

Summary of responses to consultation with Te Herenga

In mid-August 2015 this invitation to consult was published in the Te Herenga newsletter.

No responses were received from members of Te Herenga as a result of this announcement

Biological control of Tutsan, *Hypericum androsaemum*



Tutsan growing on hill country near Taumarunui.

An application is planned in late 2015 for approval to release two insects for the biological control of tutsan. This application will be submitted by the Tutsan Action Group, a community-group comprising farmers, Horizons Regional Council, and Department of Conservation conservancies. It has been supported by the MPI Sustainable Farming Fund, Beef & Lamb New Zealand and Landcare Research. Landcare Research is also the science provider for this development.

One insect feeds on the leaves (*Chrysolina abchasica*, a leaf beetle) and larvae of the other on the stems and fruits (*Lathronympha strigana*, a moth). These are the first of several proposed biocontrol agents that may be used to help control tutsan in New Zealand.

Background

Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum* L., Hypericaceae) is a semi-evergreen shrub that grows to about 1.5 m tall. It was noted as a weed of local significance in the 1920, but has now begun spreading alarmingly quickly to become a serious weed in the North Island. It has taken much sheep-grazed hill country in the central North Island out of production. It is unpalatable to stock. It is spreading both within its range and also moving to new areas. Tutsan can also shade out native plant communities in habitats like stream margins, shrublands, tussock grasslands and bare land, and is a growing concern for DOC from Kaitaia to Stewart Island. More information on the weed and the project can be found here:

<http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/science/plants-animals-fungi/plants/weeds/biocontrol/approvals/current-applications/tutsan>

Potential benefit

The aim of the project is to reduce the current and the future impact of this weed. Research puts the current direct cost of weed management and administration (in just a few affected Districts) at over \$1m per annum, and the future capital loss when land is retired from production because of tutsan in those areas will be over \$30 million. Successful biological control would reduce seed production, reducing the development of more tutsan monocultures within its existing range and slowing spread to new areas. Heavy leaf damage would reduce the density and competitive effects of the weed. There would be monetary benefits for existing affected hill country farmers in the North Island including Maori farmers. There would be environmental benefits for plant communities that currently face replacement by tutsan. Successful biological control would also limit the future impact of the weed. These benefits will be detailed in the application.

Potential issues

There are several native *Hypericum* species closely related to the target weed that must be protected. A report available on the webpage provides evidence that populations of these natives will not be at risk from the two insects. The application will discuss a range of other potential risks and costs.

Consultation

The process of pre-application consultation with a wide range of stakeholders has just begun. If you would like to learn more, or you have any concerns, please call Richard Hill (021 1376919). He can provide any other information you might need.