celebrated the natural beauty and diversity of the central North Island landscape. The conference was opened by Topia Rameka from Tūwharetoa and followed by a series of talks from Nick Singers a local ecologist, Colin Maunder (Timberlands), Craig Davey (Horizons Regional Council) and Michelle Phillips (Ngāti Tahu- Ngāti Whaoa Runanga Trust) describing the impacts of wilding pines locally and the work done to remediate this.

A new interactive session was tested where experienced control contractors, managers and researchers got a 15 minute slot to talk about their experience and learnings. Participants got to ask questions and share their own knowledge. Three field trips were undertaken – on Lake Taupō, to the unique Rangitaiki Frost Flats and a Geothermal experience to Orakei Korako guided by Ngāti Tahu- Ngāti Whaoa Runanga.



Image: Tauhara Maunga east of Taupō – Extensive wilding control work has been undertaken across the 1160 hectare maunga by Tauhara Middle 2A2A Trust and Project Tongariro. The work is part of the trust’s long-term restoration plan to allow native flora and fauna species to regenerate and leave a legacy for future generations.

Other presentations included forestry to pasture ([Wairakei Estate: Environment, Innovation, Community](#)) and forestry to native ([Waingake transformation programme | Gisborne District Council](#)) conversions, a session on calculating and preventing further spread, funding and the future, the pathway to transition and an interactive session on what people would like to see in a refreshed national strategy. Around 120 people attended the conference.

Thanks to Jo Phelan for invaluable conference planning and organisation, to our partners and main sponsor Biosecurity New Zealand as well as the group of loyal sponsors – Agpro, SPS Automation, Boffa Miskell, Orion Agriscience, Eradus and Tipping Point wines. Acknowledgement also to the volunteers who helped on conference days and all the attendees. Papers from all conferences held to date are available on our website [Conference Presentations - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#). Make use of them - share freely and widely.

Winter webinars

We restarted a winter webinar series. First introduced by Rowan Sprague, the previous WPN coordinator the 2024 series saw talks on:

- **Gene Editing of Douglas Fir** – Scion’s (now part of the Bioeconomy Science Institute) Glenn Thorlby did a 101 on the research done, how gene editing works and the rigorous permit process involved to ensure that off target species impacts do not occur - [2024 Wilding Webinar -101 Gene editing - Douglas fir - Video recording now available - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#). This was a very timely webinar as the government was planning to end New Zealand’s nearly 30 year ban on gene technology outside the lab



- **The enemy of my enemy** – Tom Carlin from Scion spoke on invasive mammals as seed predators of wilding conifers - [Webinar #2: Video link now available - The enemy of my enemy. - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#). Tom along with a group of scientists from Scion and Lincoln University investigated the contribution that seed predators have on reducing wildings across a range of habitats. The research found that seed predation varies greatly between habitats, suggesting that invasion and reinvasion rates are higher in ungrazed areas of lower forest density that support fewer introduced mammals.

The power of a community voice in the media

The groups and individuals around the country who work in the wilding space continued to excel in their relentless drive to increase awareness of the threat of wildings to our natural places as well as to farming, forestry, tourism and hydro generation. Examples include:

- **Thumbs down for high country tree plans** – Ian Anderson, then Chair of High Country Federated Farmers challenged the governments proposed plan to explore public private partnerships to plant trees on ‘low value’ conservation land - [Farmers-Weekly-Jan-13-2025.jpg \(1122x794\)](#)

- **A walk back in time** – Nick Ledgard a tireless campaigner for effective wilding management while cleaning out his Mum’s place found an article from May 1982 “Botanists warn against conifers taking over the high country”. They expressed concern about the ability of exotic conifers to in almost any landscape and their potential impact on rare native plants and plant communities - [Botanists warn against conifers taking over the high country back in 1982 - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#)
- **Bridge Hill fire lessened by wilding pine control** – Rich Langley from ECAN explained that previous wilding spraying efforts had decreased the amount of fuel for the Bridge Hill fire, as although dead-standing trees did burn easily, a closed-canopy forest spread fire more quickly and ferociously. He encouraged landowners to help control wilding pines and reduce a super charged fuel source - [Bridge Hill fire lessened by wilding pine control, says Canterbury official | RNZ News](#)



Image from FENZ: Bridge Hill fire which burnt through 1000 hectares in December 2024

- **A wild weed** – Jo Grigg celebrated in the Spring 2024 issue of Countrywide Magazine how the rural community steps up beyond their farm gates and showcased John Oswald, Ket Bradshaw (South Marlborough Landscape Restoration Trust), and Pete Oswald (Central Otago Wilding Conifer Tree Trust) as champions in this space.
- **Battling wilding pines – Ket Bradshaw’s environmental mission** - [Battling Wilding Pines: Ket Bradshaw’s Environmental Mission | Articles | rova](#). Ket biked for 17 days from Marlborough Sounds to Milford Sounds to raise awareness and support for wilding control. She made regular stops along the way and spoke to a diverse range of people about the issue and posted on social media
- **Funding cuts imperil wilding control work** – Sian Reynolds from Boffa Miskell addressed a high country farmers field trip in North Canterbury and said that wilding conifers left uncontrolled could within two decades destroy 500,000 hectares of land worth more than \$750 million in productive potential. She described it as a huge issue and said that left uncontrolled these tree weeds will decimate 5% of the New Zealand environment each year. She was supported by Hamish Roxburgh, a long time advocate and North Canterbury farmer who stated that wildings are the biggest environment disaster facing this country. The cost of doing control is less than the cost of not doing it - [Funding cuts imperil wilding control work](#).

Thinking long term sustainable solutions

We applaud those researchers working in this space. One area is whether dwarf mistletoe could be a future tool. Hailing from North America, dwarf mistletoes (Genus *Arceuthobium* Bieb.) are being investigated as a control measure for use on *Pinus contorta*. Simon Fowler from Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research is looking into whether this species of parasitic plant could be added to the control toolbox. The slow dispersal rate means mistletoe are unlikely to become a problem in commercial plantations [Could dwarf mistletoe help solve the giant wilding conifer problem? - Wilding Pine Network NZ](#) and [Could dwarf mistletoes help solve New Zealand's wilding conifer problem?](#)



Image: Dwarf mistletoes (Genus Arceuthobium Bieb.) on a Pinus contorta

3. Bridging the funding gap

We continued our Let's Finish the Job campaign but the job of attracting more funding from traditional sources is a challenging one, particularly when the economy is struggling and conservation and biosecurity are lower priorities for the government. We acknowledge the sustained work by the key government agencies, regional and district councils to increase funding but it's a big ask.

Two thirds of critical work have been deferred since the 2023/24 financial year when funding was reduced by 75%. This means we are quickly losing ground across the country in areas affected by wilding pines and control costs are increasing exponentially (around 30% per annum). We are at a tipping point - if we don't invest in wilding pine control properly now, we will lose iconic landscapes across New Zealand and create a considerably more expensive problem. Ross Ivey, Chairperson of Wilding Free Mackenzie put it bluntly:

"Without adequate funding, we'll lose the grip, and it'll go mental. It's like a cancer. For most pine trees, it takes 8 - 10 years to have viable cones, whereas these contorta trees only take 3 - 4 years."



The images above (Timaru Herald, April 2024) from Sir Grahame Sydney's property in Central Otago showing a view across to the iconic Hawkdun Range in 2004 and then in 2024 demonstrate how rapidly wildings overtake our landscape when insufficient funding is available for control and areas are either unfunded, funding is reduced or funding has never been available.

It's a case of reverse investment and we are sliding backwards at an increasing rate of knots. ECAN chairperson Peter Scott summed it up by saying "it shouldn't be a political football that's kicked between all the parties, it should be a national concern". Simon Upton the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment concluded his presentation with 3 key points at our 2023 conference:

1. If the Government does not find the funding to follow through on the wilding control investments it has made over the last three years, taxpayers' money will be wasted as wildings reinvade some of the weed-shaped holes that have been created.
2. Responsibility for wilding control should not rest solely with taxpayers. There are industries both contributing to the problem and benefiting from containing it. The Government is entitled to ask them to contribute – but it won't get far if its own commitment is shaky and
3. The Government needs to get wilding control funded on a long-term sustainable basis because there are scores of other plant pests just getting going on the invasion curve.

The Wilding Pine Network is committed to changing the current funding scenario and will continue campaigning for funding that is both secure and ongoing and at a level where we both regain lost gains and make significant inroads into the control of infestations yet to be tackled.

4. Constitution Review

The Network began a review of its constitution in mid-2025 as a result of a) changes to the Incorporated Societies Act 1908 which is now the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and b) to ensure that we have and enact transparent and fair representation and communication processes for our members. It is a timely review as the initial purpose of the establishment of the Network was primarily to provide a legally transparent process for receiving funds to run the network from its members. This has now changed to one that is primarily focused on advocacy and support that is made possible by funding from members.

5. Financial Review and Summary

- Our funders are hugely important to us as they allow us to run the network as well as keep our conference costs as low as we can so as many as possible can attend. 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 speaker thankyou's and 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 remain in a period of very challenging funding for conservation generally, so what you provide us is even more precious and appreciated.
- 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.
- Our coordinator is budgeted to work 23 hours per week, but we maintain a flexible working hours system. Special projects such as campaigns may require the use of specialist people – on these occasions our coordinator may work less hours for a set period. We also take on a support person to assist with the conference each year. Our preference is for this person to be based in the area where the conference is to be held so we can be as cost efficient as possible and make use of their local contacts and knowledge.
- Please refer below for the executive financial summary to 30 June 2025.

Executive Summary

New Zealand Wilding Conifer Group Incorporated

For the year ended 30 June 2025

	2025	2024	2023	YEAR TO DATE
Cash				
Cash received	214,861	179,396	254,334	214,861
Cash spent	144,983	199,545	242,408	144,983
Cash surplus (deficit)	69,878	(20,149)	11,925	69,878
Closing bank balance	149,673	79,795	99,944	149,673
Profitability				
Income	185,748	176,103	178,497	185,748
Direct costs	86,995	125,823	148,245	86,995
Gross profit (loss)	98,753	50,281	30,251	98,753
Other income	-	-	-	-
Expenses	23,038	37,744	61,335	23,038
Profit (loss)	75,714	12,537	(31,084)	75,714
Balance Sheet				
Debtors	11,500	11,730	20,700	11,500
Creditors	2,401	2,580	6,687	2,401
Net assets	157,799	82,084	69,548	157,799
Sales				
Number of invoices issued	41	53	50	41
Average value of invoices	3,858	2,195	4,043	3,858
Performance				
Gross profit margin (%)	53	29	17	53
Net profit margin (%)	41	7	(17)	41
Return on investment (p.a.) (%)	48	15	(45)	48
Position				
Average debtor days	23	24	42	23
Average creditor days	10	8	16	10
Short term cash forecast	9,099	9,150	14,013	9,099
Current assets to liabilities	48	10	4	48
Term assets to liabilities	-	-	-	-

6. Community Groups

The Wilding Pine Network acknowledges the significant contribution of the diverse range of community groups who are part of our network. We remain keen to support new groups and add you into our network but like with your work it takes funding to support what we do so we ask an annual contribution of \$200 to subscribe to the network. Please let us know if you would like to join the network. We are fortunate that regional councils and government agencies that are part of our network contribute a higher amount.



7. Wilding Pine Management Committee

There are 14 members on our committee representing community groups, regional councils, DOC, Federated Farmers, NZFOA, MPI and Scion. Jim Ward who was our PAMU representative is now the Federated Farmers High Country representative and brings a wealth of strategic and practical experience to our management committee.

We remain committed to getting iwi representation and continue to work 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
Ket Bradshaw (Chair) *	South Marlborough Landscape Restoration Trust	Community Group/Trust ket@wildingpinenetwork.org.nz
Richard Bowman (Deputy Chair) *	Mid Dome Wilding Trees Trust	Community Group/Trust richard@wildingpinenetwork.org.nz
Shane Grayling	Bay of Plenty Regional Council	Regional Council (North Island) Shane.Grayling@boprc.govt.nz
Carl Diamond (Treasurer)*	Environment Canterbury	Regional Council (South Island) carl.diamond@ecan.govt.nz
Jim Ward	High Country Federated Farmers	Industry Group jimward@outlook.co.nz
Phil Holland	Federated Farmers	Industry Group pholland@fedfarm.org.nz
Graeme Loh	Forest and Bird	NGO gloh@earthlight.co.nz
Sherilyn Byron	NZ Forest Owners Association	Forestry sbyron@portblakely.com
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

Please feel free to contact any of these people.

8. Priorities for 2025-2026

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

Governance and Financial

- Continue the partnership with Scion and MPI to work with iwi to establish representation on wilding governance entities
- Maintain a transparent and methodical financial management system
- Provide a series of updates to member groups in regard to work being undertaken by WPN
- Have a minimum of 4 committee meetings per annum
- Hold AGM between October to December

Information Sharing/ Community Engagement

- Hold the annual conference and keep registration fees at an affordable level. Make all conference presentations available on WPN website
- Build relationships with carbon forestry industry
- 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
- 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

Policy and General Advocacy

- Capitalise on opportunities to submit and influence government and territorial authority policies and plans
- Take every opportunity to expand our reach out into the wider community and grow collective knowledge and understanding
- Continue to grow our social media presence and utilise other forms of media e.g. podcasts, magazine and newspaper articles to further the above
- 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.

Getting the right level of sustained funding back

- Apply for funding to develop a national fundraising strategy and template for member groups to understand how to attract and disperse other funding avenues e.g. philanthropy, in kind, corporate
- Continue a campaign to lobby for additional Crown funding
- Support member groups in their endeavours in this space

If you have any ideas of work you would like to see us do or need help with, please contact our 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.