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Wenita Forest Products partners with Predator Free Dunedin to protect native biodiversity and strengthen communities in New Zealand

Dunedin, New Zealand, 22/3/2022 — Predator Free Dunedin, Wenita Forest Products (Wenita) and investment manager New Forests today announced an exciting partnership to increase protection for native biodiversity and strengthen communities in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Funding from Wenita will see Otago's largest producer of timber join the vision for a Predator Free Dunedin through predator control on its own forestry estate and on nearby public land.

The partnership with Wenita will see a network of mustelid traps through Wenita's Berwick, Maungatua and Mount Allan properties, extending into Silverstream — a treasured conservation area valued by local wildlife and communities.

"Birds that live, hunt and visit our forests also spend time in the wider Dunedin area so there is a connectivity between our forests and the city," says David Cormack, Wenita's Chief Executive Officer.

"Wenita is funding this work outside its boundaries in recognition that this network of traps will help create an enhanced wild pathway for native birds to safely move through the landscape."

The network will also extend to Wenita's Berwick and Maungatua estate, laying the foundation for further expansion of Predator Free Dunedin's operations to the south, and creating a "stepping stone" for the future. Trapping in these areas will protect threatened wildlife and ecosystems including the fernbird/mātātā and unique flightless alpine insects — some of which are found nowhere else in the world.

The support will also allow possum control in Mt Allan and Silverstream, building on existing efforts by local communities and allowing Predator Free Dunedin to increase its operational area by 30,000 hectares.

"Wenita and New Forests are demonstrating immense leadership and their support lays a very strong foundation for Predator Free Dunedin to achieve its vision," says Rhys Millar, Project Lead for Predator Free Dunedin.

"Wenita's contribution feeds into a wider community effort to target introduced predators and means we can extend into new parts of Dunedin. This will have major benefits for native wildlife in Dunedin. More traps will see treasured birds like kākā, robin and the New Zealand falcon/kārearea flourish."

Wenita is the largest producer of timber in Otago and manages a forest area of 30,000 hectares. Since its inception in 1990 and New Forests in 2005, it has made a strong commitment to improving native biodiversity and the communities in which it operates.

"We are fully supportive of the vision for a Predator Free Dunedin and proud to be providing leadership for the project to continue its success. This highlights the important role that healthy forests have for the wellbeing of our local communities and wildlife," says David Cormack, Wenita's Chief Executive Officer.

"This partnership complements the work we do for our certification with the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), by protecting native wildlife and preserving high-conservation-value habitats. Wenita values the environment we are fortunate to work in and we aim to minimise any adverse effects on the environment from our work and protect the many species which co-exist with our operations."

"Keeping the possum population in check is important for maintaining the health of the forest and having an evergreen canopy. This is not only important to Wenita as a forest owner, but to the wider community. Our forests are an important community recreation resource. We have been part of the community since 1990 and are proud to make contributions that benefit the environment that local people enjoy."

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Editor's notes:

- Wenita Forest Products Limited is the largest producer of timber in Otago. It has a three-decade track record for supplying forest products to local and international markets from its 30,000 hectares of sustainably-managed forest. The company is dedicated to looking after the environment it works in and are proud to share this with the local community.
- Wenita Forest Products has had Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification since 2001. This certification (audited annually) is internationally recognised as the most rigorous environmental and social standard for responsible forest management.
- New Forests is a global investment manager of nature-based real assets and natural capital strategies, with AUD 7.7 billion (USD 5.9 billion) in assets under management across 1.1 million hectares (2.7 million acres) of investments. Headquartered in Sydney, New Forests is a Certified B Corp and operates in Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, Africa and the United States. For more information, please visit: www.newforests.com.au.
- Predator Free Dunedin is a conservation collective of more than 20 organisations working collaboratively to protect native biodiversity and strengthen communities. Its members and delivery partners share a long-term vision to get rid of rats, possums and stoats from Dunedin's urban and rural landscapes by the year 2050.
- Introduced mammalian predators such as rats, possums and stoats are a major problem for New Zealand's native biodiversity. The only land mammals native to New Zealand are two species of bat and the rest were introduced by people, either by accident or on purpose. These species have pushed New Zealand's native wildlife to the brink of extinction — killing millions of native birds, lizards and insects every year. Today, more than 4,000 of New Zealand's native species are classified as threatened or at-risk of extinction.
- In 2015, the New Zealand government launched Predator Free 2050 — an ambitious project to remove stoats, possums and rats from Aotearoa by 2050. Predator Free Dunedin was launched in 2018 after receiving \$4.3 million in funding from Predator Free 2050 Limited, the crown-owned company that provides funding for this collective goal.