

Annual Report 2024 - 2025

Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board

Taiao ā-uta, Taiao ā-tai
Atawhaitia mai te taiao e te
taitangata e!

Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board Annual Report 2024 – 2025



Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board field trip to Taumarunui – Cherry Grove – November 2024

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

This report is presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required by the
Conservation Act and is distributed to interested parties. Members of the public are
welcome to attend Conservation Board meetings.

If you would like more information on the Taranaki
Whanganui Conservation Board, please refer to:
[Department of Conservation \(doc.govt.nz\)](https://www.doc.govt.nz)

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1. Chairperson's Report

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Tēnā koutou katoa,

It is my privilege to provide this report for the 2024/25 year. The Board has continued to navigate a complex and evolving conservation landscape with commitment, professionalism, and a shared sense of purpose. Throughout the year, we have remained focused on biodiversity protection, Treaty partnership expectations, visitor pressures, and the significant legislative reforms currently reshaping conservation; Modernising Conservation, the Fast-track Approvals Act, Te Ture Whakaturua mō Te Kāhui Tupua 2025 / Taranaki Maunga Collective Redress Act 2025. I commend members for their thoughtful engagement and collective expertise during a demanding period.

A highlight of the year was our Taranaki field trip, generously hosted by Te Atiawa. The Board visited Pukerangiora Pā, Mahoetahi Pā, and Ratapihipihi Reserve, gaining valuable insight into their cultural, historic, and ecological significance. These visits deepened our understanding of mana whenua aspirations for these sites and highlighted the potential for iwi, hapū, whānau, and community-led partnerships to play a greater role in conservation delivery, particularly where DOC's resourcing cannot fully meet the expectations of local communities. Supporting models that empower local kaitiakitanga and community involvement remains an important opportunity for future work.

The Board acknowledges and commends the Department of Conservation staff across our region for their dedication, resilience, and commitment to protecting our natural and cultural heritage. We are also grateful to our support team whose efforts ensure the Board's work is well informed and well supported.

This year we also mourned the passing of our Board Support Officer, Tanya Hadfield. Tanya's warmth, professionalism, and tireless support were deeply valued, and her loss has been felt across the conservation whānau. Moe mai rā, Tanya.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our outgoing Chair Drew Castle for his leadership during this period of significant change. His steady guidance and devotion to conservation have been instrumental to the Board and our work.

Nāku noa, nā



Chris Smith
Deputy Chair, Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board



2. Introduction

Section 6(0) of the Conservation Act requires Conservation Boards to provide the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) with an annual report as soon as practical after 30 June each year. In recognition of this requirement the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board submits this annual report.

Conservation Boards are appointed by the Minister of Conservation under section 6(P) of the Conservation Act 1987. Board functions are outlined in section 6(M) and the powers, which enable the Conservation Boards to carry out those functions, are under 6(N) of the Act.

Conservation Boards are independent advisory bodies, established by statute. They represent the community and offer interaction between communities and the Department of Conservation (DOC), within their area of jurisdiction.

Conservation Boards have several statutory roles under various Acts including:

- Provide strategic, independent advice to the Regional Operations Directors and NZCA via their Liaison person for conservation outcomes within the Board's boundary
- Liaise with regional Fish and Game Council on matters within the Board's boundary
- Liaise with Review and amend Conservation Management Strategies, and recommend these to the NZCA for approval
- Review, amend, and approve Conservation Management Plans

In total, New Zealand has 15 Conservation Boards working across the regions.

Support for the Board is provided by Tinaka Mearns, DOC Director Regional Operations, Hauraki, Waikato, Taranaki (HWT).

3. Board boundary

The Board encompasses some 15,000 sq. km of land extending from the Mokau River in the north to the Turakina River in the south and inland to Ohura and Taumarunui. Approximately 298,000 ha of public conservation land is administered by DOC which represents almost 20% of the total area of the Board's district.

In addition to several scenic, historic, and recreational reserves, the district includes both Te Papa-Kura-o-Taranaki and its associated array of recreation opportunities, and the Whanganui National Park with its unique history and strong cultural connections.

The coastal boundary that extends along the Board's district includes the Tapuae and Paranihihi marine reserves as well as the long-established Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Protected Area.

Volcanoes, wild and scenic rivers, huge tracts of forest, rugged mountain ranges and a dynamic coastline provide for a great diversity of landscapes, habitats, plants, and animals.

The area also extends out to the 12-nautical mile limit with respect to coastal and marine issues, and out to the 200-nautical mile limit, with respect to protected species.

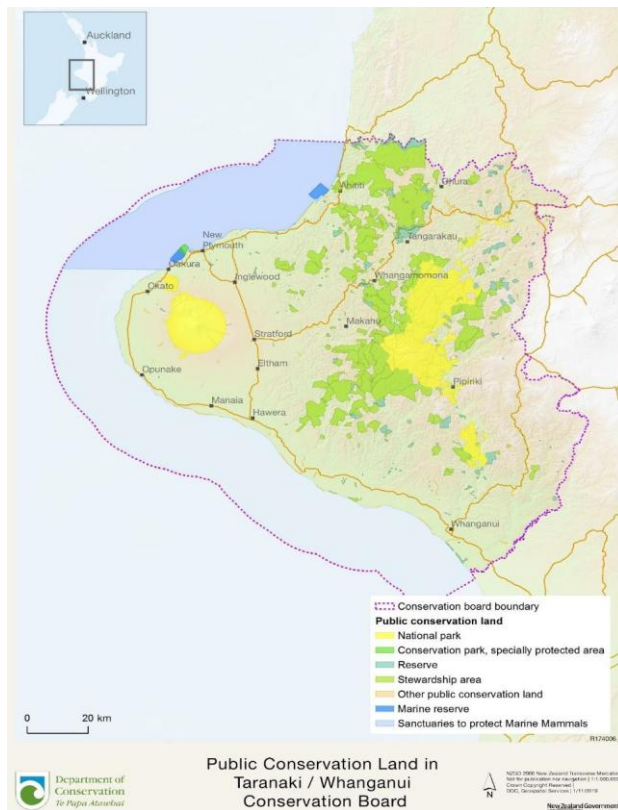


Figure 1: Public Conservation Land in Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board

Public Conservation Land (hectares by legislative section) in the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board Area – 1 November 2019

Public Conservation Land	Hectares
Recreation Reserve	58.19 ha
Historic Reserve – 31.60 ha	31.60 ha
Scenic Reserve (sec 19 1a)	20,078.93 ha
Scenic Reserve (sec 19 1b)	4.72 ha
Conservation Park	723.44 ha
Scientific Reserve	259.4 ha
Government Purpose Reserve	455.85 ha
Sanctuary Ara	1.34 ha
Local Purpose Reserve	168.42 ha
Moveable Marginal Strip	56.24 ha
Fixed Marginal Strip	649.78 ha
Stewardship Area	160,929.93 ha
National Park	108,463.07 ha

3.1. Conservation features of the Area

Main features of Public Conservation Land and Waters within the Board’s boundaries are:	
Wetlands, lakes, and rivers	Waverley Lake network
Island sanctuaries off the coast of New Plymouth	Sugar Loaf Islands Conservation Sanctuaries
North Island West Coast dunes and estuaries	Whitiau Scientific and Scenic Reserves Tapuarau Conservation Area Patea Harbour
Mainland Sanctuaries	Uenuku Rotokare (Scenic Reserve) Bushy Park
Community Projects on Conservation Land	Taranaki Mounga Project Kaitake, East Taranaki Environment Trust
Historic pre-European and Remnants from the Land War Areas	e.g., Mangapapa Tieke, Koru Pa Fort St George Omata Stockade Pukerangiora Okau Pa.
Vast areas of intact lowland forest	Whanganui National Park Waitotara Conservation Area Tangarakau Conservation and Scenic Reserves North Taranaki Conservation Areas
Marine reserves	Paraninihi and Tapuae Marine Reserve
Marine mammals	West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary Māui Dolphin Proposed Blue Whale Sanctuary New Zealand Fur Seals
Whanganui River	Te Awa Tupua Settlement
Taranaki Mounga	
The Whanganui National Park	The extensive forest of the Park is at the heart of a vast area of intact native forest, the second largest on the North Island. It holds the largest remaining kiwi population in the North Island. Covering a total area of 74'231 hectares.

4. Board functions

4.1 Board membership

The Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board had eight (8) members for the 2023-2024 year appointed by the Minister under the terms of the Conservation Act 1987.

There was one new appointment, Nicholas Plimmer from New Plymouth.

The following table lists Board members and their term of office.

Table 1: Board membership

Board Member	Area	Term Start	Term End
Castle, Drew	Inglewood	01/07/2019	30/06/2025
Clarkson, Bruce	Waikato	01/07/2022	30/06/2025
Poutu, Liana	New Plymouth	01/07/2015	30/06/2025
Smith, Christopher	Whanganui	01/07/2021	30/06/2024
Dowsett, Claire	Whanganui	01/07/2022	30/06/2026
Sheehy, Jill	Whanganui	01/07/2022	30/06/2025
Fisher, Murray	New Plymouth	01/07/2024	30/06/2026
Haitana, Paora	Whanganui	01/11/2024	30/07/2027
Riddle, Erica	Fielding	01/11/2024	30/06/2027

Commented [CE2]: Need to double check this - does look accurate, Mitchy?

4.2 Membership

Drew Castle of Inglewood

Appointment term: 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2025

Chairperson

Drew (Ngāi Tahu) is a self-employed IT professional with 20 years' experience in the IT industry. He has more recently been involved in other governance activities in the wider Taranaki community. He is strongly involved in local conservation efforts and brings an IT solutions focus to how this can support and enhance conservation initiatives. Drew has always had a keen interest in outdoor activities, and is an advocate of habitat protection, repopulation efforts of native birdlife, and the recognition of the uniqueness of local ecologies.

Christopher (Chris) Smith

Appointment term: 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024

Deputy Chairperson

Chris (Ngāti Apakura) lives in Whanganui with his whānau and brings a combination of environmental science training and hands-on conservation experience. He holds qualifications in Environmental Science, Geography, and New Zealand Studies from Massey University, manages Wildbase Recovery in Palmerston North, and is Chair of Sustainable Whanganui and Predator Free Whanganui. He also has previous experience with Land Search and Rescue Whanganui. Guided by a te ao Māori worldview, Chris is passionate about ecosystem regeneration and conservation management, and is committed to acting as a kaitiaki so that future generations can enjoy and connect with the natural world.

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Bruce Clarkson of Hamilton

Appointment Term: 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2025

Bruce is a scientist, researcher, educator, and ecologist who has 50+ years' experience working to recognise and restore native plant communities. He is internationally renowned in his field of botany and is currently a Professor at the University of Waikato, and the Programme Leader for Peoples, Cities and Nature. He offers valuable expertise and knowledge of the biodiversity and ecology of the Board's area.

Liana Poutu of New Plymouth

Appointment term: 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2025

Liana (Te Atiawa, Taranaki, Whanganui and Maniapoto) is the statutory nominee of the Taranaki Māori Trust Board. She has a legal background with a strong focus on Māori land, Treaty of Waitangi, governance and public law. Liana has extensive governance experience (including prior conservation board experience) with strong iwi, hapū and marae networks across Taranaki and Whanganui. She also serves as a negotiator for Te Ruruku Pūtakerongo - the Taranaki Maunga collective redress deed.

Claire Dowsett of Whanganui

Appointment Term: 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026

Claire (Ngāti Raukawa ki Waikato) lives with her whānau in Whanganui. She is a current PhD student studying community values for introduced species and the relationships between people and nature. Claire has previously worked for the Department as a Biodiversity Ranger and a Biodiversity Planner and will bring to the Board experience in hands-on conservation practice and the inner operational workings of the Department.

Jill Sheehy of Whanganui

Appointment term: 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2025

Ko Ngaapaerangi te Iwi o Paerangi o te Maungaroa, o te Kāhui Maunga ki Tangaroa.

Ko Te Aatihaunui a Paapaarangi te Iwi o Hinengākau, Tamaūpoko, Tūpoho.

Jill has strong community engagement, governance, planning and nature conservation skills. This, coupled with her cultural affiliations, makes her an asset to the Board. Her expertise in RMA/planning matters will be very useful to the Board's ongoing and future review work.

Murray Fisher of New Plymouth

Appointment term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2026

Murray has extensive experience in the Emergency Response, coast guard and surf lifeguard space. Murray is also an active member/trapper for the Kiwi Trust Small block farmer with QE2 land.

Paora Haitana of Whanganui

Appointment Term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2027

Paora has served the environment for more than 30 years. He has a deep understanding and connection with the lands especially in the Whanganui and Tongariro National Park. In the early 1990's Paora played a lead role in establishing one of the first pest control teams that were grounded by Kaupapa Māori practices to address the challenges experienced by the lands and tributaries that fed into the Whanganui River.

Erica Riddle of Fielding

Appointment Term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2027

Erica brings extensive military background with education from the Institute of Directors to the Board. Erica is also completing a Masters in Sustainability and sits on the governance committee for Creative Sounds Society Inc in Palmerston North as their Health and Safety portfolio owner.

4.3 Board Meetings

The Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board held four (4) Board meetings during the reporting period. Venues for the Board meetings vary each year to ensure a wide coverage and enable members of the public in both districts to attend meetings and access the Board. The Board also held two strategy planning workshops on 19 September 2024 and 28 November 2024.

Commented [CE4]: Mitchy, could you please help me update this info?

Commented [CS5R4]: Updated

Table 2: Board meeting dates and location

Board meeting date	Meeting location and venue
Friday 20 September 2024	DOC Whanganui Office
Friday 29 November 2024	DOC Taumarunui Base, Cherry Grove
Tuesday 11 February 2025	DOC Whanganui Office
Friday 29 April 2025	DOC New Plymouth Office

Attendance

The table below summarises the number of Board meetings (4) attended by members out of the total number of meetings held during the year.

Members attended other meetings and events in their role as Board members, including subcommittee meetings and representative roles.

Table 3: Board Member Attendance

Board Member	Board Meetings
Castle, Drew	4/4
Poutu, Liana	2/4
Smith, Chris	4/4
Dillon, Te Aorangi	2/4
Sheehy, Jill	4/4
Dowsett, Claire	4/4
Clarkson, Bruce	3/4

Commented [CE6]: Mitchy, do you have this info please?

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4.4 Board Committees and Representation

Drew Castle represents the Board for the Tapuae Marine Reserve Advisory Committee and Wild for Taranaki Trust.

4.5 Field trips

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Commented [CS9R8]: Updated

Field trips are an excellent opportunity for Board members to become more aware of conservation issues within their region and to meet with community members undertaking conservation activities.

Field Trip	Field trip destination
Te Atiawa hosted the Board for site visits to key historic reserves currently managed by DOC	Pukerangiora Pā Mahoetahi Pā Ratapihipihi Reserve

4.6 DOC involvement in Board meetings

DOC staff that have regularly attended meetings throughout the reporting period have included the Directors Operations: Hauraki Waikato Taranaki and Central North Island along with their team members.

There have been regular Teams meetings between the Board Chair, Deputy Board Chair, Statutory Manager and Board Support Officer for updates and to plan for Board huis/field trips. The Board also receives a weekly update on Fridays from the Board Support Officer.

4.7 Statutory work

The Board receives updates from the Statutory Manager and specific reports from the Taranaki and Whanganui district teams, including an overview of concessions, as part of the Board papers.

Resource Management Issues

Quarterly Resource Management and Statutory Management Planning and Marine reports are provided to the Board, as part of the Board papers.

Monitoring

The Board monitors the implementation of the Wanganui Conservation Management Strategy 1997 through reporting from both Taranaki and Whanganui districts, as part of the Board papers.

5. Liaisons, advocacy and communication

The Board maintains contact with neighbouring Conservation Boards through the exchange of agendas, meeting papers and the attendance of appointed liaisons to neighbouring Board meetings.

Board members have attended neighbouring Conservation Board meetings held in Waikato and Taupo.

5.1 Advocacy

Board members have the opportunity for liaising with other groups, as needed.

5.2 New Zealand Conservation Authority Liaison

Puna Wano-Bryant is the NZCA liaison to the Board.

NZCA agendas, meeting minutes and letters from the Chairperson are also provided to the Board.

5.3 Iwi/hāpu advocacy

The makeup of the Board includes members who have strong Iwi affiliations in Taranaki and Whanganui. This enables the Board to connect and understand Iwi/hapu concerns.

5.4 Community advocacy

The Board believes that working with conservation organisations and members of the public is vital to the Board's purpose as a voice of the community for conservation.

Board member reports are tabled at meetings and the Environmental Scan agenda item allows members to provide updates on any activities they have undertaken to pursue conservation interests, or advocate for good conservation outcomes.

5.5 Communication

The Board maintains a presence on DOC's website with updates and information for upcoming Board meetings and events.

The Board's agenda and confirmed minutes are also available on DOC's website.

The Board also promotes activities via its Meta/Facebook page.

Acknowledgements

The Board wishes to thank the DOC team for supporting the Board.

The Board wishes to acknowledge the attendance and discussion at Board hui by:

- Tinaka Mearns, DOC Director Regional Operations HWT, and
- Damian Coutts, Director Regional Operations CNI.

Ends.

Appendix 1 – Work plan 2024-2025

This workplan is designed to give effect to the Board's functions under section 6M of the Conservation Act 1987, section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980, the Reserves Act 1977, and other statutory requirements of conservation boards, and to align with the statutory functions of the Board in support of the application of these powers to deliver strong conservation outcomes for the Taranaki/Whanganui regions.

This plan is structured in 5 parts:

- Legal engagement and statutory obligations
- Treaty partnership and obligations
- Advice and oversight to the Department in our role
- Community advocacy
- Biodiversity and climate change advocacy

Part 1. Legal engagement and statutory obligations

Task 1. Monitor the Department's implementation of the statutory strategies and plans in its role

The Board will oversee the work undertaken by the Department governed by the region's statutory framework for conservation as described in following;

- Wanganui Conservation Management Strategy (1997)
- Egmont National Park Management Plan (2002)
- Whanganui National Park Management Plan (2012)

Performance indicators

The Board receives reports from the Department on implementation of operational activities in line with the statutory plans outlined in Task 1.

The Board contributes to oversight of the operations of the Department which are required under the statutory plans outlined in Task 1.

Task 2. Advocate for and contribute to reviews of the statutory plans in its role

The Board will advocate for resourcing and scoping for the immediate review of the Taranaki/Whanganui of conservation management strategy (CMS)

The Board will contribute to any reviews of conservation management strategy (CMS) and national park management plans (NPMPs)

Performance indicators

The Board continues its existing work on the review of the CMS, through its internal project and advocacy of its resource requirement to the Department.

The Board reports on its progress of its involvement in any review undertaken.

Task 3. Continued oversight and engagement in the legal case against Trans-Tasman Resources Limited (TTRL)

Noting the TTRL case is closed, the Board will continue to oppose seabed mining in South Taranaki.

Performance indicators

The Board receives reports and updates re: upcoming seabed mining cases.

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Part 2. Treaty partnership and obligations

Task 1. Monitor implementation of treaty settlement obligations by the Department

The Board will monitor the Department's implementation of operational requirements in order to fulfil its obligations under treaty settlements within the Taranaki and Whanganui regions.

Performance indicators

The Board receives reports from the department on its performance against its treaty settlement obligations.

The Board provides advice to the Department to support its obligations under treaty settlements in the Board's rohe.

Task 2. Monitor and provide advice to the Department on its operations with respect to Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

The Board will, from time to time, and as part of its regular meetings with the Department, work with and provide advice to the Department relating to its obligations under Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987, specifically in relation to operational matters within the Taranaki and Whanganui regions.

Performance indicators

The Board engages in discussion with the Department during its scheduled meetings specifically regarding the fulfilment of its obligations under Section 4, Conservation Act 1987.

Part 3. Advice and oversight to the Department in our rohe

Task 1. Provide advice to the department on conservation matters concerning the Board's rohe

The Board will, where appropriate and within the Department's statutory area of responsibility, provide advice to the Department on matters of the environment and conservation values concerning the Board's rohe.

Performance indicators

The Board periodically submits to the Department, either at Board meetings or by other means, its opinion or advice on environmental or conservation matters concerning the Board's rohe that relate to the Department's operational responsibilities.

Part 4. Community advocacy

Task 1. Work and collaborate with neighbouring conservation boards

The Board will engage with conservation boards that neighbour the Taranaki/Whanganui region, with the aim of greater communication and collaboration.

Performance indicators

The Board communicates with, liaises with, or attends conservation board meetings with its neighbouring regions.

Task 2. Work towards increased public profile and interaction with the conservation boards, in particular the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board

The Board will undertake activities that promote and increase the public profile and interaction with conservation boards, particularly public engagement with the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board.

Performance indicators

Board members attend events representing the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board. The Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board Facebook page grows its following. Public forum participation is advertised and promoted more heavily.

Task 3. Provide input or submit on the development of policies, plans, or strategies in the Board's rohe that relate to or have a conservation impact.

The Board will, from time to time, and where applicable to the areas which the conservation boards have an interest, provide input to or make submissions on the development of policies or strategies in the Board's rohe.

The Board will, where appropriate, engage with agencies within its rohe with the aim of promoting strong conservation outcomes within the Taranaki and Whanganui regions.

Performance indicators

The Board, when it has the opportunity, engages with or makes a submission to an agency, authority, or entity for which a policy, plan or strategy with conservation impact is being developed.

Part 5. Biodiversity and climate change advocacy

The Board will work to highlight and advocate the issues raised with increasing biodiversity and climate change outcomes.

Task 1. Monitor and support the Department's implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao
The Board will work with the Department to support the implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao within its operations in the Taranaki and Whanganui regions.

Task 2. Engage and liaise with groups outside of the Department regarding biodiversity challenges in the Board's rohe.

The Board will work with and engage with groups within the Taranaki and Whanganui communities regarding biodiversity and climate change issues and challenges.

Performance indicators

Receive reports from the Department on its implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao with respect to its regional operations within the Taranaki and Whanganui regions.