

# Willsman, Peter

## WAKATIPU WILDING CONIFER CONTROL GROUP

### 6 Other Comments

#### Would you like to comment on any other aspect of this draft 10 Year Plan?

Summary of the submission •Recognition of the wilding threat to landscape, flora, fauna, historical areas, QLDC and Doc reserves, to tourism and therefore the community. •Historical support of QLDC in birthing WCG, supporting and financing wilding control. •WCG's robust 5 year strategy \$1 million per year budget is into the third year. •The past investment of millions in wilding control is wasted unless the task is completed and ongoing maintenance funded. •WCG calls for funding of \$330,000 from QLDC for the 2015/16 season, with an annual increase of \$100,000 annually until the budget of \$500,000 is reached by 2017/18, as outlined and approved by QLDC in last year's annual plan (2014/15)

1. Wilding control historically adopted by QLDC- 1.1 QLDC has recognised the enormous threat of wilding pines to the Wakatipu landscapes, to flora and fauna, to heritage values, to tourism, and to the community. In 2004 Council commissioned a Wilding Strategy. 1.2 In 2008 QLDC commissioned and adopted a Wilding Management Strategy for 2008 – 2012. The Strategy called for a community based Group to be established. Initiated by Council, WCG was formed in April 2009. 1.3 Council has received WCG reports, been totally supportive of, and backed WCG with staff, finance, resources, use of Council media and meeting venues. 1.4 The WCG 2013 Strategy adopted by QLDC is a programme of investing \$1 million per year for 5 years using 5 key strategies. 2. A decade of wilding control is a foresighted community investment-

Year	Investment
2004 - 2008	\$893,000
2008 - 2013	\$1.9 million
2013- 2014	\$1.3 million
2014 - 2015	\$1.3 million

2.2 Due to the exponential spread of wildings large investments are required to bring the control back to maintenance levels. 2.3 The five year strategy is aimed at protecting the financial investments to date and completing the control strategy. Any financial reduction will cause control to fall behind and exponential costs will escalate. 2.4 This wilding control season 2014/2015 WCG has invested \$1.3 million in boom spraying, helicopter lance and ground crew work 2.5 The WCG submit that Council make incremental increases of \$100,000 till a budget of \$500,000 for wilding control is reached by 2017/18. Wilding maintenance would be taken over by Council from 2018. A community base WCG will need to continue as a Charitable Trust in order to source extra funding and to maintain a community voice. 2.6 Unless further grants can be sourced the WCG Strategy budget of \$1 million per year may have a shortfall of \$500,000 in 2016/17 and 2017/18. 3. That QLDC becomes the lead agency in wilding control contributing an estimated maintenance budget beyond 2018-

3.1 By 2018 WCG plan to have eradicated most of the wilding seed sources in the Wakatipu. 3.2 Ongoing control will be necessary due to current germinating seed sources, the major seed source is coming from Wilson Bay/Ben Lomond/Bowen Peak/Queenstown Hill forests 3.3 Council would co-ordinate work with Doc, LINZ, Landowners, ORC, Businesses, Trusts and the community 3.4 WCG estimates a maintenance budget of five hundred thousand annually (\$500,000) from QLDC once the five year strategy ends. 4. Priority use of funding-

4.1. WCG's priority this year is to remove as many seeding trees, woodlots, shelter belts, windbreaks and ornamental conifers (other than *Pinus radiata*) as possible and permissible. The rationale behind removing seed sources which currently blow up and infest vulnerable land is important. The cost of constantly removing seedlings on infested land while still leaving seeding trees to rain seed onto cleared land is a no brainer. Eradication is possible; *Contorta* pine has been virtually eradicated from the Von Valley. Skippers will soon have all large seeding trees beyond Long Gully removed. Follow up work removing small seedlings will continue although only light re-infestation will occur. 4.2 That Council remove seed sources from the Coronet forest and QLDC Reserves. The part Council owned Coronet forest is pouring seed onto the Arrowtown faces drowning the autumn colours and the hill country beyond. Professional wilding advice would point to the forests removal, replanting in non-spreading species. WCG urges Council, as a good neighbour, to begin an eradication program in all QLDC forests and reserves. 4.3 Council has the potential to set an example to all landowners and ratepayers by investing in removing seed sources, thus reducing the future wilding control spend. 5. That QLDC establish and maintain a staff position specifically to control wildings-

5.1 WCG has learned that continuity of knowledge about the vast area presently covered by WCG is essential (Glenorchy to Kingston to the Meg, to Macetown, to Skippers). 5.2 Ongoing policy and relationships established with landowners and Doc are essential components to success. Stable personable, competent staff is essential to landowner co-operation. 6 That QLDC assists the WCG with Communication-

6.1 That Council communicate to all land owners who own conifers which are spreading wilding seed on low or non-grazed land, that as a good neighbour they should remove the conifer seed source by 2018 ( Douglas Fir, Scots, Corsican and Larch trees). 3.1 Council is the lead agency in promoting tourism. To maintain the unique Lakes District alpine experience Council will promote and if possible enforce eradication and or control of wilding spread. Recommendations: 1. That QLDC increase the wilding budget to \$330K in the 2015/16 season, increasing by \$100k annually until the budget of \$500k is reached in 2018 2. That QLDC communicate to all land owners/occupiers who have conifers close to high risk spread areas the requirement to remove Douglas fir trees by

the year 2018 and that Council set the example by removing conifers and council forests and reserves 3. That QLDC use its coms resources to alert the community to the wilding conifer problem and its effects on the future of tourism and landscape issues. 4. That QLDC establish and maintain a staff position specifically to control wildings 5. That QLDC becomes the lead agency in wilding control contributing an estimated maintenance budget beyond 2018