

Arrowtown Village Association – Submission response to Otago Regional Council Pest Management Plan and Biosecurity Strategy –December 2018

This submission is by the Arrowtown Village Association which is a volunteer-run incorporated society that represents the views of residents to local, regional and national government. We take up issues of public interest and work to improve and develop new amenities to meet the needs of the growing community in Arrowtown.

The following points we raise are directly relevant to the vision of the Shaping our Future Arrowtown (SOF Arrowtown) report. The AVA has the SOF Arrowtown final report as the guiding principal of the Arrowtown community and its aspirations.

Intensive community input was undertaken to formulate the report. The guiding aim is:

A vibrant, diverse community that is pro-active in managing its future in a way that values and sustainably protects its heritage, character, lifestyle and the natural environment

The AVA as such requests that our requests are considered in the ORC Pest Management Plan and Biosecurity Strategy as it is finalised. One of the most relevant key objectives from the Arrowtown SOF report is:

Environment Vision:

“Arrowtown’s natural environment is valued as a foundation of community well-being. We actively care for our town’s drinking water, clean air, native flora/fauna, natural and heritage landscape’s, town green spaces, and we accept the shared responsibility to ensure these are sustained and enriched.”

Additionally we refer ORC to familiarise themselves with the Arrowtown Wilding Strategy which provides in depth information of the localised Wilding threat in our area and on which our comments are additionally based. The strategy is available on www.arrowtownvillage.nz under environment.

Our submission relates to the following points:

4.1 Table 2 Organisms declared as pests

We support the list of animals declared as pests including feral cats, hedgehogs, mustelids, possums and rats.

We support the list of plants declared as pests including Contorta pine, Corsican pine, Darwin’s barberry, lagarosiphon, larch, Mountain pine, Scots pine, sycamore, wilding conifers, wild Russell lupin.

We suggest that council considers the addition of rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) to the list of declared pests due to their invasive and rapidly spreading nature in a wilding context.

We suggest council accepts the list of animal and plant pests as listed in the plan with those amended above.

We suggest that council identifies species of conifer identified as wilding within the five separate districts. Douglas Fir, while a forestry species in some other parts of the country, is one of the most significant wilding trees in the Queenstown Lakes District. As such it should be classified as a wilding species within the Queenstown Lakes District. Shelterbelts and windbreaks should not be excluded from the definition of wilding conifers, as they still actively contribute to extensive seed rain. ORC should work with private landowners to look at replacement plantings more rapidly than currently proposed under the biosecurity strategy. Appropriate objectives and rules also need to be included.

5.3 – Point 4.

We support council in educating people about the pests present in Otago and means of control.

6.3.4

We support plan objective 6.3.4, but modified to include the destruction of Douglas fir, larch, and radiata pine where identified as a wilding species.

6.4 Pests to be managed under sustained control programmes

In the coming years as OSPRI withdraws their possum control from areas, where TB has been removed, ORC will need to have its own plan for possum control. Possums have a huge impact on our native flora and fauna so their control is necessary for both biodiversity reasons as well as vectors for TB.

We would like to see the addition of possums to the list of pests to be managed under sustained control programmes and for the ORC to have a plan for possum control across the region. The plan should include objectives such as Residual Trap Catches (RTCs) and rules for land occupier responsibility. Possum control across the region needs a plan similar to that used for rabbits.

We would like to see the addition of goats to the list of pests to be managed under sustained control programmes and for the ORC to have a plan for working with landowners, government agencies, and local councils to contain their spread. Their rate of relatively uncontrolled spread is resulting in significant loss of biodiversity in the Wakatipu area.

We suggest the Council adds possums and feral goats to animals to be managed under sustained control programmes. Appropriate objectives and rules also need to be included.

Sycamore is an additional wilding tree that can invade native landscapes through its shade tolerance. As such, it should be moved from the site-led management programme to sustained control.

Description of Feral cats p.64

We support the inclusion of feral cats, or possibly better termed pest cats, for site-led control. Cats, whether owned or unowned, are highly skilled hunters and very destructive to our native wildlife as they are an apex predator in New Zealand.

Inclusion of other animal pests

We support the inclusion of hedgehogs, mustelids and rats as site led pests. All these species have significant impact on our native biodiversity and need to be controlled, especially in areas with significant native ecosystems.

Council should accept the list of animal pests especially the inclusion of hedgehogs, mustelids and rats as site led pests. As mentioned above we would like possums defined as a pest for sustained control.

Are there any other comments you would like to provide on the proposed Regional Pest Management Plan?

- ∞ There is no mention of feeding cats or establishing cat colonies on council land or on private land without the express permission of the land owner. Any establishment of a cat colony has the potential to devastate native wildlife and should be explicitly prohibited under the plan. For example in Greater Wellington Regional Council's proposed RPMP rule which states:

The Council should add rules about feeding cats or establishing cat colonies in public places or without the express permission of the land owner.

- ∞ Wilding conifers have been identified as the number one threat to biodiversity and impact on productive land in Otago. Historically there have been poor efforts to control their spread. As they increase exponentially, any money spent now will produce significant savings in the long term. ORC, responsible for Otago's pest management strategy, needs to prioritise their control. Central government has also started to realise the threat of wilding spread. ORC needs to become a leader in this field, and look to solve the wilding issue through collaboration, support, and leadership rather than focusing on intermittent efforts. More funding and emphasis on their control through the GNR and ORC as a leading body needs to occur. In the next ten year plan, ORC should look to move wilding control from Progressive Containment to Eradication.

Submitted by:

Noel Beggs, Chair, Arrowtown Village Association

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