



# An introduction to key issues and programmes in conservation



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

In the interest of forest conservation, we support paperless electronic publishing.

# CONTENTS

Introduction	
Purpose	5
Structure of the document	5
1. Biodiversity management	
1.1 Collaborative landscape scale programmes	6
1.2 Predator Free 2050	6
1.3 Threatened Species Strategy	8
1.4 Biosecurity and pest management	8
1.5 Animal pest management	8
1.6 Advanced technology for animal pest management	9
1.7 Landscape scale predator control	10
1.8 Cat management	10
1.9 Plant pest management	11
1.10 Wilding conifers	11
1.11 Myrtle rust	12
1.12 Kauri dieback disease	12
2. Land management	14
2.1 Stewardship reclassification project	16
2.2 Decision-making on Crown Land	16
2.3 Land exchanges and the Ruataniwha Water Storage Scheme	16
2.4 Tenure review and Mackenzie Basin Vision	17
2.5 Wind-blown timber	18
2.6 Kauri National Reserve	18
2.7 Pike River	19
3. Marine and coastal management	20
3.1 Marine Protected Areas	23
3.2 Sea Change Tai Timu Tai pari - Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan	24
3.3 Te Roopu Manaaki ki te Toka / South East Marine Protection Forum	25
3.4 Review of the Effect of the NZCPS 2010 on RMA Decision-making	26
4. Freshwater management	27
4.1 Freshwater management reform	27
4.2 Whitebait	27
5. Working with others	28
5.1 DOC's partnership with Iwi	28
5.2 Te Urewera	29
5.3 Key commercial partnerships	30
5.4 DOC's partnership with the Department of Corrections	30
5.5 Community partnerships and funds	31
6. Connecting people to natural and historic heritage	32
6.1 DOC's Visitor Strategy and the roll-out of visitor funding from Budget 2017	32
6.2 Managing and sharing stories of historic heritage	33
6.3 Healthy Nature Healthy People	35
6.4 Environmental education	35
7. DOC's wider role	36
7.1 The Natural Resources Sector	36
7.2 International relationships	36



# Introduction

## **Purpose**

This document is part of a package of briefing materials designed to introduce you to your role as Minister of Conservation.

This document provides a brief introduction to a range of topics in conservation, including strategic issues, current programmes, and matters requiring your early decision and action.

It is designed to support the ongoing programme of briefings that we will provide to you over your first 90 days, as set out in the Briefing to the Incoming Minister.

## **Structure of the document**

The material is grouped by the following themes covering the breadth of DOC's work:

1. Biodiversity
2. Land management
3. Marine and coastal management
4. Freshwater management
5. Working with others
6. Connecting people with nature
7. DOC's wider role

# 1. Biodiversity management

Protecting and enhancing New Zealand's natural heritage is a core role for DOC. A major component of this is the work the Department does to protect, manage and restore biodiversity. The Department undertakes this work on public conservation lands and waters and more widely across New Zealand. The Department has work programmes aimed at protecting threatened species and addressing key threats to biodiversity, such as mammalian predators and invasive weeds. Increasingly, biodiversity management is focused on the protection and restoration of whole ecosystems using landscape-scale management. This large-scale holistic approach protects threatened species while also leading to better ecological function, increased connectivity and improved resilience to pressures.

DOC also has an important leadership role across the conservation sector. This role includes promoting the benefits of conservation, providing information and support, and advocating for conservation of natural and historic resources – including biodiversity.

Key programmes and current issues in biodiversity management on land are outlined below. Sections 3 and 4 of this briefing discusses marine and freshwater management.

## 1.1. Collaborative landscape scale programmes

DOC is collaborating with others on large-scale conservation projects to achieve conservation goals across large land areas, including public and private land. This builds on outstanding projects like Project Janszoon, a \$25 million philanthropic contribution to restore the Abel Tasman National Park over 30 years.

The approach is to work alongside iwi, local government, and funders like the philanthropic NEXT Foundation, to replicate landscape programmes at selected locations across New Zealand.

The programme aims to link up various government, regional and private initiatives to maximise the benefits of these efforts and reduce duplication (e.g. Predator Free 2050, the Ministry for the Environment's Freshwater Improvement Fund, and NEXT Foundation initiatives).

### **Current status**

DOC has identified potential locations across New Zealand for this work that have significant species and habitat values, passionate communities committed to collaborating with others, and/or land features that greatly increase the likelihood of success (such as a defensible area against pest and predator reinvasion).

DOC is in the very early stages of scoping the opportunities for collaborative landscape scale conservation in these locations and will only proceed if it has the backing of key partners.

## 1.2. Predator Free 2050

Predator Free 2050 sets the ambitious goal of eradicating rats, stoats and possums from the whole of New Zealand by 2050. This goal has created a groundswell of public support and enthusiasm to contribute to achieving it.

The programme was initiated with a budget allocation of \$28m over four years. Most of this allocation (\$5m per annum) went to the newly formed crown owned company Predator Free 2050 Ltd. The company has a mandate to find 2:1 funding and use that to support regional scale predator free initiatives, as well as the science to discover new eradication technologies. A small component (\$300k per annum) went to the Predator Free New Zealand Trust to support growth in community support and action. An allocation (\$700k per annum) has been allocated to DOC to bring new predator control tools to market, increasing our suite of tools to achieve eradication.

Predator Free 2050 provides a common thread for organising and connecting a wide range of programmes within DOC (predator control, landscape scale programmes, education etc) and in the wider conservation system (e.g. OSPRI, DOC and Regional Councils spend approximately \$80m per annum on predator control).

### **Current status**

The Predator Free 2050 Ltd company has initiated its process for funding its first large scale regional Predator Free 2050 initiative. It released its call for Expressions of Interest in September, closing mid-October. After due diligence, an announcement on initial investment is likely by February 2018.

DOC has initiated investment in new tools: an aerial stoat control toxin (PAPP), a rat specific toxin and a long-life rat lure. As these tools are expected to be 4-6 years away, we are also investigating more immediately deliverable tools.

A programme manager has recently been appointed within DOC and is developing a strategy for this work.



Robin release at Taranaki Maunga – a collaborative project to restore the mountain, ranges and islands of Taranaki. *Photo: Mark Dwyer*

### 1.3. Threatened Species Strategy

The Threatened Species Strategy (TSS) sets out a plan to halt the decline in populations of our threatened species and restore them to healthy numbers. It sets out goals to increase the number of species being managed and the intensity of work required, both to restore threatened species and to prevent others becoming threatened.

The draft TSS was released for comment in May 2017 and 192 submissions were received from a variety of national and local conservation groups, local government, iwi, researchers, businesses, and individuals.

#### **Current status**

DOC is working on how the TSS can better take account of the views of Treaty partners, and a number of regional hui are being held to engage directly with iwi, hapu and whanau. Their views will be incorporated in the analysis of submissions. Subject to your direction and Cabinet agreement, the final Strategy is planned to be ready for release in early 2018.

#### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

We will brief you on this work by late 2017. This will include advice on the progression of iwi engagement and will seek your views on the next steps for the Strategy.

### 1.4. Biosecurity and pest management

Biosecurity is about keeping pests and diseases out of New Zealand, and eradicating or managing them should they gain entry. While border controls are the most visible part of the biosecurity system, the majority of effort and resource is focused on managing pests that are already established.

DOC works closely with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) which is the lead agency for biosecurity.

The sections below set out current approaches and key programmes of work to manage:

1) Animal pests

*Including current management approaches, advanced technology, the Battle for our Birds programme and management of cats.*

2) Plant pests (weeds)

*Including current management approaches and the wilding conifer control programme.*

3) Diseases

*Including myrtle rust and kauri dieback disease.*

### 1.5. Animal pest management

Introduced predators have taken a serious toll on our native plants, birds, reptiles and invertebrates. Some species including possums, wasps and deer compete with our native species for food and change their habitats. Predators such as rats and stoats eat the eggs and young and attack the adults.



While possums, rats and stoats are the focus of Predator Free 2050, efforts to manage other species including wild deer, feral goats and pigs, mice etc are ongoing in many places. The Wild Animal Control Act underpins control of grazing animals.

### **Current status**

DOC uses a range of methods to manage animal pest populations and continues to work to improve its suite of tools.

Numerous types of traps are available for the range of species that DOC targets. These can be live traps (which need to be checked daily under the Animal Welfare Act 1999) or kill traps.

A number of toxins are approved to kill animal pests, the most well-known of which is 1080. This toxin is particularly suited for use in New Zealand as there are no native ground-dwelling mammals that are affected by its use. Aerial application of 1080 is the most cost-effective tool for controlling pests over large and inaccessible areas and is used extensively in the Battle for our Birds.

1080 naturally breaks down in the environment and does not leave residues in water, soil, plants or animals, or build up in the food chain. Its use is strictly regulated and monitored to protect people and the environment from harm.

Brodifacoum is a toxin used for island eradication projects but is not routinely used by DOC on the mainland as there is evidence that it accumulates in the environment.

## **1.6. Advanced technology for animal pest management**

Achieving Predator Free 2050 will require the use of new pest control technologies.

There is an increasing interest globally in the potential application of new genetic-based approaches (specifically ‘gene-drives’) for pest management. Gene drives are a way to spread traits through populations of animals. For example, if a gene drive causes only male animals to be born, that population will diminish as it runs out of females.

Development of approaches such as gene drive may be beneficial to New Zealand, but any development of technologies involving gene technology needs to be undertaken carefully, considering regulatory, policy, social and ecological factors.

### **Current status**

Internationally, a consortium is investigating gene drive technology for mammal pest eradication and research has started using mice as a test case to reduce the impact of invasive rodents.

In New Zealand, a bioethics panel is considering issues about using genetic editing to drive the eradication of pest populations. The Biological Heritage National Science Challenge is funding Department-led social science research on New Zealanders’ attitudes to new methods of pest and predator control including the use of gene drives.

DOC is keeping an open mind on future options, ensuring that any new technologies to control or eradicate introduced pests are researched, tested, safe and socially acceptable. The results of social science research will be vital for public conversation around new pest control technologies.

## 1.7. Landscape scale predator control

DOC's landscape scale predator control programme (known as Battle for our Birds) protects highly-vulnerable populations of threatened bird species by controlling rodents, mustelids (weasels, ferrets and stoats) and possums. It is particularly focused on addressing increased rodent and mustelid populations in years of high seed production (most years). Control is undertaken through a combination of aerial 1080 and ground control operations spread across the country. The programme received \$21.3 million of additional funding in both 2016 and 2017. This has allowed an increase in the number of hectares receiving treatment from roughly 200,000 ha to roughly 800,000 ha annually.

This programme is a building block towards the Predator Free 2050 vision. It contributes to the goal of expanding predator control across an additional 1 million ha compared to 2016 levels.

### Current status

The 2017/18 predator control programme is at its peak now, with most operations timed to coincide with the spring/summer bird breeding season. The success of this work is seen in autumn, when monitoring reveals if mohua, orange-fronted parakeet, rock wren, whio, kiwi, kea, kōkako, frog, bat and snail populations have grown or declined. Results from previous years have been consistently positive, with remarkable increases being recorded at sites that have received sustained predator control over several years.

Consultation occurs prior to every operation. Despite this, some groups and individuals remain strongly opposed to any 1080 use. Unfortunately, this can extend to harassment of DOC staff and contractors and the deliberate spreading of misinformation to generate public concern.

## 1.8. Feral cat management

DOC manages feral cats at locations on public conservation land where they pose a threat to threatened species, and supports research into technology that will eventually allow control of feral cats at a landscape scale. Where feasible, we eradicate feral cat populations from islands.

DOC's definition of a feral cat is, "A cat that is not stray or owned and that has none of its needs provided for by humans." DOC supports responsible cat ownership and maintains there is a place for domestic cats with responsible owners in a Predator Free New Zealand.

### Current status

DOC supports the initiative being taken by the National Cat Management Strategy Group to address cat management at a national level. This group comprises eight national organisations, including the Ministry for Primary Industries and Department of Conservation as advisors. A strategic outcome is "There are no feral cats in New Zealand."

## 1.9. Plant pest management

Conserving ecosystems and species often focuses on animal pest control but invasive weeds are equally as destructive to the natural environment. Invasive weeds destroy our

native plant communities and can transform the natural landscapes that make New Zealand unique.

A large public awareness campaign was launched in 2015 (War on Weeds), and is used as the overarching brand to encompass all of DOC's weed control work – including on-the-ground operations, training, community funding, public awareness, and research.

#### **Current status**

DOC manages over 350 different weed species, spending more than \$10 million a year on control efforts. DOC also undertakes weed research to improve the efficacy of weed management.

### **1.10. Wilding conifers**

Wilding conifers are introduced conifer (cone-bearing) tree species that are spreading across the landscape. There are ten species that make up the majority of wilding conifers. Of these, the worst is contorta pine, followed by Douglas fir.

Wilding conifers have been spreading at approximately 6% per annum since the 1930s and now affect 1.8 million hectares. In 2014 alone an additional 90,000ha were invaded. If nothing more was done, 20% of New Zealand would become affected within 20 years – including about 26% of public conservation land.

Wilding conifers are landscape transforming weeds. They can completely replace many native ecosystems and cause local extinction of birds, lizards, rare plants and invertebrates. Wilding conifers also invade farmland, reduce water yields and lower water quality, have an impact on recreation and tourism, and affect cultural and historic values.

#### **Current status**

A combination of strategy, funding, and effective control methods means control of wilding conifers is very achievable. Budget 2016 provided the Ministry for Primary Industries \$16 million of new operating funding over four years to tackle wilding conifers. Control will prevent future impacts on the New Zealand economy and is supported by an analysis of costs and benefits. Treating infestations early can cost less than \$10/ha. In contrast, treating mature wilding conifer forests on difficult sites can cost \$2,000 – \$10,000/ha.

### **1.11. Myrtle rust**

Myrtle rust was discovered on Raoul Island (New Zealand's most northern island) in April and subsequently on the mainland in May 2017. It is a fungus that can have serious effects on many of New Zealand's native trees, including pōhutukawa, mānuka, rātā, ramarama and swamp maire, as well as some exotic trees. It is thought it has blown here from Australia where it is widespread. The response to the myrtle rust incursion is New Zealand's biggest ever biosecurity response.

Myrtle rust attacks new growth including shoots, leaves, buds, flowers and fruit. It can also affect seed development. Repeated infections of this fungal disease can kill the plant.

MPI and DOC are working to try to contain it and protect New Zealand's unique native species. Cabinet agreed in August 2017 to a \$4.3m appropriation to DOC to implement its contribution to the myrtle rust programme (along with the \$16.85m allocated to MPI to respond to myrtle rust).

These funds will provide for germplasm collection, surveillance and monitoring, managing impacts at key places and engagement with iwi.

This package preserves the option to try to eradicate myrtle rust if the distribution remains limited, while preparing for long-term management. A decision is about to be made on whether to continue to try to eradicate or to transition to long-term management, as the spread of the fungus becomes clearer in spring. A report back to Cabinet by the end of October 2017 will provide more detail on proposals for further funding for a likely Long-term Management Programme for myrtle rust.

#### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

Your decisions on the response to myrtle rust will be sought in order to provide a report to Cabinet.

### **1.12. Kauri dieback disease**

Kauri dieback is a disease caused by a fungus-like organism known as PTA (Phytophthora taxon Agathis) and can be deadly for kauri trees of all ages. PTA lives in soil and infects kauri roots. Nearly all infected kauri die – there is no known resistance or treatment to the disease.

DOC is a key partner in the collaborative Kauri Dieback Programme. Other programme partners are the Ministry for Primary Industries, which co-ordinates the Programme, tangata whenua, Waikato, Northland and Bay of Plenty Regional Councils, and Auckland City. Programme partners work together on disease management, advocacy and research.

Measures used to control the spread of PTA include track closures, boardwalk construction, and footwear cleaning stations. Research is also under way to improve knowledge of how to detect kauri dieback (sampling and DNA-based diagnostic techniques), development of a treatment method, surveillance that determines whether the disease is present, and mapping to show the spread.



Top left: Kauri. *Photo: Jack Mace;*

Top right: A diseased tree bleeding resin. *Photo: Laura Honey;*

Lower: Visitors cleaning boots when entering a track *Photo: Des Williams*

## 2. Land management

A core role of the Department is to manage public conservation land. More than 8 million hectares of land - over one third of New Zealand's total land area - is managed for the purposes of conservation by the Department.

This land includes:

- 13 national parks
- 36 conservation parks
- hundreds of reserves
- many offshore islands, including subantarctic islands
- numerous other places, such as historic sites.

Diagram 1 shows a map of the public conservation land administered by DOC.

Managing these lands for conservation purposes is a core function of the department, and includes a range of operational activities including pest and weed control, threatened species management and habitat restoration.

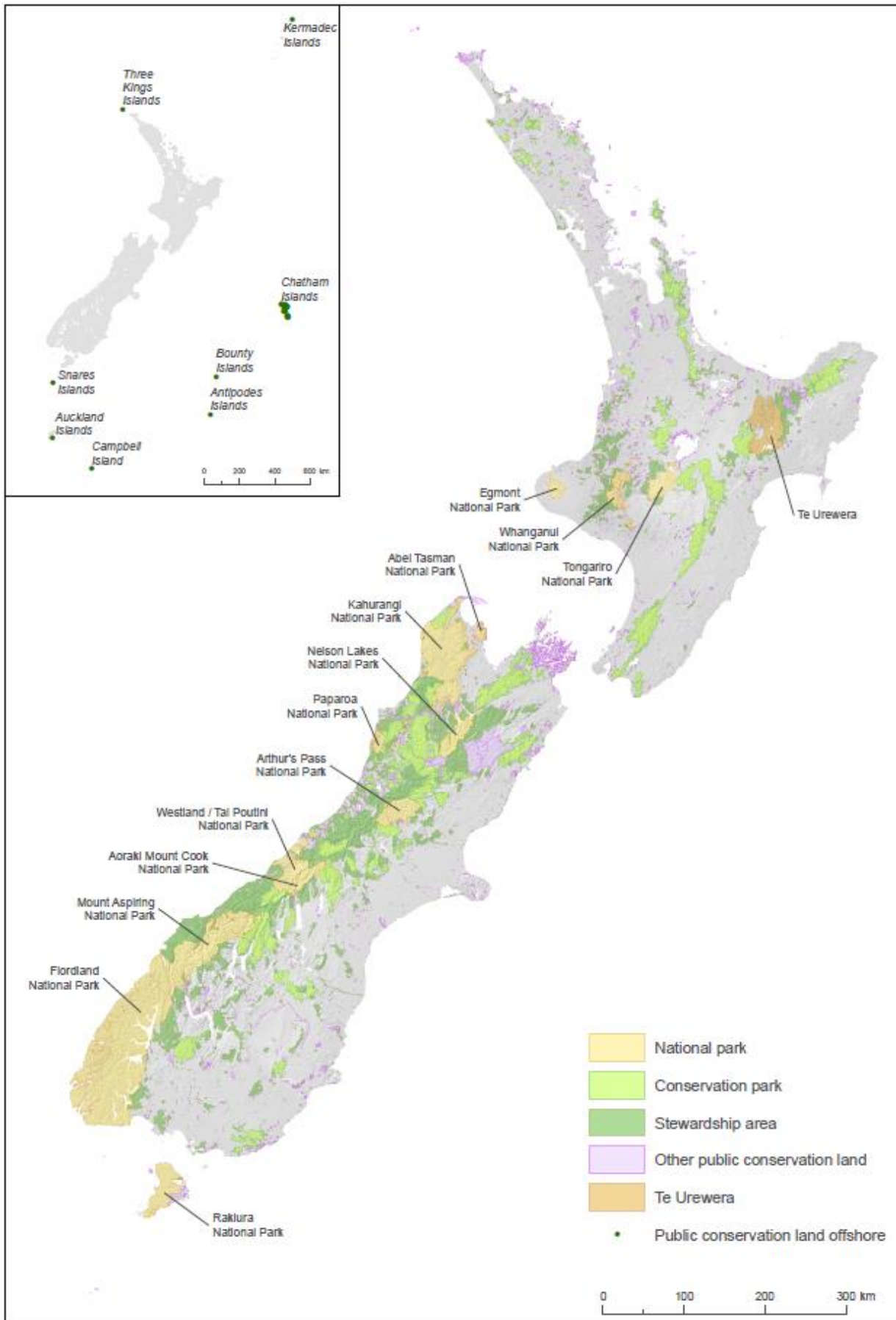
Although public conservation lands cover a large proportion of New Zealand's land area, not all ecosystem types are well represented within this area. Some environments that are most at risk of biodiversity loss are poorly represented - these include lowland forest and grasslands, wetlands and dunes.

This section discusses key programmes and current issues in land management.



Hollyford Valley, Fiordland National Park. *Photo: Shellie Evans*

Diagram 1: Public Conservation Land



## **2.1. Stewardship Reclassification Project**

DOC's Reclassification Project is reviewing stewardship land to develop a strategic approach to reclassification, acquisition and disposals. Stewardship land largely consists of areas allocated to DOC which have yet to be evaluated and classified. While some areas are of relatively low value, many include some of the highest value ecosystems on public conservation land. Stewardship land is shown in the map in Diagram 1.

There is a widespread misconception that stewardship land is a holding category, that most of the land has low value, and that it is not fully protected. That perception has been increased by the fact that most land exchanges have involved stewardship land. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment drew attention to this problem in her report on stewardship land in 2013 and the Reclassification Project responds to this.

### **Current status**

The DOC Reclassification Project will be an ongoing process that will take a number of years to work through. There has been some opposition to reclassification work by Treaty Partners with respect to land becoming a National Park which will impact on this project. This is based on the view that modern treaty partnership principles are not reflected in the National Parks Act.

## **2.2. Decision making on Crown land**

A separate project led by LINZ is underway to understand the current context in which agencies make decisions about the use of Crown-owned land (Crown land). The long-term aim of this work is to support better decision-making across government on the acquisition, use and disposal of Crown land.

### **Current status**

LINZ will prepare a problem definition as the basis for any future work, and consult further with agencies. Given the extent of public conservation land and the range of values held, DOC is taking an active interest in how LINZ's work programme develops.

## **2.3. Land exchanges and the Ruataniwha Water Storage Scheme**

The Supreme Court recently overturned the Director General of Conservation's decision to revoke the conservation park status of a particular piece of conservation land in order to enable that land to be exchanged. The Court found that revocation can only occur where the "intrinsic values" of the land "did not justify continued preservation and protection". The land was proposed for exchange to enable the development of the Ruataniwha Water Storage Scheme (Ruataniwha Scheme) in Hawkes Bay.

The effect of the Court's decision is that special protection can only be revoked where the land does not have conservation values justifying continued protection, and would also imply that only land of little or no conservation value can be disposed of (including through exchange).



### **Current status**

DOC is currently conducting a detailed assessment to understand the potential impacts of the Supreme Court's decision. This work includes the collection of data on work that may be impacted to assess the relevance; if at all, of the Supreme Court's decision.

Initial investigations of data covering the last few years show a minimal number of exchange proposals being considered that impacted on specially protected areas. In the case of stewardship areas the majority sought for exchange are grazed and are likely to have low conservation value.

## **2.4. Tenure review and the Mackenzie Basin vision**

Tenure review is a statutory process operated in the South Island High Country by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, with many operational functions delegated to officials in Land Information New Zealand (LINZ). The process reviews the ownership of land held under Crown Pastoral lease, and can result in the creation of new conservation lands, protective mechanisms such as conservation covenants, and Freehold land (most often for farming purposes).

The Mackenzie Basin is an iconic basin in the High Country of South Canterbury. The Basin has a traditional agricultural economy, which has been overtaken in recent years by tourism as its main industry. Mackenzie Basin tourism is primarily based on the iconic tussock landscape with Aoraki Mt Cook as its backdrop, and tension is arising as agriculture intensifies in the area.

### **Current status**

Over the past two years, improved partnership between DOC and LINZ and changes to the tenure review process, have enabled agencies to work better together and have led to improved conservation outcomes.

DOC is currently involved in three strategic activities in the Mackenzie Basin. Firstly, DOC, LINZ, Environment Canterbury (ECAN), Mackenzie District Council, and Waitaki District Council are undertaking work to better align the activities of each agency in the Mackenzie Basin. A key part of this work includes supporting the Mackenzie Country Trust to work towards the vision set out in the Mackenzie Agreement. The vision sets out an aspiration for balancing and integrating agriculture, tourism and conservation in the Mackenzie country while enabling community prosperity and a shared sense of responsibility for restoring the natural assets of the area. DOC and MFE provide funding to the Trust and are committed to work with the Trust to enable them to successfully implement the vision.

Secondly, DOC, LINZ, and ECAN are leading an initiative to align recreation and infrastructure activities to jointly meet the demand of tourism pressure in the Mackenzie Basin.

Thirdly, the upper-Mackenzie – Aoraki region has been identified as a potential site for collaborative landscape conservation. Scoping is currently under way for a project that envisions more than 300,000 hectares of pest-free land across both public and private land.

## 2.5. Wind-blown timber

The Conservation Act explicitly prohibits the taking of timber from conservation areas for commercial purposes. Removal of indigenous trees from reserves and national parks is also generally not provided for. Even fallen trees have significant ecological value – as habitat for species that live only on fallen logs, as an important food source for birds such as kākā and kea, and as the main regeneration site for trees such as beech.

After a major windfall event (Cyclone Ita) on the West Coast in 2014, a special Act was passed to allow a limited harvest of the resulting wind-blown timber subject to some strict limitations on the amount and effects of the timber removal. The Act expires in 2019, as it was considered important to ensure that removal only occurred while the windfall sites were still in a disturbed state.

### Current status

As part of the Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Development Action Plan 2017, DOC is to lead a project that will examine the effects of the 2014 Act (including on markets and the industry), and consider whether there should be future harvest of wind-fall timber.

## 2.6. Kauri National Reserve

Waipoua Forest is New Zealand's largest and most intact kauri forest, much of which is a Sanctuary Area managed by DOC as part of the Northland Conservation Park. There is a longstanding and high level of public support to better protect the forest and to realise its economic opportunities. The Tai Tokerau Northland Economic Action Plan proposes a Waipoua national park, and upgrading its visitor experiences, as key actions to support Northland's visitor industry. In 2017, Cabinet approved a \$4.5m capital upgrade of tracks and visitor infrastructure in Waipoua, which will also reduce the risk of spreading kauri dieback.

Waipoua Forest has been investigated for a national park twice in the past. The Waipoua Forest lies within the rohe of Te Roroa, and the Te Roroa Claims Settlement Act 2008 recognises Te Roroa's key relationship to Waipoua. A key issue is that the National Parks Act does not allow for joint governance which is a key requirement of Te Roroa's support of the proposal. Alternatively, giving Waipoua national reserve status would provide options for iwi participation in governance, and the highest level of protection under the Reserves Act. It does not have the same iconic status as a national park, but could be promoted in a similar way.

### Current status

Te Roroa Manawhenua Trust (Te Roroa's governance body) sees merit in the national reserve proposal, which the Minister of Conservation has presented to them. The proposal currently includes a governance body with equal Crown and iwi representation, which would draft the reserve's management plan. A visitor facility and associated economic opportunities for iwi would also be provided.

There is still some distrust from iwi towards a Crown partnership but also some desire to move on and ensure the health of the forest receives best protection. Agreement has not yet been reached within the iwi, or between iwi and the Crown, but discussions continue. Once agreement has been reached with Te Roroa, consultation with Ngāpuhi hapū, who have asserted interests in part of the area, will also be required, to determine their interests and how they may be accommodated.

## 2.7. Pike River

The site of the Pike River mine sits within Paparoa National Park. The Minister of Conservation has an interest in activities at the site and how these are authorised under the Conservation Act or otherwise.

DOC is developing a new Great Walk in Paparoa National Park in memory of the 29 men who died in the Pike River Mine tragedy, and is also planning to redevelop the mine site into a memorial once the mine has been sealed.

### **Current status**

The Government is committed to establish a stand-alone Pike River Recovery Agency within its first 100 days to plan and implement the safe re-entry of the drift (access tunnel) to Pike River mine.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the State Services Commission, the Treasury, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and DOC are working together to develop advice on establishing an agency to develop a re-entry plan and implement recovery of the drift. The advice will need to consider how the agency's activities in the national park will be authorised. Once any re-entry activities are complete, the agency should also complete the closure of the mine and rehabilitation of the site before it is returned to DOC for management.

The Crown will need to take over the mine and associated assets from its existing owner, Solid Energy, prior to the company going into liquidation on about 19 March 2018. If the new agency has not been established by that time, an existing government department is the best option to temporarily hold the assets and manage the mine for a transitional period. In this event, DOC may be suggested as the transitional mine manager. Other departments that could carry out this function are MBIE and the Treasury.

Construction of the Paparoa Great Walk can proceed independently of any re-entry activities at the mine site and it is scheduled to be opened in April 2019. DOC staff have liaised closely with the Pike River families and hapū Ngāti Waewae on development of the Great Walk and are working with the families to design the redevelopment of the mine site to include a memorial and an information centre about the mine and subsequent disaster.

### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

Government decisions will be required as soon as possible to progress planning for a safe re-entry of the drift, particularly in view of Solid Energy's liquidation in March 2018. With DOC as the land manager, you are likely to be involved in many of these decisions.

### 3. Marine and coastal management

DOC is responsible for New Zealand's marine reserves and looking after marine mammals and other protected, threatened and at-risk marine species.

The extent of the marine area, including the Exclusive Economic Zone and Territorial sea is 4.2 million km<sup>2</sup> and extends from a sub-tropical latitude to sub Antarctic. As a result, the marine ecosystem hosts a rich and diverse range of species, habitats and resources.

Although we have comprehensive information about parts of our marine environment, it is our least well-known ecosystem.

Marine reserves are administered by DOC and offer the highest form of marine protection in the Territorial Sea. There are 44 marine reserves, totalling 17,430 km<sup>2</sup> (9.8% of the territorial sea). There are still gaps in protection within New Zealand's biogeographic regions, with a substantial portion of our current protection located around the Kermadec and subantarctic islands.

DOC administers six marine mammal sanctuaries established under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978, totalling 23,447 km<sup>2</sup>. These areas are established to protect marine mammals from harmful human impacts, particularly in vulnerable areas such as breeding grounds and on migratory routes.

In addition, one whale sanctuary (totalling 4,690 km<sup>2</sup>) and one seal sanctuary (totalling 0.04 km<sup>2</sup>) have been established under the Kaikōura (Te Tai o Marokura) Marine Management Act 2014.

DOC also has a role in administering the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and the Sugar Loaf Islands Marine Protected Area.

Diagrams 2 and 3 show marine reserves and marine mammal sanctuaries.

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement guides local authorities in their day to day management of the coastal environment. This is prepared by you under the Resource Management Act 1991 with support from the Department.

All marine mammals are protected throughout New Zealand fisheries waters<sup>1</sup> (and on land), and the Wildlife Act specifies what other marine species are protected in our waters.

This section discusses key programmes and current issues in marine and coastal management.

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<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Fisheries Waters include waters in the Exclusive Economic Zone, the territorial sea and internal waters of New Zealand.

Diagram 2:  
North Island marine reserves and marine mammal sanctuaries

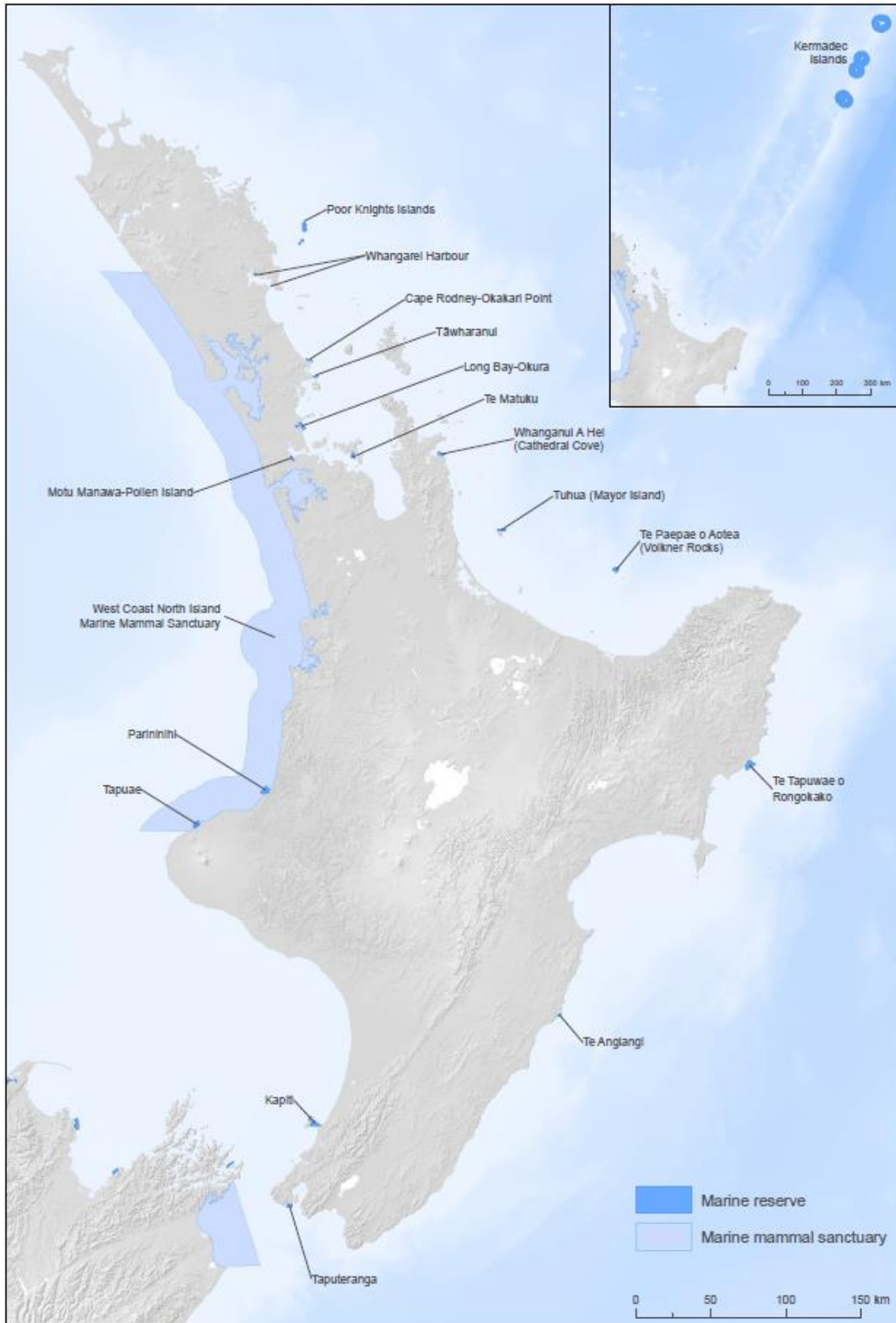
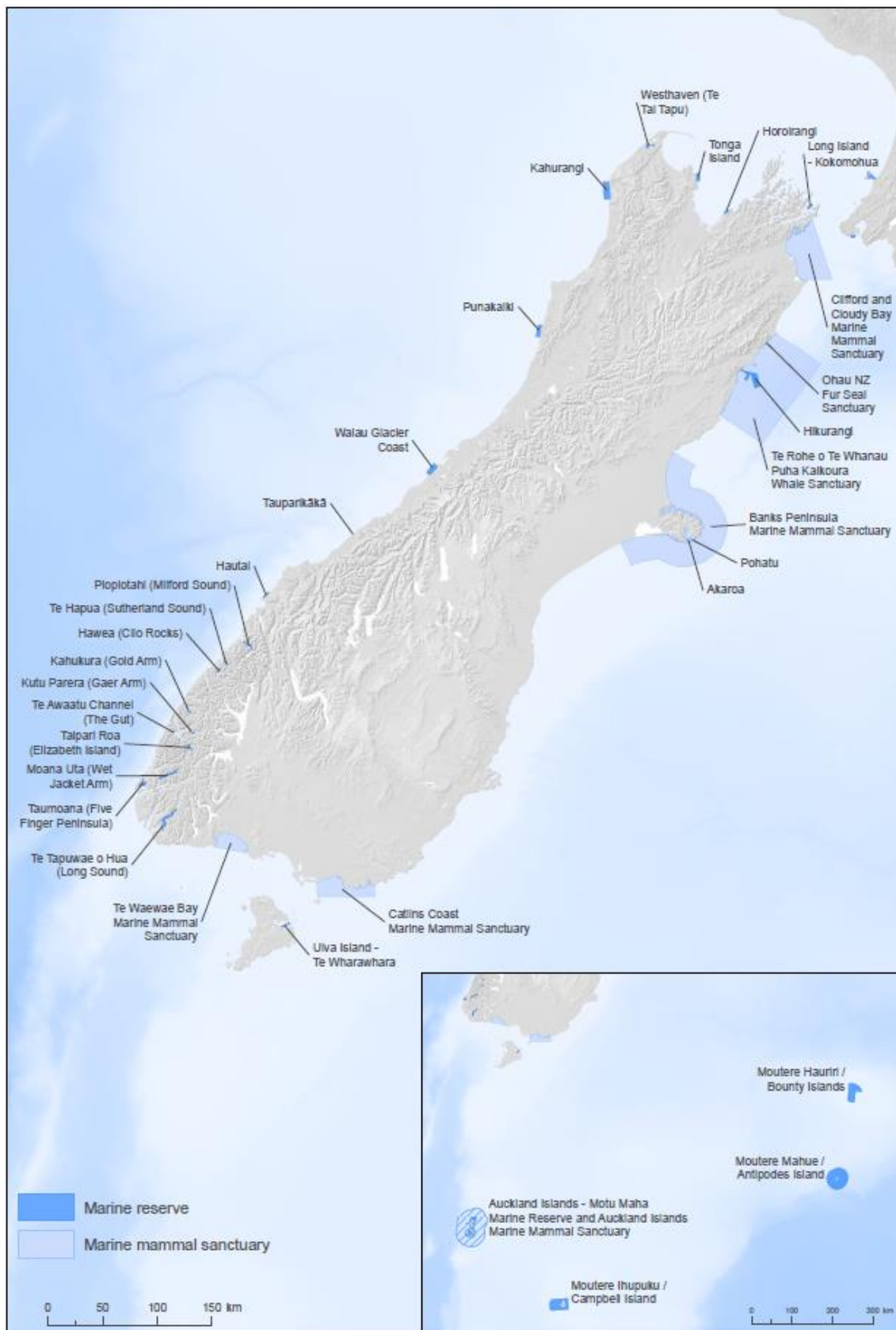


Diagram 3:  
South Island marine reserves and marine mammal sanctuaries



### 3.1. Marine Protected Areas

Marine protected areas can protect representative examples of our coastal marine habitats and ecosystems, as well as those that are outstanding, rare, distinctive or internationally or nationally important. Protecting these areas contributes to achieving biodiversity and threatened species goals and maintaining the health of the wider marine environment. They also provide investment certainty about areas appropriate for use, and opportunities for regional economic development.

There is overlapping demand for marine space between users, including commercial, recreational, customary and conservation interests, who are increasingly seeking certainty about which areas can be sustainably used. Much of the effort in marine protection over the last decade has focused on reforming the marine protection framework to enable a better balance across interests. Due to the focus on reform in recent years, less effort has been directed at implementing new protected areas.

There is increasing interest from multiple regions to establish marine protected areas or undertake marine spatial planning processes<sup>2</sup>. Collaborative spatial planning processes are a new approach that have been shown to be much more effective than establishing single marine protected areas. Marine spatial planning in the Hauraki Gulf, and other parts of the country like the Marlborough Sounds, can lower conflict through collaborative participation from the community and industry. The Sea Change collaborative spatial planning process is an example of this new approach currently underway.



Blue maomao in the Poor Knights Island Marine Reserve. *Photo: Brian Mackie (DOC)*

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<sup>2</sup> Marine Protected Area processes are focused on marine protection only, whereas marine spatial management processes consider all uses of the marine environment.

As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, New Zealand has made international commitments to protect marine biodiversity. Those commitments include conserving at least 10% of our coastal and marine area by 2020. We will be reporting on our progress towards these commitments in 2018.

#### **Current Status**

Marine protected areas policy is jointly developed by the Ministers for Conservation, Environment and Primary Industries, with the Minister for the Environment having been the lead Minister.

Marine agencies (DOC, MfE and MPI) continue to work collaboratively to develop technical and policy advice including the development of options for progressing marine protection reform and implementation.

Marine agencies have led the development of the proposed Kermadec/Rangitāhua Ocean Sanctuary and can provide further advice as requested.

### **3.2. Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari – Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan**

The Hauraki Gulf is a national taonga - it has significant economic, recreational and cultural importance. It is home to a third of our population and twenty-eight Iwi. However, the 2014 Hauraki Gulf Forum's 'State of our Gulf' report suggested that the Hauraki Gulf was under pressure from conflicting economic, social and environmental objectives, and was at risk of reaching a tipping point.

The Sea Change Tai Timu Tai Pari – Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan (the Sea Change Plan) seeks to address these issues. The purpose of the spatial plan is to provide integrated management recommendations to reverse the ongoing environmental decline of the Gulf.

Released in December 2016, it is the first of its kind in New Zealand. It represents over three years of work by a collaborative stakeholder working group (including some of the iwi of the region).

As an aspirational, non-binding and non-statutory document, it is intended as a guidance framework for agencies with statutory functions in the Gulf.

#### **Current status**

The Sea Change Plan proposes marine protected areas, space for aquaculture, and other initiatives to manage water quality, and is a good foundation for balancing protection and use. Some of the proposals can be implemented by local government where as others, such as delivering creating new marine protected areas will require action from Government.

The Sea Change stakeholder working group, mana whenua and the wider community are waiting for a response to the Sea Change Plan.

Local government is actively responding to the Plan. Both Auckland Council and Waikato Regional Council have considered how the proposals can be implemented and fit within their respective work programmes. Auckland Council has also established a Sea Change Political Reference Group, and are looking to secure additional funding to deliver aspects of the plan through processes such as their long-term plan 2018-2028.



Government has acknowledged the Sea Change Plan and the effort that went in to creating it but is yet to provide a formal response to the proposals. There is a high expectation for a Government response, with officials increasingly being asked on when and what this might be.

Officials have identified areas of the plan that require further analysis and wider stakeholder engagement. The next proposed phase is to establish an independent advisory group to advise you and the other Marine Ministers on the proposals and to carry out additional consultation. The establishment and make up of this Advisory Group will be dependent on your decision and Cabinet approval.

#### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

Your agreement will be sought for officials to meet with the relevant local authorities and mana whenua to discuss the Advisory Group proposal and appointment process.

Your decision on membership and terms of reference of the Advisory Group will be sought as appointments need to be completed before the end of 2017. DOC anticipates the Advisory Group will report to relevant Ministers in mid-2018.

### **3.3. Te Roopu Manaaki ki te Toka/South East Marine Protection Forum**

The South-East coast of the South Island is home to some of our most endangered species such as the yellow-eyed penguin, northern royal albatross and New Zealand sea lion. Other notable features include globally rare deep-water bryozoan thickets (colonies of aquatic invertebrates) and giant kelp forests that provide essential habitat for many fish species.

In 2014, a non-statutory body, the South-East Marine Protection Forum (Te Roopu Manaaki ki te Toka; the Forum), was appointed by the Minister of Conservation and the Minister for Primary Industries to make recommendations for a network of marine protected areas for the south-east coast of the South Island. Members of the Forum represent the interests of tangata whenua, commercial fishing, recreational users, conservation groups, tourism, aquaculture, marine science, local government and communities.

#### **Current status**

Since 2014, the Forum has engaged extensively with the community, seeking views of their respective sectors, and prepared a proposal for potential protection of 20 sites. Formal public consultation was undertaken in late 2016 and over 2,800 submissions were received.

#### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

The Forum would welcome your attendance at their December meeting. Agencies will work with the Forum to facilitate a formal invitation.

The Forum is currently undertaking deliberations and developing recommendations for Ministers. Formal recommendations for protection sites and types are due to Ministers on 20 December 2017. Once the formal recommendations are presented to the Ministers, you and they are required to make the final decision on the sites for, and types of, protection.

### 3.4. **Review of the Effect of the NZCPS 2010 on RMA decision-making**

The Minister of Conservation has coastal management responsibilities under the Resource Management Act (RMA) including the preparation and monitoring of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) and approval of regional coastal plans. The NZCPS sets national policy direction for the coast that must be given effect in RMA policy statements and plans. The current NZCPS was gazetted in 2010.

In July 2017 DOC completed its report “Review of the effect of the NZCPS 2010 on RMA decision making”. The report identified key findings and suggested next steps, including findings about the NZCPS directive policies following the Supreme Court’s King Salmon decision. A process was suggested to address the findings on King Salmon.

At that time DOC recommended to the Minister of Conservation that the report and a future work programme be discussed with the Environment and Primary Industries Ministers before being published.

#### **Current status**

The review report is still current but yet to be discussed with Ministers, which officials recommend you undertake before the documents are published, along with a discussion about the suggested future work programme.

There is a high degree of public interest in the report findings. Groups and individuals consulted as part of the review process, including iwi, are aware that publication of the report is waiting for a decision by the Minister of Conservation.

#### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

You can expect to receive a follow-up briefing to introduce the report and to set out the key findings and seek your decision on a future work programme.



Muriwai Beach. Photo: *Laura Honey (DOC)*

## 4. Freshwater management

DOC takes an active role in freshwater management and has significant technical expertise in relation to freshwater ecosystems and fisheries. One of DOC's stretch goals for 2025 is that 50 freshwater ecosystems are restored from 'mountains to the sea'. To contribute to achieving this goal DOC is involved in many local restoration and regional planning processes.

One of DOC's key commercial partnerships – the Living Water partnership with Fonterra – is focused on improving biodiversity and water quality in five key catchments across the country.

Key programmes and current issues in freshwater management include:

### 4.1. Freshwater management reform

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) are leading a major reform process in relation to water quality and quantity. That includes the promulgation and progressive expansion of a National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management (NPSFM) under the Resource Management Act (RMA), administration of clean-up funds, and administration of funds to support the development of new irrigation schemes.

#### **Current status**

DOC is not involved directly in any of the current MFE work, but is providing technical support when requested. DOC is involved in all regional planning processes, and is a partner in a number of the local projects supported by the clean-up fund.

### 4.2. Whitebait

DOC is responsible for managing the whitebait fishery. The fishery is regulated through two sets of regulations – one for the West Coast and one for the rest of New Zealand. The regulations control the fishing season, the hours in which fishing is allowed, and the way fishing can be undertaken.

All five whitebait species have suffered significant population declines over the last century, largely as a result of loss of habitat, loss of spawning sites, barriers to fish passage, and predation by trout and other introduced fish.

#### **Current status**

There is increasing community dialogue about a review of the whitebait regulations, with some communities favouring decommmercialisation. DOC is undertaking social and ecological research that will inform a review of whether the regulatory controls on fishing need to be adjusted. This is likely to take place in 2020.

## 5. Working with others

Working in partnership is key to DOC's approach. People and organisations across New Zealand want to contribute to conservation, and by working together, we can achieve better conservation outcomes.

A crucial relationship is with our treaty partners – iwi, hapu and whanau. DOC is committed to working with its treaty partners to support and enable them in their kaitiaki role.

We guide and build on the effort and investment of others across New Zealand to enable better conservation outcomes for New Zealand. This includes working with business, community groups and volunteers, to support them to contribute to conservation. An important inherent principle is mutual benefit: helping others deliver a 'win-win' – for their own priorities and for conservation.

Key programmes and approaches in this area include:

### 5.1. DOC's partnership with iwi

DOC has a responsibility under section 4 of the Conservation Act to interpret and administer the Act to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. This involves building and supporting effective conservation partnerships with tangata whenua at the local level.

This responsibility reflects the importance to Maori of the lands and resources under DOC management. DOC is committed to developing effective conservation partnerships with tangata whenua we employ specialist staff to support this. DOC also has a growing range of management and consultation arrangements with iwi arising from Treaty settlements.

The Department's engagement with Māori is based on the following principles:

- Protecting Māori cultural values on land managed by DOC and protecting conservation values on land owned by Māori
- Empowering Māori communities to fulfil their customary duty as kaitiaki of taonga and encouraging their participation in conservation delivery
- Balancing cultural/social and ecological values in decision making
- Interacting (to the appropriate extent) with Māori on all issues that either party may raise to manage potential risk and maximise opportunities
- Engendering tangata whenua and Māori support for conservation and the Department of Conservation
- Giving effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

A key relationship for you will be with the Chair of the Iwi Leaders Conservation Group that has been established as one of four Iwi Leader Groups (ILGs) that come under the Iwi Chairs Forum. The Conservation ILG is supported by a Conservation Iwi Advisors Group (IAG) where the Director-General has the relationship.

The Ngā Whenua Rāhui Komiti is one of your most significant opportunities for engagement with iwi leaders and we propose that you hold this relationship.

DOC is heavily involved in treaty settlement negotiations, in particular negotiating the ‘cultural redress’ aspects of settlements as they relate to public conservation land. Land is often transferred in settlements, with conservation values including public access and third-party rights protected after transfer. Treaty settlements include relationship agreements that post-settlement iwi authorities have with the Minister of Conservation and DOC.

### **Current status**

Internal work is being started on an Iwi Engagement System to ensure that we have consistent and clear understandings on how and when we engage with iwi. This system needs to be co-designed with the Conservation Iwi Advisors Group.

DOC is also developing a framework to support the consideration of iwi rights and interests in the allocation of commercial opportunities on public conservation land. The decisions we make about the allocation of these opportunities can have significant implications for Crown-iwi/Māori relationships. DOC has received requests from several Māori entities to prioritise their interests in the granting of concessions for commercial opportunities as an application of section 4 of the Conservation Act. A framework would assist decision-makers to assess these requests and how to take into account iwi/Māori rights and interests in a way that is consistent with legislation.

## **5.2. Te Urewera**

The Te Urewera Act, passed in September 2014, reset the legislative framework for the governance and management of Te Urewera. No longer a National Park, Te Urewera is now uniquely identified as its own legal identity, with Te Urewera Board appointed to act on behalf, and in the name of, Te Urewera. Te Urewera Board is responsible for the governance of Te Urewera and is on the verge of confirming Te Kawa o Te Urewera – the new 10 year management plan.

Operationally, the Chief Executive of Tūhoe Te Uru Taumatua (the Tūhoe post-settlement governance entity) and the Director-General are responsible for management in Te Urewera. The Chief Executive and Director-General are required to prepare an operational plan annually for management activities in Te Urewera, for endorsement by Te Urewera Board. Since the passing of Te Urewera Act, operational planning and delivery has largely been led by Tūhoe Te Uru Taumatua, with the assistance of Department staff working on secondment to Tūhoe. Additionally, DOC’s wider network supports Tūhoe in many ways, through the provision of services such as project management, engineering services and linkages to specialist expertise, and national initiatives such as Predator Free NZ 2050.

### **Current status**

DOC and Tūhoe are working towards finalising a relationship model to provide clarity and continuity in the management of Te Urewera and enable the intent of Te Urewera Act to be fully implemented. Key components of this work include; discussion at the executive level on relationship principles, confirming the draft funding agreement between DOC and Tūhoe (for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019), and consultation on responsibility for operational functions, such as rural fire management, visitor asset maintenance and operational planning.

The relationship between DOC and Tūhoe was recently recognised at the IPANZ public sector awards for excellence in crown/iwi relations.

### 5.3. Key commercial partnerships

Commercial partnerships continue to grow in number and importance as we seek an all-of-New Zealand response to protecting and restoring our nature.

When combined, our national partners have over 40,000 employees, 20 million customers, and many thousands of procurement relationships. This represents a significant opportunity to leverage an all-of-New Zealand response to our conservation challenges.

#### Current status

DOC has nine significant national commercial partners and works with dozens more businesses in each region. These partners are: Fonterra, Air New Zealand, Genesis, Kiwibank, Mitre 10, Dulux, Fulton Hogan, Meridian Energy and Toyota. Examples of the conservation activities undertaken include:

- The \$20 million Living Water agreement with Fonterra that protects five wetlands
- Toyota Kiwi Guardians programme for kids to learn, connect and contribute to nature
- Air New Zealand partnerships which include Great Walks biodiversity projects, Great Walks promotion, marine reserves research, Coastal Gems promotion, and free transport of endangered native wildlife.

Between 2011 and 2020, corporate partners have committed approximately \$43 million to conservation outcomes with and for DOC. This is based on current agreements and includes both financial and “in kind” value.

### 5.4. DOC’s partnership with Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections and DOC have been working in partnership since 2015, aligning work programmes to achieve positive outcomes for both agencies across a number of districts throughout New Zealand.

People on prison and community sentences are gaining marketable skills through contributing to the protection and enhancement of our species and natural places. Community work teams under DOC’s guidance complete regular weed management, track maintenance, and site management work. Behind the wire, offenders are involved with growing native plants in plant nurseries, and the manufacture of various conservation products including trap boxes, nesting boxes and BBQ tables. This work extends DOC’s operational capability to deliver additional conservation work.

#### Current status

Joint planning is under way with both agencies to accelerate the partnership, aiming to deliver a larger national roll-out through 2017-2018, and align the work and products to key conservation priorities such as Predator Free 2050.

## 5.5. Community partnerships and funds

Utilising community volunteers across New Zealand (1000+ groups) is central to achieving conservation outcomes. Predator Free 2050 has captured the 'hearts and minds' of the community. DOC is seeking to support communities to maximise their impact in achieving conservation outcomes.

The DOC Community Fund is a key enabler for community engagement in conservation. Established in 2014, approximately \$20m has been invested into over 300 community initiatives. The Fund is popular with community groups and each year it has been significantly oversubscribed. The current Community Fund round will disburse \$4.14M to community groups from October 2017.

### Current status

DOC is working on a volunteer strategy to determine how it can support community conservation.

A strategic review of the fund will seek improvements in the funding process, greater alignment with Department strategies and initiatives, and assess the level of investment required to maintain and grow the community conservation momentum.

### Action needed in the first 90 days

You may wish to be involved in funding announcements in October 2017, which could include a series of community group site visits.



Upper: Corporate volunteers. *Photo: Genesis Energy*

Lower: Members of the Chinese Conservation Education Trust planting at Omaha. *Photo: DOC*

## 6. Connecting people to natural & historic heritage

Enhancing wellbeing of New Zealanders and international visitors by encouraging and enabling people to connect to New Zealand's nature and heritage is one of the three strategic roles for the Department.

We do this by providing opportunities for New Zealanders and visitors to experience and understand the stories of our wild and historic places. We foster recreation and tourism on public conservation land, where appropriate.

DOC encourages appropriate recreation opportunities on the lands and waters it manages. We manage historic sites and visitor facilities, including walking, biking and four-wheel-drive tracks, huts, campsites and visitor centres. These tracks stretch for 14,800 kilometres—about 3,000 kilometres further than the State highway network and, along the way, there are 970 huts.

The range and number of recreation opportunities that can be offered is extended by co-operation with private operators, through more than 1,000 longer-term concessions for recreation activities.

DOC also encourages and enables people to strengthen their connections to nature by contributing to conservation.

Key programmes and current issues in this area include:

### 6.1. DOC's Visitor Strategy and the roll-out of visitor funding from Budget 2017

DOC is facing critical changes to its operating environment from the growth of tourism. Public conservation lands and waters are a huge draw-card for visitors. By 2025, international visitors to New Zealand are forecast to increase from 3.2 million to 5.4 million – approximately half of whom are coming to visit places in our national parks.

DOC must manage the effects of increasing tourism, while continuing to protect and restore biodiversity and enable recreation. Many of the challenges of increasing tourism present opportunities for conservation, if tackled strategically and collectively. For example, revenue from tourism can be used to contribute to biodiversity protection and restoration.

Budget 2017 provided DOC with \$76 million to better manage its busiest visitor sites – which are facing real capacity and cost pressures. This includes funding for the development of two new Great Walks, a suite of short walks and day hikes, and tourist facilities and track upgrades at four highly-used sites. Allocating this funding requires the joint approval of business cases by the Ministers of Finance and Conservation, and is subject to DOC delivering a high-level strategy for visitors to Ministers by the end of 2017.



### **Current status**

We are developing a strategy that will set out our objectives, principles, and strategic actions for managing visitors to public conservation lands and waters. In parallel we are looking at our current policy settings and identifying whether legislative or policy change is needed to clarify DOC's role in tourism, or to enable future-proof pricing and management tools. We are working with agencies, local government, and the tourism sector, as well as iwi and key stakeholders such as the New Zealand Conservation Authority.

DOC has initiated work to develop the first of two new products – short walks and day hikes – which will showcase both our best shorter walks and some under-utilised sites. A public process to select two new Great Walks will soon be under way, with the new Walks to be confirmed in June 2018. Planning is also under way to improve the quality of DOC's web services for visitors, and DOC is in the process of procuring a new booking service.

### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

In the first 90 days, we will provide you with a draft strategy for review, discussion and agreement with the Ministers of Tourism and Finance.

There will be an opportunity for you to launch the first two new products (short walks and day hikes) on 24 October 2017.

Potential new Great Walks will be short-listed in December 2017, and there will be an opportunity to announce shortlisted proposals in February 2018 after iwi consultation has taken place.

## **6.2. Managing and sharing stories of historic heritage**

DOC has an important role in managing historic heritage – particularly heritage sites on conservation land.

There are 13,500 known archaeological and/or historic sites on public conservation land, with around 600 of these sites under active conservation. Some of the key sites are:

- Ruapekapeka pā
- Meretoto / Ship Cove, Marlborough Sounds
- Te Rerenga Wairua / Cape Reinga, Northland
- Denniston (Former Coal Mine), West Coast
- Molesworth Station, Nelson/Marlborough
- Cook Landing Site Historic Reserve, Gisborne
- Arrowsmith Chinese settlement

One of DOC's goals is to identify our most exceptional heritage places to share the stories of New Zealand's past with visitors.

Heritage Icon sites represent some of New Zealand's premier heritage. These sites play a critical part in telling the story of our national identity and provide an important tourism offering. DOC currently has 23 Heritage Icon sites and we have a stretch goal to have 50 exceptional heritage experiences in this portfolio by 2025.

DOC is also involved in the Landmarks initiative with the Ministry of Culture & Heritage and Heritage New Zealand. Landmarks has similar objectives to DOC's Heritage Icon programme, but on a New Zealand-wide scale. Many of DOC's Heritage Icon sites will qualify to become Landmarks. Eventually this will see the DOC Heritage Icon brand merge into the Landmark programme.

### Current status

DOC is currently working with the Ministry of Culture & Heritage and Heritage New Zealand to roll-out the Landmarks programme in the Otago Region. Two or three DOC Heritage Icons will become Landmark sites. Work is ongoing in Northland which was the pilot region for Landmarks in 2016/2017.

### Action needed in the first 90 days

A decision on whether to request a roll-out plan for the next four years of the Landmark programme and the funding needed to expedite this.



DOC aims to share our heritage stories with visitors in engaging and innovative ways - Interpretation at Rangihoua Heritage Park. *Photos: Avara Moody (DOC)*

### 6.3. Healthy Nature Healthy People

Healthy Nature Healthy People (HNHP) is a programme about the connection between health, wellbeing and nature. It was adopted by DOC in 2015 and is based on the Healthy Parks Healthy People concept that was initiated by Parks Victoria, Australia in 2000 and is now the strongest worldwide movement amongst National Park leaders internationally.

The principles of HNHP are:

- Wellbeing depends on healthy ecosystems
- Protected areas nurture healthy ecosystems
- Contact with nature is essential to improve emotional, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing
- Protected areas are fundamental to thriving communities

#### **Current status**

DOC is engaged with some 50 government agencies and non-government organisations from across health, wellbeing, recreation, youth, and social services. DOC is actively working with Healthy Families (Ministry of Health) initiatives around New Zealand. It also has a memorandum of understanding with the Mental Health Foundation. DOC is working with the health sector to support the cross-government goal of Smokefree Aotearoa 2025.

### 6.4. Environmental education

In July 2017, DOC, in collaboration with the Ministry for the Environment and Ministry of Education (MoE), launched the “Environmental Education for Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan”. It sets out how government agencies will work together to better support the delivery of high quality environmental education across New Zealand. The agencies will work together to focus on key environmental goals, such as Predator Free 2050, as ‘rallying points’ for New Zealand’s environmental efforts.

#### **Current status**

DOC, MFE and MoE have established an ongoing cross-sector implementation plan and a governance group, to oversee delivery of the strategy and act as champions for environmental education for sustainability.

## 7. DOC's wider role

### 7.1. The Natural Resources Sector

The Natural Resources Sector (NRS) is a collaboration of eight government agencies responsible for the management and stewardship of New Zealand's natural resources<sup>3</sup>. The NRS takes an integrated and strategic approach to natural resource management and works together to achieve things collectively that agencies could not achieve alone.

The NRS has agreed to a set of collective outcomes for the natural resources system – land, water, climate, oceans and biodiversity. A cross-portfolio work programme sits under each outcome area that the NRS collectively delivers. The biodiversity outcome is a key priority for DOC:

*Our management of natural resources recognises how biodiversity delivers economic, social, cultural and health benefits to New Zealanders.*

#### **Current status**

An NRS sector BIM has been developed and will be provided to you and other natural resource Ministers.

DOC is leading the development of a cross-sector work programme to deliver on the NRS biodiversity outcome. This will involve a systemic look at what is needed to invest in and grow the resilience of New Zealand's biodiversity to deliver economic, social, cultural and health benefits, or what is needed to address the underlying causes of decline across the marine, freshwater and land domains.

A collaborative group with representatives from environmental and landowner organisations is tasked with developing a draft National Policy Statement on Biodiversity under the Resource Management Act by late 2018. DOC, MfE and MPI officials are supporting the group as “active observers.” A National Policy Statement is the key opportunity to address biodiversity issues particularly beyond conservation land.

#### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

Regular meetings between Ministers responsible for natural resource matters may be established early in your term. Your office will be kept informed of developments and a briefing will be provided in advance of any meeting. A forum of this type would be an important opportunity for you to work with your colleagues on issues that cut across different portfolios.

### 7.2. International relationships

New Zealand is party to a range of international agreements and bodies dealing with environmental issues. In some cases, DOC is the lead agency representing New Zealand, and your guidance and approval of delegations and negotiating positions will be needed.

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<sup>3</sup> The NRS agencies are: the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; the Ministry for the Environment; the Ministry for Primary Industries; Land Information New Zealand; the Department of Conservation; Te Puni Kōkiri; the Department of Internal Affairs; and the Ministry of Transport.

Ministerial representation at meetings is occasionally recommended where there are substantial decisions to be made.

DOC's international engagement is primarily focused on promoting conservation outcomes of direct benefit to New Zealand, but also extends to areas where we have a particular interest outside our national jurisdiction. This includes supporting conservation in the South Pacific, and cooperating in (and contributing to) the conservation and sustainable management of Antarctic ecosystems, particularly those in the Ross Dependency.

### **Current status**

DOC's current international engagement priorities which may receive public attention in the next three months include:

- Preparing for the Ross Sea Region Marine Protected Area to come into effect - this will be the world's largest marine protected area.
- Promoting stronger measures to prevent seabird bycatch in international waters - this includes raising urgency around the unprecedented rate of decline of the Antipodean albatross.
- Designing a bottom fishing management approach for the South Pacific region to protect vulnerable deep-sea ecosystems.
- Possible nomination of the Wairarapa Moana Wetlands to be designated a wetland site of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals will be held in the Philippines from 23-28 October 2017. DOC is the State Party representative to this Convention.

### **Action needed in the first 90 days**

Before the end of the year, DOC will brief you on ongoing work to meet international freshwater and wetlands reporting requirements under the Ramsar Convention, for which DOC is responsible. We will also update you on our partnership with Greater Wellington Regional Council, seeking international designation for Wairarapa Moana as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.



Wairarapa Moana. *Photo: DOC*