

Factsheet: Wasp control in the Nelson Lakes area



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The Department of Conservation (DOC) is planning to use a targeted wasp baiting method to reduce wasps in public conservation land in the Nelson Lakes district in January/February 2017.

Why should we control wasps?

Vespid wasps (wāpi) are now one of the most damaging insect pests in New Zealand's natural areas and their numbers seem to be increasing.

Introduced wasps threaten our native birds – particularly in our honeydew beech forests where they have been seen killing chicks as they emerge from their eggs and taking available honeydew, which is a valuable energy source for birds such as kākā, tui and bell birds.

High densities of wasps exert intense predation pressure on native invertebrates (insects), in particular, native caterpillars and orb web spiders.

Wasps attack honey bees, raid their hives and rob their honey. The flow-on effects include lost honey production, the cost of replacement bees and in turn higher pollination costs for horticulture.

Wasps pose a significant threat to human health – more than 1300 people a year seek medical treatment for wasp stings and many more wasp stings are unreported.

Why is DOC doing this work?

Conserving many of New Zealand's natural ecosystems and provision for safe recreation is key for DOC. Control of pests on public conservation land to protect these values is an important part of our role.

How will DOC control wasps?

The Department intends to use a toxic wasp baiting method which exploits the social structure of a wasp colony. Worker wasps collect bait from stations and return with it to their nest. They feed it to the queen and the developing larvae, therefore poisoning the entire colony, within a short time. The bait is made up of chicken meat, which does not attract bees. Bait stations only need to be filled

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once in summer and all remaining bait is removed after three to seven days.

While the active ingredient in the bait is extremely toxic to wasps it poses a very low risk to mammals or birds. Bait stations are yellow or orange and set at 1.5m above ground to exclude non-target animals like weka. This method has been trialled under strict research conditions in Nelson Lakes and proven to reduce wasp populations and cause little adverse effect to other species.



Wasp bait in Wasptek™ (left) and KK bait stations.

Timeframe

In order to maximise the benefit to conservation, the Department will begin applying the bait from around the middle of January to the end of February 2017, when wasps are known to be feeding on protein and the weather is suitable.

What areas will be targeted?

The Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project Mainland Island covers approximately 5,000 ha of public conservation land on the western slopes of the St Arnaud Range in the Nelson Lakes National Park and in Big Bush Conservation Area. Wasp control will be carried out over approximately 1,600 ha within this area for biodiversity protection purposes.

In addition, wasp control will be undertaken in the St Arnaud village as well as at key recreation sites in the wider area for human safety purposes. See the attached map.

What safety measures are there?

DOC will be working closely with the manufacturer of the toxic bait to ensure that the control operation is managed rigorously, applying the best practice and procedures developed at Nelson Lakes. This includes the practice of removing bait that the wasps haven't eaten and using a monitoring programme.

For more information

Department of Conservation

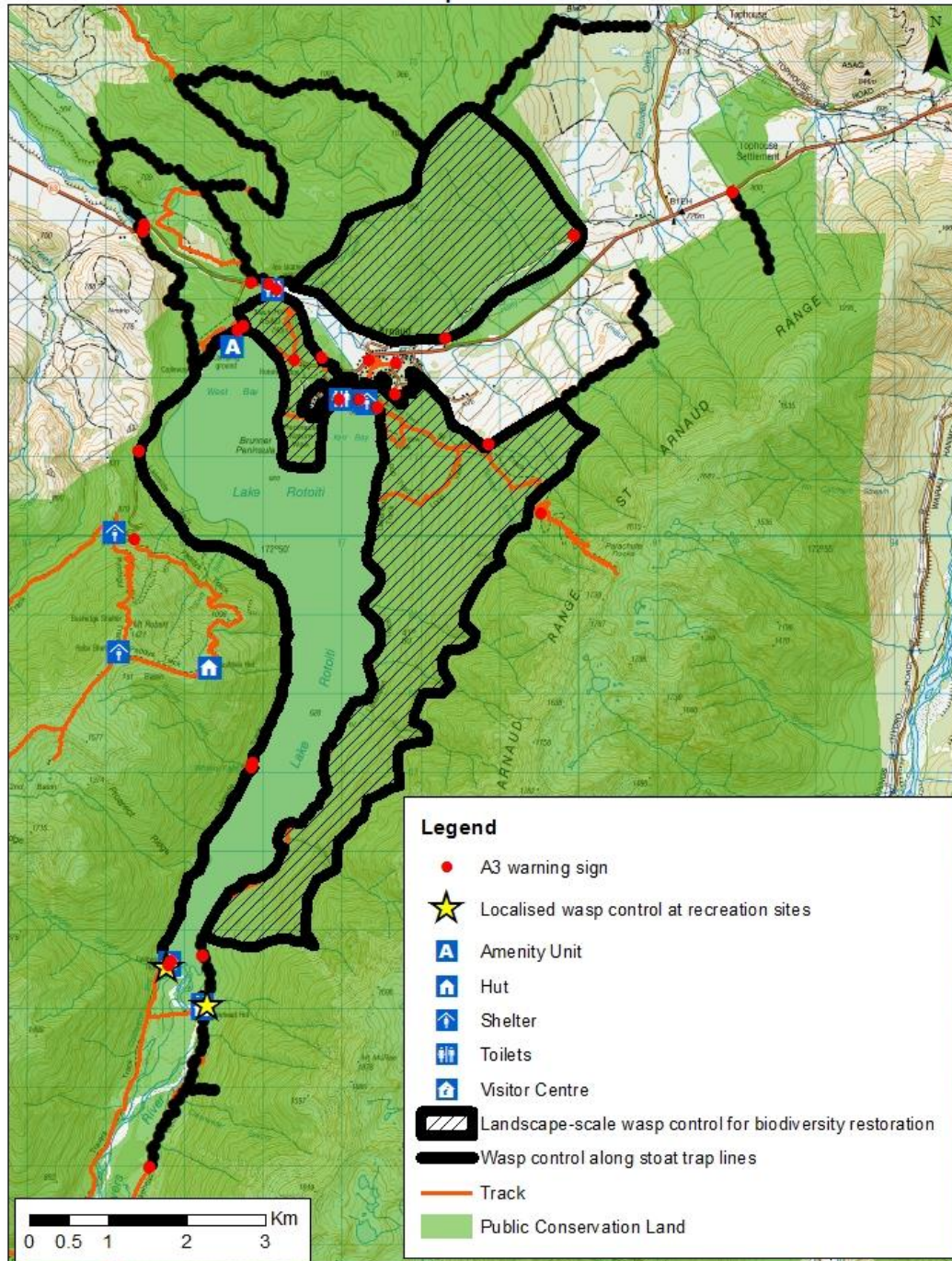
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Proposed Pesticide Operational Areas



Nelson Lakes Wasp Control 2016/17 map 1 of 2



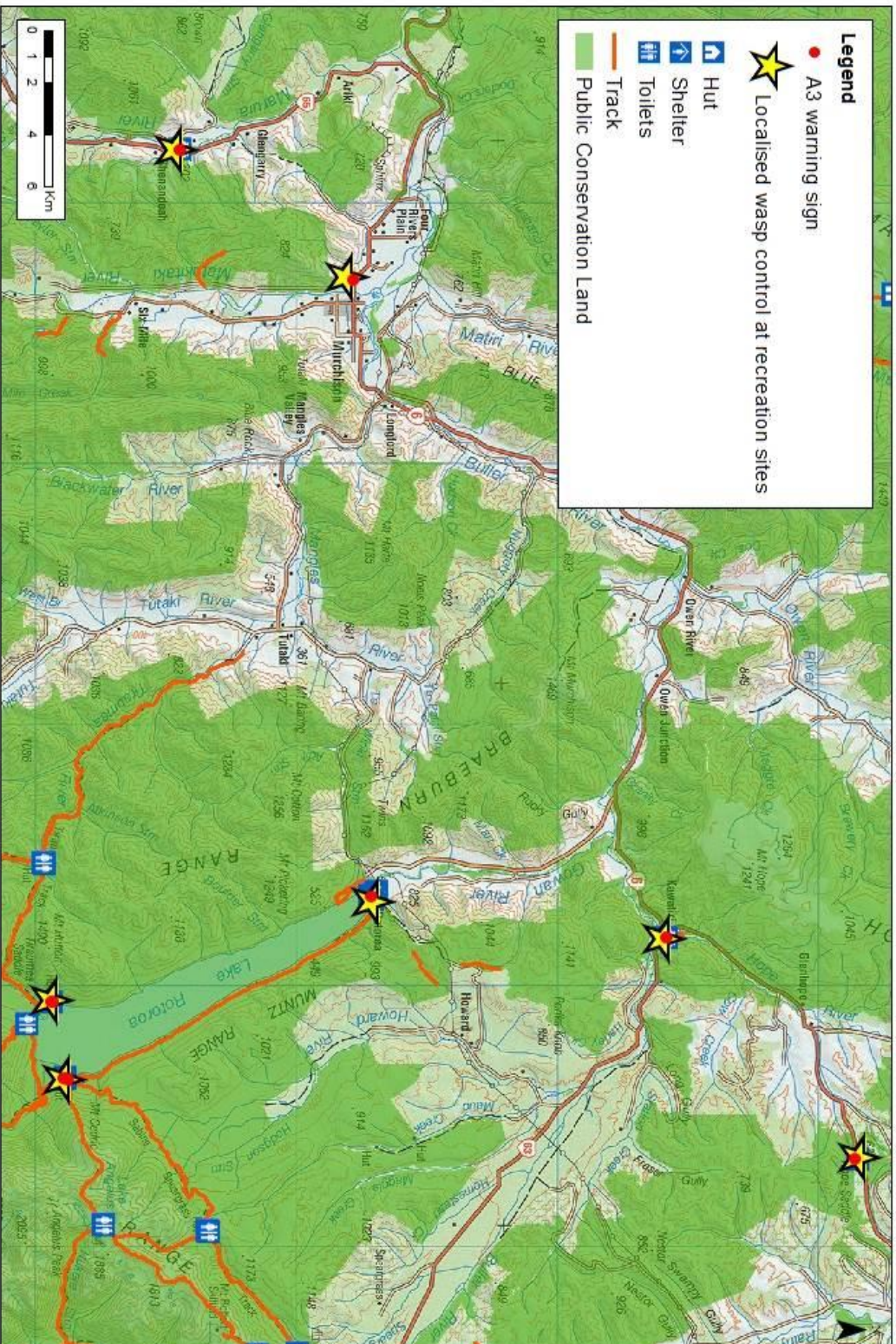
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map 2 of 2



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