

Hikaroroa / Mt Watkin Conservation Group

Community Newsletter - July 2025

Tēnā koutou katoa / Hello Everyone!

We hope you are staying warm this winter. We are ticking away at gearing up for this season of increased field work.

DOC Community Funds Updates

Our community fund project has officially started this month. We've been excitedly waiting to get things rolling.

Our friends from AKV (Aroha Kaikorai Valley) have linked us up with the TurboWeb team and we are working on getting a website for the project up and running as we speak. Once this is online it will be the go to place to stay up to date with the project and upcoming opportunities.

We are still hoping to host a public event in the near future to share the details of the project, but will probably now aim to have this in the Sept-Oct period while we take a break from field work for lambing.

ORC Possum Project Updates

We had a great winter trapping weekend in June to bring our ORC Possum suppression project funding to a close.

Check out some photos and nice write up about the weekend from the AKV team here:

<https://akv.nz/aroha-kaikorai-valley-news/hikaroroa-mt-watkin-winter-trapping-mission>

And here is a link to our trap results:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15eg9aXExq/>

Our next advanced trapping trip will be Nov-Dec but there will be opportunities to help with some network maintenance before then. Our next stages for possum suppression will be

fine tuning sets and working with researchers to better understand possum interaction rates within our network.

We are really grateful for the support from the ORC and Predator Free Dunedin / The Halo Project to make this project happen at a crucial time that has allowed us to set up the infrastructure to keep possum numbers low in this area of significant biodiversity. This funding has laid the foundation for growing this conservation project into a community led initiative, and we are thrilled that DOC has contributed to carry on the work started in this project into the future.

DCC / DOC Feral Goat Control

The DCC and WAM (Wild Animal Management) Team at DOC teamed up to organize an ungulate cull at the Hikaroroa/Mt. Watkin Scenic Reserve. A combined ground and aerial operation resulted in the removal of 65 goats, 2 deer and 3 pigs.

Over the coming years we are hoping to work together to increase the suppression area of feral ungulates and understand the density needed to see measurable regeneration in our mature forests, prevent the decline and loss of palatable plant species, and promote regeneration in the Hikaroroa area.

Upcoming Field Work, Training, and Volunteer Opportunities

Here are some upcoming dates for anyone looking to get out in the field!

HMWCG Operations:

- July 26-27: Community Trapping days (DOC200/250s)
- Aug11-14: Pest monitoring survey deployments
- Aug 18-21: Transect remarking and possum survey collection
- Aug 25-28: Reserve Doc200s (tbc)
- Aug 30-31: Community Trapping days (DOC200/250s)
- Sept 2-3: Camera survey collection

Community trapping days (DOC200/250s): we are penciling these in for the last weekends of the month (not September - lambing) for the foreseeable future. These are fun chances

to get together and get out on the hill, and a great starting place for any new volunteers wanting to learn trapping skills. Our next trapping days will be July 26-27th.

August Pest Monitoring Round: There will be weekly pest monitoring activity happening starting Aug 11th until Sep 4th. Join me to learn more about relative abundance monitoring methodologies and processing. Pest monitoring is a key part of our adaptive management strategy to ensure we are effectively managing pest species. If you are interested in being involved please reach out!

Reserve Doc200s: The conservation group now has the responsibility to keep the stoat traps inside the DCC reserve serviced. We are going to aim to have roughly monthly field trips into the reserve to service these traps. This is a great opportunity to get into and explore the heart of the reserve. We are waiting for the final permissions from the DCC team to get this underway so exact dates and capacity this month are still to be confirmed!

Can you help us set up a field base?

With the new growth in the project, we are in the process of looking for a dedicated building that can be used as a field base to store equipment, field gear, and conduct training out of. Zac Noone has kindly offered to let us use a spot on his property with good central access to the project area for the building.

We currently don't have the funding to purchase a shed / portable building, but are in the process of trying to acquire some.

If anyone in the community has connections or a spare shed laying and is willing to help with a community project, please let us know! We would be grateful for any help!

A huge thank you to all of our funding providers and collaborators!

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kaunihera
a-rohe o
ōtepoti



Waitaki
DISTRICT COUNCIL
TE KAUNIHERA A ROHE O WAITAKI



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



¹ The group is still looking for leaders and volunteers to get involved. If you are interested in being involved, please email us for more information: HMWconservationgroup@gmail.com or contact our Co-ordinator (Jamie Hickling: 02040939311)