

Nipping it in the bud

Objective 2
To minimise the numbers or contain the distribution of significant new invasive weeds where this is feasible.

About one in ten newly naturalised plants will probably become invasive. New species often behave differently to existing weed species. They may thrive in a different range of climate, altitude or soil type, invade new vegetation types, or competing more aggressively with native species. For example, Christmas berry first naturalised in Whangaroa in 1995. In other countries it invades a broad range of habitats (from mangroves to pinelands) and excludes the natural understorey, so it could become a major new weed in New Zealand.

Minimising future problems requires eradicating or preventing the spread of potentially invasive species that have just naturalised or have just begun to spread into a region, when their distribution and numbers are limited and control is much easier. Eradicating or containing a species that has become well established and widespread is far more difficult, because it will usually reinvade a cleared area.

WHAT IS DOC DOING?

DoC is carrying out “weed-led” programmes, and supporting some weed-led programmes being run by other agencies (figure 3). The aim of these is to control new weed species that have the potential to greatly increase in numbers, distribution and level of impact. These weed-led programmes may have lower benefits in the short term compared to managing weeds in important natural areas, but they will be an important part of managing weed impacts in the long term.

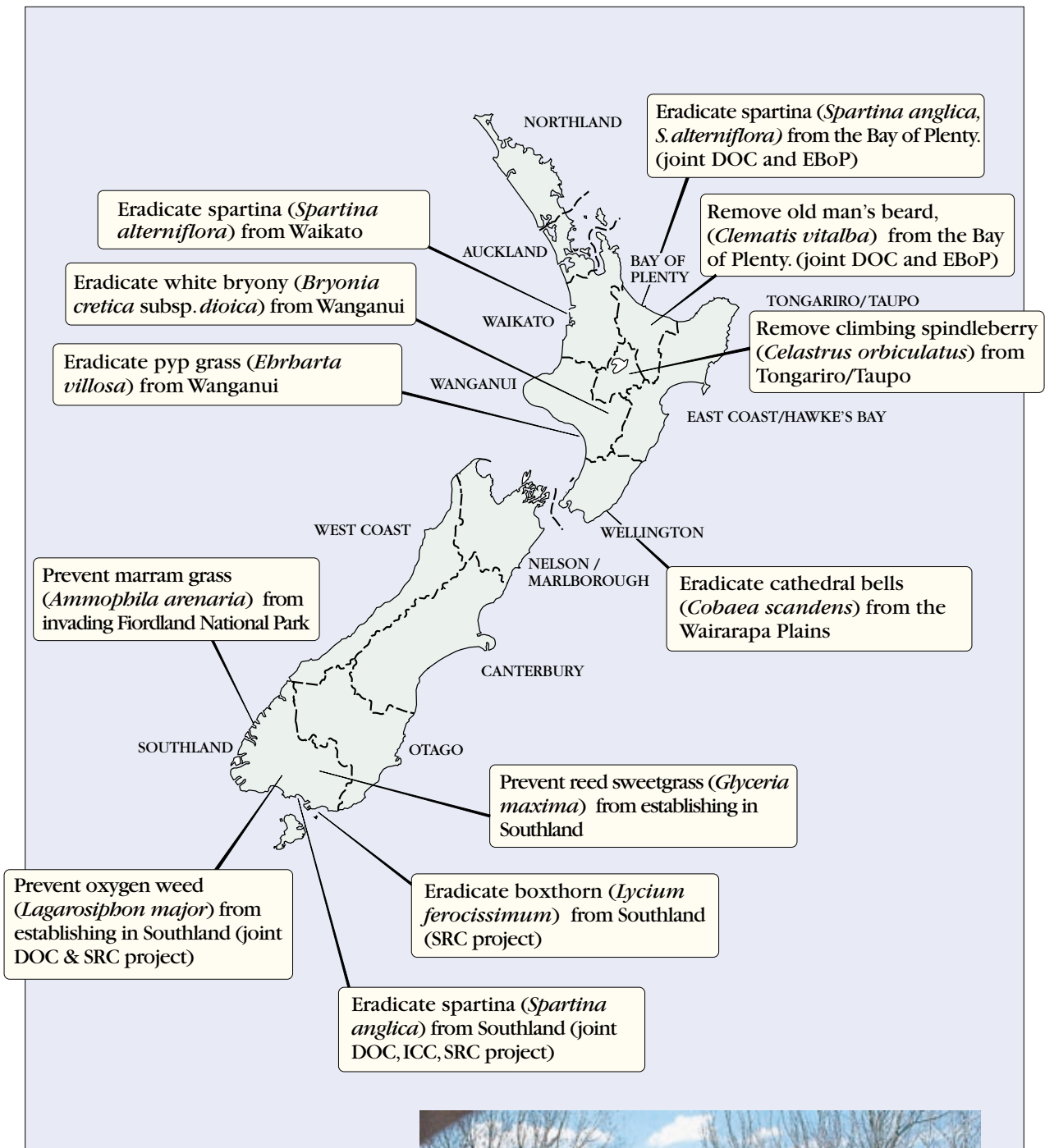
The support of the public, and partnerships between DoC, landowners, regional councils and other agencies, will be essential to the success of weed-led programmes. This is because new weed populations can appear on land of any type or quality, and because human activities can introduce and spread new invasive weeds. Emerging problems must also be identified at an early stage, and there must be a balance between rapid response and planning for longer term control.

Left: Chilean flamecreeper. In the Waikato, Chilean flamecreeper is only known in a few sites at Waipapa, Pikiariki and adjacent forest and farm land. DoC is working with Carter-Holt Harvey and a farmer to eradicate Chilean flamecreeper in these sites before it becomes too well established to control.
Peter Williams

Right: Climbing spindleberry smothering a kowhai near Huka Falls. In Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy in 1997, climbing spindleberry was growing in only four small and isolated sites. DoC is attempting to eradicate it before it spreads, because it has the potential to spread widely and smother and collapse forest canopy up to twelve metres tall.
Chris Buddenhagen, 1997



Figure 3: Some weed-led programmes that DoC is carrying out or supporting in 1998.



Reed sweetgrass
P.N. Johnson

