

Role of the Conservation Board



What is a conservation board?

A conservation board provides for interaction between the public and the Department of Conservation at the regional/district level. Conservation boards are independent bodies, established by the *Conservation Act 1987* (the Act). The purpose of the Act is to promote the conservation of New Zealand's natural and historic resources, and for that purpose to establish a Department of Conservation. Each board represents the community of interest in the work of the Department and conservation in general within that board's area of jurisdiction. Its primary role is to advise the Department and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA).

There are 14 conservation boards, each with a defined geographical area, as shown on the attached map. The Northland, Auckland, and Waikato conservation board boundaries align with those of the former departmental conservancy of the same name. The East Coast / Hawke's Bay board has been re-established, and there is a separate board for the Chatham Islands. In the South Island, while national parks straddle district and regional boundaries, they do not straddle board boundaries (e.g. Mount Aspiring National Park is managed in part by the Otago region and in part by West Coast Tai Poutini region but it all falls within the area of jurisdiction of the Otago Conservation Board).

Functions and responsibilities

The functions of boards are set out in section 6M of the *Conservation Act* and in the *National Parks and Reserves Acts*. A board's focus is on policy issues, strategic direction and planning, not day-to-day operational details of the Department's work.

Major responsibilities of each board are participating in the development of the conservation management strategy (CMS) and any national park management plan for its area of jurisdiction, and overseeing their implementation. The CMS implements general policies and establishes objectives for the integrated management by the Department of natural and historic resources (including any species managed by the Department), and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes.

Conservation management plans, other than for national parks, are approved by conservation boards.

Membership

The majority of board members are appointed after public nominations are sought. Remaining members are appointed in accordance with specific provisions in the Act; relating to Treaty settlements. In appointing members as a result of the public nomination process, the Minister is required by the Act to consult with the NZCA and have regard to:

- the particular features of land administered by the Department in the area of the board's jurisdiction;

- the interests of nature conservation, natural earth and marine sciences, recreation, tourism, and the local community including the tangata whenua of an area.

The Minister's aim is to appoint members whose knowledge, skill, and commitment can enhance the protection of the area's natural and historic resources.

Tangata whenua interests

Before making appointments representing the interests of the tangata whenua of an area, the Minister is required by the Act to consult with the Minister of Maori Affairs.

Role of board members

Once appointed to a conservation board, all members have to exercise the powers and functions as set out in the Act. The Act does not provide for members to restrict their participation to matters of special expertise. In other words, "tourism" members may not restrict their contribution to tourism matters; "tangata whenua" members may not restrict their interest to tangata whenua matters; and so on.

Members are not representatives of the organisations or persons who nominated them. They are appointed as individuals to bring to the board their expertise, knowledge and perspective, as well as the concerns of different sections of the community, so that sound decisions can be made within the conservation context which governs the work of both the Department and the board.

All members should make independent attempts to be informed about matters that come before the board and contribute their perspectives, as all members have equal rights and equal responsibilities under the Act. This includes an equal responsibility to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. (See also fact sheet on section 4 of the Conservation Act.)

Map

