Community consultation processes for aerial 1080 applications

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ABSTRACT

Research is reported on case studies in six localities throughout New Zealand where the Department of Conservation (DOC) and communities have engaged in consultation processes on possum control and aerial spreading of 1080-poisoned baits. Information from DOC staff and community groups and individuals was obtained by interviews and focus group discussions. The report provides an overview of the consultation and information-sharing process used in each case study. Key factors discussed that can influence community consultation processes (aside from the methods and tools adopted) included: differing perceptions of what 'consultation' meant; the approach and attitude of DOC staff; risk perceptions of aerial spreading of 1080 poison; community impressions of different organisations and contractors involved; differing structures and social contexts of communities; and media involvement. The various processes and methods used by staff when undertaking community consultation and information sharing over aerial 1080 are assessed. The report also highlights key considerations for staff who are involved in community consultation processes. Consultation should be part of a wider relationship-building process with communities, but the need to clearly define what DOC is consulting on in any operation is emphasised.

Keywords: community consultation, possum control, aerial application, 1080 baits, information sharing, New Zealand.

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1. Introduction

This report examines the processes by which the Department of Conservation (DOC) engages communities in consultation and information sharing processes regarding possum control, specifically aerial spreading of 1080-poisoned baits ('aerial 1080'). The purpose of this research is to identify the various processes for, and the key features which contribute to, effective consultation and information sharing. This has been achieved by examining six case studies where communities have engaged in public consultation processes on possum control and aerial 1080.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

- Provide an overview of the operation and the consultation and information sharing process in each case study
- Evaluate the consultation and information sharing process (what worked well, what did not work well, and how it could be improved)
- Identify the key themes, issues and factors which influence the process of consultation and information sharing.
- Recommend best practice community consultation for future possum control operations.

The research was not designed to review and evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of each individual case study operation, but rather sought to gather, through the use of case study examples, an overview of the general consultation processes in use, and the diversity of areas, interest groups, and communities where aerial 1080 operations have taken place.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The Department has produced a *Consultation Policy* (DOC 2001a) and *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b). There is also useful external literature on community consultation and best practice, for example *Striking a Balance: A practice guide on consultation and communication for project advocates* (MfE 1999). This research does not attempt to develop another guide but instead builds on DOC's policy and guidelines and aims to further identify the key features which contribute to effective consultation and information sharing in the context of aerial 1080.

2. Methods

The case studies used in this research, from six different areas of New Zealand, were selected after discussions with DOC Head Office staff to identify a range of community consultation experiences.

A qualitative research approach was considered most appropriate for eliciting and interpreting information around personal experiences and perspectives on consultation processes. Qualitative research is in-depth and intensive in design, it is not concerned with attaining a representative sample of a population. Depth or quality of data is prioritised over breadth or quantity. The research does not attempt to provide a complete picture of DOC's experiences with community consultation over possum control, but rather aims to give some insight into the dynamics of a small number of case studies.

As well as DOC staff, the key geographic communities and communities of interest that have been included in this research are iwi/hapu, adjacent landowners, residents who take their water supply from the catchment, other local residents, hunters, anti-1080 action groups, local councils, and the Animal Health Board (AHB). These groups are not homogeneous, and multiple views and perspectives within each of these 'communities' can be expected. In addition, these communities are not mutually exclusive, and people may belong to more than one community.

In five of the case studies, groups and individuals were contacted by a posted letter which invited them to participate in the research through interviews (in person or over the phone) or focus groups. Only those people who returned the initial response form were asked to participate in the research. This may imply that only those who felt passionate, or had the time and energy, self- selected to be part of the research. Consequently, the research may have captured a greater proportion of the community who were unsatisfied or satisfied with the consultation process than would generally be the case. However, we ensured that participants were giving informed consent and did not feel obliged to participate.

In the sixth case study, a DOC staff member took the researchers individually to the homes of people he had consulted over the possum control operation under study. These people had not been contacted beforehand and were not given any prior warning. The researchers explained the research 'on the spot' and asked if the person would like to be interviewed. Being met at the farm gate by a DOC staff member and two researchers ensured the participation of people who otherwise may not have responded to the request for their participation in the research.

The field research was conducted by two social researchers in September and October 2002. Approximately three days were spent at each location to allow the time and flexibility needed to hold interviews and focus groups with both staff and public participants. Prior to the fieldwork, staff provided researchers with documented background information about the operation.

Two semi-structured interview schedules were developed, one for staff, the other for community members (these are included in Appendix I). In all, over the six locations, 35 staff and approximately 64 community members were interviewed, with another five returning written comment on the consultation process.

The information included in this report is based on our assessment that it provides an overview of the key issues and significant themes as identified through interviews and focus groups with participants.

3. Case studies

This section provides an overview of each case study from north to south (Fig. 1). More detail on the processes of community consultation and information sharing that occurred at each site is outlined in the discussion sections to follow. Refer to Para (2000) for an additional case study of DOC's consultation processes for aerial 1080 with tangata whenua on the East Coast.

3.1 WAIOMU/TE PURU, COROMANDEL

This case study is part of a broader plan called the Central Coromandel Forest Protection Programme (CCFPP), which encompassed three possum control operations to be undertaken over several years.

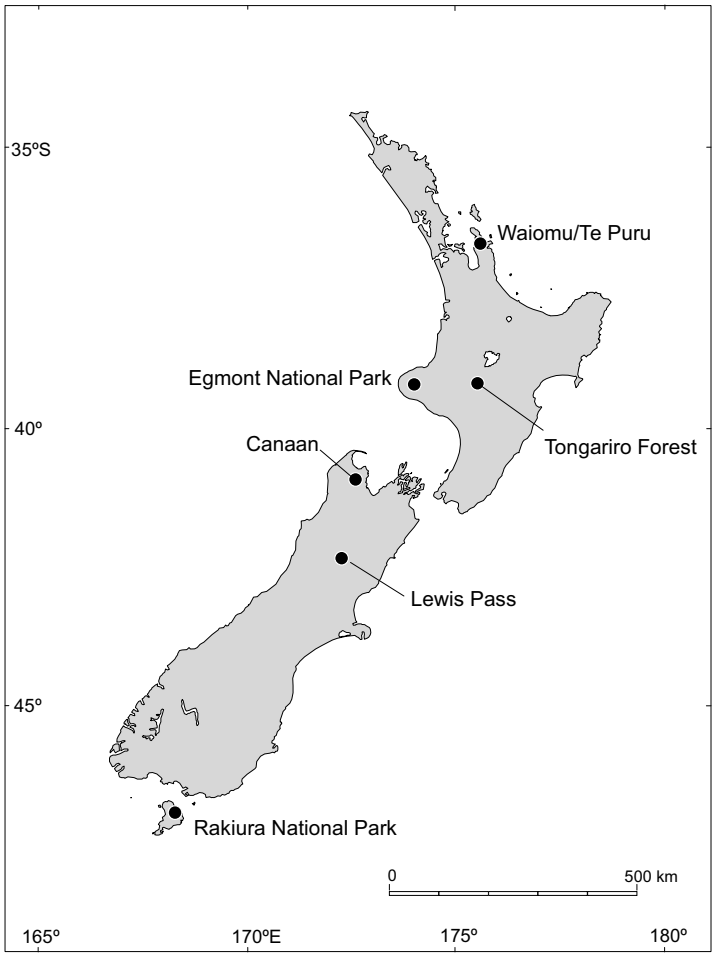


Figure 1. Location of case studies on community conultation on aerial 1080 operations.

The Waiomu/Te Puru Operation occurred in the spring of 1999. Approximately 4820 ha were treated in a combined 1080 aerial and bait station operation. The operation area was approximately 20 km north of Thames on the west coast of the Coromandel Peninsula and encompassed the Waiomu Ecological Area and the Tapu, Waiomu and Te Puru water catchments areas. This was the first possum control operation in this location.

Adjacent landowners were identified with council help and cadastral maps and each was sent a letter about the operation, the timing, and the probable methods to be used. Once tenders were accepted, a notification letter was sent confirming information about the operation, and just before the operation each landowner was visited in person.

Because water is drawn off land not always with permits, interested parties were hard to identify and staff had to walk the area to find them. On two occasions, other interested parties were sent fact sheets about the operation. Regular press releases about the operation, and to warn people about the toxin, were put out via a local radio station and newspaper.

Letters inviting comment and input about the proposed operation were sent to iwi/hapu groups. Once tenders for the operation had been accepted, the groups were written to again to notify them about the timing and methods to be used in the operation. A further letter to notify iwi/hapu was sent at the beginning of June 1999.

Staff also consulted extensively with the Thames Coast Protection Society (TCPS), a well established environmental group that had formed in opposition to mining in the Coromandel in the mid-1980s and was supportive of the operation.

The original plan for possum control in the Waiomu/Te Puru operational area was for an aerial drop with a 1-1.5 kilometre buffer zone behind private land which would be treated by ground control. However, some of the wider local community became concerned about aerial 1080 being laid over their water catchment areas when they were alerted to the proposed operations and saw the tender process advertised. They formed a group called Waiomu Water Watch (WWW).

The meeting organised by WWW was well attended. DOC staff were not present at this first meeting, although DOC had sent a letter to the meeting saying it was willing to work with a working group. The working group unfolded as a series of community meetings between the public and DOC staff over several weeks.

The outcome of this impromptu consultation process was the decision by the Area Office to do aerial application on only one portion of the proposed site and to ground-bait the rest, thus removing all water catchment areas from the aerial operation. In order to tackle a larger area with ground control the overall size of the operational area was reduced (from 6190 ha to 4820 ha). DOC was open about budgetary constraints and the need to reduce the size of the operational area if the method was changed. Some community members organised fund-raising to help minimise the reduction of the area. As a gesture of goodwill, volunteers placed and filled bait stations on private land adjacent to the DOC land to make the aerial application more effective.

3.2 TONGARIRO FOREST

The Tongariro Forest Conservation Area consists of dense forest surrounded by farms and used by the public for many recreational pursuits such as mountain biking, camping, and tramping. The area is also very popular for commercial and recreational hunting of deer and pigs.

Situated 20 km southeast of Taumarunui in the central North Island, the Tongariro Forest Conservation Area was aerially treated with 1080 in Sept 2001 as part of a joint DOC/AHB operation. Of the almost 20 000 ha of conservation estate treated, 600 ha, comprising the Owhango water supply catchment, were treated with 1080 laid by hand.

Although ground pest control had been taking place in the forest for 40 years prior to 2001, the most recent aerial 1080 operation in the area had been undertaken by the Manuwatu/Wanganui Regional Council (Horizons.mw) in 1995 and 1996 for the AHB as part of their efforts to control possums as Tb vectors in the area. For that operation the area treated was a 3–4 km wide buffer zone around farmland in the vicinity, and parts of the forest.

The 2001 operation was the first time the whole forest had been treated and the first time DOC was involved in an aerial 1080 operation in the Tongariro Forest. DOC took the opportunity to join the effort and treat a large area around a kiwi sanctuary that had recently been set up. Amongst other things, DOC's goal for the operation was to see if an aerial 1080 operation at the right time would allow a predator-reduced window of time for the kiwi chicks to mature, thus reducing chick mortality. The AHB contracted Horizons.mw to undertake their operation, and Horizons.mw undertook the application on the conservation estate also.

At the initial stages of the operation, staff prepared fact sheets, which in January 2001 were sent to iwi/hapu, all local landowners, concessionaires, and stakeholders. An initial meeting was held with a local iwi/hapu group, who expressed their dislike of the poisoning of their hunting areas.

Despite the opposition from some iwi/hapu members and the existence of the Ruapehu 1080 Action Group (RAG), little adverse response from the public was received at this time. Many other people in the region, particularly farmers, were supportive of the operation (no-one took up the offer of being visited by a DOC staff member to discuss concerns). The planning of the operation for September 2001 therefore continued, including follow-up letters and revised fact sheets being sent out in July.

Members of the local Owhango community who had not been officially informed about the operation by DOC heard about it through other community members and formed the Concerned Citizens of Owhango (CCO). This group was made up of a diverse range of the community, from schoolteachers to hunters.

In July 2001, CCO organised a public meeting, elected five representatives, and voiced their concerns to the District Council about 1080 being dropped over their water catchment area. They successfully lobbied (just prior to local body elections) for the local council to withdraw consent for the operation to be undertaken around a local water catchment area on the grounds of insufficient consultation with the community. The District Council directed DOC to negotiate an outcome with the

group before consent for the aerial operation was given, and a series of meetings and correspondence followed.

The group and DOC developed a Memorandum of Understanding that stated that no 1080 aerial control would occur in the water catchment area. A working party, made up of representatives of DOC, the local council and CCO, was organised, and it was agreed that possum control in that area would be undertaken with hand-laid baits. In September 2001, the Council gave final approval for the operation to go ahead.

3.3 EGMONT NATIONAL PARK, TARANAKI

Egmont National Park (ENP) is close to the town of New Plymouth and is surrounded by private land, some of which is bush-clad though most is in dairy farms and a growing number of lifestyle blocks.

Aerial 1080 operations began in and around Egmont National Park in 1993, with joint control efforts by the Taranaki Regional Council (TRC) and DOC. At that time there was considerable public protest in the form of marches, public meetings, and much discussion on radio-talkback. There was significant opposition from both adjacent landowners and the community at large.

The aerial 1080 operation considered here was carried out mid-2002 and was called Operation Egmont. When the operation was first planned, a working group was established to disseminate information and provide advice to DOC on community consultation and help answer questions such as who DOC should talk to and how DOC should consult. This group was made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups, including the regional council, Federated Farmers, and iwi/hapu.

Contact with local landowners began by sending out letters. All were sent a fact sheet about Operation Egmont and bush owners were also sent a survey form with return envelope to indicate consent for DOC to treat their private bush. Landowners were then visited individually by someone employed to undertake this liaison and create a database to record all the information gained from the visits. These visits were intended to address any issues, answer questions, offer information packs, and put a personal face on DOC and the possum control operation. The major concerns raised by landowners about the operation were related to the aerial dispersal method of the toxin and the consequent risks to stock and dogs.

An additional fact sheet was then produced, and this responded to recurring concerns bought up by owner/occupiers that was not covered in the material distributed in the information packs. A further information letter was sent out to all occupiers/owners updating the process and confirming the planed operation and including the new fact sheet. Two weeks prior to the estimated beginning of the operation, a public notification letter with final instructions was sent to all landowners/occupiers.

The DOC Area Manager also contacted local iwi/hapu over Operation Egmont. Four different iwi/hapu groups had representatives on the external working committee, and local iwi/hapu were sent letters, telephoned, and visited in person in order to set up meetings. Two newspaper supplements were prepared and included in the several local papers and distributed to the broader Taranaki public.

There was significantly less opposition to Operation Egmont in 2002, with many farmers previously opposed to the 1993/94 operation keen for DOC to do an aerial

1080 operation. However, several public meetings were held by the community to discuss the upcoming operation, which included two small protests in the main street of New Plymouth and on the foreshore by dog owners and other concerned citizens against 1080. For several days two members of the Taranaki Action Group (TAG) dressed as 'environmental police' blocked the road to Egmont National Park.

3.4 CANAAN, GOLDEN BAY

Situated 12 km from the township of Takaka, and on the southwest edge of Abel Tasman National Park, the area for this operation was approximately 2000 ha, including the Canaan Plateau and private land to the east of the park. The adjacent Canaan Road is also home to many people living in house trucks. In addition, pig and goat hunting occurs in the Takaka Valley boundary of the operation area.

The Canaan Area aerial possum control operation took place in August 2001. The primary intended conservation outcomes for the area were to increase the population of native snails, especially the giant land snail *Powelliphanta hochstetterii hochstetterii*, by reducing possum numbers. The operation consisted of applying 1080 baits aerially to approximately 1700 ha and using ground-based leg-hold traps and feratox baits on 300 ha.

The August 2001 operation was the first pest control operation in this particular location, although many other aerial pest control operations had been conducted in nearby areas prior to it. Planning for the operation began with affected parties being sought for consent purpose approximately six months before the proposed aerial appplication dates. Staff compiled a list of people who were adjacent landowners and/or who derived water from the area. Key people were rung or visited first, and then staff sent out letters informing others about the intended operation along with a consent form for affected parties to sign. All the people who did not return the form were telephoned or visited. Part of the operational site was private land and the landowner was opposed to the use of 1080 but after consultation approved control using cyanide and traps.

The Golden Bay 1080 Action Group was formed at this time to fight the aerial 1080 operations of both DOC and the AHB. The Action Group called a public meeting and invited DOC representatives to attend. Staff then decided to be part of a round table meeting with interested groups and subsequently to be more proactive, joining the AHB road show which organised speakers to come and speak individually with community groups, including the 1080 Action Group, farmers and the general public. DOC staff members and the Action Group had several more meetings. A 1080 debate was also organised one evening in a local café. On account of the concern from the community, the DOC Rural Advocate then spent some time visiting all the affected parties. Meetings were also held with local iwi/hapu.

Apart from a general opposition to the use of toxins, another concern for some community members was that their water supply was within the operation area. To ameliorate this, DOC created an exclusion zone around the Ironstone Creek catchment area, and in other areas a consent agreement was signed by DOC to supply alternative water to residents for six weeks following the operation. Unfortunately there were some supply difficulties at this time, with DOC relying on a water system which had not been tested. While being a drain on Area Office resources, staff

considered this was one way to mitigate some landowners' concerns about the safety of their drinking water and get some consent to the operation.

3.5 LEWIS PASS, WEST COAST

The Lewis Pass possum control operation was undertaken in July/August 2002. The operation covered 10 448 ha in the Lewis Pass National Reserve east of Springs Junction in the Upper Maruia valley. The area is predominately beech forest and subalpine scrub and tussock, with the main species intended to benefit from the possum control operation being three native mistletoes. The location of the operation is traversed by State Highways 65 and 7 linking Nelson to Christchurch, and the area is used by trampers, hunters, walkers, quad and mountain bikers, and people camping, picnicking, and fishing.

This was the first aerial 1080 operation in the area by DOC, although small localised possum control operations had been undertaken and the area had been commercially trapped. Many of the landowners have trappers who come onto their land and trap or poison and sell the skins.

Consultation and notification for the operation began in May 2001 with letters, fact sheets, and maps sent out to neighbouring landowners, concessionaires, and other key groups, outlining the proposed operation and inviting people to raise any operational issues. A further mail-out followed by personal visits to landowners was undertaken in August 2001. If neighbours identified areas within the operation zone where they drew water and requested they not be treated, boundaries were redrawn and these areas were excluded from the operation. Iwi/hapu had been consulted earlier as part of the business planning process.

People in the local community who were not neighbouring landowners heard about the proposed operation and called a meeting in the local hall to discuss it. Many felt there had not been adequate consultation with the wider public or community, and there was some feeling that if you did not draw water from the area you were not consulted at all. Some resolved to object and it was discussed whether a committee should be set up, but because of time constraints it was decided to pursue individual submissions. Under the West Coast Regional Council, aerial discharge of 1080 is a permitted activity but requires notified resource consent. A hearing was held in December 2001 and resource consent was given as the Commissioner could see no reason for the operation not to go ahead.

3.6 RAKIURA NATIONAL PARK, STEWART ISLAND

Animal pest control on Stewart I. has previously been limited. DOC has undertaken some control with ground-based 1080 cat baits in specific areas, and in the 1970s the Forest Service did two 1080 carrot bait drops along the coast. The small offshore Ulva Island has also been cleared of pests.

In 2001 a draft pest management plan for Stewart I. was prepared and the Southern Islands Area Office initiated a series of public meetings, both on Stewart I. and in Invercargill. On Stewart I., members of the public were invited to an initial general

meeting to discuss the plan and how they could be involved in its development. It was envisaged that at this first public meeting the community would be introduced to the draft plan and a liaison group would be created to work through the plan and provide recommendations.

However, at this initial meeting, most of the approximately 180 people attending wanted to talk about 1080. The main issue of public concern was the effect of aerially applied 1080 on the whitetail deer population and therefore recreational hunting. Graffiti such as 'Stewart Island Poison Free? – 1080?' had started to appear. Because of previous 1080 operations in Southland, the level of emotion in the community over possum control was very high. It was clear to staff that the public were too incensed to work through the plan without first discussing 1080 and it was agreed that at the following meeting 1080 would be discussed.

The press were at the following meeting, as everyone was expecting a heated debate. It was expected that DOC would announce their intention to use aerial 1080, but it was announced that DOC would not use 1080 for a year or until consultation with the community over the pest management plan had been completed. A community liaison group was then initiated to provide feedback on the draft pest management plan. The key groups represented included Forest and Bird, iwi/hapu, Game and Forest, and the Deer Stalkers Association, and there were various interested community members. The meetings took place once a month for about six months and were chaired by a DOC staff member. It took several meetings for participants to believe that aerial 1080 use was not a fait accompli on the Island and before the group actually started working through the plan issue by issue.

Staff made it clear that DOC would make the final decision about what methods of pest control to use, but would put off using aerial 1080 to allow the consultation process to work. At the time of this research the liaison group was still working through the pest management plan and there was no intention to introduce the possibility of using aerial 1080.

4. Key factors influencing community consultation processes

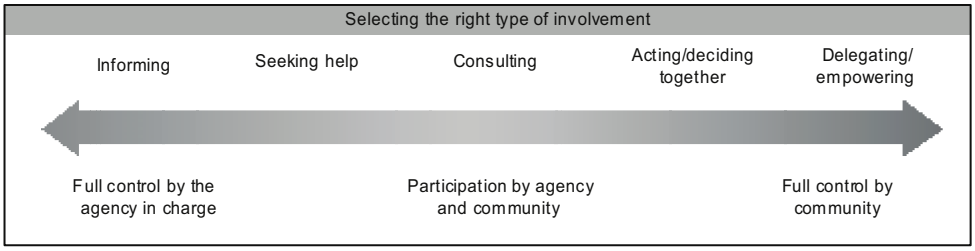
Although the focus of this research was on reviewing the tools and methods for effective community consultation in relation to aerial 1080, it was evident that before these tools could be considered there were a number of overriding factors that influenced the effectiveness of any consultation process independent of the tools and methods that were employed.

4.1 PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

Across the case studies there were often clear differences between community participants and DOC staff as to the purpose and expected outcomes of the consultation or information-sharing processes. The term 'consultation' is frequently used when referring to discussions and contact between DOC and communities as part of a decision-making process. According to DOC's *Consultation Policy* (DOC 2001, 5):

> *Consultation is a stage in the decision-making process where DOC seeks community and tangata whenua views on issues and proposals. The Department of Conservation keeps an open mind about the final decision it might make, and makes its final decision after consultation has been completed.*

The term 'consultation' has, however, been used more generally to refer to a wide range of activities along the participation spectrum, including 'informing' and 'acting/deciding together'. As illustrated in Fig. 2, in each of these activities the community has a different level of control and input into the decision making.



(Adapted from Arnstein, 1969)

Figure 2. The spectrum of community participation (Adapted from DOC 2003).

In relation to aerial 1080, there may not always be a requirement for DOC to undertake a process of wide community consultation on a proposed operation.* The planned focus of DOC's interactions with the community may instead simply be on seeking agreement on boundaries and buffer zones, and getting written approval from neighbouring landowners or informing people of a planned operation. The Department may therefore go to their community expecting to undertake a process focused on informing the neighbouring community and mitigating any effects on a decision to already use aerial 1080 (as aerial 1080 is already a permitted activity in that area). However, it is evident that there are often clear expectations from members of the community that DOC will consult on the actual use of aerial 1080. Issues arise when the community and DOC have different expectations over what will be discussed and achieved through a consultation or information-sharing process.

The following quotes from DOC staff and community members illustrate the differences in expectations that can arise in relation to the consultation or information-sharing process.

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* If, for example, 1080 is a permitted pesticide under a regional plan, public notification may be mandatory under the Pesticides (Vertebrate) Control Regulations 1983 but consultation will not be required. District councils may also not require any additional community consultation other than to fulfil requirements of an Assessment of Environmental Effects, the Medical Officer of Health, and DOC's own Quality Control Manual.

Some DOC staff members commented:

> *[Aerial 1080] is approved here, and it's on our own land. It's not consultation, its liaison and information sharing.*
>
> *There's been ten years of developing the Conservation Management Strategy—there's already been a lot of consultation about that, but people do not want to be involved early on—people come in at the eleventh hour.*
>
> *We should stop calling it consultation, it's liaison. We should harden up—we do not need to do consultation—it's an approved activity and on our land. It's liaison and information sharing.*
>
> *We were liaising or consulting with landowners about what their concerns were, and then we were addressing their concerns. We were not consulting over whether we would use 1080 or not.*
>
> *If you've got a valid reason why our method is so unacceptable, state the reasons and the sites. But not a general 'no' [to 1080] … I disagree with the Airport case decision—our approach is—we go in with an open mind—this is what we're going to do—you tell us why we need to change it at specific sites … It's not about whether we're going to use 1080, [it's about] why we shouldn't use it in a particular spot in your area.*

According to community participants:

> *The overall feeling was we were being advised rather than consulted. It was pre-advice rather than pre-decision—consultation should occur in advance of consent.*
>
> *There was no consultation—we were told it was happening.*
>
> *The decision [to use aerial 1080] was made well in advance. The 1080 was purchased, the operation had been budgeted, then they involved the community … but the decision was already made.*
>
> *Asking us to sign bits of paper, that's not consultation.*

It is clear that despite the legal arguments which exist around this issue with regards to whether DOC has to consult, community participants in this research usually expected that if a 1080 operation was being planned, the proposed method would be part of that consultation and that consultation would occur with a wider group of people than just neighbouring landowners.

Community participants interviewed for this research often referred to the *Wellington International Airport Ltd v. Air NZ* [1991] decision as a reference point for defining consultation in relation to resource management. In this decision, the Court of Appeal indicated that consultation includes:

> *... a statement of a proposal not yet finally decided upon; listening to what others have to say and considering responses; sufficient time and genuine effort; enough information to make useful and intelligent responses; an open mind and readiness to change or start afresh (though it is entitled to have a working plan); and intermediate situation involving meaningful discussion.* (Fraser 1996: 8)

For a consultation process to work, there needs to be a shared understanding as to its purpose and the role of the community in the decision-making process in relation to the spectrum in Fig. 2. For example, is the purpose to discuss the method of possum control, is it to discuss the boundaries and buffer zones of a planned aerial 1080

operation, or is it just to inform people of a planned operation? Did the regional council do the 'consulting' over the pest control method when the regional plan was produced and 1080 use was made a permitted activity? Does this mean that the community has missed out on a chance to comment on pest control method if they did not participate in the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) or regional plan process?

These findings are similar to those outlined in a report by Warren (unpubl. 2003: 5) which identified:

> *... the need for DOC to be clear about the purposes of processes described as consultation but which are in fact more akin to information dissemination. The key to consultation is the expectation by associates, communities and other stakeholders that their input is sought in relation to a decision not yet made.*

Warren's (unpubl. 2003: 5) report also concludes that:

> *Participants are increasingly sophisticated in their knowledge about, and expectations of, consultation processes. This often includes an understanding of statutory requirements to consult and case law around consultation. When they are invited to engage in a process described as consultation, they expect to potentially influence a decision. They expect decision-makers to use consultation, along with other information collection methods, as a basis for making more informed decisions. Information dissemination is a legitimate part of DOC's activities but describing it as consultation potentially devalues real consultation processes.*

Evidently in some cases DOC has used the term 'consultation' to describe 'informing' processes. However, in any operation, consultation needs to be clearly distinguished from activities such as information dissemination, information gathering, and relationship building. At the other end of the spectrum, communities may sometimes have an expectation that consultation means 'deciding together' and not simply one part of the decision-making process. For example, in the Stewart I. case study, staff made it clear that DOC would make the final decision about what methods of pest control to use. It is therefore important that the use of the term 'consultation' is defined from the outset in any decision-making process.

4.2 STAFF STYLE AND APPROACH

The success or effectiveness of consultation was often put down to the approach and attitude of the DOC staff members involved. Members of the community will often relate to DOC staff members personally (positively or negatively) and thus the personality or approach of a particular staff member can have a large impact on how the consultation may proceed. According to one staff member:

> *As things go down the track, personalities come to the fore.*

There was a wide range of comments from community participants on the impact of individual staff on the consultation process:

> *If -- [DOC staff member] was not as approachable ... the meetings would not have been effective.*

-- [DOC staff member] was available and fearless, and people knew his face. He was dedicated and committed. He said, 'this is our best tool – if you've got a better one, bring it on'.

A recurrent theme from many community members who have been involved in some way with a DOC aerial 1080 operation is that at times some staff, and DOC generally, can come across as patronising or arrogant.

It's all about the way you say it. -- [DOC staff member] had to be bigger than God.

-- [DOC staff member] was extremely rude to us—we were stating our concerns that were well researched and he was totally putting us down.

The community was talked down to. There was an awful attitude to the public, staff were patronising.

I felt put down by staff, like the questions I was asking were stupid.

One DOC staff member also commented on this:

DOC has this attitude of 'we know best'. Once upon a time people trusted the government, but not any more—people question authority and that's a good thing.

The high levels of conflict associated with some previous 1080 operations and, in many cases, the determination of DOC staff to use aerial 1080, are apparent in the comments from one DOC staff member:

At the time we couldn't see any other option, we were too full of environmental passion and conservation zeal. We were in 'battle mode'. We were going to drop 1080 come hell or high-water.

A related issue which arose in the research was the issue of responding to public concerns through mitigating activities. Some staff feel that compromising over issues of perception (such as doing ground control around water catchments when the scientific evidence suggests there is no actual risk) will only exacerbate these concerns and reinforce the perception that the risk is real. One DOC staff member said:

My fear is if we pander to people's fears it will become harder and harder [to use 1080].

However, according to Horn & Kilvington (2003: 10):

People who work constructively with communities show acceptance of different points of view, no matter how 'irrational' they might seem, and are prepared to change the process by which they plan to achieve the outcomes they desire.

In some case studies, there was a general theme of resignation that DOC would do what it wanted despite community feeling, the community was being advised rather than consulted, and that the aerial operation was a fait accompli so there was not much point wasting time and energy opposing it. A number of participants had been involved in previous consultation experiences with government departments, including DOC, and were generally sceptical of the value of getting involved in any consultation process.

According to one participant:

DOC said 'We'll do what we bloody well want'—locals know that is true. We've been through two other consultations, didn't make any difference …

[DOC] do what they think is best, so then this one came along—people did go along because they wanted to know what DOC was doing.

According to others:

People opposed it in South Westland and it still went ahead. The feeling was that it was a foregone conclusion and they were just going through the motions to get resource consent.

With some things DOC can be a bit arrogant, but to be fair they did ask where we wanted excluded. The feeling in the valley was, it didn't matter what they did, DOC were going to do it anyway.

A key factor that often seemed to determine if consultation was perceived as genuine by community respondents was whether DOC staff were open to change through consultation or were instead focused on trying to 'convince people they were right'. One landowner spoken to in the course of this research said he was approached by DOC in a letter and then in person about wanting to use aerial 1080 on DOC land adjacent to his land and to incorporate some of his land in the operation.

The attitude was 'we're going to do this—sign here'. I'd prefer they'd come and said 'we've got a need to do possum control in the area, what are your thoughts?' It's how you're approached. How they approached me immediately got my back up. If they'd approached me properly I might have contributed some money to get the job done, because at the end of the day we all have the same goal.

Another key factor which influences whether consultation is deemed to be genuine is whether community members feel that they have any control over the proceedings. According to Horn & Kilvington (2003: 5):

Providing a community with little or no choice diminishes their perceived control, while providing strategies that offer more choices increases their perceived control. Providing such choices also helps build trust between the agency and the groups involved in the consultation process.

In some cases, an open approach was adopted and communities were able to make changes as part of the consultation process. In the Lewis Pass, staff made some boundary adjustments and excluded certain areas such as water catchment locations from the operation to alleviate public concerns about the aerial use of 1080. Similarly Stewart I. staff recommend keeping an open mind about possum control methods:

Large areas can be broken down into smaller ones and these can be done with ground control—its all mindset.

Being flexible with options for such things as boundaries and methods can help overcome public concern or opposition and can enhance public support for conservation outcomes. As a Tongariro staff member commented:

We really need to listen and compromise so we don't close the door on other operations or issues.

As another DOC employee commented:

If you are simply paying lip-service to consultation the community will know it. Just like they can read patronising body language which says, 'I know best'.

In the Waiomu/Te Puru case study a consultation process was initiated after members of the community called a meeting to voice their concerns. On account of this impromptu consultation, staff commented that they had to take a step back:

> *The first meeting we backed right off the throttle … Our perspective was that if there was no operation that would be a major step back…we wanted an operation, to use 1080 would be a bonus, to do some aerially … would be excellent.*

Members of the group describe the consultation process which unfolded during the meetings:

> *At first, we found DOC to be intractable, they went to some lengths to convince us there was no danger to our water or to us. The final decision came as a welcome surprise and went a long way to regain the goodwill of the public.*
>
> *When the Area Manager got up with an alternative plan, everyone said, 'Oh, that seems a lot better'. I had not believed consultation was really going on until then, I thought it was just a PR exercise. It showed he'd really listened.*

Some members of the group commented that the negotiations left everyone feeling good and 'warm and fuzzy' and people were left wanting to contribute. In response to public opposition, staff in the Waiomu/Te Puru operation agreed to treat with ground control one area designated for aerial treatment, with a local environmental group paying the extra money the ground control cost. One DOC staff member suggests:

> *We can't always have everything we want. We have to be willing to give a bit.*

4.3 PERCEPTIONS OF 1080 AND SCIENCE

A key factor arising from the research was the polarised positions that existed with regard to perceptions of aerial 1080, with each community having its own distinct mix of positive and negative attitudes towards its use. Many community members have a high level of apprehension and concern about 1080 based on anecdote, the media, science, or emotion. A number of community participants made reference to previous experiences they had had with aerial 1080 operations. They recalled not being able to hunt, animals experiencing traumatic deaths, and previous protests and confrontations with DOC staff over aerial 1080.

While there is a high level of trust in DOC and science from some people in the community, particularly people who have pre-existing positive relationships with DOC, amongst many research participants there was also a clear lack of trust of science and DOC's research and evidence.

> *All we know is 1080 was designed to kill things—and they wanted to put it in our water supply! They say it's so diluted it can't be detected in the water—but what is the quality of the monitoring? There hasn't been enough research on the long-term effects.*

On the other hand, a number of DOC staff used the following argument to support the case for 1080:

> *It's safe—there's more of it in a cup of tea than you'd ever get drinking it from the water supply. It's the best tool we have.*

According to one staff member:

> *There is mistrust of science—emotive stories based on ignorance of 1080. You can't tell people … Stories based on out of touch, ill-informed emotion…Tell them the facts but people say bullshit, they believe emotive stories.*

Many DOC staff have a high level of trust in the science of 1080 and appeared frustrated by their communities' lack of trust or willingness to listen. There is a clear distinction between science and emotion in much of the discourse, including the material in the media. Headlines such as 'Purely emotive stance on 1080 slammed' 'Get the real facts on 1080' 'Opponent needs to check facts, says DOC', '1080—the facts and the fable' and 'Myths surround use of 1080' also help to reinforce the narrative that the debate is between science and emotion. Common phrases used on both sides are that the other's arguments are 'urban myths', 'misinformation', 'anecdote', 'speculation', and 'hearsay masquerading as fact'.

While DOC staff may dismiss many community arguments as emotive and continue to try and convince people with scientific facts, it was apparent that many participants distrusted New Zealand science and scientists. A number of 1080 opponents commented that they look outside of New Zealand for information on 1080:

> *It's scary stuff. I've spent a lot of time on the web, mainly universities in the United States. It's like DDT … I don't trust the NZ research because they would have you believe it's perfectly safe—but its not. Need to look at the research that has been done in universities in America.*

There is also a high level of trust for what neighbours and other community members have to say, particularly when that person has some perceived expertise:

> *My friend has got a Masters degree in science and she will tell you, she knows about these things. She has got a Masters in Chemistry. This guy [regional council representative] doesn't know, but she's got a Masters in Chemistry. She told me to ask him what degree he's got.*

Some community participants also made reference to what they read in the media as a source of truthful information. Letters to the editor provide an opportunity for people to hear the voices of others in their community. In the course of this research, people in the community often referred to letters they had read to which they attributed a high level of 'trust'. These were letters from local 'experts' (as opposed to scientific 'experts'). These local experts include the veterinarian writing about alternative methods, the former forest service worker with first-hand experience of aerial 1080 applications who now has doubts about its safety, and the deer hunter who is now pro-1080.

It appears that even where DOC can present local evidence that a 1080 application has not killed the birds, some community members will still be suspicious of the evidence. In one case study, where evidence was presented that the birds had returned to an area following a 1080 drop, one community member commented:

> *I heard that the birds have come back to the area. But I also heard that DOC actually brought [the birds] back and released them.*

In this same case study, two neighbours were interviewed separately (one anti- and one pro-1080). One neighbour commented that there had been no birds around their area following the 1080 operation, while the other did not think that 1080 had affected the bird population at all.

According to one staff member:

> *Some people will remain opposed to 1080 no matter what evidence is supplied. 1080 use may infringe on their belief systems.*

Part of this discussion relates to the wider issue of many people being wary about trusting 'scientific evidence' and knowing (through many recent historical examples) science is sometimes fallible. According to Hipkins et al. (2002):

> *most New Zealanders hold strongly realist views of science. A significant proportion of the population … are not inclined to take scientific claims on trust.*

Williams (1994: 22) notes that in the last four or five decades public trust in science has declined. He suggests that highly publicised medical misadventures, chemical critiques, and even science fiction films have 'added fuel to public concerns about how far science is playing God or tinkering with nature'. Willams (1994) suggests that:

> *I t will do little good to continue to explain the humane physiology of, and safe ecological record of, 1080 in the future: where there is no public sympathy with theses views, they can make relatively little difference to the declining acceptibility of 1080 in society.*

According to Gough (1991 cited in Livingston 1994: 6):

> *stakeholders who feel left out of the decision-making process on an event which they feel imposes risks to them or their families are not convinced by scientific research.*

This point is particularly important, as many people talked to during this research who were concerned about 1080 in their water supply were not satisfied with the sophistication of current water monitoring methods to detect levels of 1080 that might still be harmful, or doubted that 1080 once broken down into flouride was then somehow less dangerous, or considered any level of toxin in their water supply (harmful or not) was simply unacceptable to them.

It is clear that many people who get involved in the 1080 debate (both DOC staff and community members) hold strong positive or negative positions on the issue of 1080. With some people in the community strongly opposed to and suspicious of 1080, and many DOC staff convinced that it is the best tool and a safe option, it was difficult for many people to step back and engage in an open consultation process when it appeared that the lines had already been drawn.

According to Horn & Kilvington (2003: 15):

> *It is unproductive to try and convince people that 1080 is good, harmless or effective. In fact, it appears that arguing about the safety of 1080 or downplaying its problems, tends to make people feel their views are being dismissed. In this situation, a normal reaction is for people to defend their position. Setting out to persuade or convince, therefore, can be counterproductive. Instead, agencies could more constructively use their time to work with communities to find ways to address their concerns.*

Similarly, Rohrmann (2002 in Horn & Kilvington 2003: 10) notes:

> *Informing and communicating about risks is more likely to succeed when treated as a two-way process, when participants are seen as legitimate partners, and when people's attitudes and 'worldviews' regarding environment and technology are respected.*

4.4 PERCEPTIONS OF KEY ORGANISATIONS

DOC's relationship with the community over 1080 use is complicated by the AHB (working through regional councils) also being involved in 1080 use for possum control. The way in which any AHB operation is carried out in a community had an impact on perception of DOC and 1080 operations, as many people do not distinguish between the AHB operations and DOC operations.

> *A lot of people see AHB operations as DOC. There's a lot of confusion of what is DOC and what is AHB*. (DOC staff member)

AHB operations are frequently undertaken by subcontractors and, in many of the case study areas where AHB possum control had also occurred, this had meant that less community consultation was undertaken. According to one DOC staff member:

> *I'm not entirely comfortable being seen with the AHB, I think it's a handicap for DOC. At the end of the day, contractors for the AHB stuff up and we take the rap.*

Also, as the quote above suggests, because the AHB have a significantly lower public profile than DOC, when a mistake happens or an operation becomes controversial DOC may receive a lot of the bad feeling from the public over it. According to another DOC staff member:

> *It's frustrating when it's seen as DOC doing it all when it's AHB. Farmers come into this office and complain about AHB operations.*

Similarly, the actions of regional councils can influence perceptions of DOC. Many landowners do not distinguish between the regional council and DOC and the (positive or negative) actions of one will reflect on the other. In the Operation Egmont case study, one action that may have influenced community reaction in the years between the operations may be linked to Taranaki Regional Council's Self-help Possum Control Programme on the Taranaki ring plain or buffer zone around the Park. The programme involves the Regional Council initially treating properties (with ground control) and then ensuring land occupiers maintain the reduced possum numbers. Although distinct from DOC's aerial possum control operation in the Park, the Regional Council's adjacent operation was considered by many landowners interviewed for this research to have significantly influenced community perceptions of, and response to, DOC's operation, with many landowners keen for the operation to go ahead.

4.5 UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES

In a number of areas, problems arose when key groups and individuals in the community had not been informed about the proposed operation or involved in the consultation process at an early stage.

In one case, some participants commented that it had appeared to them that DOC had deliberately kept quiet about the proposed operation and this caused resentment and suspicion. However, DOC had been consulting one community group in the area and had assumed they represented all interested people there. This assumption proved to be incorrect.

In another case, staff were taken by surprise at the reaction to the proposed operation because they had been undertaking operations in the area for the previous seven years without a murmur of opposition. They therefore had not initiated a process of consultation with these groups in the community as they had not expected any opposition. According to one staff member:

> *The Operation caught us totally on the back foot—no one had cared [how we did possum control] before then. Our opposition were the people who formerly helped us save whales.*

Staff suggested that the fact that the previous operations were in the 'back country' (where there were very few affected/interested parties) and this operation was in 'front country' or on people's backdoor step, combined with the concurrent AHB operations in the same region, meant the profile of 1080 in the community was swiftly raised ten-fold.

In another case study, staff expected deer hunters to be their major opponent, and local residents who were not adjacent landowners were overlooked as significant stakeholders. When local residents found out about the proposed operation, DOC then had to initiate a consultation process at the eleventh hour with local residents who were angry and suspicious of the fact that DOC had not attempted to consult them in the first place.

It is clear that having an understanding of the key groups and players in a community, knowing who to contact, and contacting these people at the earliest possible time is vital in order to avoid any suspicion that DOC is trying to hide the proposed operation from the community.

We found that a key factor in any consultation process is the question of knowing where to draw the line about who needs to be consulted and who simply needs to be informed. Following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and consent guidelines usually helps. In the SOPs there is often a focus on consulting affected parties, particularly landowners and tangata whenua, as part of the consent and Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) process. However, the level and nature of general consultation with other groups is left to the discretion of each operation. In one case study, staff commented that they found some confusion over how a local council defined 'affected parties' versus 'interested parties', as the definition was blurred.

In order to understand communities and know the key people in communities, putting resources and time into building and maintaining ongoing relationships with groups before consultation occurs is important. In the Canaan case study, for example, there was a close relationship between DOC and iwi/hapu interviewed for this research and this helped when consultation over the 1080 operation arose. Because of this strong ongoing and personal relationship, iwi/hapu interviewed said that when they came to deal with difficult issues like aerial 1080 the consultation flowed naturally from the relationship and they have been engaged in consultation with DOC every step of the way. A key factor in this success was that good relationships had been established over other conservation initiatives or issues prior to the possum control operation. This is reinforced in DOC's *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b: 19):

> *An ongoing working relationship developed between DOC and iwi/hapu/whanau is a key factor in assisting the consultation process. It allows for the trust and respect that has been developed in projects and field operations to continue within the consultation forum.*

In another case study it was suggested by iwi/hapu interviewed that the relationships between them and DOC generally needed to be stronger and should be set up well before a possum control operation arises. Respondents suggested that this would ensure that DOC would then know exactly who to talk to when an issue arose and when meetings were being held by iwi/hapu.

It is not possible to separate community consultation from wider processes of relationship building. Like the role of the Kaupapa Atawhai Manager in relation to iwi/hapu, a number of case studies used rural advocates or liaison officers in their consultation processes to help develop relationships. In Operation Egmont, a rural advocate visited the affected parties in person, and DOC staff have noted many benefits of this for community relations in general. Relationships have been established which staff in this area intend to maintain to ensure they do not need to 'start from scratch' for any future pest control initiatives.

> *We've got to build up trust and relationships, and that takes time, especially with the history of bad consultation here.*

The response to the recent Operation Egmont operation was quite different from that received seven years previously. With ongoing relationship building with their community, staff expect to have less relationship work to do for the next operation.

According to one community member interviewed:

> *Society changes—people don't do to the environment what they did ten years ago. DOC need to keep their ear to the ground to know if what they are doing is acceptable. They need to be changing and flexible because things don't stay fashionable or socially acceptable.*

DOC staff members also made similar comments:

> *Don't assume you know what people are thinking. Never assume how anyone might feel about 1080. Go out and actually listen and find out what people are thinking and feeling.*
>
> *Last time in 1995 we had a public day in Ohwango Hall—hardly anyone turned up so we assumed it wouldn't be an issue [this time]. But the organic industry has grown since last time. Increased people are living in rural/lifestyle blocks and it will continue to grow.*
>
> *People have to know you, they don't necessarily have to like you or agree with you, but they have to know who you are.*
>
> *Communities change—don't assume what you did six years ago is OK again now.*
>
> *Some people will always see you as a bastard from the government, but if you go out and face people and listen, at worst you'll learn what you expected, at best you'll learn what people's concerns are.*
>
> *It's no good staying remote and standing back, you have to be involved and in person, after all, we are all part of the same community, and we have even made great friends with some of the people from groups we've worked with.*

The following quote from Warren (unpubl. 2003: 8) reinforces the need to focus on building relationships:

> *Consultation planning needs to reflect the link between specific consultation processes and more broad and ongoing community relationship building.*

4.6 ROLE OF CONTRACTORS

Another significant issue was the use of contractors for possum control operations. While in most areas DOC employed contractors for essential skilled roles such as helicopter pilots and trappers, the question of how much of an operation should be contracted out came to the fore on account of the implications this can have for DOC's community consultation and broader public relations.

In order to gain a contract with DOC or a regional council through a tender process, contractors will often submit a bid that does not factor in the costs of extensive consultation. Respondents to this research cited examples of where contractors had 'let the side down' with consultation, particularly with iwi/hapu, and also of AHB operations where DOC had undertaken the consultation for them.

The contractor will often base their quote on getting the possum control done as quickly and efficiently as possible. When DOC uses contractors to undertake all of the operation there can therefore be a tension between expecting contractors to be cost effective and meeting expectations in relation to community consultation. Contractors are focused on the short-term goals of the operation whereas DOC's focus is also on the long-term goals of building and sustaining community support. The risk in contracting out whole operations is that the responsibility for consultation and ongoing relationship building can be overlooked.

In addition, in many cases the tender process itself guarantees that the contractor will have decided on a method before any consultation begins. This means that any consultation undertaken after the contract has been let runs the risk of looking inauthentic to the community, as the decision on method of pest control has already been made.

A number of staff participants who had been through aerial pest control operations and realise what is at stake were very wary of using contractors for the whole operation and instead employed them for specific tasks with DOC staff taking overall responsibility for the operation and the community consultation.

> *If we use contractors we issue all the gear and maintain all that. We keep a tight eye on them—keep them under control.*

Staff involved in the Lewis Pass operation used contractors only as ground staff on the day of the drop, with all other processes, including consultation, undertaken by DOC staff. As they say:

> *The buck will always came back to rest with DOC if contractors make mistakes so it's important we make sure they don't.*

Warren (unpubl. 2003) also discussed the use of independent consultants. Although consultants can bring specialised skills and experience, DOC staff have ongoing relationships with the community, and therefore are likely to be more familiar with local issues, and the consultation can become an important public-relations building exercise as well.

4.7 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Other demands and priorities on communities and individuals at the time will influence the level of interest and opposition in a planned operation. In some of the case studies, the proposed operation took place just before a national election which dominated the local media and thought.

In the Tongariro Forest operation, the protest occurred at the same time as the local body elections, and it has been suggested that some councillors may have been particularly sensitive to community concerns and therefore willing to intervene to delay the operation until after consultation had occurred.

Some people who were emphatically opposed to 1080 said they had decided at that time to put their energy into other concerns, such as the Royal Commission on Genetic Engineering. There was also speculation that some people have chosen to put their effort into the upcoming national review of 1080 by the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) as opposed to protesting specific local operations.

4.8 ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The news media play a vital role in the aerial 1080 debate at both national and local levels and can help to set the agenda by 'telling people what to think about' and by 'emphasising what is important' (McGregor et al. 2002: 100).

Most people rely on the media for information about local and national issues, and there can be a common assumption that media processes will be ethical, will display 'editorial independence', and promote the 'public good' and 'democracy'. For the public, the worldview constructed by the media is often used as 'an acceptable substitution for first-hand knowledge' (McGregor et al. 2002: 98).

In the case studies, the media had covered the operations to varying levels. Although there were differences between areas, this section provides a broad overview of media themes and practices. The focus of this analysis is on newspaper representation, a form of media most likely to be focused on the issues in the immediate geographical community.

Letters to the editor in the local papers have provided a general forum for discussion and debate on the issue of aerial 1080. These can provide a space for the voices of those members of the community who might not be represented in other forms of media. Although not everyone in a community who is concerned about an operation or supports an operation will write a letter to the editor, the volume of correspondence in these columns was often referred to by DOC staff and others in the community as an indication of the level of community interest in an operation.

Common themes in the letters across the papers include: debates over the science of 1080; discussions on alternative methods; debates over the validity of various 1080 'experts'; concerns over the loss of New Zealand's 'clean green' image; concerns over the impacts on deer hunting; concerns over the effects on birds, insects, and dogs; concerns about the effect on water quality; and protests over the lack of public consultation.

In many cases the responses from DOC have created ongoing debate and discussion in the media. However, there were different views from staff in terms of whether it

was necessary for DOC to respond to all letters. In one case study, the Area Manager responded to every letter on 1080 in the local paper. He was given an opportunity to respond prior to publication and the editor would ensure that the letters appeared side by side in the paper. In another case study, staff questioned whether it was necessary to respond to every letter, as often the same arguments came up and it was difficult to know whether responding made any difference. This office's policy was to 'pick and choose' what letters to respond to.

News stories on aerial 1080 that have been developed by the media frequently follow a conflict-oriented model of journalism. In many stories, this is used to set up conflict by alternatively reporting the voice of the DOC representative with the voice of the anti-1080 group or a hunting representative.

The headlines used to introduce a story on aerial 1080 also give a clear indication of this particular narrative. Common themes in these headlines include the focus on conflict, with headlines such as '1080 row hots up' 'More protests over 1080 predicted' 'Hunters talking sabotage', and 'DOC to go ahead with 1080 drop despite opposition'. By only focusing on opposing views, this model of reporting may imply that there is a greater degree of conflict in the community over this issue than actually exists.

This traditional 'objective' style of journalism also relies heavily on canvassing the voices of 'experts' and groups with opposing extreme views. Much of the representation in the media, for example, is from scientists, department and regional council staff, Forest and Bird, anti-1080 groups, and hunters' groups. As well as exaggerating the level of conflict in a community, this type of journalism reduces the opinions of the community to a number of standard responses from 'community representatives' and can exclude many of the multiple voices and opinions that may actually exist.

Some Area Office staff had put an effort into fostering a relationship with the media, with staff taking newspaper editors and journalists out to the sites.

> *I took the* Grey Star *editor up to Otira [where there was an aerial 1080 operation a year ago]. We started with a video presentation then took him up the valley. We got good editing after that.*

In some cases the local paper focused on scandal and emotion, others were supportive of DOC and did not publicise the activities of protestors. According to one staff member:

> *The [protestors] get wound up and start getting attention. In the newspapers here they've started ignoring them. The paper wouldn't put the protest in the paper. We've had support from the editorial staff who were already supportive of 1080.*

In the case of Operation Egmont, a newspaper supplement was prepared which reached a large audience, and DOC was able to construct the narrative without editorial influence. In another case study, the local newspaper did not have the resources to cover meetings, and a representative of the anti-1080 group provided a write-up for the paper.

5. Processes and methods for community consultation

There are a number of different processes and methods that have been used by staff when undertaking community consultation and information sharing. The Department's *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b) also includes information on different consultation techniques.

In every case study a combination of methods was used. What methods are most appropriate depends on the details of the operation, the staff involved, and the nature of the communities. According to a report by the Ministry for the Environment (1999: 9):

> *There is no consensus … regarding the desirability of high-profile public education campaigns and consultation processes over low-profile approaches; strong community opposition can result from either.*

5.1 PLANNING

Including local input at an early stage of a conservation initiative such as possum control is important. The time consultation can take is easily underestimated. It can take a long while to identify everyone affected and key community groups and members, particularly if ongoing relationships do not already exist. In a number of case studies, staff suggested that allowing two years lead-in from the time the decision to do possum control is made to the time the control is actually undertaken was advantageous.

Warren (unpubl. 2003) concluded that consultation is considerably enhanced by local input into the planning of the process. This was also raised by community participants:

> *The earlier on you start involving people in the process the better, and if people believe their contribution is meaningful and influencing decision-making the sooner the community take some ownership.*

5.2 PUBLICISING

Publicising and informing the community about a proposed operation at the earliest possible stage is a vital part of any consultation process. The purpose may be to fulfil a legal obligation and may also be to provide the community with background information that will then prepare them for further public involvement.

Many people in the case studies who were not adjoining landowners but still had an interest in the operation as they were part of the immediate community, said they heard about the operation through 'word of mouth', and believed it would have been much better if they had heard directly from DOC staff. There were suggestions that DOC should send a personal letter with information about the operation to everyone in the surrounding community—not just the adjacent landowners—especially if the operation is near their water supply. One person commented:

It's not enough just to put it in the paper because a lot of people don't read the paper. It works much better if there is some way of making it personal like a letter or a big notice in the [local] shop.

Another key issue for consideration is what information is publicised. Many community participants suggested it was best for DOC to be 'upfront' about ideas and intentions for possum control as soon as possible so there is time for the community to have an active role in planning the operation.

In a number of case studies, staff made an effort to put a personal face on the operation and to be very public about what they were doing and why they were doing it in order to avoid any accusations that DOC was trying to 'slip it past the community'.

5.3 INFORMATION SHARING

As well as publicising the proposed operation, it is important that DOC staff provide detailed user-friendly information on the conservation problem and the proposed operation to the community. According to DOC's *Consultation Policy* (DOC 2001: 5): 'by itself, education/information provision does not constitute consultation. However, education/information is important to enable effective consultation.' Various information-sharing methods have been used by DOC staff conducting possum control operations.

For Operation Egmont, two newspaper supplements were prepared, included in the several local papers, and distributed to the broader Taranaki public. This approach allowed staff to get information out about the operation in an unadulterated form to as wide an audience as possible in a very cost-effective manner. The Area Office received positive feedback about this approach. The newspaper supplements were considered by staff to be a key reason for the reduced public concern about this operation compared with the previous one. This research, however, was unable to ascertain the impact the supplement had made.*

Staff in one case study emphasised the importance of having high-quality originals as 'people feel palmed off by photocopies'. However, there were also comments from people in the communities about DOC spending its money producing 'glossy' publications when at the same time claiming it does not have any money for alternative methods of pest control such as ground control. According to one community participant:

So much money was spent on the glossies (and they claim not to have much money) and it looked so polished and finished we didn't believe it was a draft [proposal].

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* This research was unable to ascertain the impact the supplement had made compared with other factors mentioned, such as the TRC operation, or opposition fatigue leading to apathy, or local press lack of interest in it as a story at that time and wish to be even-handed in their representation of this and other issues that were more at the forefront of people's minds (such as GE), as the operation took place just before the national election. Most of the people talked to in the research remember the supplement but could not remember how much of it they had read and said they could not recall discussing the information in the supplement with friends, family or neighbours.

As well as presentation, it is important to consider the content of the material and ensure it is specific to the proposed operation. Community respondents to this research consistently commented that they did not think there was enough known about the species (target and non-target) in an area, before an operation, for any post-operational monitoring or research to be meaningful or for DOC to know what impact its efforts were having on particular species. Some people were very sceptical of comparative evidence from other areas being used to indicate what might be in the local circumstances.

It is important for staff to share information with communities about the scientific and conservation goals they hoped to achieve by possum control. Staff involved in the Tongariro Forest operation commented that the public did not know enough about their kiwi programme to understand why using aerial 1080 at a particular time was so crucial. In retrospect it would have been better to get the message out earlier about the conservation of kiwi in the area and therefore the reason for the possum control.

The usefulness and value of the information that DOC provides needs to be considered in the light of who people trust and the information people trust (as discussed in 4.3). There was a clear message from DOC staff and the community that locally specific information is most effective. Staff on the West Coast, for example, have collected site-specific information such as bird call recordings and video data in order to satisfy the expectations by local communities that information and evidence for claims be up-to-date and location-specific. They suggest that having as much, preferably local, research on possums, other pests and native flora and fauna as possible before an operation provides staff the evidence they need to give them confidence to communicate it.

Also, staff in the Waiomu/Te Puru case study have collected video evidence of such things as stoats eating birds. The video and their other responses have been accumulated over time and in response to public questions, accusations, and criticism. According to one staff member:

People say this and that, and we go out, have a look, and rebut with evidence.

Another strategy used in various case studies was to fly key stakeholders over the proposed area to see the possum damage. In Operation Egmont, most respondents who had been on a flight noted that they had found this extremely educational and it had given them a good understanding of the damage possums had done in the area. The suggestion was made to the researchers that it might have been a good and cost-effective idea to film the view from the flights for future use. Similarly, staff also took key stakeholders to Kapiti I. for the day to show people first-hand an area where possums had been removed.

Another way to share information and raise awareness is to involve community members in monitoring in an area where it has been decided that possum control is necessary. In areas where staff have done this, such as Stewart I., they have suggested it also helps the community understand the data and research better if they've seen how it was collected.

According to one staff member:

[Pre-operation monitoring] is a fantastic opportunity to work with the community—work on it five years in advance, get some scientific information on the birds. Use schools—it may not be scientifically reliable monitoring but it is an opportunity to demonstrate monitoring.

5.4 INFORMATION DAYS

Another tool that has been used is information days, at which staff are available at a particular location such as a community hall to discuss the pest control operation with small groups or on a one-on-one basis. These types of forums can provide for information exchange and discussion while avoiding 'capture of the event' (Ministry for the Environment 1999: 28).

This 'open day' approach was used at Waiomu/Te Puru:

> *Instead of waiting for the public to invite us, we organised an open day and designed displays. We prevented a mob of angry people trying to swamp us by numbers. It is much better than trying to have a public meeting where a few people dominate and the fence sitters might be influenced.*

This type of approach is a useful way for members of the community to learn about a proposed operation, to express their views on the proposal, and also develop 'face to face' contact with DOC staff. According to Sinclair (1994: 30):

> *... perhaps the main benefit of these techniques is the creation of a situation in which a member of the community and a study team representative can discuss in detail a particular issue.*

For the Lewis Pass operation, a DOC open day with sausage sizzle was held. Although not specifically about possum control, information about the Lewis Pass operation was available for the public at the day. Although some suggested there was some suspicion in the community about the open day, 'people wondered what DOC was up to—you don't get a free lunch'. Others were less sceptical:

> *DOC did a lot of good for themselves the day they had the BBQ—they had a lot of interesting material and a lot of staff you could talk to.*

Open days may be a useful gauge of community interest and feeling. However, as Sinclair (1994: 30) points out: 'the opinions registered at displays are inevitably a limited sample and should be supplemented by other information gathering techniques'.

5.5 INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS

Another tool used is individual visits to interested parties, usually to adjoining landowners. In Operation Egmont, for example, the liaison officer personally visited every adjoining landowner. Staff involved in this operation agreed that a personal visit to every farmer was absolutely essential and stressed the importance of having the staff and vehicle resources to carry out these visits.

Staff involved in Operation Egmont found ongoing face-to-face interaction with community members/stakeholders over the forthcoming operation was essential and allowed staff to document and then respond to the various concerns people had about the operation. One DOC staff member believed face-to-face visitation allowed members of the community a chance to:

> *... express their concerns and in many instances provided a cathartic opportunity for venting feelings of resentment, disappointment, and disempowerment towards DOC about the possum control operation or other DOC activities.*

Similarly, landowners said they appreciated the information and someone taking the time to go and talk with them. According to one landowner:

> *... adjoining landowners need special treatment on a one-on-one basis—you need to visit them on their turf.*

Proactive contact with landowners was identified as a key to success in this operation. As another landowner commented:

> *Feet on the ground, talking to farmers face to face worked really well. If they hadn't put in the effort and gone door to door with farmers it would have fallen over.*

The rural advocate in Golden Bay was also involved in individual visits to discuss the operation after concerns had been raised in the community. This person can usefully act in a liaison role between DOC and the community. In this instance, the advocate felt it helped that the person coming to talk about the operation was not just seen as a DOC employee but as being 'a little bit independent':

> *I got on quite well with this community—they felt they hadn't been listened to. It helped because I didn't have to wear a uniform and I presented myself as in-between and talked about DOC as 'them'. I work for DOC temporarily but I am still part of the community.*

Staff here said that for any future possum control operations they would send someone in to meet all affected parties in person, and rather than saying, 'We are going to do an aerial 1080 operation' they would go in saying, 'We want to do possum control—what is acceptable to you?' One staff member advised:

> *Visit everyone in person or in groups. It is time-consuming, but worthwhile in the long run.*

However, there was also a concern from some people who were opposed to the operations, that talking with groups individually means that the 'collective action' of a community is lost. According to one group who were anti-1080:

> *We had a meeting [about the proposed operation] and went away quite happy that it wasn't going to happen on this side. DOC then approached people individually and told them that it was going to happen. We lost the collective action.*

In another operation, the anti-1080 group was also concerned that DOC was 'picking farmers off one at a time'. Similarly, a number of people in Lewis Pass were concerned that a community meeting had been organised to discuss the operation but many landowners chose not to attend as DOC had already spoken with them individually. While many people were very positive about individual visits, it is also important to be aware that there is a view from some that DOC is not encouraging community action or collective discussions but is trying to 'pick people off'

The use of rural advocates or liaison officers illustrates the importance of having the right people liaising with the community. A number of staff and community respondents asserted the need for the DOC staff member to have some commonalities with the individual or group they are talking with.

5.6 INTEREST GROUP MEETINGS

In a number of operations, small meetings were held with individual groups. For example, staff who were involved in the Canaan operation decided to initiate small group meetings with specific community groups for the forthcoming operation in Abel Tasman National Park:

> *We have identified all community groups around the area and are going and talking with them one by one (for example the house bus people). We are going to have small isolated meetings rather than large meetings.*

This technique was particularly common when working with iwi/hapu, with staff attending hui or trustees' meetings to discuss the proposed operation. Para (2000) describes how a series of hui with runanga, tribal land trusts, hapu executives, and marae committees were conducted to consult with tangata whenua over planned 1080 operations.

According to Ministry for the Environment (1999: 30):

> *Small group and individual meetings are effective for encouraging dialogue on the details of a proposed project. Such meetings also tend to attract people who are willing to participate. The benefits of small group and individual meetings include an ability to focus on specific issues or localities.*

5.7 PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings provide opportunities for discussion and expression of different opinions within a community. Meetings are one of the most common forms of community consultation and were used in most of the case studies.

According to Sinclair (1994: 22):

> *Public meetings are advertised opportunities for all interested and willing members of the community to consider an issue of common concern. They may be arranged by the study team … for information dissemination purposes at varying stages of a planning investigation or by members of the public who want to generate community awareness of and support for a cause. The public meeting is one of the most common and long-established forms of public participation.*

Although they have been used frequently in community consultation processes, there were a wide range of views on the value of public meetings. According to Sinclair (1994: 22):

> *Interest groups and well organised individuals tended to dominate meetings and discouraged a wide variety of individuals from expressing and exchanging their views.*

Similarly, a report by Ministry for the Environment (1999: 28) stated:

> *While public meetings may be a traditional method of undertaking consultation, they should not be the only method of consultation used. These may pose potential difficulties in presenting information and obtaining constructive feedback.*

Public meetings can often become scenes of conflict and dispute, with groups taking 'sides', particularly in larger meetings. According to one community participant:

> *You can be so cut down by authorities bullying at a public meeting. It's hard. You get pushed into the role of protestor.*

Some DOC staff also expressed reservations about public meetings:

> *Don't have public meetings—they're a recipe for disaster.*
>
> *You have to be careful with public meetings. They never lead to productive outcomes. Most people are just entertained and others just get their heads bitten off. Small groups are better.*

While a number of people flagged the limitations of public meetings, there was also a sense that there was a 'time and place' for them and that they were part of the 'democratic process' of open discussion and debate. According to DOC staff members:

> *Public meetings are good—you get everybody together. You might not reach agreement but it's good to have everyone saying their views, good to air all the views. Let people talk about how their dog died.*
>
> *I hate public meetings with a passion—you're setting yourself up to get gunned down—but there is a time and a place for them.*

Similarly, many people in the community also felt meetings had a place in the process:

> *Public meetings are very important. If DOC are prepared to have a meeting it shows they are confident.*

According to one AHB representative:

> *Public meetings are useful—every time before an operation we have a meeting and then a follow-up public meeting … Sometimes we have a full hall, sometimes not, we always do it. Public meetings can be unpleasant—but it's worth having them because you get support for the meetings as well. You get the pro ones coming as well. We find them really good—have two sides there.*

Public meetings may be organised by DOC staff, or groups or individuals in the community. A number of community members commented that the first thing they did when they heard about the planned operation was to call a public meeting. In a number of the case studies, DOC staff expressed different views over whether it was sometimes useful or appropriate to attend meetings organised by other groups

> *We went to one meeting organised by the anti-1080 lobby and one guy was drunk and one guy was stoned. They are anti-government, anti-DOC and anti-1080. It is insulting for DOC to try and answer their questions … Personally I think—don't even go there, because you won't convince them, you will just get shot down. We need to think—are we even going to go there, are we even going to go to their meetings.*

However, there are also repercussions of not being seen at these meetings. One anti-1080 group organised a meeting, and according to this group:

> *DOC never turned up because they said they weren't invited. It's a public meeting—you don't have to be invited. We were angry because they didn't turn up so we organised a march to the DOC office—we gave them a hard time about it.*

In another case, members of the community thought it was 'great' that DOC staff did 'front up' uninvited to a public meeting organised by 'greenies'. At this meeting, DOC staff attended and listened to the views but chose not to respond to the comments.

In one case the community had organised a public meeting and specifically not invited DOC. According to one person in the community:

> *The public meeting was called as a gauge to see what community's views were. We planned to sort out [the] community's position and then go to DOC.*

However, no one at the meeting had any information on why the operation was planned and therefore the meeting could have benefited from having DOC input to avoid misinformation. According to the same person:

> *At this first meeting nobody at the meeting seemed to know why DOC was doing this operation—they thought that it was because DOC needed to spend money.*

It is also important to consider the timing of the meetings. Some people in the communities commented that DOC should organise public meetings to talk about the issues as soon as they are thinking about doing a 1080 operation.

> *The first round of community input should be a public enough situation where people can say what they think and DOC can say their view. They should put something in the paper that says, 'This is what DOC is thinking about' and then organise a public meeting.*

One member of the public commented 'DOC would get more respect if it organised a public meeting and was upfront'. However, some staff commented that they want to be confident about the issues when they speak at a public meeting. Often it takes time to gather information and to feel confident enough to stand up at a public meeting and present and debate the issues.

It is also important to consider the structure of any public meeting. In the Tongariro Forest case, the local mayor called a meeting in Owhango, and any organisation that had anything to do with 1080 was allowed ten minutes to present and members of the public then spoke. However, as some acknowledged, while people were all given an opportunity to speak, it is difficult to know how many people listened, as people often 'just said their mantra'.

In one case, some community people referred to a meeting where all of the time was spent on presentations with no time for discussion and debate:

> *People who went thinking that 1080 was fine left thinking that and others who didn't think that was fine [left thinking] that. I didn't get much out of the public meeting—there was little time for questions.*

In the Waiomu/Te Puru case, a public meeting was used as a forum to ask DOC staff questions. The questions were written on a whiteboard and DOC staff then went away and found answers to the questions and responded in writing. This meant that DOC staff were not put on the spot:

> *One key thing was the process we used—we don't try and solve problems on the spot. We said, 'You tell us what your problems are'. The community debated the words, as we wanted them to be clear. We took along a lot of brown paper and then recorded their questions and then responded in written form. People could see the questions answered in our planning.*

Chairing or facilitation of the meetings was repeatedly identified as a key factor in the success of public meetings by both DOC staff and the community. In one case, a meeting was chaired by the mayor, and people referred to this meeting as 'a useful forum' as 'everyone listened to each other'. In many cases where meetings were described by DOC staff and the community as 'productive' and 'balanced', respected community members have chaired meetings:

> *DOC came to the meeting and listened to concerns. The meeting was good. Someone from our community board from our area chaired the meeting. It was a well chaired, well behaved meeting.*

In one case DOC staff talked about a public meeting they attended that was organised by an anti-1080 group:

> *There were 80 people—us against everyone else. An anti-1080 person was the facilitator—this didn't work—we just kept quiet. They invited me to it and I felt that it would be worse if I didn't go. Next time we had a round table meeting (a couple of DOC people, AHB, farmer rep, deer stalker rep, anti-1080 group) with a neutral person facilitating—he did a really good job.*

The success of using a public meeting model is also dependent on the objectives and expected outcomes from the meeting. According to Sinclair (1994: 22):

> *Members of the community rarely attend meetings simply to be informed. More often they seek to influence decision-makers or gain assurances about the study's consideration of particular issues through expressing demands vociferously or demonstrating group solidarity.*

Often meetings are developed to share information or initiate discussion. However, DOC staff and communities described the most successful meetings as ones where a smaller steering group or committee was established by the end of the meeting. Public meetings were used as a means to assemble a group of people who were representative of and trusted by the community to speak on their behalf. Therefore in a number of case studies public meetings were used as a starting point for further consultation.

5.8 WORKING GROUPS

In a number of cases stakeholder or working groups were established in order to have more detailed discussion and debate about the operation with representatives of the community. These groups provided opportunities for the community to have a greater level of input than that provided at public meetings. Members were either nominated by the community or selected by DOC staff. According to the *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b: 23):

> *Working groups/workshops and forums are useful ways of exploring issues and proposed projects and for groups to make recommendations. Complex ideas can be explored in depth, people can meet, conflict can be expressed, discussed, and managed.*

In Operation Egmont, when the operation was first planned, a working group was established to disseminate information and to provide advice to DOC on community consultation and help answer questions such as who DOC should talk to and how DOC should consult. This group was made up of representatives from key

stakeholder groups identified by DOC, including the regional council, Federated Farmers, and iwi/hapu.

In other cases, working groups were established as the result of public meetings. In Waiomu/Te Puru, the purpose of the first public meeting was to get the community together and identify representatives from different groups and to then establish a smaller group to work through the process. A working group of six to ten people was established which met a few times and was then reduced to a couple of key people who DOC staff dealt with regularly.

In the Stewart I. case, it was envisaged that the working group for the pest management strategy would:

> *... provide DOC with a communication document of resolutions and recommendations for serious consideration in DOC's (as land manager) decision making related to pest management on Stewart Island.**

The group was developed after a series of public meetings where there was high anti-1080 feeling. Membership of the working group was open to anyone who wanted to participate. Once the group was formed, general attendance at the meetings from then on dropped to about 30. According to one member of the group 'the people looking for a scrap not a solution didn't come back'.

We received general comments on the working group process that has been used in a number of case studies. Participants in the working groups generally reported that they were a useful forum and a good opportunity for sharing information between various and often quite opposed parties and also a good conduit for passing information on to the rest of the community. Other comments from community participants included:

> *In that stakeholder group there wasn't enough listening, wasn't always solutions developed, a bolshie boys club. But you've got to give it a B—a good pass. Great that DOC initiated it—a good start for cooperation.*
>
> *The committee time was for two hours every six weeks—that's quite a bit of time—and you're not reimbursed. There are two sides to those committees—the voluntary side and the paid staff side.*

The importance of participants being able to see action as a result of the meeting of the meetings was a key theme. According to Sinclair (1994: 26):

> *A committee should not be set up to pacify a wide range of authorities and groups simply by offering formal membership. Participating groups rarely value membership per se, but seek to use their position to express interests or become involved in a way that demonstrably contributes to the study.*

One participant told the researchers he wanted to be part of the liaison group so that he knew what DOC was doing, basically to be informed.

> *The liaison group gives us insight into what DOC does, monitoring and so on. It's good for the fieldworkers too because there's a sharing of information from locals to staff.*

Others explained their participation by saying that they care about what happens so want to be involved. Respondents commented:

> *Having the group, it gave everyone a say, and you were there to listen.*

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* Meeting summary, Stewart Island Pest Management Strategy liaison group meeting, 23 May 2002.

Before the liaison process people saw DOC as this great secret organisation about to crush us. No one in the process believes that now.

The groups were also viewed as providing an opportunity for DOC to build and develop ongoing relationships. In some cases, staff commented that they hoped the groups would continue and pick up on other issues beyond pest control.

Some group members were happy with DOC staff running the meetings, while others felt things were a little too dictated by DOC.

My feeling was that because staff were running it they were more open to some people (those who agreed with them) and put down those who didn't.

In this case, staff had considered using an independent facilitator but considered the cost to be prohibitive and that they did have the skills within their staff to perform this task. However, it was made clear that those involved in the running of the liaison group were not the decision makers.

5.9 SUBMISSIONS

In the Lewis Pass case study, the operation was part of a resource consent submission process. One community member who was involved in this process commented that it allowed people to have a voice:

No one can say they didn't have their say, that's a good thing with the consent process—people felt better having their say.

However, some people feel frustrated with the submission process, knowing that it cannot stop a proposed operation or change the method used, only apply conditions. One community member reported:

The feeling was that whatever submission people put in, DOC scientists would refute it so it won't make any difference. The big guys versus the small guy thinking, therefore there was a feeling of why bother.

Some participants also commented that they felt at a disadvantage because they were doing their submission in their own time and were up against paid 'experts'. Also some people can be intimidated by such official processes and perceive them as being complex:

If it seems too hard people won't do anything and then they'll say, 'Well it wouldn't have made a difference anyway.

Some DOC staff commented that many people do not understand how to do submissions, often they're not clear, they make general statements and do not focus on particular points, so staff find it easy to dispute. Thus, while submissions are one way for the community to have input into the decision-making process, it is not an alternative to a more comprehensive consultation process.

5.10 FOLLOW-UP

Many staff commented that consultation and information sharing with the community does not finish at the end of an operation and it was important to consider follow-up. They suggest people will tend to assume the operation was not successful unless they

are told otherwise. Additionally, although it may take years before really meaningful scientific data are obtained, it is equally important to get results out about how many possums have been killed as soon as possible after the operation.

As one community respondent asked the researchers:

> *Will we get results back? Was it effective? I'd like to know, and ongoing too, three to four years down the track.*

According to one staff member:

> *Staff need to not consider the last bucket of 1080 the end of the operation—it's not, you still need to send follow-up information out to stakeholders, a clearance notice then a results notice. With other operations, a year later we are still in the area. The actual loading up the helicopter and chucking bits out is the minor bit.*

Once meaningful scientific results are available, staff agree that DOC needs to advertise any positive results better. As one staff member commented:

> *Get the good-news stories out, ongoing PR. DOC doesn't sell itself well enough.*

While a number of staff said that they intended that their priority following an operation would be to do the monitoring and get the results out to stakeholders, many staff said they had not had the time to do this, with other work piling up. However, many community participants wanted access to this information in order to further their understanding of the issue. According to one participant:

> *It's all part of broader education. When the bird populations rise, tell us and tell us why; when they decline, tell us why, and then people will see why we need possum control.*
>
> *Follow-up would be good. We know it happened but there is no information whether it has been successful or not successful. There should be information in the local papers about the birds and what DOC is doing.*
>
> *I would be interested in seeing monitoring information afterwards. I didn't want any more information beforehand—could get it if we wanted more. I would be interested in receiving monitoring information about birds.*

6. Considerations for community consultation

It is important to consider not just how DOC can best work with community groups, but also how it can best work internally when undertaking a consultation process. Staff interviewed identified a number of areas where they felt they needed more managerial support and direction.

6.1 SUPPORT FOR STAFF

One theme which persistently came up for DOC staff in relation to conducting community consultation was the need for management support for the work they were undertaking. Most areas where DOC does pest control operations are small rural or semi-rural areas and DOC staff are often part of the community that they are consulting. The distinction between work and life outside of work can become blurred, and work matters intruding on private time can be not only annoying but also stressful. According to one staff member:

> *It's disruptive when you go to the movies and someone wants to talk about 1080.*

Many staff recounted the added stress that can come from being involved in a controversial work issue in a small town. Friends outside of work can suddenly become people on the other side of the fence. Often it is the families of DOC staff who find themselves caught between opposing parties. Several staff members mentioned how their partners were friends with people who were opposed to the pest control operation DOC was undertaking, or their children were at school with the children of active opponents to operations.

Some commented that support for staff for the stress of the work is lacking and believed managers needed to look at those risks and provide more support.

> *The guys on the ground and their families are under immense pressure. DOC needs to identify that that's going to happen and how it's going to be managed and pro-actively support staff.*
>
> *It would have been nice to get even an e-mail of support, but there was a void—absence—you feel really on your own.*
>
> *The thing is this is our permanent home, we are talking to our friends and families, families who might have been in the area for hundreds of years—we can't get it wrong.*

Some staff suggested that DOC is too reliant on good individual staff and needs to put in place measures to ensure that community relationships are not dependent on one individual but can and will continue after particular staff move on. One staff member suggested:

> *We as individuals are dissociated from DOC, so they will run into trouble if they replace us—trust is personal, it doesn't flow from the position. We need something in place so there will be continuation of the process if we leave. There need to be clear goals for others to follow—the scariest thing is for someone up the line to pull the pin and jeopardise the relationships.*

One staff member admitted losing the community's support was a blow and he feels DOC in the area is quite isolated now:

> *… in a small community we all have to live together, so we have to find ways to work together.*

6.2 DEPARTMENTAL TOOL KIT

The second theme to arise in relation to departmental support was the need for a toolkit of information about possum control and 1080. One staff member new to aerial possum control operations felt he did not initially have enough information about aerial 1080 to be confident to reply to, and allay, concerns from the community:

> *Am I making the right comments? I was saying, 'No one in DOC would be using poison if we didn't really need to'. Is this the DOC line? If I knew what I know now I would have been more assertive about the information.*

One staff member commented that often scientists do not come up with simple, clear answers, and it is difficult to respond to a lot of the questions that the public are asking because the answers simply are not available. A staff member commented:

> *We need the Department to tell us what is the response to this or that. Like why the Department doesn't use deer repellent. Are we only supposed to be using aerial 1080 in rugged and remote areas? … A department-wide effective tool kit—a national pool of this information. There needs to be more sharing of information nationally—the same issues are cropping up around the country.*

Some staff mentioned that it would be useful to have a list of the typical questions asked, the answers, and the research that backs it up as well as some standard press releases. Although others mentioned that this information was available, it needed to be better publicised. Some staff also mentioned that they would like more training in how to do community consultation and meeting facilitation or would like to involve staff who had these skills:

> *As a department we say we're into consultation but what training and support is there for people to do that? The Department is just lucky having people willing to do it and go beyond their job descriptions. If the Department is really serious about consultation we need training, perhaps a DOC team who can come in and tell us what we need to do.*

The notion of having DOC staff who have been through a community consultation process for 1080 operation and can offer some sort of training or induction was raised a couple of times. According to one staff member:

> *Local staff can't be experts in everything, so it would be good to locate experts we can bring in to support Area Offices.*

6.3 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Another issue frequently mentioned by community participants was the need for DOC to consider wider social and economic issues in relation to its pest control operations. The concerns of some iwi/hapu, community groups, organisations, and individuals reach beyond conservation to broader social and economic issues. For some people, possum control is therefore not just about New Zealand's biodiversity but may equally be seen as an opportunity for employment.

Many community respondents commented that possum control could be an employment opportunity for locals. The following rhetoric was frequently used:

Every unemployed person and every kid and his dog'd be up there if you paid them $10 a skin.

Staff often used the argument of DOC's mandate under the Conservation Act and the reality of limited budgets to explain their narrow focus. According to one staff member:

It's not our job to provide jobs .... I'm not going to spend $80 a hectare when I can spend $15 ... Our job is charged by law to protect the ecology of conservation areas.

On the other hand, community members used arguments related to the importance of not separating environmental from social and economic outcomes and made reference to DOC needing to adopt a 'whole of government' and 'triple bottom line' approach.

In one case study a community group agreed that their common goal with DOC is to kill possums, but they see this goal as needing to fit in with other community priorities such as hunting which is part of the lifestyle for some people. In some areas, local iwi/hapu mentioned that they believed the possum control operation could or should offer potential employment opportunities.

There seems to be some confusion and disjuncture between staff and community expectations over DOC's obligations to consider the social and economic effects on communities. It is important to consider how much weight social or economic factors carry compared with DOC's conservation and economic 'bottom lines' and DOC's obligations in regards to a 'whole of government' approach.

6.4 FLEXIBILITY ACROSS DOC

By definition, consultation requires some degree of local flexibility to work with the needs of the local community. However, in a number of case studies there was a tension between working with local communities to develop a local solution and also complying with DOC policy or perceived pressure within DOC.

DOC's Deer Policy was raised often by community participants in the Stewart I. case. Some participants found it difficult to believe DOC could engage in 'genuine' consultation over pest management on the island, as they believed that as DOC had already classified deer as a noxious animal and that this decision was not open to consultation and discussion.

Some staff who have looked at alternative methods that may be more acceptable to the community said they felt some pressure by some parts of DOC to use aerial 1080 so as not to undermine justification of its use in other areas.

In addition, there are strong links between anti-1080 groups across the country, and these groups made reference to other operations that have been completed using other methods besides aerial 1080. This sets a precedent of expectation from the community and in many of the case studies community members cited other areas around New Zealand where they were aware methods other than aerial 1080 had been used for possum control, effectively significantly reducing acceptance of aerial 1080 in their own area significantly less.

One community member commented:

A good government manager shouldn't be punished for doing things differently. They have been able to do things differently in Urewera.

One DOC staff member commented:

Because they did trapping in the Ureweras the public think it's possible here, but the situation is so untransferable. The public said they'd do the trapping, but they've got no idea what's its like—their romantic notions and reality are poles apart.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This research aimed to provide an overview of the six case studies, evaluate the consultation and information-sharing processes, and identify the key themes, issues, and factors which influence the process of consultation and information sharing in aerial 1080 operations.

It is important to reiterate that it included only those community members who were interested enough in the issue and the research to participate. This may mean, for example, that a greater proportion of each community who were either unsatisfied or satisfied with the consultation process were captured than may generally have been the case. The research also does not attempt to provide a complete picture of DOC's experiences with community consultation over possum control, but aims to give some insight into the dynamics of a small number of case studies.

With these limitations in mind, the case study examples have illustrated the range of methods and tools that can be adopted when undertaking a community consultation process, and the benefits and disadvantages associated with each of these. It is envisaged that these key findings will be of value for staff embarking on a consultation process in relation to possum control and other DOC initiatives.

Every area is different and every community unique, and there is no one set of tools or one strategy that will fit every community consultation process. However, what is consistent across all operations is that the details of the consultation process (for example what is open to consultation, the timeframe for the consultation, the methods of consultation) need to be clearly identified to all parties involved and to be part of a wider relationship-building process with communities.

In each case study there was a range of factors that had worked well and those that had not in the consultation process. From the analysis of the six case studies, this section outlines a number of recommendations to help staff work towards 'best practice' for community consultation. It builds on many of the principles of DOC's *Consultation Policy* (DOC 2001a) and *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b).

7.1 ACTIONS PRIOR TO CONSULTATION

Clarify what is meant by consultation

Before considering the best tools and methods to adopt for a consultation process, there needs to be an explicit understanding of the term 'consultation'. In some cases, the term 'consultation' has been used when the objective is to simply inform communities about an upcoming operation or in other cases to attempt to *convince* communities that aerial 1080 is the most appropriate method. Communities need to feel that the decision is not pre-determined, there is more than one choice, and they have some control over the process and decision.

According to the *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b), DOC needs to keep an open mind in a consultation process and be willing and able to change its suggested actions. Any consultation process has to involve a genuine willingness to listen and to get the best information from the community in order to inform the decision-making process and meet local concerns. Therefore the specifics of the operation that will be open to discussion and debate need to be made explicit to both DOC staff and the communities involved.

Effective community consultation and community acceptance need to be seen by staff as essential prerequisite to a possum control operation as opposed to an 'add on' once a method and approach have been determined.

Focus on the conservation problem

In order to encourage long-term community ownership of a conservation issue, the consultation process should ideally focus on informing people of the problem (for example the impacts of possums) and possible solutions, as opposed to only focusing on a specific method (for example aerial 1080).

Accept different views

The *Consultation Guidelines* (DOC 2001b) stress the importance of acknowledging the different values and negotiable issues held by each group. It is important to accept that people's views will often not change and they will not be convinced by DOC or science. In order to engage in an effective consultation process, staff should therefore not put energy into trying to convince people that aerial 1080 is the best tool, but should accept and respect these different views and perceptions of risk and not dismiss them as 'emotive' or 'uninformed'. Instead, participants can move towards a two-way dialogue where all agree on the conservation problem, acknowledge the different views, and look for ways to work together and address concerns.

Allow time and resources for ongoing community relationships

Consultation needs to be developed in conjunction with processes of information sharing about conservation problems and long-term relationship building. Where there is a pre-existing relationship with DOC over other issues and a level of trust and respect, it is often easier to embark on a consultation process. Staff need to have the

time, resources and motivation to build proactive relationships with communities through methods such as informal meetings, newsletters, and regular visits.

Understand local communities

Having an understanding of the important community issues, key groups, and players in a community, knowing who to contact, and contacting these people at the earliest possible time is vital in order to avoid any suspicion that DOC is trying to hide the proposed operation from the community. It is important to work with local authorities in order to learn as much as possible about the local communities before a consultation process commences.

Ensure staff have effective communication skills

It is important to have the right people liaising with community groups. Staff members involved need to be able to communicate clearly with different groups and ideally have some commonalities with the individual or group they are talking to. In order to help achieve this there need to be opportunities for facilitation and communication training for staff working on possum control operations.

Facilitate staff information sharing

There need to be opportunities for staff to meet and share their experiences of working with communities on pest control operations. Thay need to discuss new approaches to working with communities, information on methods and tools for community consultation, examples of best practice and examples where possum control has taken place in partnership with local communities.

Remember that consultation is DOC's responsibility

Consultation needs to be the responsibility of DOC, and staff should be cautious about contracting this out. Often contractors involved in possum control are focused on the short-term goals of undertaking a timely and cost-effective operation and will not factor in the costs of an extensive consultation process. DOC, on the other hand, needs to also focus on the long-term goals of building and sustaining community support as part of the consultation process.

7.2 CONSULTATION PROCESS

The most appropriate consultation process and methods selected for a possum control operation will depend on the nature and dynamics of each community, and it is therefore important to be flexible. However, the following principles will be relevant to most consultation processes.

Involve communities in early consultation planning

It was apparent from the research findings that the time consultation can take is easily underestimated. Advertise widely and include local input at an early planning stage of a planned operation. Ask key individuals and groups in the community for advice on the most appropriate consultation process and methods to use.

Share information

It is important to continually share information with the community about the scientific and conservation outcomes DOC hopes to achieve by possum control, the options for possum control, and 'good news stories'. Similarly, it is important that the community and other stakeholders are sent information on the results of the consultation process and the operation in order to further their understanding of the issue and build ongoing support for DOC. It is also important to look for opportunities to involve communities, schools, and iwi/hapu in ongoing monitoring work in order to build up community understanding and ownership of the conservation problem.

Use face-to-face methods

The methods that are most appropriate are dependent on the details of the operation, the staff involved, the nature of the communities, and the objectives and expected outcomes. However, face-to-face methods (for example information days, individual visits, interest group meetings, and public meetings) are important in order to put a personal face to the operation, to be very open about what is going on and to avoid any accusations that DOC is trying to 'slip it past the community'. It is also important to carry out the consultation in venues and places where the community is comfortable.

Use independent facilitators

Meetings where respected community members or independent facilitators have chaired meetings are generally recognised as more successful.

Initiate a working group

Public meetings can be a useful starting point to establishing a working group of people who are representative of and trusted by the community to speak on their behalf. Working groups are a valuable way of having detailed discussion and debate about an operation with representatives of the community. These groups provide opportunities for the community to have a greater level of input than that provided at public meetings. Groups can also provide an opportunity for DOC to build and develop ongoing relationships on a range of issues.

Work with the media

It is important to view the local media as another community group that DOC needs to work with to inform the public. The Department can encourage local media to include the 'good news stories', to focus on the conservation problem, and to include a range of stories and views on possum control (not simply the extreme stories or the 'talking heads'). Producing newspaper supplements focused on the conservation problem is another way of ensuring information reaches a large audience and another tool for building long-term relationships and encouraging community ownership of the conservation problem.

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Appendix 1

Questions asked of participants

Community

Introduction

- Tell me about the area in which you live?
- How long have you lived in the area?

Background

- Before the consultation over aerial possum control had you had much to do with the Department? If so, what was your relationship like with the local staff?
- What is your previous experience with possum control? What did you know about it? Where did you get this info?
- What is your previous experience with 1080? What did you know about it? Where did you get this info?

1080 case study

- When did you first hear the proposed aerial 1080 operation near your property/land? How did you hear about it? (e.g. personal contact, radio, newspaper ads, signage)
- Can you describe how you were involved in the consultation process?

Information sharing

- What information did you receive about the proposed operation?
- Where did you get this information from? (e.g. DOC, neighbours, etc.)
- What information did you find useful? What information did you not find useful? Why?
- Is there anything else you would have liked to receive information about?

Consultation

- How would you define 'consultation'?
- What were your expectations of the consultation process?
- How did the consultation process unfold?
- What do you think the Department did well?
- What do you think the Department could improve on?

Summary

- Has your perception of the Department changed as a result of the consultation process? If so, in what ways?
- What is you opinion of aerial 1080 now? Was it altered in any way by the consultation or liaison process?
- What advice would you give to a DOC staff member about to start an information sharing and consultation process for a planned aerial 1080 operation?

DOC staff

Introduction

- How long have you worked for the Department of Conservation?
- What is your role in the Department?
- Can you tell me a little about the local community you work with?

Process

- Have you been involved in other possum control or 1080 aerial operations?
- How did you decide what approach to take for the information sharing and consultation processes?
- What resources did you use (if any) when deciding how to go about the information sharing and consultation process? (e.g. guidelines, SOPs, other documents).
- What resources did you find particularly useful? Why?
- Who did you talk with in deciding how to go about the information sharing and consultation process?
- Are there any other resources or information that you would have found useful when planning your information sharing and consultation process?
- Were limitations put on the process both in time and resources? If so, what were these?
- Did you have to make any compromises? If so, what were these?
- What was the process you finally decided on?

Information sharing

- What information did you produce for the community?
- What was the purpose of this information?
- How did you distribute it?
- What do you think worked effectively or ineffectively? Why?
- What improvements would you make next time?

Consultation

- What does consultation mean to you?
- What were you consulting about in your consultation process?
- How did you decide on the 'scope' of your consultation process?
- How did you decide who to include in the consultation process?
- What groups were included in the consultation process?
- What was your relationship like with the community prior to the consultation process?
- Can you describe step by step the consultation process you went through?
- Did you anticipate any problems or concerns from the community going into the consultation? If so, what were these concerns?
- What did you expect the consultation to entail?
- Did it meet your expectations?
- Did anything unexpected happen as part of the consultation?

Summary

- What do you think worked well in the information sharing and consultation process? Why?
- What do you think did not go well? Why?
- What do you think you would do differently next time?
- What advice would you give to a DOC staff member about to start an information sharing and consultation process for a planned aerial 1080 operation?