

Objective 3
To protect land, freshwater and marine sites that are important to New Zealand's natural heritage from the impacts of invasive weeds.

Protecting New Zealand's natural heritage

In the next 10–15 years, invasive weeds could threaten some 575 000 hectares in over 270 important protected natural areas if they are not controlled. In more than 70 of the highest priority areas, weed impacts could potentially cause the local or national extinction of a plant community or native species.

Table 1: Natural communities in protected areas threatened by weed invasions (based on DoC data, July 1998)

Natural community type	Priority sites	Area at risk within 10–15 yrs	A few examples of priority sites
Subalpine areas and grasslands: tussocklands, alpine herbfields, cushionfields, native grasslands	51	324 200 ha	Kaweka Forest Park (Hawkes Bay); Kirkliston Ranges (Canterbury); Remarkables and Hector's Ranges (Otago), Blue and Eyre Mountains (Southland); Tongariro National Park
Forests and shrublands	83	125 700 ha	Puketi, Waipoua (Northland); Moehau (Waikato); Grays Bush (East Coast); Mt. Bruce Forest Reserve (Wellington)
Freshwater wetlands and riparian areas	24	21 300 ha	Whangamarino (Waikato); Motu SR (East Coast); Wahopo/Okarito (West Coast); Waituna (Southland)
Coastal wetlands (estuaries and harbours)	20	11 000 ha	Parengarenga Harbour (Northland); Wairau Lagoons, Havelock Estuary (Nelson/Marl) Manawatu Estuary (Wanganui),
Duneland communities (e.g., dune slacks, foreshore, shrublands)	33	35 700 ha	Pouito Peninsula (Northland); Kaitorete Spit (Canterbury); Three Sisters (Southland)
Islands (mostly forest/scrub)	28	27 100 ha	Raoul, Rangitoto, Little Barrier, Kapiti, Mana
Places with a mixture of communities	18	26 000 ha	Waipapa and Pikiariki (Waikato); Te Urewera National Park; Isolated Hill (Nelson/Marl)
Other types of natural communities	13	4 400 ha	Rangitaiki frost flats, Te Kopia SR geothermal area (Bay of Plenty); Chapman Road drylands, Sutton salt lake (Otago)
Total	270	575 400 ha	

WHAT IS DOC DOING?

DoC is establishing “site-led” programmes that focus on specific natural areas and what is required to protect the values of those places.

Protecting important natural areas often requires more than simply controlling the invasive weeds growing within them. It may also require controlling invasive weeds in sites outside the natural area that are buffers or seed sources; monitoring the effectiveness of weed control, managing animal pests or other factors that promote weed invasions, and detecting new potential weed threats.

The support of adjacent landowners may be important to the success of a site-led programme because weeds often invade protected natural areas from nearby. Successful site-led programmes may also require increasing people’s awareness of what is required to protect the place, because human activities can introduce or spread weeds into the area.

The white seedheads of pampas stand out in the native shrublands in Whitecliffs, Taranaki. This area has important sequences of native vegetation from sea cliffs to forest.
Graeme LaCock, 1998



In Tongariro National Park, heather has dramatically reduced native plant cover, and some insect species are in danger of becoming locally extinct. Covered in native red tussock in 1963 (left), by 1990 this area of Tongariro National Park had become dominated by heather (right). Heather is spreading up to seven kilometres per year into the Moawhango, the Kaimanawa Range, Tongariro Forest, and into land north, west and east of Lake Taupo.

Colin Ogle