



Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board
Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro Taupo

**TONGARIRO TAUPO
CONSERVATION BOARD**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2016-2017**

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
Pursuant to Section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987
Serviced by the Department of Conservation
Taupo Office – PO Box 528 – Taupo 3351

Contents

1.0 Chairperson's report

2.0 Membership of The Board

3.0 The Board's Area

4.0 Board functions and activities

4.1 Board meeting summary

4.2 Fieldtrips highlights

4.3 Special events

5.0 Significant advocacy and statutory work undertaken by the Board

5.1 Statutory Processes

5.2 Strategic Planning

5.3 Policy

6.0 Community Activities supported by the Board

7.0 Advocacy

8.0 Liaison work

Acknowledgements:

1.0 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

John Bishara

Chairperson Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board

Ka tirohanga e au ki nga kokonga o tenei rohe. Kei reira nga hokai tapu o to tatou tupuna a Ngatoroirangi.

Kua puta te waiora mai te kopu o toku kuia, he wai tapu he wai ora, kei te takoto te whenua tapu na aitua, na tupua. Te Waonui o Tane, Ko Ikatere, Ko Haumiatiketike, Ko Rongomai nga kaitiaki.

Ko i a e, ara e!

I am pleased to introduce the 2016 2017 Annual Report for the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board.

I would firstly like to reflect on the significant national taonga the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board have responsibility for including:

- Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan
- Tongariro National Park Management Plan
- Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS)

The complexity of Treaty Settlements in the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board area has been evident this year with a number of significant negotiations progressed which have included the signing of the Ngati Tuwharetoa and Ngati Rangī Deeds of Settlement. Kahui Maunga negotiations are scheduled to commence within twelve months of the Ngati Tuwharetoa signing and the Board will be taking an active interest in this kaupapa as it develops over the period.

A key focus for the year has been the partial review of the Tongariro National Park Management Plan which was ably led by Mike Britton as chair of the Statutory Planning and Policy sub-committee. This work was largely completed within the 2016/17 year and prepared for presentation to the NZ Conservation Authority for consideration. Development of the Rangitikei Manawatu Economic Development Plan by Ruapehu District Council has occurred concurrently with this and there are overlapping interests between these initiatives.

Another key piece of the Board's work related to the re-licencing of the Turoa Ski Field by Ruapehu Alpine Lifts. This work involved a robust review of key documents in order to provide the Board's view on this application as it related to key planning documents and was led by Laurie Burdett. The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board has a key role in providing a community perspective for the Department of Conservation (Te Papa Atawhai) and its advice around how to manage some of the pressing issues within the region, in particular in response to growing tourism pressures.

This year has seen the embedding of the Department's new structure and greater stability of staff which has been well received by the Board, and provided renewed trust and confidence in our ability to address and complete tasks. The leadership of Meirene Hardy-Birch as CNI Operations Director in particular has been appreciated and ably supported in the interim by Allan Munn in her absence. On behalf of my fellow Board Members, I would also like to thank our Department staff for their constructive contribution in assisting the Board throughout the year.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board Members for their valuable contributions, tireless service and commitment during the year and pay special tribute to retiring member Geoff 'Snow' Rameka for his manaakitanga, matauranga and tautoko to the work of the Board.

Particular acknowledgement must be extended to Colin Paton as a former Board member who passed away earlier this year. Colin was a passionate supporter and advocate of conservation and recreation in the Taupo area and made a valuable contribution to the Board during his tenure. *Moe mai ra e te rangatira... Haere, haere, haere!*



I hope you will find the following reports valuable in providing a broad sense of the activities and initiatives that are occurring across the Tongariro Taupō region. I encourage you to follow up on anything about which you would like more detail by looking at the various newsletters, articles and reports that are available on the web page www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/conservation-boards/tongariro-Taupō/, many of which are referenced throughout this report.

Nō reira
Tēnā tātou katoa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Bishara', is written on the page.

John Bishara
Chairperson Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board

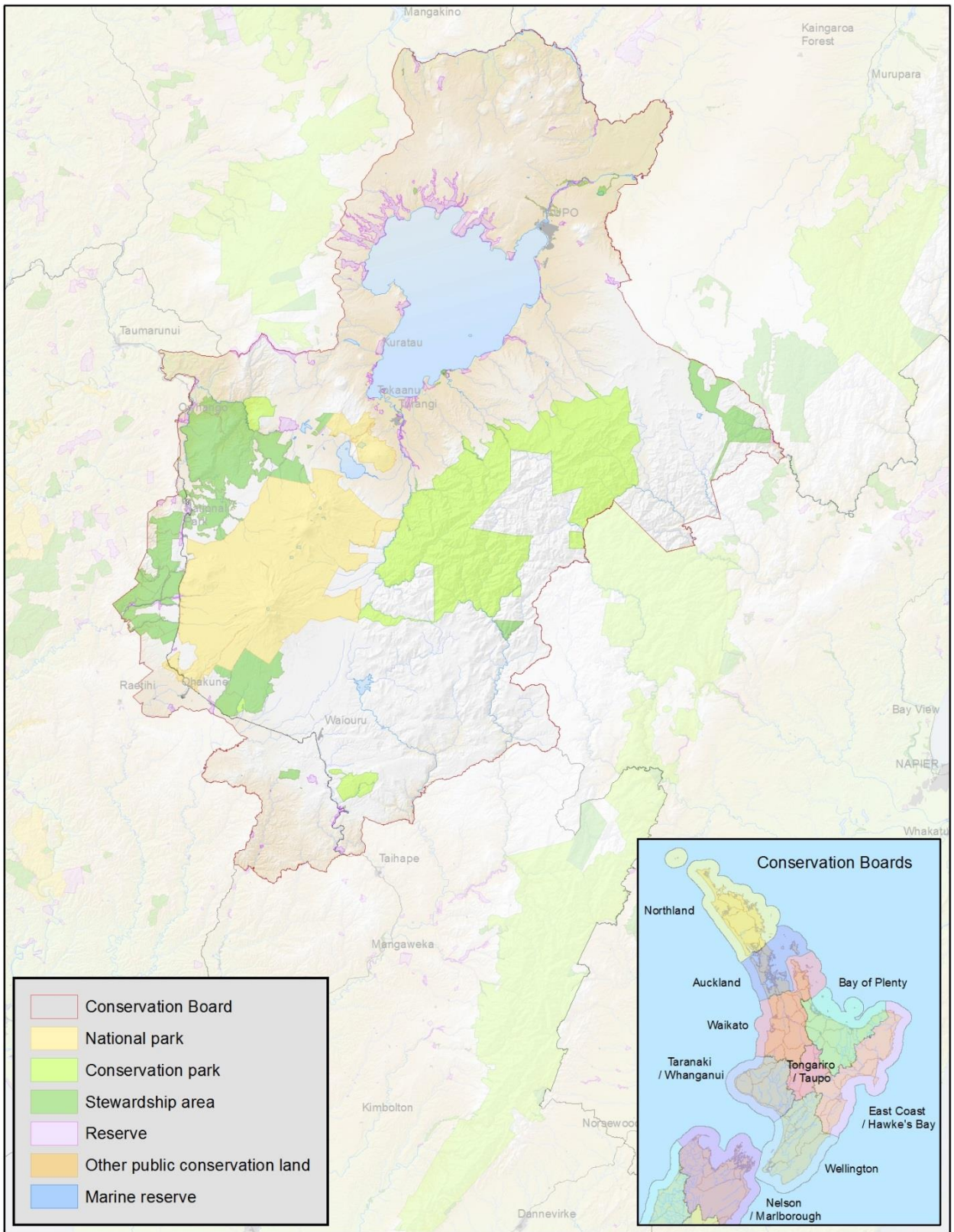
2.0 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

This year we have two new members joining the Board, being Annaka Davis and Tracy Puklowski. These Board members brought particular skill and expertise in policy development, Fish & Game interests and Visitor Experiences.

Members continue to provide representation for their respective communities and share community aspirations and challenges.

A summary of the Board membership and meeting attendance during the report period was as follows:

Board Member	Home location	Board meetings	Liaison meeting, functions	Special meetings
John Bishara (Chair)	Turangi	4	1	1
Mike Britton (Deputy Chair)	Wellington	5	1	1
Laurie Burdett	Taupō	5	1	1
Geoff 'Snow' Rameka	Taupō	2	0	0
Sir Tumu Te Heuheu	Turangi	0	0	0
Te Ngaehe Wanikau	Turangi	2	1	0
Peter Zimmer	Ōwhango	5	1	1
Annaka Davis	Taupō	3	1	0
Tracy Puklowski	Waiouru	3	0	1



Tongariro / Taupo Conservation Board

3.0 THE BOARD'S AREA

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board area is dominated by major landscape features with Lake Taupō forming the headwaters of the Waikato River. This expansive body of water has tributaries which are in large part fed by the mountains that hold centre stage in the region, Mt Ruapehu, Mt Ngauruhoe and Mt Tongariro. The mountains and their slopes form the core of the Tongariro National Park, which is New Zealand's first national park and only dual World Heritage site. Areas to the east including the Kaimanawa Forest Park and adjoining rugged mountain ranges which remain more remote, containing giant podocarp and beech forests, clear rivers and rare wildlife. The Tongariro Forest Park is located just northwest of the park and is home to a national whio security site and a North Island brown kiwi sanctuary. On the western side of the National Park, the Ruapehu Conservation Area consists of the Erua Forest and Southern Tongariro Forest. The largest population of short tail bats in New Zealand is found in the Rangataua Conservation Area near to the township of Ohakune on Mt Ruapehu's southern slopes.

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing continues to be one of the most traversed alpine tracks in the world with a significant international audience creating unique management challenges for the Department, the Board, communities, and Iwi. Board members provide a community perspective to these issues, bringing great passion and personal knowledge to their advocacy and statutory role in partnership with the Department of Conservation (Te Papa Atawhai), Iwi, communities, and business in looking after these unique and iconic places.

To the north of Lake Taupō, there are five geothermal power-stations, and until recent years, vast forest plantations covered the landscape. Large scale dairy conversions have changed the horizon and have created a new set of dynamics for the regions waterways. The iconic Huka Falls attracts hundreds of thousand visitors to this natural feature each year.

Business has collaborated with community and the Department to develop a kiwi, takahē, and falcon sanctuary within the Wairakei Golf Course. These collaborative efforts provide unique opportunities especially for young people to have encounters with New Zealand's special wildlife.

4.0 BOARD FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

4.1 Board Meetings summary

Meeting date	Meeting Venue
8 July 2016	Te Kahukura o Tanemahuta Whare, Taupō
2 September 2016	Ruapehu Community Learning & Tech Hub, Ohakune
17 November 2016	Te Kahukura o Tanemahuta Whare, Taupō
22 February 2017	Te Whare Aronui o Tuwharetoa, Turangi
19 May 2017	Te Kahukura o Tanemahuta Whare, Taupō

4.2 Fieldtrips highlights

Field Trip date	Field Trip Destinations
1 & 2 September 2016	Ngati Rangi Marae & Turoa Ski Field/Ohakune Pathway Site (check spelling in minutes) Ruapehu Community Learning & Tech Hub - Ohakune
23 February 2017	Kaimanawa Forest Park

Field Trip Report – 1st & 2nd September 2016

The Board visited the Turoa ski field where Hon Nicky Wagner met with the board and representatives from Ngati Rangi, Department Staff and Raupehu Alpine Lifts RAL staff.

Dave Mazey of RAL presented an overview of the Ski Field's operations and Julian Tovey of the Department gave a presentation on the proposed Turoa to Ohakune and Horopito walking and cycling trail. The board had an opportunity to visit a portion of this walkway as part of the field trip.

The board returned to Maungaronga Marae to receive a presentation from Ngati Rangi on their aspirations, Visions, Mission and Values.

The board heard about the history of the Marae's whakapapa and spend the night in the whare.

Field Trip Report – Kaimanawa Forest Park

Following the February meeting, members of the Board were hosted by Central Plateau Operations Manager, Dave Lumley, to take part in a field trip to Kaimanawa Forest Park to familiarise themselves with this area. On the way, the first point of call was the whio creche at the Turangi Trout Centre where they were able to experience young whio in the enclosures where they were being readied for release.

The Board then headed to the southern part of the Kaimanawa Forest to visit campsites off Kaimanawa Road and in particular, Waikoko campsite to look at the impacts of the significant increase of freedom campers at this site. This generated good discussion amongst the Board as to how better management of these areas can be implemented.

The Board then travelled to the northern part of the Kaimanawa Forest which included a trip across Poronui Station, a privately-owned area adjoining the park which has a dual function as an operating farm and high end tourism venture.

The Board continued on through Clements Road to Te Iringa carpark to get a sense of the impact of browsing species on the forest.

Our final site visit of the day was at Five Mile Bay where the Board was, again, provided the opportunity to view the significant impact of increase of freedom campers and associated issues that result from this activity.

5.0 SIGNIFICANT ADVOCACY AND STATUTORY WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE BOARD BY COMMITTEE

5.1 Statutory Planning

- **Tongariro NP Partial Review**

A significant task for the Board during the 2016/17 year was consideration of a proposed partial change to the Tongariro National Park Management Plan. This arose in response to a proposal from Ohakune community interests to develop new dual walking and biking trails on the southern slopes of Mt Ruapehu. These primarily included a loop track adjoining the popular (existing) Old Coach Road bike trail between Horopito and the Ohakune Mountain road; and another track from Turoa to Ohakune running parallel to the Mountain Road.

The Board, in principle, does not believe that ad hoc plan changes are in the best interests of the longer-term protection of a national park and dual world heritage area. Noting, however, that the full review of the Tongariro National Park Plan will not proceed until after the Treaty Settlement for the Maunga is completed it agreed to support the partial review. The primary reason it did this was because of safety concerns on the Ohakune Mountain road and the option of a parallel track would likely have less impact than additional widening of the road. It also noted general support for the project by Ngati Rangī, Ngati Uenuku and Ngati Tuwharetoa.

The Board remains concerned that the protection of the national park and dual world heritage area must remain foremost in any consideration. While potential developments may help local communities, in general, where developments and activities can be located outside of the Park, they should be.

The Board is happy with the review process followed starting with notification in late 2016 and a call for public submissions closing at the end of May 2017. This produced 50 submissions and these were heard by a joint Department/Board panel in late June. Concerns expressed by submitters did identify that while management plan amendments are often at a higher level, when they relate to a very specific proposal, then the detailed proposal and the impacts of it needs to be described as part of the public documents. The acceptability of a proposal may rest on the detail and this is especially the case in respect of the Turoa to Ohakune part of the project.

- **Tongariro Alpine Crossing**

The Board continued to receive regular updates from the Department, which included visitor numbers and a presentation from Paul Carr who attended a Sustainable Summits conference. He was able to share some of the challenges being experienced in other alpine destinations in relation to increasing visitor numbers and this is an area the Board continues to have a high-level interest in.

- **Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Turoa Ski Field Licence**

The Board's work on this licence commenced in March 2016. The licence for the Turoa Ski Field is due to expire in 2022. RAL sought an early renewal of their licence to ensure the financial viability of structure upgrades and investments. The term requested was 25 years

plus extensions if conditions are met. These extensions are planned to maintain a 25-year term for the same reason as the early application for renewal.

The inclusion of Indicative Development Plan 2011 discussion in the application documents, though informative, did tend to muddy the water as the current board had little exposure to this draft plan. A hard copy was requested as it made it easier to work with both documents. The Ecological assessment of the Turoa ski field area was completed in 2013. This is a useful and interesting document that also included the IDP for Turoa ski field in the assessment.

A relatively short time frame was sought for the board to complete its work, though this was later extended. Towards the end of the process a site visit was also offered but by then the board had moved passed that need.

The board supports the continuation of the ski field and saw many positive aspects in the application. However, we did have a couple of concerns around the change to the wording of the licence purpose and an aspect of the exclusive use.

During the Board's stay at Ngati Rangī marae at Ohakune they expressed their concern that the Turoa licence renewal documents were being prepared for public notification for which they were not yet ready. They were also concerned that they did not want to always be the ones that said no.

The board took their concerns to the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board meeting the next day. These were around a small part of the wording in the public notification documents and that negotiations/discussion with iwi had not been completed. The application was publicly notified early the next week. Obviously, our timing and coordination was out. We understand that consultation with Ngati Rangī continues.

The dual world heritage site, Tongariro National Park is a special entity worthy of a better coordinated and planned process. Unless there is a very good reason this process should not be hurried to meet commercial imperatives. We note that the process for the Lord of the Rings site use was much shorter but this was a one-off use of specific sites rather than a twenty-five year plus licence.

The board has noted the proposed wording in the new licence and feels it is appropriate.

- **Kaimanawa Forest Park**



The result of excess deer browse

In the Board's view the numbers of sika deer in the Kaimanawa Forest Park are too high and both the deer and the forest tend to be in poor condition, especially away from the roads, tracks, people and easy access areas. In places the forest consists of just mature trees and Horopito with little or no regeneration of palatable flora. The sika have eaten all the palatable seedlings and long term this will lead to canopy collapse with the associated reduction of some native fauna within the forest park.

In light of this, the Board agreed to have a representative on the Central North Island Sika Foundation and to attend their meetings. This role has been filled by Laurie Burdett.

The Sika Foundation was formed in 2015 and has the following Vision,

“A healthy Sika hunting resource, thriving in resilient natural habitats, valued by stakeholders.”

And objectives:-

- To actively manage the central North Island Sika herd as a “Herd of Special Interest” under the Game Animal Council Act (2014), in order to provide enhanced benefits to hunters and a higher level of protection for the forests and grasslands in which they live.
- To advance a management regime that involves a collaborative partnership between Recreational Seasonal Hunters, The Game Animal Council, the Department of Conservation, local Iwi, interested land owners and businesses with an interest in sika.
- To achieve and maintain consistent, appropriate harvest levels of healthy sika by better coordination of recreational sika hunting.
- To increase the understanding by recreational sika hunters of the sika herd through better information and education.

The Foundation has been working steadily throughout the last year to achieve these objectives.

An application has been sent to the Game Animal Council to have the sika herd within the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest Parks declared a herd of special interest,

Organised hunts with extra helicopter access landing sites have been successful in harvesting an increased number of sika in the Kaimanawa Forest Park. However, access to the wilderness area remains a problem.

Publicity to educate recreational hunters about the sika herd has been achieved through posters, the internet, representation at the meetings and a presence at the Sika Show. Hunters are being encouraged to shoot does as this manages the sika numbers better than just taking out the stags.

The actual success of this will show up in the information forms that the hunters are being encouraged to complete.

Further research into sika by a faecal pellet count is planned.

The Foundation's website is www.sikafoundation.co.nz

At its May 2017 meeting, the Board received a presentation from the SIKAF Foundation on its proposed SIKAF Herd Management Plan. One of the objectives of the proposed Sika herd management plan is:

“To ensure vegetation/habitat outcomes of successful canopy replacement within 40 years of natural canopy collapse in all broad vegetation types.”

This will be an ambitious goal and an improvement on the current state of this forest without any active management of the sika herd.

The board supports the work of the Foundation to achieve a healthy Forest and healthy deer within it. However, it will be interesting to see what this looks like in the future.

- **Predator Free 2050**

The Board has taken an active interest in the development of the Predator 2050 initiative and alongside regular updates from the Department, is informed through the community of the ongoing progress they are making.

5.2 Strategic Planning

Monitoring of the implementation of the CMS

At its February meeting the Board received a comprehensive presentation of the proposed Deed of Settlement for Tuwharetoa with the Crown. This included reference to a co-authored CMS and Conservation Board representation. The Deed was later ratified by majority of the hapu and signing of the Deed took place on 8 July 2017. This will provide an opportunity for the Board and Tuwharetoa to further develop their relationship around this work.

Stewardship Land

The Department provided a progress report on where this work is nationally and is looking forward to seeing the final five-year plan that the Department is developing as part of this process with input from the NZCA.

Fish & Game

The Board continues to foster a positive relationship with Eastern Fish and Game Council by appointing a Board member to a liaison role. This role seeks to identify areas of mutual interest and seek opportunities to work together and support one another's goals.

The board initiated Taupo Fishery staff to provide an update of recent operational changes and future opportunities for the Board to work more closely with the Taupo Fishery Advisory committee. The Board hopes to progress this relationship in the coming year with the goal of working more closely with the committee to raise awareness of both the Board activities and the Advisory committee roles.

6.0 ADVOCACY

Submission on the Waikato Regional Council Healthy Rivers Plan

This proposed plan covers a portion of the Northern part of the Tongariro Taupo Conservancy and aims to improve and maintain the water quality of the Waikato and Waipa rivers and tributaries.

The Board supported parts of the plan that were in the Conservation Board's sphere of interest, namely, stock exclusion from streams and riparian planting. Both can improve the life supporting capability of streams and rivers and the riparian planting can provide a native corridor for fauna.

However, the Board felt that the stock exclusion in steeper country could be strengthened and that heavy animals should not be grazed on significant in size areas of land steeper than 25 degrees. The reason being that heavy stock cause accelerated erosion on steep country which adds to the loss of topsoil which can cause sedimentation build-up in waterways and estuaries.

Community Advocacy

As the Board is geographically dispersed this is mainly carried out at an individual level in respective communities.

Advocacy for pest control and the use of appropriate mechanisms to achieve this requires ongoing commitment. We have found the Battle for the Birds 2016 pamphlet and the Federated Farmers and Forest and Bird information sheet on the use of 1080 especially useful.

Attendance at community native flora planting days continues as does the attendance at community led pest management meetings and workshops.

7.0 LIAISON WORK

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Region shares boundaries with five conservation regions. Five liaison roles are assigned amongst board members.

As the liaison for the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board with the Sika Foundation and given the contiguous habitat for deer between the Tongariro Taupo and Bay of Plenty Board areas, Laurie Burdett chose to liaise with this adjacent board and has attended Board meetings and remained informed through meeting minutes.

It was noticed in the draft management plan for the Whirinaki Te Pua –a- Tane Conservation Park that the Bay of Plenty Board did not want sika in this park as it is ecologically rich and threatened by a number of pests.

The introduction of additional pests, such as sika and rusa deer, pose an additional threat to the park. The Regional Pest Management Plan requires agency co-operation to prevent the establishment of sika deer in the Bay of Plenty. Sika deer have the classification of "Agency Pests" within the current Regional Pest Management Plan which expires at the end of September 2017.

Agency Pests are "pests of national significance that are managed by or subject to programmes co-ordinated by the crown".

The Sika Foundation consider that sika are unlikely to move to the Whirinaki area due to competition with red deer that currently exist in that park. State Highway 5 is also a barrier to Sika deer crossing into the Bay of Plenty region.

Treaty Settlements

It is anticipated that starting with Ngati Tuwharetoa Treaty Settlement, the role of the Board and its role will be impacted by this and other Treaty Settlements, including that related to the Maunga. The Board is very supportive of the process and has been grateful to receive regular briefings on progress with the Ngati Tuwharetoa negotiations.

The Board is aware that any Settlements will include co-governance and a joint process in the review of the Tongaririo Taupo Conservation Management Strategy. The Board is strongly in support of this process and will be looking for the resources to begin the review as soon as possible. It sees this as an important way to enhance the credibility of co-governance to the wider community and to allay any possible concerns about the Settlement outcomes.

Engagement with local Community

During the year Departmental staff presented a review of the current 'Turoa Te Ao' Conservation Awards process for the Board to consider. It was agreed that the Board would take a more regular but less formal approach to community awards in the future and that both staff and Board members would propose award recipients at each Board meeting and that staff would then support Board members in presenting awards to the agreed recipients.