

23 February 2023

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Tēnā koe [Redacted]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 25 January 2023 in which you asked for:

'an update regarding the plan to re-introduce ship rats at Rotopiko Lake, Waipa District.'

The National Wetland Trust is the lead organisation on the trial at Rotopiko. The Department of Conservation (DOC) has played a supporting role due to our interest in protecting the water quality, rare native plant species and macrophytes that live in Rotopiko lake.

The water quality is severely impacted by the large number of birds (from introduced passerine species) roosting on land owned by Waipa District Council and managed by the National Wetland Trust. The birds' faeces are high in nutrients and a main contributor to deteriorating lake water quality at Rotopiko.

Due to the urgent need to find a solution to the lake water quality and other options already having been trialled without the desired success, DOC supported the approach being led by the National Wetland Trust.

The Trust's current trial is to release up to 50 rats over a period of three months to assess the efficacy of deterring introduced passerine birds from roosting in the area. At the time of writing, DOC staff are aware the Trust has released nine rats into the area behind the predator-proof fence. The Trust's representatives have indicated if the trial is successful, and the roosting birds disperse, then the rats would again be trapped and removed from the fenced area.

DOC staff have emphasised to the National Wetland Trust the need to deliver on the trial's milestones or adapt as required, in the interests of protecting the lake water.

If you require additional details, you may wish to contact the National Wetland Trust.

Nāku noa, nā

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Dan Heinrich
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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai