



PHOTO: TRACEY GRANT

damn weed...volunteer Darrell Grace throws pink ragwort to the wind with the help of fellow volunteers, Tom Luff (far left) and Randall Springer during a DoC weed control programme at the Whitiua Scientific Reserve yesterday.

DoC battle against menacing weed

Pink ragwort, or Senecio jacobinus, is getting the heave-ho from DoC's Whitiua Scientific Reserve south of Wanganui, thanks to the help of volunteers and prison inmates. Relatively new to New Zealand and Australia, the weed is threatening the survival of about 120 species of native and endangered plants in the area, prompting DoC to launch a control programme. Whitiua field centre manager Gary Lithgoe said DoC had identified a problem with pink ragwort about three years ago and

although little was known about the plant then it was decided to begin ripping it out before it became an insurmountable problem.

"This is our third year of control and we're getting on top of it, but we recognise that it'll be an ongoing battle with a constant seed source in the forest right next door to the reserve," Mr Lithgoe said.

The weed is also known as the African holly-leaved daisy and features attractive purple flowers in spring and summer.

Mr Lithgoe said now was the best time to begin pulling the plant before

flowering and seeding.

DoC conservancy advisory scientist Colin Ogle said he was investigating various funding avenues for funding an impact study of the plant and the impact of removing it. His investigations were proving positive.

About a dozen community volunteers and 20 Kaitoke Prison inmates spent yesterday ripping the weed out of the 250-hectare reserve as part of the ongoing control programme.

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