

## INTRODUCTION



New Zealanders feel strongly about conservation. They have lobbied for and secured the conservation gains that ensure this country has the conservation system it has today. The land that the department manages is public conservation land owned by all New Zealanders, and everyone has an interest in the work we do. And there are many conservation challenges still there: ones New Zealanders feel passionate about and want involvement in.

Department of Conservation staff are professional conservation managers. We are aware of the conservation challenges facing New Zealand, and are dedicated to ensuring species survival and ecological health. In doing this, we work on behalf of New Zealanders and also with them. Working with people is part of all conservation work, from pest control to archaeology, from visitor asset management to threatened species programmes.

We all interact with communities, whether they're geographic like neighbours next to a national park, demographic like Auckland's Chinese community, interest-based like farmers, trampers or conservation group members, key associates like regional councils, special partners like tangata whenua or statutory advisors like conservation boards. The way people get involved varies from time to time, place to place and community to community. It can be informing, consulting or involving communities in our work, or supporting them in theirs.

Communities include Maori who, as tangata whenua, have a special relationship with the department. The policies in the Kaupapa Atawhai Strategy provide specific guidance for our relationships with tangata whenua.

While we bring our specialist knowledge as conservation professionals, communities and individuals bring their knowledge of the local area, matauranga Maori or their own specialist knowledge. All knowledge is legitimate and needs to be heard and respected.

A new direction in this document is on developing partnerships and building community skills to do conservation better. There are great examples of community involvement and awareness raising all around the country - we need to build on the best of these with the flair and imagination we bring to other aspects of our work.

There are costs and benefits - some projects may need more time to develop, with flexibility built in, especially given the need to have common goals through open, two-way discussion without compromising the conservation bottom line. There are broad ranging benefits, both direct and indirect, demonstrated through examples of our excellent community engagement experiences.

Conservation with Communities is an overarching framework that guides how we do our work - it is not simply a strategy for the community relations work area. It sits alongside our commitments to tangata whenua. This is a major cultural shift for the department, and I expect it will take several years, maybe five, to plan and implement properly.

I want to see commitment to this fundamental approach to our work - it is the way we do things at DOC.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh Logan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hugh Logan

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

FEBRUARY 2003