



Controversial drone spray over wetland goes ahead in spite of last minute appeal to the Environment Court. What on earth is going on, and why are the public being kept in the dark?

Media release from the Weed Management Advisory (WMA) – 3 March 2026

The Weed Management Advisory (WMA) has confirmed with the Environment Court in Auckland, that they received an application last week for an interim enforcement order to immediately stop the aerial spraying of agrichemicals over the waterways and wetlands of Te Henga, Waitakere in West Auckland.

In spite of this, the WMA has been told the spraying went ahead.

Hana Blackmore of the WMA said today that she understood Auckland Council had actually suspended the consent process for this year's aerial spraying with glyphosate (AKA Roundup) on the strong advice of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

"This is an incredibly controversial project" said Blackmore, "but no-one seems to know what is going on, let alone why spraying has even been permitted."

"2024/25 was only the first round of a 3 year aerial spraying campaign with glyphosate to control willow trees in a river wetland area. This was carried out by a private environment group in a public space that is also the habitat of critically endangered bats and birds of national significance."

Blackmore said that after the spraying last year, Auckland Council had been called out for failing to apply the appropriate legislation, and that permission for the controversial pesticide spraying in the wetlands should not have been given.

The WMA says that members of the affected community have done all in their power over the last year to get their concerns taken seriously, including contacting national environment organisations, and ministers.

"They have engaged with Auckland Council, supplying them with volumes of published research, data and impact assessments on the critically endangered bats and bittern in the spray area. They have had at least five face-to-face meetings with Council - as recently as December 2025," said Blackmore.

"But then, promised follow-up meetings with Council and requests for information on progress and resolution did not eventuate, so the notice from the environment group that they intended to resume spraying of the wetlands in late February came as a shock."

So, what the hell has happened? asks the WMA.

How does a private group get consent to aerial spray a controversial pesticide in a public space without any due process and consultation with the local residents, let alone the wider community and region?

"We all have a guardianship responsibility and role and should be able to be heard on such serious and consequential operations that impact far beyond the seeming area of action", said Hana today.

"The public have been kept in the dark for far too long about what's been going on in Te Henga. Light is needed on the subject - and urgently".

The WMA believe it is imperative that the Matuku Link environmental group cease all pesticide sprays while the legal process is underway.

“This is not a biosecurity emergency” said Blackmore, “the willow can wait. But the local residents and the wider community, can’t.

“The group knew they did not have a social licence to aerial spray, right at the beginning, but they went ahead anyway. Trust has been lost. The history of what people out west have been through, and what they have fought for, should not be brushed aside as if it is some minor nuisance. People matter.”

And taking legal action matters too. It is not something taken casually, says Blackmore. We need to know what is going on.

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