

Insight

Reaching over 4500 landowners in Priority Possum Control Areas

Priority possum control

The council funds and undertakes work in over 49 Priority Possum Control Areas (PPCAs), covering nearly 543,00 hectares across the Waikato region and involving thousands of landowners.

PPCAs are areas of land that have been identified by Waikato Regional Council as needing possum control to:

- protect and enhance biodiversity (including improving the stability of catchments)
- enhance primary production
- maintain the gains of previous or existing possum control.

Recent extreme weather events have made clear the importance of intact healthy forests to protect catchments, with control of pest animals an integral part of that.

Developing and maintaining professional relationships with landowners is critical to the long-term success of our PPCA programme.

We appreciate your cooperation with the control work being carried on your property.

The council has made available an online mapping service so you can see where your property is located within a PPCA. You can view the interactive map online at waikatoregion.govt.nz/priority-possum-control-areas.

AT220 trap – a new tool in the toolbox

The council has been trialling the use of AT220 traps as an alternative control tool to aerial or ground-based toxins, and to determine whether they can reduce possum numbers to required performance monitoring levels (for example, 5 per cent residual trap catch or 5% RTC) in large, forested areas on private land. Three trial sites have been set up in the last 18 months. AT220 traps are self-setting. They automatically deliver lure to attract possums, rats, mustelids and reset once the pest animal has been controlled.

Paeroa Range trial site

The first trial across 500 hectares of native forest in the Paeroa Range, using 105 AT220 traps, has been completed. A pre-control trend monitoring result of 13.75% RTC (40 possums were caught out of 300 trap nights during the initial monitoring period) indicated possum numbers were quite high. After the AT220 traps had been operating for around eight months, the area returned a successful post-control monitoring result of 3.03 per cent RTC (nine possums were caught out of 300 trap nights during the final monitoring period).

What we've learnt

The results of this first trial suggest that AT220 traps have the ability to successfully reduce possum numbers to the required RTC levels in forested areas of PPCA if they are regularly maintained. This includes recharging batteries, lure refills and ensuring each trap mechanism is functioning. The best results were achieved by placing traps at approximately 150-metre intervals on locations where there are signs of possums.

The cost of achieving such a result, however, is substantially higher than if the same area was to receive an aerial 1080 application, and it takes a significantly longer amount of time to achieve the required reduction in possum numbers: six to 12 months for installation and operation of AT220 traps compared with days taken to conduct an aerial application. Therefore, this control method is likely to be too expensive for larger and remote areas.

The results of this and the other trials will help the council develop criteria around when and where this control method could be employed as part of the suite of tools available to us when controlling pest animals at a landscape scale in the region.

An AT220 trap in action



What we're doing

PPCA blocks

1. Otahu Farmland

- Completed by EcoFX in December 2022, 0.85% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

2. Pukekawa

- Completed by EcoFX in December 2021, 2.35% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

3. Onewhero

- Completed by EcoFX in May 2022, 1.79% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

4. Te Kohanga

- Sector 1 completed by EcoFX in June 2023, 4.52% RTC.
- Potential next sector operation 2023/2024.

5. Port Waikato Farmland

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2023, 4.1% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2025/2026.

6. Port Waikato Bushland

- Completed by EcoFX in December 2022, 0% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

7. Glen Murray

- Completed by EcoFX in October 2021, 3.84% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

8. Waikaretu

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 7.26% RTC.

9. Naike

- EcoFX contracted to complete control in 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2021 9.25%.

10. Whangape

- Farmland trend 2022 4.89% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

11. Rangiriri

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 7.33% RTC.

12. Rotowaro

- Rotowaro Farmland trend 2023 13.52% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

13. Matira

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 9.30% RTC.

14. Te Akau

- EcoFX contracted to complete control in 2023/2024
- Farmland trend 5.65% RTC.

15. Waingaro

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 9.04% RTC.

16. Mount Karioi North

- Farmland Trend 2023 3.64% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/25.

17. Mount Karioi South

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland Trend 8.33% RTC.

18. Mount Pirongia North Buffer

- Completed by EcoFX in December 2022, 1.76% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2025/2026.

19. Mount Pirongia West Buffer

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2023 10.8% RTC.

20. Oparau

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 15.9% RTC.

21. Ngutunui

- Completed by EcoFX in November 2021, 1.55% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

22. Waipa Puniu II

- Completed by EcoFX in December 2022, 3.13% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

23. Honikiwi

- Completed by EcoFX in March 2022, 0.71% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

24. Hauturu Awaroa

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2023:
 - Farmland 4.73 % RTC,
 - Bushland 0.74% RTC.
- Potential next Farmland operation 2025/2026.

25. Nukuhakari – Awakino 1

- Completed by EcoFX in December 2021, 3.09% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

26. Nukuhakari – Awakino 2

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2022, 0.42% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

27. Whareorino Bushland

- Bush sector joint WRC-DOC (NPCP)
- Contracted to EcoFX in 2022/2023.

28. Whareorino

- Farmland completed by EcoFX in November 2021, 3.38% RTC.
- Potential next farmland operation 2024/2025.

29. Mahoenui

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2023, 4.46% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2025/2026.

30. Pio Pio West

- Completed by EcoFX in February 2022, 0.00% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2025/2026.

31. Pio Pio East

- Farmland trend 2022 4.3% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

32. Aria

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 8.71% RTC

33. Mokauiti 1 Farmland

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2022/2023.
- Operation deferred to 2023/2024.

34. Mokauiti 2 Farmland

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 5.70% RTC.

35. Mokauiti Bushland

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/202.
- Bushland trend 2022 7.56%.

36. Rangitoto Range

- Completed by EPRO Ltd in October 2022, 1.00% RTC.
- Joint WRC-DOC (NPCP) bush sector spring 2022.
- Potential next operation 2028.

37. Tiroa

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 10.82% RTC.

38. Waipa

- Completed by EcoFX in July 2022:
 - Farmland 2.39% RTC,
 - Bushland 0.0% RTC.
- Potential next farmland operation 2025/2026.

39. Rangitoto

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2022, 0.56% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2025/26.

40. Ngaroma 1

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Farmland trend 2022 6.3% RTC.

41. Ngaroma 2

- Farmland trend 4.2% RTC, 2022.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

42. Arohena 1

- Completed by EcoFX in February 2023, 4.47% RTC.
- Next operation 2026/2027.

43. Arohena 2

- Completed by EPRO Ltd in March 2023, 0.0% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

44. Waotu

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2023, 1.12% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

45. Mangakino

- Farmland trend 3.36% RTC, 2022.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

46. North Taupo

- Completed by EPRO Ltd in October 2022, 1.82% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2024/25.

47. West Taupō

- Completed by Epro Ltd in May 2023, 1.32% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

48. Waikite Valley Farmland

- EPRO Ltd contracted to undertake control 2023/2024:
 - Sector 2A
 - Forest Blocks
- Farmland trend 11.70% RTC, 2022.

49. Te Kopia – Paeroa Range

- Bushland trend 8.48% RTC, 2022.
- Joint WRC-DOC bush sector.
- Potential next operation 2024/2025.

50. Te Miro – Whitehall

- Farmland trend 4.14% RTC, 2023.
- Potential next operation 2024/25.

HALO blocks

51. Maungakawa Reserve

- Completed by EcoFX in June 2020, 1.03% RTC.
- Next operation 2024/2025.

52. Te Tapui Block B

- Completed by EcoFX in August 2020, 2.22% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

53. Te Miro Reserve

- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2023/2024.
- Trend 8.05% RTC, 2023.

54. Pukemako/Sanitorium Hill

- Completed by EcoFX in October 2022, 3.33% RTI.
- Next operation 2023/2024.

55. Tirohanga Road

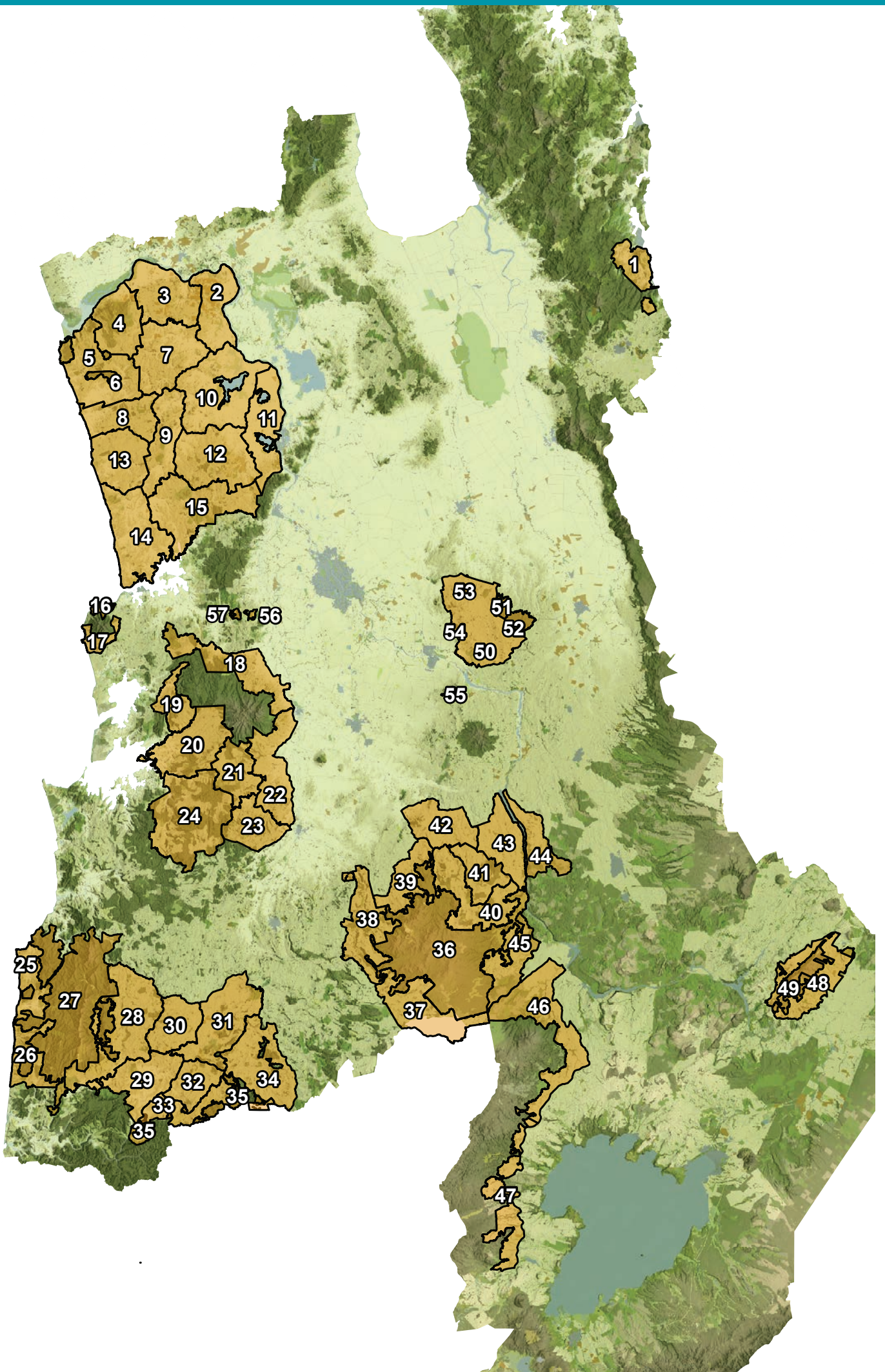
- Completed by EcoFX Ltd in October 2022, 0.00% RTI.
- Next operation 2023/2024.

56. Old Mountain Road (Johnstons)

- Completed by EcoFX in August 2022, 1.82% RTI.
- Next operation 2023/2024.

57. Old Mountain Road (Hope Bush)

- Completed by EcoFX in August 2022, 0.00% RTI.
- Next operation 2023/2024.





Meet Kathryn O'Toole Pest Animals Lead

I have an MSc from Massey University and have previously worked in biodiversity/biosecurity related roles for Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, Auckland Council, QEII National Trust and the Department of Conservation.

I joined the council's Pest Animal Team in January this year after working in our Science and Kauri Protection teams. My role as Pest Animals Lead includes oversight of our PPCA programme, which helps ensure large areas of our region have protection from the impacts of possums.

Wallaby control

Waikato Regional Council, as part of the National Wallaby Programme, undertook a successful night shooting operation in the Wai-o-Tapu/Maunga Kakaramea in May 2023, controlling over 100 dama wallaby. The operation is part of a wider control programme in the area that includes an aerial 1080 operation in neighbouring plantation forestry to prevent wallaby spreading into the Waikato from a geographically identified wallaby containment in the Bay of Plenty region.

The National Wallaby Programme has also been constructing a wallaby fence along SH5/ south-western boundary of Whakarewarewa forest, also with the aim of reducing dama wallaby spread from the containment area.



The Whakarewarewa wallaby fence.



Night shooting operation in the Wai-o-tapu/Maunga Kakaramea



Invasive freshwater gold clams

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) needs your help to keep an eye out for a new-to-New Zealand clam species that was recently discovered in the Waikato River at Bob's Landing, near Lake Karāpiro, and since at Maraetai, Mangakino, and all the way to Wellington Beach in Hamilton. Waikato Regional Council is supporting the national response led by MPI which has recently declared the clam an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act.

The clams are quite distinctive. They can be found sitting on top of sandy or muddy surfaces or buried shallowly within them. There are no New Zealand species that look like this in the river.

These clams reproduce rapidly and form large populations that can clog water-based infrastructure such as electric generation plants, irrigation systems, and water treatment plants. They are filter feeders that can potentially compete with native species for food. We do not yet know how this species will respond in New Zealand conditions.

If you spot any clams, please note the location and call Biosecurity New Zealand on 0800 80 99 66. Help prevent the spread of these clams to other waterways by practising Check Clean Dry when moving to another location on a river, or between waterways. The Check Clean Dry method can be found on the MPI website.

