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New website for Northland Tōtara Industry Pilot project

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Project partners running a two-year study into the viability of a Northland tōtara timber industry have unveiled a website (www.totaraindustry.co.nz) to explain the project and its social, economic and environmental objectives.

Tōtara timber from Northland farms is being harvested selectively under a ‘continuous cover forestry’ model and milled as part of a two-year project to assess whether the native tree can be managed sustainably for commercial use.

The Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) project will assess the forest resource; harvest and process up to 500m³ of farm-tōtara logs; collect data and research results from drying studies and trials; conduct milling trials, product and market testing; and develop and analyse the business case for a regional tōtara timber industry.

The vision behind the project is of a regional industry based on the sustainable management of regenerating farm-tōtara and summarised by the vision statement ‘he tōtara tuturu, he iwi tū tonu’, or ‘sturdy tōtara, sustainable communities’.

“TIP aims to restore the mana of this wood and improve the health and quality of tōtara on private land, resulting in an increased area of native forest on farms and Maori-owned land,” said project manager Elizabeth Dunningham.

Project team member Paul Quinlan said the group wanted to see tōtara valued again by landowners as it once was by Māori.

“We want to change the way landowners view this resource as something that has environmental and commercial value, something that needs to be nurtured, tended and encouraged, rather than cleared and converted to pasture,” Mr Quinlan said.

TIP maintains that a successful tōtara industry will see the sustainable management of existing regenerating forest and scrubland and encourage the planting of new areas, increasing the area of native forest on private land.

The new website features a video explaining the TIP project, an overview of its objectives, a section explaining the various workstreams, an overview of the organisations involved, a comprehensive question and answer section, and a collection of resources that will be useful to anyone wanting to familiarise themselves with the project’s progress and some of the academic thinking behind it.

“We understand that there will be some concerns expressed about harvesting native trees,” Dr Dunningham said. “So we’re doing what we can to outline our work and explain clearly exactly what we are trying to achieve. And, perhaps more importantly, what we aren’t.”

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About TIP

The Northland Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) is a two-year project which started in April 2018. It will assess the forest resource; harvest and process up to 500 m³ of farm-tōtara logs; collect data and research results from drying studies and trials; conduct milling trials, product and market testing; and develop and analyse the business case for a regional tōtara timber industry. The project promotes the sustainable management of tōtara on private and Maori-land, for all the benefits that native forests can bring. For more information visit www.totaraindustry.co.nz.