

TO THE HEARING PANEL

HEARING SUBMISSIONS REGARDING THE CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REVIEW 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submissions. We congratulate Environment Canterbury on the development of the Proposal and look forward to its implementation.

We wish to offer our support to the Staff Recommendations Report, with particular reference to the recommendation to reject the submissions seeking exemption from the proposed wilding conifer rules.

This staff recommendation is inline with our original submission requesting that the removal of wildings from Selwyn District Council reserves, and specifically those at Castle Hill Village, should be retained under the proposed statutes and regulations of the Canterbury Regional Council Pest Management Plan.

We strongly oppose the submissions made by the Castle Hill Village Association and Selwyn District Council requesting exemption from the regulations for listed pest conifer species and wildings conifers located in Castel Hill reserves.

We object to any form of exemption to Castle Hill reserve trees for the following reasons:

1. Current Thinking:

"..... at the least chip away at the contorta problem." "Since there are likely to be several years of significant contorta felling and removal....." These recent statements reflect the expectations and attitudes of some Castle Hill Community Association (CHCA) committee members. The West Reserve which was being discussed contains almost 200 mature wilding seed source P. contorta, most of which are over 25 metres tall. These wilding conifers were not part of the original landscape plans being self seeded, and were not authorised under the exotic plantings resource consent for the village.



The dominance of wilding seeding P. contorta on the West Reserve



While there is acknowledgement in the Castle Hill Reserves Management Plan and with the CHCA committee that the P. contorta is a problem and must go, there is reluctance for a variety of reasons within the village to remove

wildings quickly and completely. However, this is not the opinion of many residents both permanent and occasional. Recent CHCA committee and newsletter polls indicated that of 27 members and respondents, 18 want the P. contorta to be removed immediately, and 9 want the process to be gradual. This is a ratio of 2 to 1 in favour of rapid removal.

This dissension is unproductive and non conducive to relationships, and should not be left in the hands of the village community to resolve. Possibly the reason that some of the committee members signed off on the CHCA submission was that they feel confident they are able to control the situation with the help of Selwyn District Council through the Reserves Management Plan, and do not wish to relinquish that control. Based on past and present experience we do not share that confidence, therefore we could not agree to the CHCA committee submission.

2. Castle Hill Reserves Management Plan:

Further comment is necessary concerning the Castle Hill Reserves Management Plan. It should be noted this has been under review for a year and to date the complete draft of the revised plan has not been presented to the Council or community. A draft plan concerning the West Reserve (the large area of contorta pictured in this material) has only within the last 2 weeks been circulated to the committee. It was hoped that after the vigorous community submissions that were made to this particular plan, particularly on wilding matters, changes will be made, but there does not appear to have been much impact in terms of rapid wilding removal.

The following statements appear in this draft for community consultation:

"Phase 2...to comprise removal of remaining pest trees ...to occur in 3 years time".

*"It is generally accepted that pest species will mostly be removed from the village, particularly the contorta. However, where particular management such as containment within surrounding treesthen their retention is proposed. **The Council has a letter from ECan allowing removal of pest species from the village reserves over a longer period than the one year stipulated by ECan. This is intended over the 3 years of Phase 2 to the West Reserve project.**"*

This led to Recommendation 2

"that pest species as defined by ECan.... But particularly specimen of other species be considered for retention where their bad habits can be managed"

This raises two further points of concern:

1. The letter from ECan to Selwyn District Council allowing exemption from the rules of ECan re the timing of pest removals. When and where did this letter come from and how was it actioned? Did it go through the exemption process? If so, the fact that the process does not require community consultation is of concern.

We would submit that ECan looks to add a consultation process for potentially affected parties when considering exemptions under 8.3 of the Proposal.

2. The establishment of containment planting around an existing pest species is a long process for catch-up - up to 30 years - and in that time a tree can throw thousands of seedlings onto neighbouring land each year, and continue to grow exponentially. The potential landmark D. fir trees are already far too big for any hope of that.

The following statement is in the expired Reserves Management Plan.

2.9 Trees in the reserves. Page 32, Castle Hill Village Reserves Management Plan June 2011

Douglas fir: (Oregon pine)

*"The seeds disperse readily but the wild seedlings are only moderately aggressive in their propagation and are not considered to be a problem in the village. The aim of this management plan will be to scale back its use in reserves to **landmark** and shade tolerant areas."*

There is no acknowledgement that this tree is in fact the second worst wilding source locally, nor any acknowledgement that the trees may be causing a problem on anyone else's land within the village or beyond. Gardeners in the village are constantly removing seedlings from their garden beds and flower pots. On a small strip of DOC land opposite the village D. fir seedlings outnumber P. contorta approximately 5:1. The nearest seed source trees are on SDC reserve across the road in the village, and could likely be considered as landmark trees by the CHCA committee. As previously stated, it is far too late to consider containment for these trees.



Left - DOC land with dominance of Douglas fir seedlings. Right - their source across the road in SDC reserve



The support of Douglas fir as amenity landmark trees is concerning and it is still discussed by some members as being the tree of choice for landmark trees and shade for the skating rink.

This rink does not need shade to freeze.

We encourage the Hearing Panel to reject the submission by the SDC and CHCA to allow exemption from the proposed rules by way of Management Plans.

3. Castle Hill Station:

To date the following money has been spent on wilding removal on the neighbouring Castle Hill Station:

WELRA	\$41,000 (Whitewater catchment earlier this year)	
Castle Hill Station.	\$17,000 (current owners)	
	\$68,000 (previous owner)	Total: \$126,000

The previous owner of Castle Hill Station maintains that *It is important that all wildlings go from the village..... it's like polio..... it's all or nothing.*

There is still considerable work to be done on the station, but funding will not be available until the coming summer from MPI. The landowner will be removing contorta in the shelter belts.

Villager volunteers have cleared wildings from high reaches of the station above the village, where, of the three species present, larch was the most common and most difficult to remove. No monetary value has been produced for this work.



Whitewater Stream where contractors spent the \$41,000 is over the ridge from the village to the left of the photo. There are no other seed source trees between the village and that location. Beyond the village fence on Castle Hill Station, there is a considerable number of all three wilding species (Larch, Douglas fir, P. contorta) above the Thomas River.



Larch, contorta and D. fir over the fence from the village spreading onto Castle Hill Station. Thomas River below

4. DOC Estate:

Wildings are being constantly removed from Kura Tawhiti (Castle Hill Rock Reserve) by volunteers, and the aforementioned land across the road from the village has recently been cleared of seed source wildings by DOC staff. All three species are evident on this land. Volunteers will later be used to remove the smaller pre-seeding trees. The *P. contorta* shelter belt by the Kura Tawhiti carpark will be removed and replanted with beech - undertaken in the next few months.

5. Other Land Owners

- ❖ The original *P. contorta*, *D. fir* and larch seed source trees were planted many years ago on the **Brittan/Enys** land to the north of the village. The *P. contorta* trees have recently been removed.
- ❖ **Ratepayers** in the village are removing the odd seeding *P. contorta* on their properties. This is actively ongoing.
- ❖ The owner of the **large section of land to the north of the village** currently for sale is aware of his responsibilities and has agreed to undertake *P. contorta* removal. The real estate agent has assured us that any potential buyer will also be made aware of the obligations to remove them.
- ❖ **Brooksdale Station** (south of the Porter River to Lake Lyndon). Major volunteer effort has gone into wilding removal on this land over the last 6 years. Seedlings continue to appear. This area is down wind of the seed source trees in the Castle Hill basin.
- ❖ Another private **land owner across the road** from the village is also actively removing *P. contorta* from his land. (photo below)



Wilding *P. contorta* and *D. fir* at least 200 metres from the village source trees. Land between is maintained as a golf course.

6. Future Funding:

A further amount of over \$200,000 has been allocated from the Central Government allocation through MPI, administered by ECan and DOC, to complete removal of seed source both *P. contorta* and Douglas fir in the Craigieburn area, on both private and DOC land this coming season. Some of this work is already being done by contractors. Another \$60,000 has been allocated for the Porter Block (which includes Castle Hill Station).

7. Potential Consequences of any Castle Hill Reserve

Exemptions:

Failure to immediately remove the seeding trees from Castle Hill reserves has the potential to undo years of collaborative control work and jeopardise future control programmes.

We believe that if an exemption is granted and if seed source trees are left to be managed in accordance with the Castle Hill Village Reserves Management plan under the auspices of SDC,

- ❖ it will be very difficult to remove the wildings with a speed that is concurrent with the principles of the National Wilding Strategy, MPI expenditure, the Environment Canterbury Pest Management Plan, and the desire of the majority of village residents.
- ❖ the pocket of *P. contorta* on the Selwyn District Council reserves in Castle Hill Village will be the only seed source left between Porters Pass and Arthurs Pass, left to remain for aesthetic/amenity reasons only, desired by a small group of people, on public land. That will set a very visible precedent for other landowners to make a case for exemption of their seed source wilding trees, and
- ❖ there is a high risk that the good work already completed and under way at considerable private and taxpayer expense on neighbouring properties will be negated. Seeds from the village seed source trees can reach the Torlesse Range and Lake Lyndon in a strong wind; it only needs one big event at the right time. Further removal of the resultant wilding spread will be expensive. Removal of wildings can cost between \$4,000 and \$5,000 per hectare, and Castle Hill Station is 3,000 hectares. It is highly unlikely SDC or ratepayers in the village would be willing to incur these costs.

Summary:

In summary, we submit our

- ❖ Support to the proposed wording of the wilding conifer regulations in the notified Proposal. Specifically, that the rules should be applicable throughout the Wilding Conifer Containment Area (no exemptions).
- ❖ Support to the Staff Recommendations Report that rejects all submissions seeking to create specific exemptions within the proposed rule framework.
- ❖ Opposition to the SDC and CHCA submission that the management of wilding removal in the Castle Hill Village reserves should be exempted from Environment Canterbury's Pest Management Plan and delegated to the Selwyn District Council. We do not believe that the new Reserves Management Plan will sufficiently manage the wilding issues. The circumstances of the wilding spread around the village are historic and significant, and currently managed to the highest standard in the country. The project is regarded as the 'poster child' for the rest of New Zealand's wilding control projects. The significant funding from the Government indicates the seriousness of the commitment.

Fiona McDonald

Member of Castle Hill Community Association committee
Co-Chair of Education Outdoors NZ
Deputy Chair NZ Mountain Safety Council

Sean Moran

Member of Castle Hill Community Association committee

Maree Goldring

Member/secretary of Castle Hill Community Association committee
Member/secretary of Waimakariri Ecological and Landscape Alliance
(WELRA)

Member/secretary of Canterbury Environmental Trust (CET)

Community member of the Selwyn Waihora Water Zone Committee

- * Member of the Biodiversity sub committee.
- * Zone committee representative on the Rakaia Catchment
Environmental Enhancement Society.