

# Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board Annual Report 2023 – 2024



Field trip in Taranaki with the New Zealand Conservation Authority – April 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:  
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## 1. Chairperson's Report

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I oreā te tuatara ka puta ki waho  
A problem is solved by continuing to find solutions

As Chair of the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board, I am pleased to present our Annual Report for the 2023/2024 year.

I am grateful to the Board for continuing to entrust me with the role of Chair during the 2023/2024 year. This year has been one of necessary reflection and reassessment for our Conservation Board as we faced significant resource constraints that limited our ability to progress our statutory responsibilities, particularly working towards a review of the Wanganui Conservation Management Strategy. While this affected our planned work program, we looked to strengthen our working relationship with the Department of Conservation to better understand our roles and mutual expectations. We also used this time to build on connections with our neighbouring Conservation Boards, laying the groundwork for future collaborative approaches.

The Board continued its other statutory responsibilities within both the Taranaki and Whanganui regions, maintaining oversight of conservation matters across our diverse landscapes, from Mount Taranaki to the Whanganui River, our coastal areas and forests. Despite the constraints, we maintained connections with iwi partners, stakeholders, and our communities, while realigning our expectations and approach for the coming years. Several significant engagements marked our year, including participating in the New Zealand Conservation Authority meeting in New Plymouth, which provided valuable opportunities for direct dialogue about our region's conservation priorities.

Our Board's involvement with the Conservation Boards Chairs working group, established by the Director General of Conservation, gave insights into the direction of the statutory planning workspace within the Department. A notable highlight was our briefing with our neighbouring Board regarding Te Kōpuka nā Te Awa Tupua, the Te Awa Tupua strategy, strengthening our collective understanding of this important kaupapa. We also witnessed an historic milestone with the initialling of Te Ruruku Pūtakerongo, the Taranaki Maunga Collective Redress Deed, marking a significant step forward in the recognition of mana whenua relationships with Taranaki Maunga.

The year has not been without its challenges. As with other Conservation Boards, we observed a broader trend of reduced engagement due to the lack of ability to progress our statutory responsibilities which are a key driver for every board member. This prompted us to focus on strengthening our core relationships with the Department and community but also required us to adjust our expectations and work plan.

We wish to acknowledge Te Aorangi Dillon, who concluded her term on the Board in 2024. Since joining us in 2021, Te Aorangi's dedication to conservation and her ability to bridge different viewpoints has strengthened our Board's work. Her wisdom and considered approach to our responsibilities will be missed, and we are grateful for her service to conservation in our rohe.

Our relationship with the Department of Conservation has deepened this year, particularly through increased engagement with the Whanganui office and Operations Directors. Their support and willingness to work collaboratively with the Board has been valuable in maintaining momentum during a year of adjustment.

We have also benefited from enhanced collaboration with our neighbouring Conservation Boards, with productive liaison work undertaken with the Wellington Conservation Board, the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board, and the Waikato Conservation Board. These connections have provided valuable perspectives and opportunities for sharing approaches to common challenges across our regional boundaries.

Looking ahead, we anticipate significant engagement with the conservation law reform process and its potential implications for Conservation Boards' roles and responsibilities. We are committed to increasing our community advocacy work within our rohe, with a renewed focus on getting out into our communities and engaging in direct dialogue about conservation matters that affect them. Additionally, we will strengthen our oversight of the Department's strategic objectives, ensuring robust monitoring of these objectives within our current statutory plans. This focused approach will help ensure our Board continues to add value while operating effectively within our current resource limitations.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to all Board members for their continued dedication and contributions during this year of adjustment. Your commitment to conservation within our rohe, despite the challenges we've faced, has been commendable. To the communities of Taranaki and Whanganui - thank you for your ongoing interest in and support of conservation in our regions. We look forward to increasing our engagement with you in the coming year as we work together to protect and enhance the natural and cultural heritage that makes our rohe so special.

Nāku noa, nā



Drew Castle  
Chair, Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board



## 2. Introduction

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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 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 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.

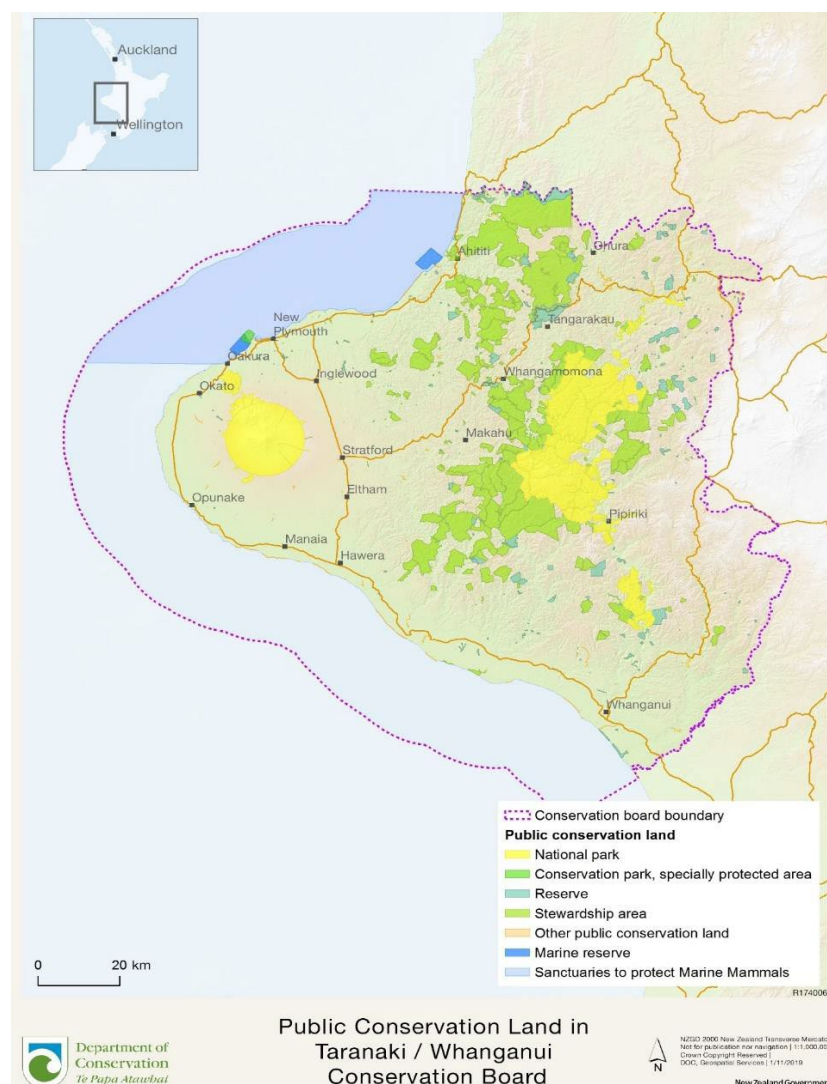


Figure 1: Public Conservation Land in Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board

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

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

### 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**

Whitau 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

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### 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
Plimmer, Nicholas	New Plymouth	01/07/2023	30/06/2026
Dillon, Te Aorangi	Hawera	01/07/2021	30/06/2024
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

## 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) is educated in Environmental Science and Geography and has experience in search and rescue. He also has an interest in a combination of indigenous knowledge systems and science, to address conservation issues.

### **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.

**Te Aorangi Dillon of Hāwera****Appointment term:** 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024

Aorangi (Ngāruahine, Ngāti Hāua, Okahu, Inuawai, Kanihi, Umutahi, Mōkai Pātea Nui Tona, Te Arawa, and Ngāti Rangitihi) is a social worker and a member of several Māori organisations, including iwi and hapū governance bodies, and the South Taranaki District Council Iwi Liaison Committee. She is actively involved in her community and has excellent relationship and interpersonal skills.

**Nicholas Plimmer of New Plymouth****Appointment Term:** 16 August 2023 to 30 June 2026

Nicholas has a strong legal background with a focus on environmental, resource management, and climate change law, alongside knowledge of issues facing the marine environment.

### 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 a joint hui with Tongariro Taupo on 22 February 2024.

**Table 2: Board meeting dates and location**

Board meeting date	Meeting location and venue
Friday 22 September 2023	DOC Whanganui Office
Friday 1 December 2023	Virtual Meeting, MS Teams
Friday 22 March 2024	DOC Whanganui Office
Friday 7 June 2024	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
*Plimmer, Nicholas	1/4

\* Resigned – 10 April 2024

### 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

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
21 March 2024	Gordon Park Scenic Reserve

The Board visited Gordon Park Scenic Reserve, welcomed by the Friends of Gordon Park and supported by DOC Whanganui Office team. The Board gained first-hand perspective of extensive conservation work undertaken at the native podocarp-hardwood forest over several years.



Gordon Park Scenic Reserve; image courtesy of Department of Conservation

#### **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**

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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**

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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 2023-2024

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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 rohe
- 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 rohe

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 rohe

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.

## **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.

