

16 December 2009

Help protect kauri this summer

People heading out to enjoy the bush this summer are being asked to do their part to limit the spread of kauri dieback, a new to science disease attacking kauri trees.

Andrew Harrison, kauri dieback long term management programme spokesperson, says the disease is believed to be spread by the movement of soil and soil water.

“We need the public’s help to stop the disease spreading further. There are simple things people can do.

“As a precaution, people should stick to defined tracks in parks and reserves, clean their footwear, tyres and any equipment that comes into contact with soil before and after leaving areas of kauri forest, and avoid disturbing the roots of kauri trees.

“It’s especially important for people moving between areas of kauri forest when they are out enjoying the warmer weather as there are some areas, such as the Coromandel and Hunua Ranges in Auckland, that aren’t showing signs of the disease and we want to keep it that way,” he said.

Andrew Harrison says kauri dieback, or *Phytophthora taxon Agathis* (PTA), is a serious threat to one of our most treasured species and there is a need to be vigilant to prevent it from having devastating effects.”

“Kauri forests are an essential part of New Zealand’s ecosystem and home to many other plants and wildlife. We don’t want to lose such an iconic species to disease. We all need to act now to prevent its spread.”

The kauri dieback long term management programme is made up of MAF Biosecurity New Zealand, the Department of Conservation, the Auckland Regional Council, Northland Regional Council, Environment Bay of Plenty and Environment Waikato who are working together with Maori.

In October 2009, the Government announced funding of \$4.7million into a five year programme to contain the disease, and regional councils involved in the programme have also committed funding which brings total funding for the future management of kauri dieback to \$9.8 million. The group is currently undertaking research to find out more about PTA, how it spreads, and what can be done to stop it, and developing a public education programme.

“Kauri dieback is new to science and there is a lot to learn about the disease. It’s essential we find out more about it to continually improve the things we are doing to protect kauri,” said Andrew.

“This summer there are signs up at parks and tracks across the natural range of kauri and we have a website (www.kauridieback.co.nz) as well as an 0800 number (0800 NZ KAURI) people can call to get more information.

PTA is specific to kauri and can kill trees of all ages. Affected trees show yellowing leaves, canopy thinning, dead branches and lesions that bleed resin across the lower part of the trunk.

Media contact:

Amanda Peart

Kauri Dieback Management Communications

Phone: 09 366 2000 / 027 611 4562

