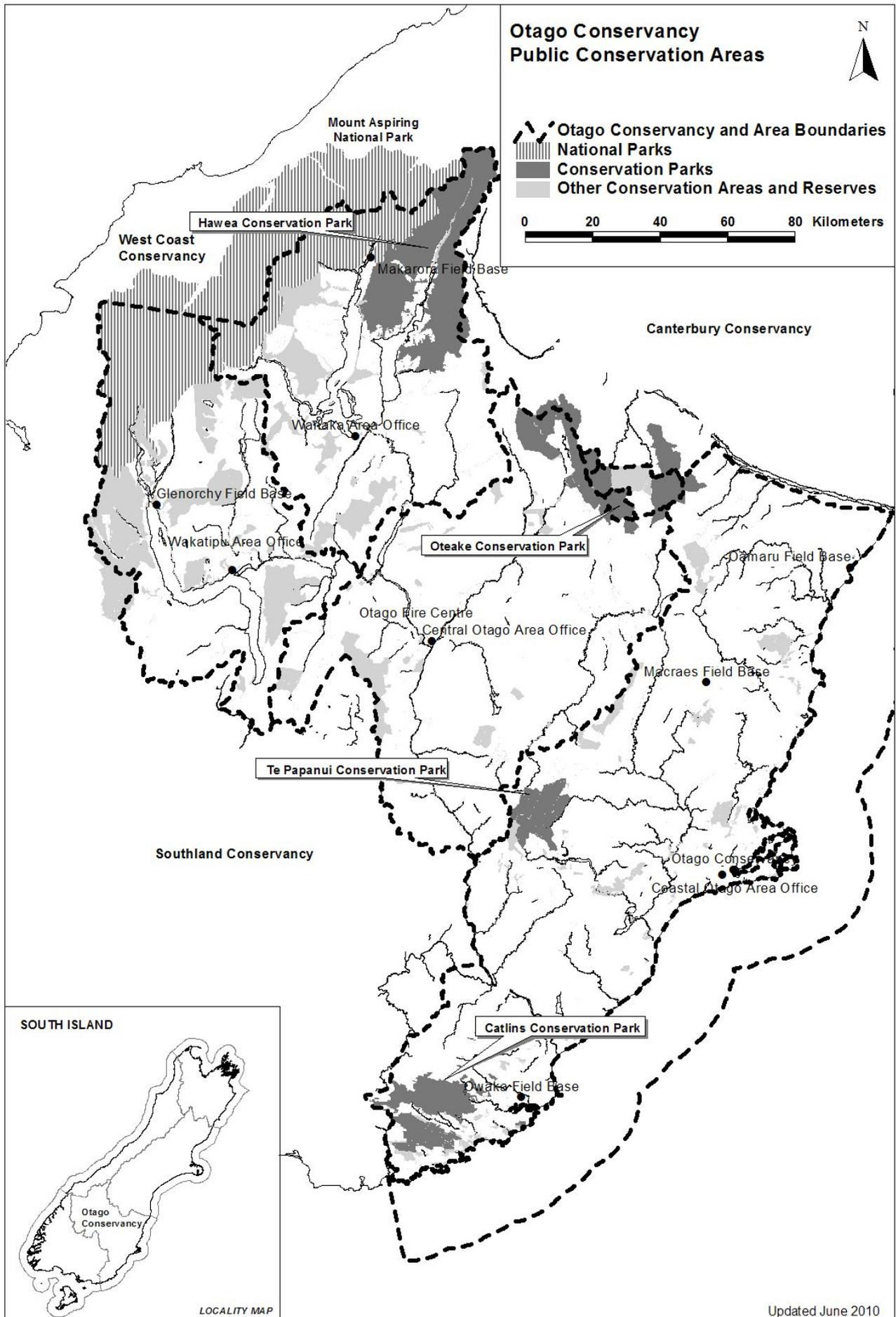


OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD



2009/2010 ANNUAL REPORT



Otago Conservation Board Annual Report for the period 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010

*Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
pursuant to Section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987*

Photograph : Front Cover

Members of the Otago Conservation Board in front of the restored remains of the old Lindis Hotel in the Nine Mile Historic Reserve on 13 February 2010.

[Photograph by Paul Hellebrekers]

Photograph : Back Cover

A jewelled gecko/moko kākāriki on a *Coprosma crassifolia* shrub growing on the Otago Peninsula. In early 2010, 16 jewelled geckos/moko kākāriki were successfully returned to their home habitat on the Otago Peninsula following the apprehension and prosecution of wildlife poachers by the Wildlife Enforcement Group.

The Otago Conservation Board fully supports the proposed implementation of the **Jewelled Gecko/Moko-Kākāriki Management Plan – a community-based plan for Otago Peninsula**. This document has been developed by the local community and the Department of Conservation over the past two years, with sponsorship by Setpoint Solutions.

[Photograph by James Reardon]

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OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD

2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

This report has been prepared for the New Zealand Conservation Authority pursuant to section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987. Copies of the report have been circulated to individuals and organizations with an interest in the Board's activities.

1 INTRODUCTION TO BOARD MEMBERS

From 1 July 2009 to 31 August 2009, the members of the Board were as follows: (The official Board term expiry dates which applied during that period and the number of full Board meetings attended between 1 July 2009 and 31 August 2009 are shown in the final two columns.)

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------|----------------|---|
| Hoani S Langsbury (Chair) | Otakou | 31 August 2010 | 1 |
| Ross Allan | Dunedin | 31 August 2010 | 1 |
| Chas Morris | Wanaka | 31 August 2011 | 0 |
| Dr Garry H Nixon | Alexandra | 31 August 2010 | 0 |
| Bruce J Parker | Ngapara | 31 August 2009 | 1 |
| Andrew Penniket | Wanaka | 31 August 2009 | 0 |
| Mark J Planner* | Cromwell | 31 August 2011 | 0 |
| Iris Scott | Glenorchy | 31 August 2010 | 0 |
| Dr Abigail M Smith | Dunedin | 31 August 2011 | 1 |
| Chas F Tanner | Purakanui | 31 August 2011 | 1 |
| Dr Jim E Williams | Dunedin | 31 August 2009 | 1 |

* (Mark J Planner resigned from the Board in August 2009 and was not replaced.)

The present members of the Otago Conservation Board were appointed by the Minister of Conservation for terms commencing on 1 September 2009 or earlier, and ending on the dates listed below. The number of full Board meetings attended between 1 September 2009 and 30 June 2010 is given in the final column.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|---|
| Hoani S Langsbury (Chair) | Otakou | 31 August 2010 | 5 |
| Ross Allan | Dunedin | 31 August 2010 | 5 |
| Dr David Holdsworth | Dunedin | 31 August 2012 | 3 |
| Chas Morris | Wanaka | 31 August 2011 | 5 |
| Dr Garry H Nixon | Alexandra | 31 August 2010 | 5 |
| Andrew Penniket | Wanaka | 31 August 2012 | 5 |
| Iris Scott | Glenorchy | 31 August 2010 | 5 |
| Dr Abigail M Smith | Dunedin | 31 August 2011 | 5 |
| Chas F Tanner | Purakaunui | 31 August 2011 | 5 |
| Dr Jim E Williams | Dunedin | 31 August 2012 | 5 |

2 INTRODUCTION TO BOARD DISTRICT

The boundaries of the Board's area of jurisdiction correspond roughly with those of the Otago Conservancy of the Department of Conservation (see map inside front cover). However, both Mount Aspiring National Park and the Catlins Conservation Park (which comprises the major inland portion of the Catlins Coastal Rainforest Park) are wholly within the Board's district, even though parts of these parks are managed by the West Coast and Southland Conservancies of the Department, respectively. This was done to ensure a single approach with regard to policy and planning for these parks.

The marine boundary is the Twelve Mile Limit in relation to marine reserve issues and the Exclusive Economic Zone in relation to marine mammal issues.

Significant protected areas within the Board's area of jurisdiction include:

- **Mount Aspiring National Park**
355,531 ha (192,855 ha in the Otago Conservancy, 162,676 ha in the West Coast Conservancy)
- **Catlins Coastal Rainforest Park**
This is a collective name for the Catlins Conservation Park of 50,693 ha (32,933 ha in the Otago Conservancy, 17,760 ha in the Southland Conservancy) and numerous reserves and conservation areas which are located along or near the Catlins coast.
- **Te Papanui Conservation Park**
This park comprises 20,591 ha of tussock grassland, wetlands, shrubland and silver beech forest remnants on the Lammermoor and Lammerlaw Ranges northwest of Lake Mahinerangi near Lawrence.
- **Hāwea Conservation Park**
The Hāwea Conservation Park covers about 105,000 ha of public conservation land around Lake Hawea and the Hunter River, as well as areas on the McKerrow Range near Makarora. Large areas in the park are covered with native beech forest and shrublands.
- **Oteake Conservation Park**
About 65,000 ha of public conservation land on the St Bathans, Hawkdun, Ida, Ewe and St Marys Ranges to the north of Ranfurly have been included in this new conservation park. Its vegetation is dominated by tussock grasslands.
- **Otago Central Rail Trail**
A very popular recreational facility for walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders, which follows the route of the former Otago Central Branch railway line for 150 kilometres between Clyde and Middlemarch.

3 CONSERVATION BOARD MEETINGS

The following Board meetings were held in the period 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010:

- **Full Board Meetings**

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 3 July 2009 | Milton |
| 18 September 2009 | Cromwell |
| 13 November 2009 | St Bathans |
| 12 February 2010 | Tarras |
| 16 April 2010 | Sinclair Wetlands |
| 11 June 2010 | Dunedin |

- **Public Forums**

The Board set aside an hour for a public forum during each of the six Board meetings listed above. Up to 12 members of the public attended each of these sessions and many of them shared their comments and views on local conservation issues with the Board.

- **Field Inspections**

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 13-14 November 2009 | St Bathans, Oteake Conservation Park, Falls Dam |
| 13 February 2010 | Nine Mile Historic Reserve, Bendigo Historic Reserve |

In general, the Board continues to be very pleased with the Otago Conservancy's achievements in relation to the relevant key objectives in the Otago CMS e.g.,

- the official opening of the **Oteake Conservation Park** by the Minister of Conservation on 13 May 2010, following a number of high country tenure review outcomes and other land transactions over the past decade or so, and its popularity with visitors;
- the official opening on 9 December 2009 of impressive new visitor facilities at **Nugget Point/Tokatā** in South Otago, and the positive feedback received from visitors and locals;
- the completion of a new viewing platform and interpretation panels at the very popular **Roaring Meg** site in the Kawarau Gorge between Cromwell and Queenstown;
- numerous contributions to improved **public access in Otago**, e.g. the ever-growing track network along the Clutha River/Mata-Au and Hawea Rivers, the new Diamond Lake Loop Track near Wanaka, work towards linking the separate parts of Te Araroa in Otago, the management of the new Jacks Point Trail near Queenstown, co-operation with promoters of the Gibbston Trail near Queenstown, the new track beside Blue Lake at St Bathans, the upgrading of the tracks at Bendigo and the Bannockburn Sluicings etc;
- the ongoing maintenance and promotion of the **Otago Central Rail Trail** in co-operation with the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust, the Rail Trail Operators Group, and local communities, along with the Trail's acknowledged economic benefits to communities along its length;
- the provision of good quality information on **new areas of public conservation land** following the tenure review of pastoral leases by Land Information New Zealand under the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 (e.g. the preparation of publicity brochures and the placement of signs and interpretation panels in many parts of inland Otago);
- improvements in **signage and interpretation** at many existing areas of public conservation land (e.g. St Bathans, Nugget Point/Tokatā, Gabriels Gully);
- close co-operation with the Central Otago Ecological Trust, which culminated in the official opening of the **Mokomoko Dryland Sanctuary** (within the Aldinga Conservation Area near Alexandra) on 28 November 2009, and the re-introduction of 12 Otago skinks to that part of Central Otago;
- continuing work towards the long-term protection of **grand and Otago skinks** in their habitat near Macraes Flat;
- the formation of a working group to implement a **Jewelled Gecko/Moko-Kākāriki Management Plan – a community-based plan for Otago Peninsula**, which has been developed by the Department and the local community over the past two years, with sponsorship by Setpoint Solutions;
- the Department's contributions towards the successful return of 16 **jewelled geckos/moko kākāriki** to their home habitat on the Otago Peninsula following the apprehension of wildlife smugglers;
- the continuing successes achieved by **Operation Ark** in the Lower Dart/Caples and the Catlins, with significant benefits to mohua/yellowhead populations in areas where intensive predator control is carried out (as well as spin-off benefits to other species such as the whio/blue duck, long-tailed bat and short-tailed bat populations in the Lower Dart Valley);
- the survival of 16 **albatross/toroa chicks** at the Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve from 17 eggs that hatched;
- the successful ongoing management, in partnership with Kāi Tahu, of **buff weka** populations on Te Peka Karara (Stevensons Island), Mou Waho (Harwich Island) and Mou Tapu (Crescent Island) in Lake Wanaka; and Wāwāhi Waka (Pigeon Island) and Mātau (Pig Island) in Lake Wakatipu;

- the restoration and maintenance of historic structures, including the restoration and stabilisation work carried out on the **St Bathans Hall** and the former **Naseby Post Office**;
- effective **goat, pig, tahr, possum, rabbit and predator control** at key sites, as required by the relevant Departmental and regional control plans;
- co-operation with neighbouring landowners and occupiers to maintain the progress with **wilding conifer control** at sites throughout Otago, as well as work to control other weeds such as gorse, broom and Spanish heath;
- further **monitoring of concession activity** throughout Otago during the busy summer season, showing concessionaires that the Department is serious about concession-related compliance, as well as raising the Department's profile among visitors in general;
- the success of **community conservation events**, including two **Conservation Award evenings** during **Conservation Week, Sea Week** and several **Volunteer Projects**.

The Board has been greatly concerned for several years about frustratingly slow progress with the implementation of the **Marine Protected Areas Policy** in Otago. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (2000) goal of having 10% of the marine environment in a network of Marine Protected Areas by 2010, is reflected in the Otago CMS (1998, p. 526) priority statement: "*obtaining approval for a marine reserve in Otago, and establishing appropriate management for it*".

There are currently over 30 marine reserves in various parts of New Zealand, all preserving the protecting small parts of our spectacular marine environment - but there are still no marine reserves in Otago. The Board strongly supported two attempts to create a marine reserve at the iconic and irreplaceable Nugget Point/Tokatā (in 1992 and 2005), and was very disappointed when both failed. Otago's marine ecosystems are productive and important, and the Board wants some of them to be protected for future generations.

On 7 March 2010, the Board organized and sponsored a **Marine Protection Symposium** entitled "**Otago's Changing Seas: looking after our coastline**" at the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre. Experts from around New Zealand spoke from a variety of perspectives on the importance of conserving parts of our coastline. Around 80 people gave up much of their Sunday to learn more about marine protection and what they could do.

At an official level, the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries are jointly responsible for achieving the objectives associated with the Marine Protected Areas Policy. Unfortunately however, the 'gaps analysis' work that should have been completed in mid-2009 had apparently still not been finished as at 30 June 2010, and the Marine Protection Planning Forum for the Southern Coastal Biogeographic Region has yet to be established. The Board hopes that much more progress can be made during the year ended 30 June 2011.

b Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS

The Board has previously reached an agreement with the Southland Conservator regarding occasional Departmental reports on the implementation of those parts of the Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS which relate to areas of the Catlins Conservation Park in the Southland Conservancy. The Board appreciates the work carried out by the DOC Southland Conservancy in these areas and does not have any particular concerns.

c Draft West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS

The Board has an interest in this draft CMS document because it covers those parts of Mount Aspiring National Park which are administered by the DOC West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* Conservancy. The focus of the Board's input has been to ensure consistency between the Draft West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS and the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan.

Section 6M(1)(d)(i) Advice on Proposed Changes of Status or Classification

The Board supported the disposal or exchange of two small areas of public conservation land near Queenstown following encroachment on to the areas by adjoining landowners. There are no reasons to believe that the encroachment was intentional, and the situations were resolved to the satisfaction of all parties. Since the boundaries of public conservation land are often unfenced and unmarked (e.g. marginal strips), the owners and occupiers of neighbouring land need to be particularly careful when planning new structures or other developments near those boundaries.

Section 6M(1)(d)(ii) Advice on Conservation Matters

The Board was consulted by or gave advice to the New Zealand Conservation Authority and the Department on a number of topics, including the following:

- proposed changes to the **WARO (Wild Animal Recovery Operation) framework**;
- the presentation of annual **Coastal Otago and Inland Otago Conservation Awards** for notable conservation achievements in Otago;
- nominations for the **2010 Loder Cup Award**.

The following three triggered **Concession Applications** were supported by the Board subject to conditions which mitigated adverse effects to a satisfactory extent:

- a proposal for a **camping ground concession** in the Twelve Mile Delta Recreation Reserve;
- an application by Central South Island Helicopters Limited for **helicopter landings** in parts of Otago;
- an application by NZ Ski Limited to vary its existing **concession to take water** from Lake Alta in the Remarkables Conservation Area.

(An application by Milford Dart Limited to **construct a road through part of Mount Aspiring National Park** at the Routeburn Roadend is mentioned separately on page 12 of this report.)

Section 6M(1)(f) Liaison with Fish and Game Councils

R Allan and J Williams maintained informal liaison with Fish and Game Otago and Fish and Game Central South Island, respectively.

Section 4 Giving Effect to the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

In accordance with a previous agreement, the Board has relied on the Department to carry out Section 4 consultation in connection with the significant conservation issues raised at Board meetings. It is not aware of any substantive issues for which the Department has not already undertaken Section 4 consultation.

5 POWERS OF BOARD UNDER SECTION 6N CONSERVATION ACT 1987

Section 6N(2)(a) and 6N(3) Advocacy and Statutory Planning Processes

The Board formally advocated its views by lodging or following up on written submissions on the following documents and issues, among others:

- Preliminary proposals for the tenure review of the **Ben Lomond, Craigroy, Lauder and Temple Peak** pastoral leases;
- Proposed Plan Changes 5A-5W to the Central Otago District Plan;
- A review of the National Bovine Tuberculosis Strategy;
- A proposal for a moratorium on the commercial harvesting of longfin eels;
- The proposed lifting of speed restrictions on the Hunter River;
- The review of the 2002 Policy and Implementation Package for SILNA Forests;
- The proposed inclusion of bladder kelp in the QMS regime;
- The Draft Mount Watkin/Hikaroroa Scenic Reserve Management Plan.

Freedom camping

Problems associated with unauthorized waste disposal by tourists along the sides of roads and highways (e.g. the Haast Pass/Tioripatea Highway) have been brought to the Board's attention by members of the public for many years. The Board discussed this issue in relation to commercial tourist campervan activity at its meeting in Tarras on 12 February 2010. The resulting publicity generated a flurry of media reports and comments by members of the public throughout New Zealand, with the public discussion soon widening to include 'freedom camping' generally.

After approaching Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ) with its concerns, the Board acknowledges and appreciates that the Association has been working through the New Zealand Freedom Camping Forum to resolve the waste disposal problems mentioned above. The outcome of the most recent meeting of the Forum represents significant progress towards this end.

Project Hayes

Board members were delighted with the Environment Court's decision of 6 November 2009 which cancelled the resource consents associated with the Meridian Energy Ltd proposal for **Project Hayes** (Proposed Lammermoor Wind Farm). Prior to that date, the Board had been a party to appeals by the Maniototo Environmental Society Incorporated and Upland Landscape Protection, in order to gain legal clarification of the rules in the Central Otago District Plan which pertained to land over 900 metres. In the Board's view, areas above 900 metres in altitude (including much of the land directly affected by **Project Hayes**) were the least modified, the most valuable, and the most sensitive landscapes in the Central Otago District.

While the Board is not involved in the appeal by Meridian Energy Limited of the Environment Court's decision, it awaits the outcome with great interest.

Stocktake of Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act

The Government's discussion paper on this topic aroused considerable controversy in some regions, but public conservation land in Otago was affected very little by the paper's recommendations. The Board strongly supported the proposed retention of the whole of Mount Aspiring National Park in Schedule 4 and the addition of the Orokonui Nature Reserve near Dunedin to Schedule 4. Looking to the future, the Board advocates that no public conservation land in Otago that is currently included in Schedule 4 should be removed from it.

Sewage disposal at Moeraki

For several years, the Board has been concerned about the quality of the water which spills across the beach between the Moeraki Boulders Car Park Recreation Reserve and the Moeraki Boulders Scenic Reserve. Thousands of visitors a year, including young children, cross the overflow to see the Moeraki Boulders/Kaihinaki, unaware that the water could pose a health risk to them. Board members are pleased that the Department has placed an appropriate warning sign in the car park used by many visitors to the site.

Section 6N(2)(b) Board Committees

The following working group and committee continue to function as the need arises:

- Scientific Advisory Group

A Smith (Convenor), H Langsbury (ex officio), and the following 13 specialists:

| | |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Dr Barbara Barratt (entomologist) | Dr Carolyn Burns (limnologist) |
| Dr Alison Cree (herpetologist) | Dr Cecile de Klein (soil scientist) |
| Dr Kath Dickinson (plant ecologist) | Dr Jill Hamel (archaeologist) |
| Dr John Jillett (marine biologist) | Dr Peter Johnson (botanist) |
| Dr Brent Lovelock (tourism specialist) | Emeritus Professor Sir Alan Mark (plant ecologist) |
| Mr Brian Patrick (entomologist) | Prof Hamish Spencer (zoologist) |
| Dr Ian Turnbull (geologist) | |

The Scientific Advisory Group is a panel of advisers who can provide the Board with specialized information on topical conservation issues. The Board appreciates the willingness of these experts to provide input on topical conservation issues. Electronic communication means that actual meetings of the group are no longer necessary.

- **Planning Committee**

R Allan (Convenor), D Holdsworth, A Smith, C Tanner, J Williams, H Langsbury (ex officio)

The Planning Committee was established to study planning documents and other planning matters relating to the Board's jurisdiction and formulate detailed recommendations for ratification by the full Board. In practice, email communication has usually enabled all Board members to become involved in such matters.

6 BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Sections 30(a), 45 - 47 Review of National Park Management Plans

Following public notification of the **Draft Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan** in April 2009, 436 submissions were received. A hearing panel, comprising two Board members and, in most cases, two representatives of the Director-General of Conservation, heard over 70 submitters at hearings in Dunedin, Queenstown and Wanaka. At most hearings, other Board members and Department of Conservation staff attended as observers.

Issues raised most often by submitters included: the management of aircraft activity; how best to preserve natural values and the special remote character of the park; park zoning; the management of concessions; jet boating access; and the management of specific places, such as Bevan Col, the Olivine Wilderness Area and the Routeburn area.

The issue that generated the most discussion was the management of aircraft activity in and over the park. In general, most aircraft operators sought greater access, while many other groups and individuals wanted further controls on aircraft activity in specific places or throughout the park.

The physical nature of the western side of the park, and the visitor pressures on it and the uses of it, are different in comparison with those areas east of the Main Divide. For these western areas, the issues raised by the public related primarily to grazing, hunting access, and air access for kayakers to the upper Waiaototo River. Allowing for the continuation of the remaining grazing licences appeared to be the matter of most concern to the West Coast residents who expressed their views on the draft plan.

The Director-General of Conservation amended the draft park management plan in response to the public submissions and formally handed the amended draft plan to the Board on 12 February 2010. Subsequent discussions enabled the Board and the Director-General to reach agreement on all but one matter at the Board meeting held on 11 June 2010.

The unresolved matter relates to aerial trophy hunting (commonly referred to as 'heli-hunting') in the park. The Board is of the view that this activity is inappropriate in the park. It contributes little to animal control and may have adverse effects on existing recreational uses and the opportunities of other park users to experience natural quiet. The Board was also mindful of submissions, the majority of which supported the stance taken in the notified plan, viz. that this activity should not be permitted. Accordingly, the Board resolved to revert to the provisions of the notified plan, with a small amendment to the introductory text.

The Director-General's view is that applications for aerial trophy hunting concessions may be appropriate in some zones, having regard to the specific criteria for activities in each zone. Both the Board and the Director-General are aware that this issue is not confined to Mount Aspiring National Park, and that decisions on where, when, or whether this activity is appropriate on public conservation lands (including national parks) requires national as well as local consideration.

On 11 June 2010, the Board resolved to send the amended draft plan to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for approval with a statement on the above disagreement about aerial trophy hunting (i.e. heli-hunting), and with the other supporting documents required by the National Parks Act 1980.

The Board hopes to formally present the amended draft plan to the New Zealand Conservation Authority at the Authority's meeting in Wellington on 11 August 2010.

Section 30(b) Priorities for National Park Management Plan Implementation

The Department has implemented the following objectives and policy statements (among others) in the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan during the reporting period:

- the ongoing monitoring of Haast Tokoeka (Kiwi) chicks in the **Haast Tokoeka (Kiwi) Sanctuary** (much of which is located on the Haast Range in Mount Aspiring National Park) and the translocation of healthy chicks into the sanctuary under the Operation Nest Egg (ONE) programme (page 51, 8.7);
- continuing successful **tahr** and **goat control** operations (pages 53-55, 8.9);
- the completion of a **new track and two suspension bridges crossing the Makarora River and linking the Blue Pools and Young Tracks** (page 68, 8.18);
- the completion of the **Routeburn Nature Walk** and a **new suspension bridge across the Routeburn** near the Routeburn Roadend (page 68, 8.18);
- the completion of a **new suspension bridge across Snowy Creek** (page 68, 8.18);
- the upgrading of the **Liverpool Hut** in the West Matukituki (pages 70-72, 8.20).

Section 30(f) Advice on Interpretation of National Park Management Plan

In April 2010, the Board considered a summarized version of a concession application by **Milford Dart Limited**, to construct a short road from the Routeburn Roadend to a proposed tunnel entrance nearby. Although the current Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan states that "*there will be no increase in the extent of formed park roads within the existing park boundaries*" (page 60, 8.14), the Director-General of Conservation was of the view that the Department was still able to consider the concession application. The applicant asked for the application to be put on hold before the Board had a formal opportunity to give advice on the application.

Around the same time, the Department asked the Board for its advice on the New Zealand Transport Agency's plans for a realignment of the Haast Pass Highway and the construction of a new bridge across the Haast River at the **Gates of Haast**. The proposal involves the exchange of some existing national park land for land associated with the current alignment of the highway. The Board agreed with the Department's view that the proposed mitigation measures would ensure that the project had relatively minor effects on the conservation values in that part of the park. Accordingly, the Board recommended to the New Zealand Conservation Authority that it recommends to the Minister of Conservation, that the land exchange should take place.

7 LIAISON

Other Conservation Boards

C Morris, A Penniket and C Tanner have continued to liaise with the West Coast Tai Poutini, Southland and Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Boards, respectively. We believe that it is helpful for one or more representatives of the four southernmost conservation boards to occasionally attend meetings of the neighbouring boards, since a number of significant conservation issues are common to all four regions.

New Zealand Conservation Authority

The minutes of NZCA meetings, the NZCA annual report, and the authority chairperson's written summaries of the meetings kept the Board updated on the authority's views and actions during the reporting period.

Takata Whenua

H Langsbury, who is affiliated to Te Rūnanga Ōtākou, and J Williams, who is affiliated to Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki, were appointed on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (Section 6P(7B), Conservation Act 1987 refers). The Pou Kura Taiao, Matapura Ellison, assists the Board to liaise with all of the Kāi Tahu papatipu rūnaka in its area of jurisdiction (i.e. Ōtākou, Moeraki, Huirapa, Makaawhio, Hokonui, Awarua, Waihopai and Oraka Aparima) as required, and helps to keep the Board updated on conservation issues of interest to takata whenua.

Local Government

The Board seeks to maintain a good working relationship with the Otago Regional Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Otago District Council, Clutha District Council, Dunedin City Council, and Waitaki District Council, since all of those councils have significant responsibilities for the protection of conservation values outside public conservation lands. Some Board members have met representatives of the councils between formal Board meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Local Communities

The Board held a public forum in connection with each of its five formal Board meetings during the reporting period. The public forum in the St Bathans Hall on 13 November 2009 was attended by 12 members of the public, as a result of some local conservation issues which were of considerable public interest. The Board receives valuable community feedback on local conservation issues from those who take part in these forums. Many Board members also regularly liaise with members of the public on conservation-related issues in the course of their professional work or as a result of personal interests.

Media

Reporters representing the Otago Daily Times and/or the Southland Times attended several meetings during the year, and the Board received generally good coverage in these newspapers. The Board's discussion on the issue of 'freedom camping' at its meeting on 12 February 2010 generated widespread national and regional media coverage. While the Board did not deliberately seek the publicity it was given, the coverage acted as a useful catalyst for the expression of community concerns on the topic and it stimulated public interest in possible solutions.

Conservation and Other Interest Groups

The Board is fortunate to have members who already participate actively in organizations such as Federated Farmers, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) and others.

Community Contributions to Conservation

The Board is happy to acknowledge and recognize the impressive achievements of the many local organizations, councils, community groups and enthusiastic individuals throughout Otago who involve themselves in conservation projects.

One way in which the Board participates in the recognition of such organizations and people is by choosing the winners and runners-up for the annual **Otago Conservation Awards**. Separate awards are presented for Coastal Otago and for Inland Otago during Conservation Week every year. In 2009, the winner of the Conservation Award for Coastal Otago was Tony Malthus, with George Sutherland and Graeme Loh as the runners-up. The winners of the 2009 Conservation Award for Inland Otago were Tony Jewell and Rod Morris, and the runners-up were Neill Simpson and Roger and Wendy Browne.

8 CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

The past year has been very rewarding for the members of the Otago Conservation Board, culminating in the completion of the Board's work on the review of the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan. The additional effort required to complete this undertaking was met with commitment and enthusiasm. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Board members on their diligence throughout the long and often challenging review process. The assistance given by Otago and West Coast Conservancy staff during the review process has also been greatly appreciated.

This statutory planning process provided Board members with many opportunities to engage with community stakeholders. Pre-notification consultation with various sectors of the community worked very well as part of the review process. We have been dependent on good feedback from community and interest groups to enable a robust plan to be created - one that meets the needs of the environment, recreational users, and commercial operators in a balanced way.

The Board has continued to be involved in Resource Management Act issues that impact on the conservation values of the region, with all members contributing to the preparation or co-ordination of Board submissions at different times. The Board maintains an ongoing interest in major energy projects, specifically wind farm proposals, as well as proposed changes to district plans.

In particular, the Board will continue to advocate for protection of the iconic landscapes in Central Otago. We were very pleased to witness the recent official opening of the Oteake Conservation Park, with the recognition and protection of tussock grassland landscapes and ecosystems that this park provides. Now that the pace of pastoral lease tenure review has quickened again, the Board will keep on seeking to secure desirable recreational opportunities as part of the process that protects important intrinsic values in the Otago high country.

The Otago Conservation Board is beyond being disillusioned with progress on "Marine Protected Area Process". Earlier this year, the Board took it upon itself to host a Marine Protection Symposium in conjunction with the Otago University's Marine Studies Centre. This generated interest at a local level, and was an opportunity for the local community to gain a better understanding of the need for Marine Protected Areas. However, we seem to be no closer to seeing the Marine Protected Areas Implementation process providing any protection in Otago.

On behalf of the Board, I take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Otago Conservancy team and, specifically, the work of the Otago Conservator. The Board slotted into working with the new Conservator seamlessly and has enjoyed the development of an exceptional working relationship.

As these will be my final comments as the Board Chairperson, I wish to acknowledge the good hands that I leave the work of the Board in. I have seen many changes to the Conservancy, the Department, and statutory processes in the decade that I have been on the Board - all of which are undertaken in the best interest of delivering our living environment to future generations. In closing, I challenge the Board to maintain and enhance that which we have all come to appreciate as "the greatest living space on earth".

He manako te koura I kore ai. *Wishing for crayfish will not bring it.*



Hoani Langsbury
Chairperson

1 August 2010

