

Role of conservation boards



What is a conservation board?

Conservation boards are independent bodies, established by the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act). The purpose of the Act is to promote the conservation of New Zealand's natural and historic resources, and for that purpose to establish a Department of Conservation.

A conservation board provides for interaction between the public and the Department of Conservation at the regional/district level. Each conservation board represents the community, within that conservation board's defined geographical area, in the work of the Department and conservation in general. The primary role of conservation boards is to advise the Department and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA).

There are 15 conservation boards, as shown on the attached map. In the South Island, while national parks straddle district and regional boundaries, they do not straddle conservation board boundaries. For example, Mount Aspiring National Park is managed in part by the Otago region and in part by West Coast *Tai Poutini* region, but it all falls within the area of jurisdiction of the Otago Conservation Board.

Functions and responsibilities

The functions of conservation boards are set out in section 6M of the Conservation Act, in the National Parks Act 1980 and Reserves Act 1977. A conservation board's focus is on policy issues, strategic direction and planning, not day-to-day operational details of the Department's work. They largely have an advisory role to both the Department and the NZCA on conservation matter across their rohe.

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

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

Membership

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

- the particular features of land administered by the Department in the conservation board's rohe;

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

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

Tangata whenua interests

Before making appointments representing the interests of the tangata whenua of an area, the Minister is required by the Act to consult with the Minister of Maori Affairs. There are also several boards which have appointment provisions under the Conservation Act 1987 and Treaty settlement legislation.

Role of conservation board members

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

Members are not representatives of the organisations or persons who nominated them, though are appointed with the knowledge that bring diverse perspectives to the position (e.g. – iwi, biodiversity, science, tourism, farming, and marine). They are appointed as individuals to bring to the conservation board their expertise, knowledge and perspective, as well as the concerns of different sections of the community, so that sound decisions can be made within the conservation context which governs the work of both the Department and the conservation board. All members should be informed about matters that come before the conservation board and contribute their perspectives. This includes an equal responsibility to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. (See also fact sheet on section 4 of the Conservation Act.)

Map

