

# **Project De-Vine Environmental Trust - Golden Bay**

## **The Project De-Vine Story**

Updated August 2020

Chris Rowse and his partner Silvia moved to Golden Bay from Christchurch in 1999 and soon started to clear the Banana passion vines (BPV) on their property in Clifton, which had smothered and brought down trees in a gully and become well established elsewhere. Once this was under control, it became obvious that they were being overwhelmed by seedlings repeatedly infesting their QEII covenanted property at Rocklands Road. Chris set up the Rocklands Road Weedbusters group with the help of some adjoining landowners and encouraged their neighbours to help clear pest vines from their properties. Chris had a bigger vision; he could see that the seedlings would keep coming until the pest vines were removed further and further away from their property. In 2007, he submitted successfully along with over 20 others to have Banana passion vine added to the Regional Pest Management Strategy for all Golden Bay. At the hearing, he rather prophetically stated that: "I do not want to be pulling up Banana passion vines on our property when I am 80!"

He could not just stop at his neighbours and has since proved to be a passionate and amazing organiser of people to tackle pest vines well beyond his own locality. In 2010, on the advice of the regional representative for QEII Trust, who was visiting their covenant, he applied to the Department of Conservation Biodiversity Fund for a 3 year grant under the umbrella of the local branch of The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. This was approved and he proceeded to engage a weed team. This team worked very well together on a tough karst landscape and killed thousands of pest vines on properties with sink holes or tomos. With help from Forest and Bird, Chris turned his hand to funding applications with this success and secured two bigger grants from the same DOC fund to expand his vision as far as Pohara. Rocklands Road Weedbusters became Project De-Vine to reflect this expansion out of the Rocklands Road and Clifton area. Fortunately, the local DoC office and Tasman District Council from the start and still are very supportive and give great technical backup. Project De-Vine has gone from strength to strength and became an independent charity Project De-Vine Trust (PDVT) in July 2016. In February 2020 it changed its name to Project De-Vine Environmental Trust (PDVET) to reflect the wider range of work that it is carrying out.

Its goals are to carry out pest plant control work on prioritised species (primarily DOC's dirty dozen) across the Golden Bay area. PDVET has gone through a rapid transition from a handful of landowners focusing on eradicating weeds from their properties in Clifton, to 8 to 10 or more contractors spending an average of 3 to 4 days per week carrying out pest weed and tree control throughout the year with the support of one office administrator and two of the contractors who are carrying out office tasks and field management as needed. 500,000+ pest vines or other pest plant or tree species have been manually killed to date by our teams and many more sprayed. Over 630 properties have been assessed and we are continuing to assist nearly 200 properties with control work. To demonstrate the high level of pest species

control a 4-phase reporting system has been established. It shows the changes for each property where work is carried out as the targeted pest species are reduced from a heavy level of mature (seeding) plants or trees to a state of only residual juvenile (non-seeding – or “zero-density”) plants or trees. When this is summated for a project funded area involving 200 or more properties, it is possible to get a clear picture of the properties resisting any control (usually 1, 2 or 3), to those that we or the landowners are controlling and those that are naturally clear. As this reporting system is rolled out for all PDVET’s project areas in Golden Bay and now beyond, the progress can be easily be seen by funders and the Biosecurity staff of the Tasman District Council.

PDVET has raised community awareness about the damage that Old man’s beard (OMB), BPV and other pest plants and trees can do to indigenous vegetation on private properties, along Abel Tasman (ATNP) and Kahurangi (KNP) National Park boundaries as well as in Reserves and regenerating bush blocks across Golden Bay and over the hill into the rest of the Tasman region. In addition to support from a large majority of property owners, PDVET has fostered strong positive relationships with DoC, Tasman District Council, QEII Trust, Project Janszoon, LINZ, Federated Farmers and Fonterra.

Its model of being financially sustainable has involved seeking regular grants from TDC, Rata Foundation and other sources to cover the office operating costs that are not covered by DoC, Lotteries and other funded or contract work.

A key aspect of our work is contracted work, for which we charge under or close to a “market rate”. This generates a “surplus”, which as a charity we can use towards our operating costs, equipment and starting up new initiatives.

**It has taken on contract work to:**

1. Manage the pest vines and other key species along the 11 rivers of Golden Bay for LINZ
2. Assist in the pest plant and tree control work in Abel Tasman National Park
3. PDVET has negotiated the contract with NZTA to clear the Old man’s beard and Banana passion vine from the State Highway 60 roadsides on the Riwaka and Takaka side of Takaka Hill.
4. PDVET has been contracted by Tasman Environmental Trust to poison all the willows from the length of the Motupipi River and its many tributaries. Assist with the native tree planting programme, weed control and releasing to replace them. The aim is to achieve a much better water quality outcome for the river and its estuary over a 5-year period
5. PDVET is contracted with Project Janszoon, in partnership with DoC, to assess and carry out pest plant work to control invasive plants that are outside, but able to spread into Abel Tasman National Park (ATNP). These include Climbing asparagus, Banana passion vine, Old man’s beard, and Yellow jasmine.
6. PDVET is contracted with DoC, to carry out pest plant work in two of its reserves and some significant forest remnants in Golden Bay

7. PDVET has successfully worked with Tasman Environmental Trust, using the Cobb Mitigation Fund, to assess and then apply to funders to co-fund controlling a mix of invasive plants that are establishing in the Takaka valley. This is a three-stage project with three years of funded control work planned for each of the a/ Lower third (starting its third year), b/ Middle third (funded and just starting) and c/ Upper third of the Takaka Valley (scheduled to start assessing in two years). These pest species are starting to threaten the Kahurangi National Park (KNP) boundary as well as lowering the effectiveness of the various riparian planting programmes that exist throughout the valley.
8. Other contracts are:
  - a. with QEII for weed control of their property
  - b. TDC to carry out riparian planting
  - c. with Kiwifruit Vine Health to eradicate wilding Kiwifruit vines out of Golden Bay
  - d. various TDC departments:
    - i. Roading in several areas of Tasman
    - ii. Takaka Refuse Station
    - iii. Reserves in Pohara and Tata
    - iv. Water Reserves

### **Our Funded work:**

PDVET continues to pursue its goals of making Golden Bay and the halos of ATNP and KNP free of key pest plants and trees, ie to reduce and maintain the targeted species to “zero-density”. Its main programme of control work on many fronts is funded by Lotteries, DOC, Rata Foundation, TDC and others. Smaller funders provide grants to allow us to assess or control areas ahead of the main control work applications. Business sponsors help us to provide free gel bottles to landowners in our “Swap a Bottle” scheme.

See our current map of our Management Units, which shows how far we have spread across Golden Bay and over the hill from Riwaka to Marahau, to complete the “halo” of control work around ATNP. We already have a provisional plan for the areas we wish to add to our areas of control, so that by 2026 all areas of Golden Bay will have been assessed and hopefully have received three years of initial funded control work to the key properties, subject to the level of funding. We have an annually funded follow up control work plan as well to ensure that landowners are well supported, on a rotational plan, for as long as it takes to exhaust the remaining seed bank. To date PDVET has received over \$1.69 million in grants and are currently carrying out over \$145k in contracted work per year.