



Taranaki / Whanganui Conservation Board
(Te Tai Hau-ā-uru)

Annual Report 2011-2012

TARANAKI / WHANGANUI CONSERVATION BOARD
TE TAI HAU-Ā-URU

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**Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board Members
2011/2012**



From left to right: Barney Haami; Dave Digby; Louise Davies (Board Servicing Officer); Rex Hendry; Rachel Steele; Dr Christine Cheyne; Darryn Ratana (Chairperson)
Absent: Anne-Marie Broughton

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1. CONSERVANCY AMALGAMATION

In December 2010, the Department formally amalgamated the Tongariro/Taupo and Whanganui Conservancies to become the Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy.

Both the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board and Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board remain unaffected in this reporting year and continue to exist as separate bodies. The Minister of Conservation has however approved changes to their respective areas of jurisdiction to mirror boundary changes made in the conservancy amalgamation and these became effective 1 July 2011.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE TARANAKI/WHANGANUI CONSERVATION BOARD

The Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board is an independent statutory body appointed by the Minister of Conservation. It was established by section 6L of the Conservation Act 1987.

The Board has the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the conservation management strategy (CMS) and conservation management plans (CMPs) for its region. As well as providing for interaction between the public and the Department of Conservation at the conservancy level, the Board also acts as an advocate for the protection of conservation values. Its prime role is to advise the Department and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA).

The functions of the Board are set out in Sections 6M of the Conservation Act 1987, and in the National Parks Act 1980 and the Reserves Act 1977.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

Following the changes made to the Board's area of jurisdiction in 2011, membership of the Board was reduced from nine to eight. Two of these appointments are statutory and selected in consultation with the Minister of Maori Affairs on the recommendations of the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board and the Taranaki Maori Trust Board.

Members of the Board are appointed for up to a three year term by the Minister of Conservation having regard to their experience, expertise and links with the local community including tangata whenua. Members may have knowledge of nature conservation, natural earth and marine sciences, cultural heritage, recreation, tourism, and Māori perspectives. This process ensures a diversity of experience and background and a spread across the main geographical and ecological zones within the board's area.

Appointed Members	Year Appointed	Home Location	Meetings Attended (5 held)
Darryn Ratana (Chair)	2005	Whanganui	5
Richard Steedman (Deputy Chair) ¹	2008	Taihape	2
Anne-Marie Broughton ²	2011	Whanganui	2
Dr Christine Cheyne	2004	Palmerston North	5
Dave Digby	2006	Stratford	5
Barney Haami	1998	Whanganui	2
Rex Hendry ³	2008	New Plymouth	3
Wikitoria Keenan ⁴	2009	New Plymouth	1
Donald McIntyre ⁵	2008	Inglewood	1
Rachel Steele	2005	Taumarunui	4

¹ Member appointed to Wellington Hawkes Bay Conservation Board in 2011 appointment round

² Newly appointed 19 September 2011

³ Absences due to temporary work in Antarctica

⁴ Resigned during reporting year

⁵ Term expired 31 August 2011

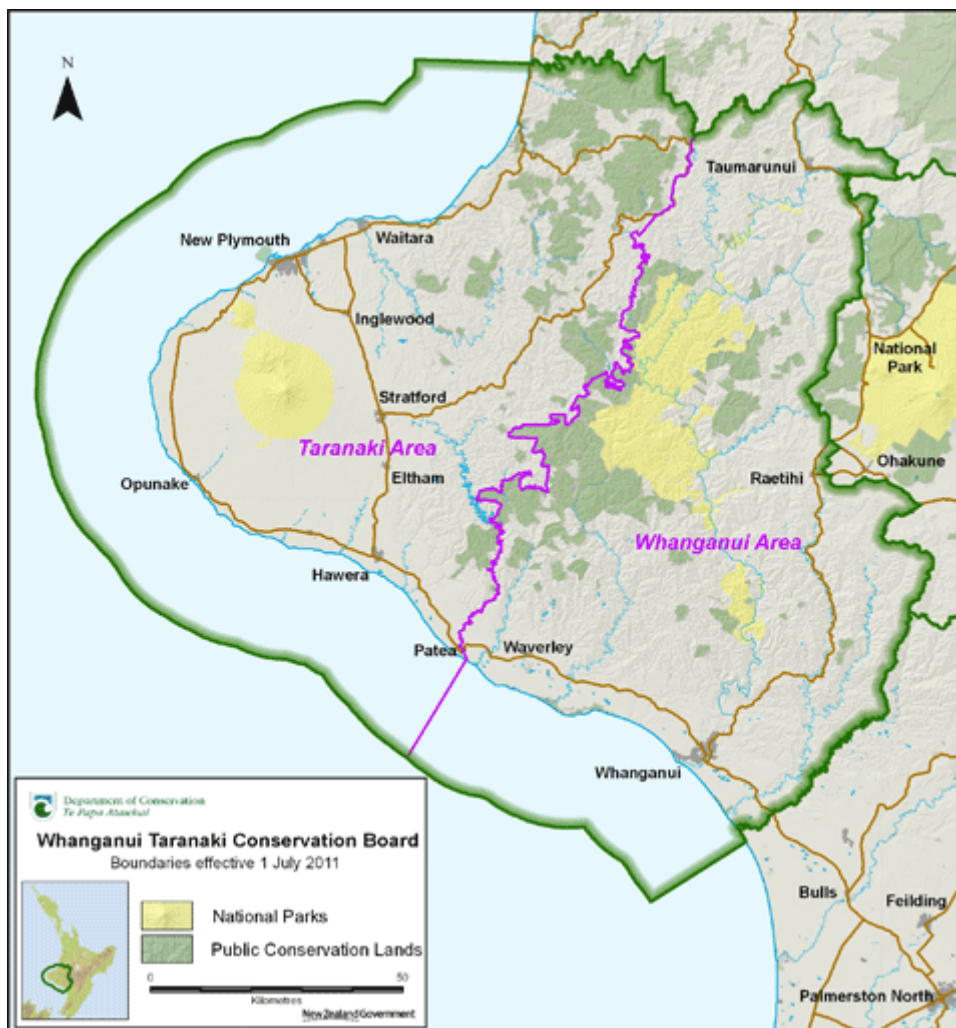
4. BOARD DISTRICT

4.1 The Board's area of responsibility covers the Department's boundaries for the Whanganui and Taranaki Areas within the greater Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy. It encompasses some 15,000 square km of land extending from the Mokau River in the north to the Turakina River in the south and inland to Ohura and Taumarunui (refer to the map). Approximately 298,000 hectares of public conservation land is administered by the Department which represents almost 20% of the total area of the Board's district.

In addition to a number of scenic, historic and recreational reserves, the district includes both the Egmont National Park 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 Paraninihi Marine Reserves as well as the long established Nga 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.



Map of Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board Area

5. BUDGET, FEES AND ALLOWANCES

The Board's budget for 2011/12 was \$18,000. Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Travelling Allowances Act 1951. Board members are paid a daily meeting fee of \$140 and the chairperson receives a daily meeting fee of \$190. Members may be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses incurred while engaged on Board business.

6. BOARD MEETINGS AND INSPECTIONS

As in previous years the Board has continued to alternate Board meetings between Whanganui and other locations throughout the Board district to give local people the opportunity to attend meetings and raise any issues. There is time set aside at the start of each Board meeting for a public forum that allows Board members to become familiar with local conservation issues. The relevant DOC Area Manager provides Board members with a briefing on work undertaken as well as any current issues in the area where the Board meeting is held. This enables the Board to gain a greater understanding of the Department's work in the field and an opportunity to meet field staff.

Wherever possible, the Board implemented its policy of focusing meetings, and any associated field inspections, around a strategic theme related to key conservation issues agreed by the Board for its reporting year. Guest speakers were invited to provide the Board members with a range of views on the conservation issue.

The Board scheduled four formal meetings and one extraordinary meeting for the report period. A combined workshop and field inspection with Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board was scheduled to coincide with one of the meetings. The meetings were as follows:

Date of Meeting	Meeting Venue	Location
9 September 2011	Whanganui Conservancy Office	Whanganui
18 November 2011	Whanganui Conservancy Office	Whanganui
2 December 2011	Kaitieke Hall	Owhango
16 March 2012	Taranaki Regional Council Main Office	Stratford
8 June 2012	Whanganui Conservancy Office	Whanganui

Field Inspections

The Board regards inspections as an important part of exercising its functions because they provide opportunities to discuss management issues on site and share ideas with Department staff. Wherever possible, field inspections are arranged to coincide with topical conservation issues so that the Board can be provided with relevant background information.

Saturday, 3 December 2011: Members from both the Taranaki/Whanganui and Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Boards met at Kaitieke for a joint board discussion. An informal evening presentation was given by local conservationist/farmer Dan Steele, on his natural and historic restoration project for private land adjoining the Whanganui National Park. With the two-day meeting themed around recreation and enhancing public access to the outdoors, board members conducted a site visit of the Bridge to Nowhere and were provided with a history of the Mangapurua settlement. In addition to input from Conservancy and Area staff, local concessionaires updated board members on the recreational opportunities available in and around Whanganui National Park and how they have benefitted local business.



Area Manager Nic Peet with members of both boards at the Bridge to Nowhere Photo: DOC

New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) Visit

The Board welcomed the Authority's decision to schedule a meeting and field visit to Whanganui over the period 9-10 February 2012 so that it could formally receive the draft Whanganui National Park Management Plan for its approval.

In recognition of the importance of this task and the kaitiaki role of Whanganui River iwi, the Authority chose to support the Board and travel to Pipiriki to receive the Plan at Paraweka marae. Presentations were received from the Chair of the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board, the Chair of the Board, the Conservator and the Area Manager. The presentation was attended by local iwi, departmental staff, the Mayor of Wanganui District, the Deputy Mayor of Ruapehu District, board members and the general public.

The Authority spent the night at Tieke Kainga having been welcomed by Te Whanau o Tieke, and conducted a field visit to the Bridge to Nowhere the following day. The Board was gratified with the Authority's positive feedback and agreed that the discussions and fieldtrip gave the Authority members a great introduction to this special place and the importance of the river to it.



Dr Kay Booth, Chair NZCA officially receives the Draft WNPMP from Darryn Ratana, Chair TWCB, flanked by Dr Nic Peet, Whanganui Area Manager and local kaumatua, Hokio Ngataierua-Tinirau and Bobby Gray. Photo: Connie Norgate

7. FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987

7.1 Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 states “This Act shall be so interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi”. As a board established under the Conservation Act 1987, section 4 applies to the Board in the discharge of its functions.

7.2 Functions of the Board

(a) Recommend the Conservation Management Strategy for approval

A conservation management strategy (CMS) is a 10-year statutory document that implements General Policy and establishes objectives for the management and protection of the natural and historic features and wildlife of the region, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes. Conservation Boards are actively involved in the preparation, review and amendment and approval of CMSs.

The current Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for the Whanganui Conservancy was approved in April 1997. Although work had been undertaken by the Board to prepare a new draft CMS for public notification, this was put on hold in 2009 pending the development of a national framework for CMSs. A new template was formally approved in late 2010.

Following the merge of the Tongariro Taupo Conservancy with Whanganui Conservancy in 2010, the Department proposed that one CMS was produced for the Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki (TWT) Conservancy that would manage the Taupō-nui-ā-Tia, Ruapehu, Whanganui and Taranaki Areas.

At its September 2011 meeting, the Board was advised of the Department's concerns in initiating a review of the TWT CMS until progress had been made for the development and implementation of a section incorporated in the Tongariro/Taupo CMS entitled *He Kaupapa Rangatira* (A Joint Initiative). The Board declined the Department's request to support a proposal to defer the TWT CMS Review asking that further information be made available.

The matter was discussed more fully at the Board's joint meeting with the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board in December 2011. As a consequence, and in the absence of a quorum, the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board agreed to support a request to the Minister of Conservation to defer the TWT CMS Review noting that the deferral would allow for progress of *He Kaupapa Rangatira* and further development of the conservation relationship with iwi groups throughout the conservancy.

At its March 2012 meeting, the Board formally endorsed the deferral, subject to the Board receiving a regular monitoring report on the progress and implementation of the *He Kaupapa Rangatira* section of the current Tongariro/Taupo CMS; and the development of a framework for conservation management within the rohes of Taranaki and Whanganui iwi.

(b) Approve Conservation Management Plans

The Board did not approve any conservation management plans, or their review and amendment, in this reporting period.

(c) Advise on the implementation of the Conservation Management Strategy and Conservation Management Plans

The Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board trialled a new model of CMS monitoring during the reporting period that involves a system of monitoring categories and places within the CMS on a three yearly reporting cycle. The board was briefed on four sections of the CMS as follows:

- *Moawhango*

In implementing a number of management objectives for the Moawhango Ecological District the Department continues to successfully build and strengthen relationships with key stakeholders including local iwi, New Zealand Defence Force, and Horizons Regional Council.

The Board commended the Department on its performance in implementing the objectives and is mindful that the Whanganui CMS contains a complex set of objectives for this place. It was agreed that only minor improvements may be needed as the broad themes remain quite strong and do not need changing for this district.

- *Enhancing Public Access to the Outdoors*

The Board noted that a number of CMS outcomes have not yet been achieved but acknowledged that recreation work is on-going and a joint CMS for the conservancy could help to progress this.



Transportation of mountain bikes via jet-boat on the Whanganui River Photo: DOC

It was considered that the next CMS place some emphasis on any areas for risk improvement and more focus be given to cultural impacts and/or perspectives. Although acknowledging that the current Whanganui CMS is dated, the Board noted that any review would need to reflect recent trends for recreation including mountain biking, recreation cycle rides and its future proofing, as well as the emergence of new potential forms of recreation as identified jointly with key stakeholders and other interested groups.

The Board commented that recreation cannot be viewed in isolation from the Board's other statutory responsibilities especially Treaty and conservation protection of natural heritage. It stressed the importance of investing long-term in monitoring the impact of recreation on ecosystems and ensuring that ecosystems are enhanced and not compromised by recreation developments.

- *Marine/Coastal*

The Board considered that good progress had been made in respect of managing marine reserves, marine mammals and the coastal environment and was impressed with the innovative approach that staff had taken to finding affordable solutions for monitoring marine life. The Board noted the high level of skill and expertise evident within the Department noting that there is a need to ensure that this knowledge base is retained and expanded.



Photo: S. Martin

In addition to addressing the Board's concerns regarding a number of subjective measuring tools, it was recommended that the Department request the Board's assistance with coastal plan development and resource consent processes. Although commending the good level of collaboration that currently exists between the Department and other agencies, the Board also recommended that the Department continue to improve its engagement with local stakeholders.

The Board continues to hold a high level of concern for the endangered Hector's and Maui's dolphin and resolved to support the proposed interim and long-term measures for their protection.

- *Threat Management*

CMS monitoring outcomes for threat management provided mixed results with regard to pest control. The Board noted that the Department appeared to be falling behind on deer and pig control but was currently holding its ground on possum control although it warned that the Department could not afford to let up in this area. The Board advised that pressure be maintained on mastelid and goat control.

The Board recommended that the Department continue to work with regional councils, the Animal Health Board, iwi, and private landowners to get the best value for pest control. Overall it was considered that implementation of the CMS was working well however was difficult to measure against the CMS outcomes.

In addition to the monitoring reports, the Board is provided with a Conservator's report that gives a brief overview of work being performed and improvements/changes made and completed throughout the conservancy. The Board is also provided with a presentation from the relevant Area Manager at its meetings.

Other Departmental staff and guest speakers are invited to give presentations to the Board. The Board received the following presentations for this reporting period:

September 2011

- Support Services Review
- Destination Management Framework

November 2011

- Draft Whanganui National Park Management Plan

December 2011

- Recreational use by local communities (*Guest speaker*)
- Kia Wharite
- Natural restoration on private land adjoining Whanganui National Park (*Guest speaker*)

March 2012

- Freedom Camping Consultation
- Government's interim proposal to further protect Maui's dolphins
- Tatu Exploration Drilling Access Arrangement

June 2012

- National Cycleways in TWT Conservancy Progress Report
- Beehive Concessions in Whanganui Area

The Board is grateful for the time and effort staff and guest speakers put into preparing and delivering these very informative presentations.

(d) (i) Advise on any proposed change of status or classification

There were no proposed changes of status or classification of any area of national or international importance within the reporting year.

(ii) Advise on any other conservation matters

Maui's dolphins

In April 2012, the Board provided feedback to the Minister of Conservation on the proposed interim extension of the West Coast North Island Marine Mammal Sanctuary and an extension of the seismic survey regulations within the sanctuary. As well as strongly supporting interim and long-term measures to protect Hector's and Maui's dolphins the Board also requested that the review of the Threat Management Plan for these dolphins be completed as a matter of urgency.

Review of the Crown Minerals Act 1991 Regime

Following on from previous submissions regarding the review of the Crown Minerals Act (CMA) 1991 and the Schedule 4 stocktake, the Board provided feedback on a further CMA Regime discussion paper in April 2012. In its submission the Board reiterated the need to recognise the ecosystem services and related benefits (e.g. tourism earnings) associated with conservation of New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity in the conservation estate.

(e) Advise on walkways

The Board formerly had the function of advising the Conservation Authority and the Director-General on proposals for new walkways. This function was repealed by section 82 of the Walking Access Act 2008.

(f) Liaison with Fish and Game Council

Liaison has been maintained with the local Fish and Game Council through an exchange of agendas and minutes of meetings. A representative from Taranaki Fish & Game attended the December & June meetings. There were no matters arising from the liaison which required direct Board input.

(g) Ministerial delegations

The Minister did not delegate any ministerial powers or functions to the Board during the reporting period.

8. Powers of Boards

(a) Advocacy

The Board considers it has an important role to play in:

- Information sharing with iwi authorities
- Promoting public understanding of and fostering support for the protection of the natural and historic heritage of New Zealand
- Raising public awareness of conservation boards and their roles, through meeting members of the public and representatives from other agencies and groups
- Making submissions on issues relevant to the Board.

Treaty/Iwi Relationships

The Board has a statutory requirement to include members who can represent Taranaki and Whanganui iwi. As well as this, several Board members have iwi affiliations with one current member also appointed to the regional forum of Taranaki iwi. These connections play a vital role in improving the Boards understanding of iwi perspectives.

Progress in Treaty settlement negotiations continues within the area covered by the Board with four iwi (Te Atiawa, Taranaki, Nga Ruahine, Whanganui River). The Waitangi Tribunal is currently preparing its report on the Whanganui land claim.

Deeds of settlement have been completed for Ngati Tama, Ngati Mutunga, Nga Rauru, Nga Ruahine and Ngati Apa.

Tapuae Marine Reserve Advisory Committee

In February 2010 the Minister of Conservation approved the establishment of an advisory committee for Tapuae Marine Reserve under section 56 of the Conservation Act 1987. Further, the Minister agreed that the advisory committee would consist of 7 members via nominations from local iwi, fishing groups, the Taranaki Regional Council, and the Board.

Due to concern regarding appropriate tangata whenua representation on the advisory committee, and in response to the Board's request, the Department conducted further consultation on the number and composition of the Tapuae Marine Reserve Advisory Committee. A nomination process was consequently initiated during the reporting year.

Submissions

The Board has provided comment on discussion documents from other Government organisations and statutory plans developed by territorial authorities and regional councils. During the report period the Board made a submission on the following document:

Regional Public Transport Plan for Taranaki 2012-2022 – Taranaki Regional Council

The Board supported the intent of the Transport Plan and endorsed any development that would integrate the various modes of transport and encourage stronger use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Draft Long-Term Plan 2012-2022 – Horizons Regional Council

The Board strongly advocated for continued, and adequate, funding for programmes such as Kia Wharite and waterway (run-off) management, that provides significant benefits for indigenous biodiversity. In its submission the Board also supported the Sustainable Land Use Initiative; coastal environment management goals; funding for the Whanganui Catchment Strategy and the Living Heritage Activity with reservations expressed regarding the emphasis given to flood protection.

(b) Establishment of Committees

The Conservation Act enables the Board to establish committees and delegate to them functions and powers. The committees active during the reporting period were:

- *Marine* Darryn Ratana, Rex Hendry
- *CMS* Darryn Ratana, Christine Cheyne, Rex Hendry, Rachel Steele
- *Whanganui National Park Management Plan Review* Darryn Ratana, Rachel Steele, Anne-Marie Broughton
- *Statutory Planning* Christine Cheyne
- *Biodiversity* Darryn Ratana, Rachel Steele
- *Section 4* Barney Haami
- *Concessions* Darryn Ratana, Rex Hendry, Barney Haami

Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

In accordance with the Ngati Tama Claim Settlement Act 2003, the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was established under the Act to advise on the management of Whitecliffs and other nearby conservation areas, including Parininihi Marine Reserve. JAC committee members include representatives from Ngati Tama, the Department of Conservation and the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board.

Following the gazettal of Parininihi Marine Reserve in September 2006, the JAC was delegated the Board's power to approve, review or amend any conservation management plans for the reserve, in accordance with section 6N(2)(b) of the Conservation Act 1987. In its August 2007 meeting, the Board resolved that the JAC be the governing body for the Parininihi Marine Reserve (a preferred choice of Ngati Tama), rather than establishing a separate marine reserve committee.

9. FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1980

(a) Recommend National Park Management Plans, Reviews or Amendments

The review process for the Whanganui National Park Management Plan (the Plan) formally commenced on 28 July 2003 and the original draft was notified in 2006.

The review attracted 74 submissions from numerous parties including the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board, Tamahaki Incorporated Society and Ngati Hauaroa. All submissions were considered during 2006-2007 except those relating to Whanganui iwi with whom consultation was ongoing.

During consultation in late 2008, tangata whenua indicated that they wanted iwi issues to be more prominent in the front of the document. Changes included articulating the iwi aspiration regarding the concept of a Maori National Park and the need for both the Department and tangata whenua to better understand this aspiration and also the need to identify and share values and principles in relation to the national park. These aspirations were shared by the Board at its meeting with tangata whenua in April 2009.

In 2009 a new forum of Whanganui iwi was constituted and the Board agreed further consultation with the forum would be desirable. Following further collaboration on text a formal response was received in September 2011 from Whanganui River Iwi in support of the changes made to the Plan.

At its extraordinary meeting held in November 2011, the Board endorsed all recommended changes to the Plan and resolved that it be forwarded to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) for approval.

The Board was pleased to be able to host a visit by the NZCA over the period 9-10 February 2012 when a formal presentation of the draft WNPMP was made to the NZCA by representatives of the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board, the Department, and the Board.

At its meeting of June 2012, the Board was advised that its WNPMP Committee had met with representatives of the Department to consider and endorse a number of editing changes and to respond to feedback and comments made by NZCA on the Plan. Following formal review by the Minister of Conservation, it is anticipated that the Plan will be formally endorsed by the NZCA at its meeting in August 2012.

(b) Have special regard in respect to Whanganui National Park

In its September 2011 meeting, a statement was tabled on behalf of the Tupuna Rohe Chairs and Whanganui River Maori Trust Board in support of the changes to the Plan which enhance the relationship between the Department and Whanganui River Iwi. The statement outlined their acknowledgement of engagement with the Department regarding the drafting of the Plan and noted the shared commitment to identify key values and principles for Whanganui National Park, and to continue to strengthen the working relationships with particular regard to governance and management of Te Pu Wao Nui (Whanganui National Park).

Both the Whanganui River Maori Trust Board and the Board's Whanganui National Park Management Plan Committee reviewed and confirmed policy changes made to chapters 1 and 2 of the Plan in November 2011 regarding references to future Treaty of Waitangi settlements in the draft, ensuring that they were in the scope of existing legislation.

Although noting the protracted nature of the Plan's progress, the Board agreed that it had enabled both iwi and the Department to develop a mutually agreeable approach to drafting the first two chapters (within existing legislation) and had satisfied the Board's requirements under s30 (2) of the National Parks Act.



Members of the NZCA are farewelled from Tieke Kainga February 2012 Photo: K Edwards

10. RESERVES ACT 1977

There were no matters raised under the Reserves Act 1977 that required consultation with the Board during the reporting year.

11. LIAISON

All Board members receive the minutes of NZCA meetings and Ian Buchanan has been appointed as liaison member. The Board is very grateful to Catherine Tudhope and Katrina Edwards, Statutory Bodies Officers, for keeping regular contact with the Board.

The Board has continued liaison with adjoining Conservation Boards through an exchange of minutes and shared correspondence on matters of national importance. As a result of the amalgamation and a need to discuss whole of conservancy outcomes, the Board Chairs from both the Tongariro/Taupou and Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board have a reciprocal agreement to attend meetings.

Board members liaised with a number of individuals, groups and organisations throughout the reporting period. This liaison is seen as a very important way of providing an interface with the community. Board members were given the opportunity to report back at each board meeting.

Liaison included:

Anne-Marie Broughton	•
Christine Cheyne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Network Manawatu • Manawatu Forest and Bird • Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club
Dave Digby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Taranaki Forest & Bird • Stratford Tramping Club • Mountain Safety – Taranaki
Barney Haami	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tamaupoko Link (Chairperson) • Tupoho Whanau Trust • Tamahaki Inc. • Ngati Rangi Trust • Hinengakau Development Trust • Whanganui River Maori Trust Board • Whanganui Maori Regional Tourism Organisation • Maori Sector of Regional Partnership Programme (Whanganui, Rangitikei, Ruapehu District Councils)
Rex Hendry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand Alpine Club & Advocacy Committee • New Zealand Recreation Association • Taranaki Regional Transport Committee • Taranaki Land Search & Rescue (Search Manager) • Western Institute of Technology (WITT) Board • LandSAR NZ (National Director)
Wikitoria Keenan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Te Atiawa Iwi Authority • Te Atiawa (Taranaki) Settlements Trust • Taranaki Iwi Chairs Forum • Taranaki Maori Trust Board • Puke Ariki Land Trust • Ngati Te Whiti Ahi Kaa Trust
Darryn Ratana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nga Rauru Iwi Authority • Taranaki Iwi Chairs Forum
Rachel Steele	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaimanawa Wild Horse Advisory Committee • Taupo Forest & Bird

Members of the public were provided with an opportunity to raise issues with the Board via letters, and/or public forums at each Board meeting. None were raised during the reporting period.

12. Chairperson's Comment

Having reflected on my comments in last year's annual report regarding flux of change, I am deeply disappointed to find little improvement over 2011/12.

An amalgamation of both the Tongariro/Taupo and Whanganui Conservancies in July 2010 was followed closely by the announcement of a national Organisational and Support Services Review in 2011 which has resulted in over 100 job losses in order to find efficiencies within the Department.

Regretfully this impacted severely upon the Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki (TWT) Conservancy which took a hit of 1/5 of the total jobs lost nationally (24 in total for TWT) through a mix of redundancy and staff positions moving into shared service centres in Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch.

The Board has also been advised that the Department will shortly be undertaking a project that is to focus on the Department's conservation delivery operations. This is as a result of the Department being expected to find savings of \$11.6 million for the 2012/13 year and meet a baseline reduction of \$8.7 million per year from

2013/14 onwards. Although the Board was assured that the primary focus will be on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its front-line services, it remains to be seen the level to which staff numbers are impacted upon.

We continue to hold very grave concerns for the ability of the Department to maintain, let alone grow conservation values in the immediate and long-term future and have advocated as such to the Minister of Conservation. Yet again!! Although we applaud the Department's shift of focus to get more people involved in conservation, we also hold our collective breath that its aim to achieve increasing conservation results through building conservation with business, community, and iwi groups will find some immediate and long-term traction.

In addition to the loss of experienced technical specialists from TWT through a redistribution of roles, the organisational restructure has seen the Conservancy Office relocated to Taupo effective 1 July 2012. Along with other key stakeholders of the Department, and indeed the wider business community, I am deeply disappointed that we have lost yet another regional office from Whanganui.

Once again, the Board re-iterates its congratulations to all Departmental staff for their ongoing commitment and drive to conservation work in the face of such adversity.

On a far more positive note the Board was extremely proud to have hosted members of the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) in February 2012 in order to formally receive the draft Whanganui National Park Management Plan (WNPMP) for its approval – the final step in its very protracted journey of development.

In recognition of the importance of this task and the kaitiaki role of Whanganui River iwi recognised specifically in the National Parks Act 1980, the NZCA chose to support the Board and travel to Pipiriki to receive the Plan at Paraweka Marae.

A collaborative desire by members of the Board, Department, and Whanganui iwi was to immerse members of the Authority into Whanganui National Park and imbue them with the knowledge that the Park is a living, cultural and recreational landscape. A number of things happened over the two days that we hosted the NZCA that could not have been scripted which only added to the positive feedback that I have since received from all parties.

It was with deep satisfaction therefore that the Board received news that the Plan had passed its final hurdles and was to be finally approved at the Authority's meeting of 9 August 2012. The Minister of Conservation, Hon. Kate Wilkinson, and the NZCA Chair, Dr Kay Booth, joined with departmental staff and tangata whenua in Whanganui the following day to celebrate its approval.

This Plan is the culmination of many years of work and with input by numerous people. Although the process was prolonged, I am confident that the new Plan is a model for what can be achieved through shared vision and appropriate consultation. My sincere congratulations to all who played a part in its development, and who will continue to do so in its implementation.

I particularly look forward to the continued collaboration between the Department and Iwi to discuss their aspirations for the Whanganui National Park including the concept of a "Maori National Park" and the subsequent development of a monitoring framework that is able to assess the Park's overall wellbeing – including its cultural and spiritual wellbeing.

Acknowledgements

Following the 2011 round of board appointments, we welcomed Anne-Marie Broughton and farewelled Donald McIntyre and Deputy Chair, Richard Steedman.

Given the changes to conservation board boundaries in the 2011 realignment which included Richard's role of interest, it was great to see Richard appointed to our neighbouring Wellington Hawkes Bay Conservation Board. We have also farewelled Wiki Keenan during the year who has resigned due to her iwi commitments in Taranaki. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Donald, Richard and Wiki for their commitment to conservation during their tenure on the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board.

On a similar note, I also extend my thanks to the remaining members of the Board. I commend them all for their continued commitment of time, drive, and energy to Board matters. Their ability to advocate and liaise for and with, their community groups will be integral to the Department's new direction.

My thanks also to the team within the Statutory Bodies Unit – Catherine and Katrina for their continued advice and support. As well as recognising all staff who, over many years, have had a part to play in the development of the WNPMP, special kudos go to Catherine Tudhope for her invaluable knowledge of statutory requirements and (in this case) management plans, and a keen eye for errors!

The Board extends its gratitude to Damian Coutts, Conservator, and his team of staff throughout the Conservancy, as well as guest speakers, who have provided timely assistance and advice throughout the year, despite the upheaval for a number of conservancy staff due to the Shared Services Review. Lastly, my thanks to Louise Davies (Board Support Officer) for her administrative support throughout the year.



Darryn Ratana
Chairperson
August 2012

The Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board adopted this report on 7 September 2012



Members of the Taranaki/Whanganui & Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Boards met with Whanganui Area staff in December 2011 to inspect the recently installed interpretation panels at the Bridge to Nowhere.