

Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust Newsletter

Kia ora from the Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust

Welcome to the fifth issue of our community newsletter. In this addition we review 2011/12, update you on this year's work programme and have some great articles from Jeff and Linzi Keen, Pete Raal and a report from chair Ali Timms.

Mid Dome trustees have been working hard securing additional funding, canvassing local and national government agencies and supporting the running of the annual control programme. These outstanding efforts have added to an excellent year of controlling wilding trees on Mid Dome.

Chair report

by Ali Timms



An important function of the Mid Dome Trust is to promote and protect all of the values of high country tussock lands, not only at Mid Dome but nationally as well.

In the past we have successfully lobbied for an exemption for tree weeds in the Emission Trading Scheme Legislation which benefit many organizations involved in wilding control.

And founding Trustee Sir Alan Mark has been very vocal this year about the stupidity of an SOE, Landcorp, planting Douglas fir in highly risky sites for carbon farming whilst other Government departments – DOC and LINZ – are spending large sums of money on wilding control as a result of historic bad sitings.

Some excuses can be made for the mistakes of the past when the wilding risk of contorta and some commercial species was not known. But to see this huge disconnect between completely contrary decisions made by government today beggars belief. For example, the Douglas fir plantation at Waipori Station in the Lammerlaw Range, Eastern

Otago uplands, was approved despite the risk of wilding spread being assessed as greater than high. And compliance with plantation consent conditions are only as good as the local District Councils' ability and/or willingness to enforce them.

In Southland we are fortunate that lobbying resulted in the Southland District Council making changes to its District plan that really tighten up conditions around plantations in Mountain Resource Areas.

And recently the Trust obtained "affected party" status that enables us to have input into the resource consents for a new plantations such as the one sited at Flagstaff Station at Athol.

All of this indicates the pressing need for wilding issues to be addressed at a national level. The Wilding Conifer Management Group represents all parties involved in wilding issues in NZ. This group in concert with Minister for Primary Industries commissioned a report which has recently been released. "Wilding Conifers in NZ, Status Report" by Vicky Froude is a good first step towards establishing national wilding management strategies and consistency in government policy.

A concerted and combined advocacy approach will be essential if recommendations of this report are put in place. An Otago Wilding Trust has recently being set up to deal with wilding issues at a regional level and our Trust is seeking membership on it.

But, with some Regional Councils still failing to recognise wildings as a threat to biosecurity, biodiversity and productive farming, we've got lots of work to do!

Changes in the Mid Dome Trust

Mr Mark Sutton continues to support the Trust's endeavours and we welcome him as our newest trustee. The Mid Dome Trustees are:

- Ali Timms (Chair) – Environment Southland Chair and Councillor for Eastern Dome constituency, which includes Mid Dome
- Alison Broad – Invercargill-based advocate and consultant on community projects
- Sir Alan Mark – Dunedin scientist, conservationist and tussock grasslands specialist
- Geoffrey Young – Local landowner
- Michael Skerrett – Iwi representative
- Mark Sutton – Waiau Fisheries & Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Trust

The total budget spent on wilding tree control for the Mid Dome project's 2011/12 season was \$428,779. A break down of the hectares controlled last seasons is covered in Map 1 and by tenure in Table 1.

Ground control

Ground contractors have controlled approximately 2483 ha of scattered to medium density trees. Since November 2011 Lawson Forestry Contracting has worked on various Mid Dome management units with chainsaws and hand-tools. They have been removing large numbers of young trees from these areas. The presence of so many young trees could be an effect of residual seed source or an event. Landowners are asked to keep a wary eye out for new infestations of wilding trees.

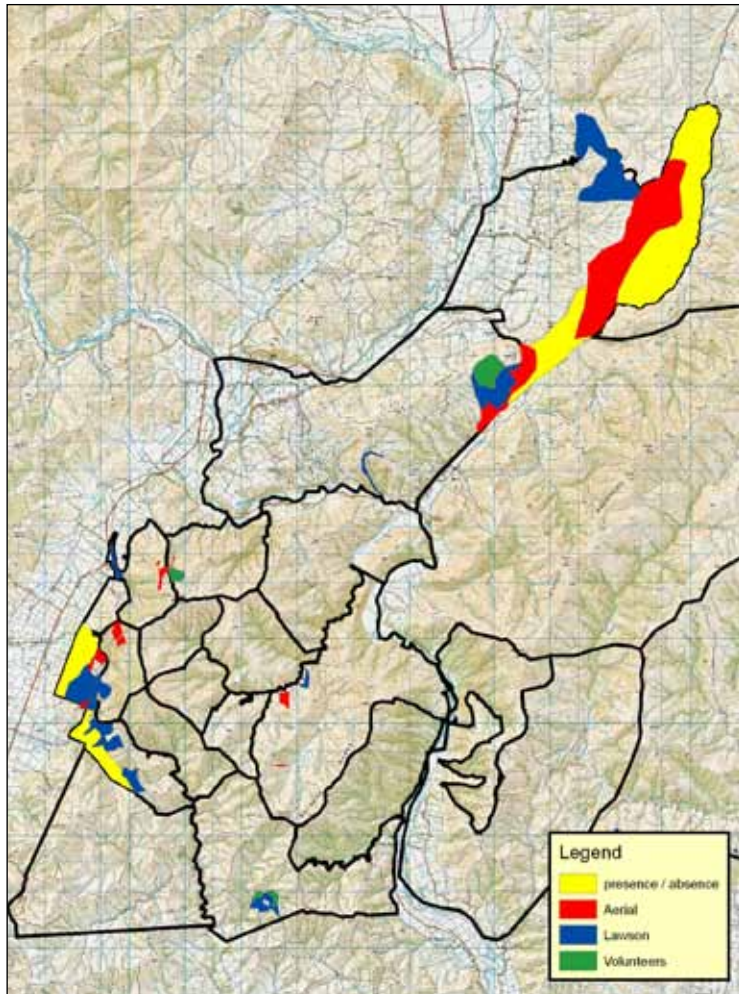
Groundsray Contracting have completed 11 ha of ground based basal bark technique (GBBA). Peter Raal explains this technique in his article.

Aerial control and trials

Ninety five hectares of rateable and crown land was controlled by Nokomai Helicopters using boom spraying. Basal bark (spot) spraying was carried out on 902ha of the Slate Range, covering the Blackmore Covenant and steep faces along the Nokomai stream, where the ground contractors were unable to reach.

Trials placed in 2010 will have their final inspection in February 2013 to gauge the effectiveness of each method and herbicide combination used.

All the trials are a joint venture between the Trust, Department of Conservation (DOC) and Crown Research Institute (SCION).



Map 1: Management units controlled in 2011/12

Volunteers

Volunteers cleared 126ha of wilding trees at Mid Dome. The public volunteer days were again well supported, and concentrated on the northern faces of Mid Dome and the south side of the Slate Range. Volunteers from Otago University had a separate work day in November. Their efforts were coordinated by Sir Alan Mark of the University and they removed any trees found in the area.

The next volunteer work day will be held on Saturday 9 March 2013. Watch for more details or contact Randall Milne at Environment Southland. Please phone 0800 76 88 45 if you're interested in helping.

Southern Institute of Technology (SIT) students, lead by Ross Ramsay, spent a weekend in April on Jeff Keen's property removing small trees with hand-tools. This is the third year SIT students have supported the Mid Dome project and plans are a-foot to repeat this in the coming season.

Volunteer days can be organised for other groups. If you or your organisation is interested in volunteering, please contact the following:

- Randall Milne, Environment Southland, phone 0800 76 88 45 or email randall.milne@es.govt.nz
- David Miller, Department of Conservation, phone 03 2112400 or email dmiller@doc.govt.nz

Table 1: Area of land controlled by land tenure type and control method.

Land Tenure	Ground Control Ha	Aerial Control Ha
Rateable Land	2443	945
Public Conservation	40	0
Crown Land	0	52
Total	2483ha	997ha

Funding

The Mid Dome Trust has secured significant funding (\$300,000 over three years) from the Community Environment Fund, with the Trust matching this each year, making a \$600,000 project. With this funding the Trust will now be able to target the original mature seed source trees for eradication.

To ensure the Trust's eradication of wilding trees from the Mid Dome area, we continue to seek further private funding. The project team is always on the lookout for funding opportunities to supplement the work programme. If you have any suggestions please contact:

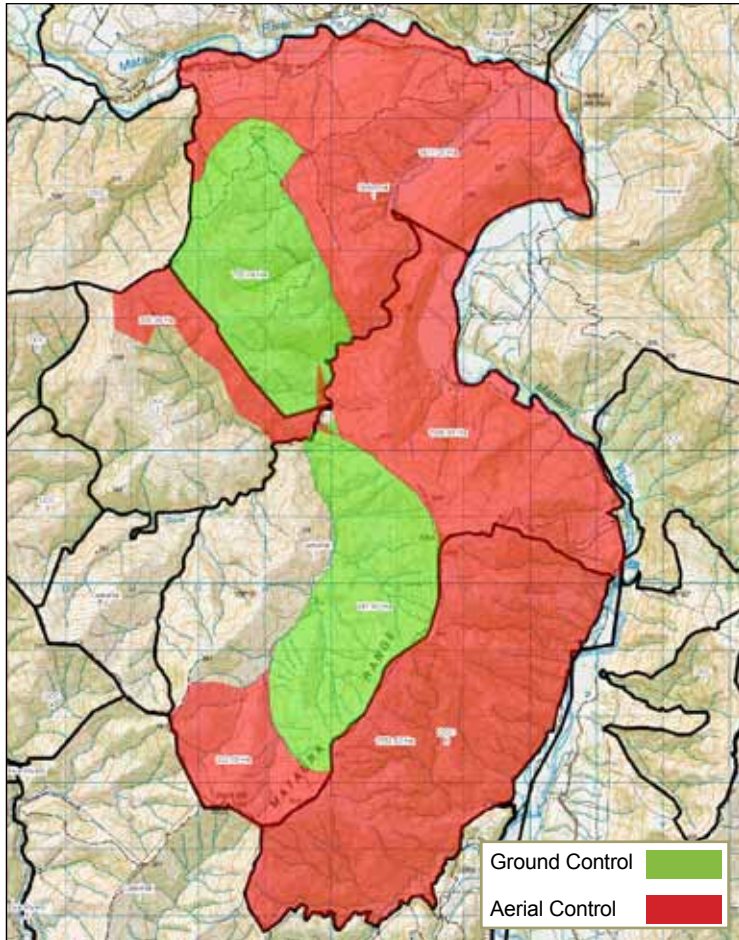
- Ali Timms (Trust chair) – ali.timms@gmail.com.
- Richard Bowman (ES) – richard.bowman@es.govt.nz

2012/13 Work Plans

Trust Work Plan (funding from annual funders)

The 2012/13 Trust Plan was approved with a budget of \$434,200. This involves aerial and ground control on rateable and conservation land, removing mainly second generation trees from Nokomai 1, Cattle Flat 2 and the Mataura faces.

The full operational plan for 2012/13 season can be obtained from David Miller at DOC by emailing dmiller@doc.govt.nz or telephoning 03 2112400.



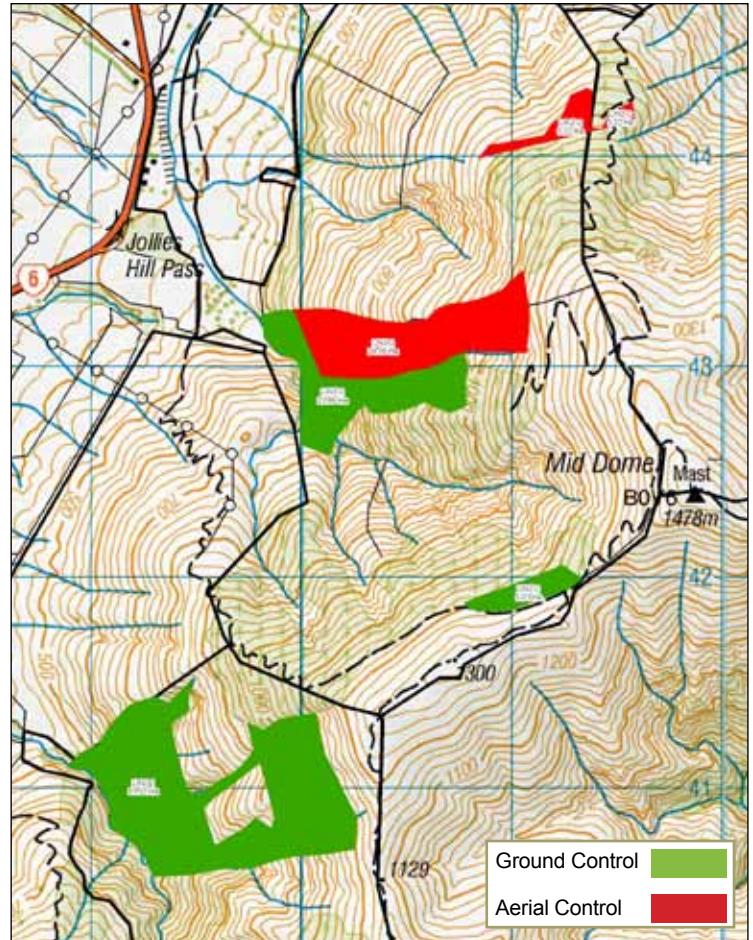
Map 2: 2012/13 Work Plan showing areas being targeted with Trust funding.

Community Environment Fund Work Plan (additional funding)

Funding of \$300,000 over the next three years has been awarded from Ministry for the Environment (MfE) 'Community Environment Fund', with the Trust contributing \$300,000. The extra money is targeted for the control of seed source plantings on Crown Land, assisting in controlling down wind wilding spread.

Ground control will target trees in native areas removing scattered trees into more dense stands suitable for spraying.

Nokomai Helicopters have secured this year's contract to complete the planned aerial work on Mid Dome.



Map 3: 2012/13 Work Plan showing areas being targeted with funding from MfE funding.

Hunters

Mid Dome conservation area continues to be open to hunting of deer, pigs and goats all year round. Permission must be obtained from surrounding landowners for access to this area by the private farm tracks. Access via private land may not be possible at some times during the year. Please respect the land owners' right not to grant access across private land as trespassers may be prosecuted. Walking access can be gained by the public track at Fiery Creek from the Nokomai Road. Monthly hunting permits are available on line from the DOC website for Mid Dome.



An integrated approach to our wilding pine eradication

by Jeff and Linzi Keen, Tomogalak Gorge Farm

Our "Big Basin", a native block of 180ha (4 blocks) has been severely impacted by wilding pines. Until recently our philosophy had been to leave the block in a natural state and only use it for winter grazing. However the pine tree invasion has forced us to look at a variety of methods of control.

Over the last three years we have been very grateful of the support of SIT and their Environmental Studies Programme, whereby students have come up to stay for a weekend each February for a pine pull and case study of the problem. We have thoroughly enjoyed the relationship with these students, some, including several ex-students have returned each year as they have enjoyed the experience so much.

The larger trees have been sprayed and isolated mature trees felled, with the facilitation of David Miller who has been integral to our eradication efforts.

We have had to change our philosophy about keeping the block 'native', as it was going to be a very difficult to combat the wilding pines without grazing pressure. We therefore made the decision to

fence it into eight smaller blocks so added stock pressure can be used as a method of control.



SIT Environmental Studies students pulling pines

Basal bark herbicide treatment for invasive woody weed management

Pete Raal (*This is a condensed summary of this actual article. If you would like to read the complete version please contact me – praal@doc.govt.nz*)

Sometimes trees, and other woody weeds, just need to go! Why is this?

Woody weeds can reduce the quantity and quality of desirable native and/or forage plants available for livestock grazing on the farm. These unwanted plants are often more aggressive than existing native vegetation or the desired forage species and compete for light, water, and nutrients. Often the aesthetic value of the farm is also significantly impacted by woody weeds.

Because of these problems, an increasing number of farmers are looking for simple solutions to control the ever increasing numbers of these weeds, especially scattered wilding pines. The good news is that by using the basal bark application method you can quickly kill most single or scattered woody weeds in an environmentally safe way if you follow a few simple rules.

The basal bark application method provides the ideal solution for scattered woody weed control because it is quick and easy to use, highly effective and incorporates a practice that enhances to the growth of the desirable native and forage. Using this method, the herbicide is applied to a specific area on the tree which significantly reduces impacts on adjacent vegetation or the soil from drift or overspray.

The basal bark application method uses a knapsack to squirt a mixture of 120g/l triclopyr butoxyethyl ester (Grazon or equivalent generic) herbicide in oil onto the lower trunks of woody species. The technique is highly effective on saplings and trees with a stem diameter of less than 20 millimeters and which have not yet developed a thick bark. As the trees become bigger, the bark becomes rougher and thicker and the technique becomes less effective. It must be noted that treated trees may take up to 1 year (or more) to die so don't draw conclusions too soon if you use this method.

If you need further information or want to share any insights please contact Peter Raal, Technical Advisor: Threats (Science and Technical's Christchurch Service Centre's Threats Unit) located in the Otago Conservancy Office. Email: praal@doc.govt.nz, Phone: (03) 474 6945.



Using the basal bark application method herbicide is applied to a specific area on the tree

Acknowledgements

The Mid Dome Trust would like to acknowledge all those who have supported them through the volunteer days, supply of donations in kind, annual financial contributions from our funding partners and the private organisations that have also given support.

Contact us

If you have stories you would like to share or have any feedback about this newsletter, contact David Miller, Mid Dome Project Manager on 03 211 2400 or email dmiller@doc.govt.nz.