

The Didemnum Working Group has asked The Marlborough District Council for \$12,500 towards its \$247,000 management strategy.

New Zealand Marine Farming Association chief executive and working group spokesman Graeme Coates said that was a big drop from the \$400,000 spent in the group's first year, \$20,000 of which came from the council.

"It's a vast reduction from last year, because we have done so much of the work already.

"This year is about mopping up those areas and focussing on two or three large areas that still have potential to spread it," he said.

Didemnum vexillum is a colonial tunicate that had been identified as a serious risk to the mussel farming industry and the working group is tasked with managing, controlling and where possible eradicating it from Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman.

Mr Coates said the group had the organism under control in a number of areas, but more work was needed in areas where it had a strong hold, such as Port Nelson.

In winter the didemnum is dormant and not spawning, and another push will be made to eradicate it from certain areas.

The council will consider a recommendation from its environment committee to help fund the strategy, subject to all other stakeholders and marine farmers contributing, at a meeting on April 5.