

Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board

Te Poari Papa Atawhai
o Tongariro/Taupo

Annual Report

1 July 2012 - 30 June 2013

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
pursuant to Section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987

Serviced by the Department of Conservation

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Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board Members



Board Site Visit to Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary- Wairakei Taupo- May 2013

From left to right *Mark Davies-DOC, Neville Young, behind him: Deidre Ewart –DOC, Dave Lumley-DOC, Wairakei staff, Don Cameron behind him: Kim Turia DOC, Rex Hendry- Taranaki Whanganui CB Chairperson, Cam Speedy Louise Davies (Board Support Officer), Pete Masters (Chairperson) Ellen Forch, Barbara Morris, Colin Paton.*

Absent: Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, Te Ngaehe Wanikau, John Bishara,



Board Members 2012-13: Pete Masters, Neville Young, Don Cameron, Cam Speedy, Ellen Forch, Barbara Morris, Colin Paton, Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, Te Ngaehe Wanikau, & John Bishara.

Cover Photo: Te Maari Eruption Nov 2012



INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board is an independent statutory body, appointed by the Minister of Conservation. It was established by section 6L of the Conservation Act 1987. Although the Department formally amalgamated the Tongariro/Taupo and Whanganui Conservancies to become the Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki (TWT) Conservancy in December 2010, both the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board and the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board continue to exist as separate bodies.

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.

Area of Responsibility

The Board's current area of responsibility covers the Department's Ruapehu and Taupō-nui-ā-Tia Areas within the greater Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy (refer to the map). The area in question encompasses 818,700 hectares, of which approximately 221,000 hectares is administered by the Department of Conservation (representing almost 27% of the total area of the Board's district). The Board's district is unique in that it has no ocean coastline and includes the Lake Taupo sport fishery.

The Board's district is dominated by the volcanic landscape of Tongariro National Park, the beech forest and tussock ranges of Kaimanawa Forest Park and by New Zealand's largest lake, Lake Taupo. Tongariro, Erua and Rangataua Conservation Areas to the east and south of the national park offer a diverse range of ecological features and recreational opportunities.

Tangata whenua have long had a special relationship and history with the mountains, lakes, waterways and geothermal features of this area. Tongariro, New Zealand's first national park, grew from the Ngati Tuwharetoa gift of its mountains to the nation in 1887. The park received World Heritage status in 1988 for natural landscape values and in 1993 for its cultural landscape values, recognising the special significance of the mountains to Ngati Tuwharetoa and Whanganui iwi.

The district contains many rare, uncommon, vulnerable or threatened native plants, birds, communities and ecosystems. Managing these in light of weeds, predators, fires and other threats remains an ongoing challenge.

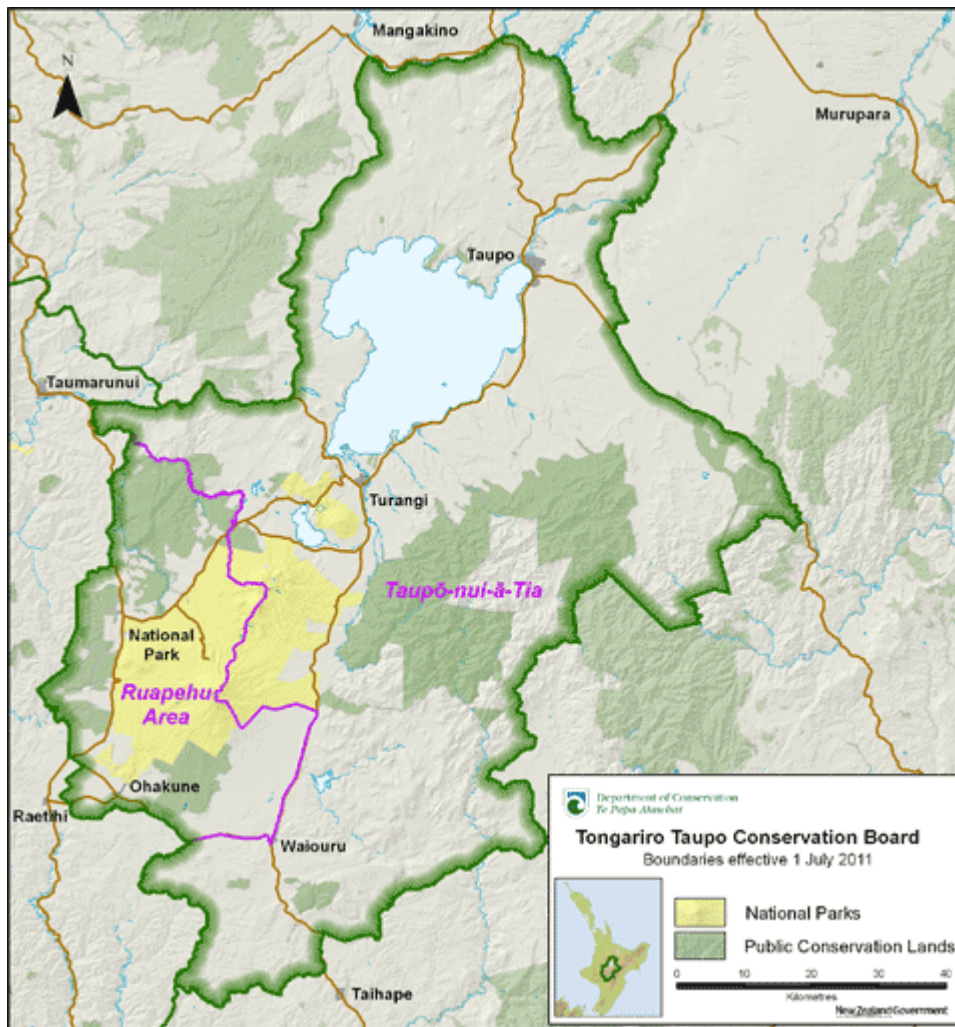
Lake Taupo and its tributaries provide opportunities for world-class fishing and numerous other forms of water recreation. The sports fishery is managed by the Department although the lake and river beds are owned by Ngati Tuwharetoa.

The landscape of the area is unique in New Zealand and large numbers of national and international visitors come here for sightseeing and recreation. Tongariro National Park is the most visited national park in New Zealand and numbers are expected to rise further. In contrast, the surrounding mountain ranges retain a feeling of remoteness and isolation which is increasingly sought by recreationists – New Zealanders in particular.

A large number of issues occur on these lands which are of interest to the Board. These include:

- management of plant and animal species such as the blue duck (whio), kiwi (western North Island Brown), and 3 species of mistletoe.
- management of recreational facilities such as huts and tracks
- management of historic sites
- concession activities, including those relating to recreation and tourism, grazing, research, and leases.

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board has a responsibility to the people of the Tongariro/Taupo district, and the wider New Zealand population, to ensure these lands and the biodiversity which they contain are protected and enhanced.



Map of Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board Area

Membership of the Board

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board consists of ten members who are appointed for up to a three year term by the Minister of Conservation. Included on the board is the mandated appointment for the paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa. The remaining nine public appointments are made 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.

The Minister did not conduct an appointment round for the 2012 calendar year and extended the term of appointment for those members whose terms were due to expire at 30 June 2012 for a further year (i.e. until 30 June 2013).

The names, locations of the members of the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board, and attendance record at meetings from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 were as follows:

Appointed Member	Year Appointed	Home Location	Meetings Attended (5 held)
John Bishara	2011	Wellington	1
Don Cameron	2008	Ohakune	5
Dr Ellen Forch	2011	Auckland	5
Peter Masters	2008	Taupo	5
Barbara Morris	2011	Taupo	5
Colin Paton	2011	Taupo	5
Cam Speedy	2011	Turangi	5
Sir Tumu Te Heuheu	1998	Taupo	1
Te Ngaeha Wanikau	2011	Turangi	2
Neville Young	2011	Wellington	5

At its December 2012 meeting, Pete Masters was re-elected as Chairperson for a further twelve months.

Conservation Board Meetings

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board held five meetings during the report period. A combined discussion and field inspection with Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board was scheduled to coincide with one of the meetings. The meetings were as follows:

Date of Meeting	Meeting Venue	Location
10 August 2012	Waiora House	Taupo
12 October 2012	Whakapapa Fire Station	Whakapapa Village
7 December 2012	Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre	National Park
22 February 2013	Alpine Café, Turoa Ski Area	Mt Ruapehu
31 May 2013	GNS Wairakei Research Centre	Taupo

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.

Friday, 12 October 2012: In conjunction with its CMS Monitoring Report on the Tongariro National Park Management Plan, board members conducted a site inspection of various Whakapapa Village infrastructures including the water treatment plant, lodge clearing, DOC yard & recycling centre, Whakapapa Holiday Park, and Chateau Tongariro.

7-8 December 2012: Members from both the Taranaki/Whanganui and Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Boards gathered at the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuit Centre (OPC) of NZ for a joint board discussion and their individual board meetings. With the two day meeting including

discussions on Kaupapa Maori and the Engagement Growth Strategy for the wider conservancy, board members conducted a site visit of the Mangatepopo road-end to discuss cultural values regarding activities conducted upon local maunga; and to Whakapapa Village to discuss its role as the gateway to the majority of visitors to Tongariro National Park and the role of businesses in the future development of the village.

Led by Board member Cam Speedy, members were treated to a trek along the Mangatepopo River to view who in their natural habitat and were informed on the outcomes achieved to date through the recent partnership between the Department and Genesis Energy Ltd for its national Whio Recovery Programme.

Friday, 22 February 2013: Following on from previous presentations on the indicative development plans (IDPs) for the Whakapapa and Turoa ski areas, Dave Mazey (General Manager, Ruapehu Alpine Lifts) led a site inspection of the Turoa ski area and facilities including the recently installed High Noon Express chairlift.

Friday, 31 May 2013: Guided by Dave Lumley and Kim Turia, they presented the Wairakei Golf and Sanctuary.

Guest Speakers and Presentations

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

August 2012

- TWT Strategic Direction
- Te Maari- Mt Tongariro eruption

October 2012

- Tongariro Alpine Crossing Survey (*Guest speaker*)

December 2012

- TWT Shared Values Project
- Growing Conservation through DOC/Business partnerships
- Engagement Growth Strategy
- Natural Heritage Management System

May 2013

- Taupo Basin

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

Budget, Fees and Allowances

The Board's budget for 2012/13 was \$18,000. Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Allowances Act 1951.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS – CONSERVATION ACT 1987

Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

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

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 the CMS.

The Tongariro Taupo Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) was approved in May 2002 and has a lifetime of ten years. Following the recent merge of the Tongariro Taupo Conservancy with Whanganui Conservancy it was to be replaced by one CMS for Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy that would manage the Ruapehu, Whanganui, Taranaki and Taupō-nui-ā-Tia Areas.

In August 2011, the Board formally endorsed the deferral of the TWT CMS Review until progress had been made for the development and implementation of *He Kaupapa Rangatira* (A Joint Initiative).

At its August 2012 meeting, the Department outlined the TWT Conservancy Strategic Direction including the development and proposed implementation of 12 key strategic projects for TWT. It is intended that these key projects would provide a better understanding of community and Place needs and would provide the foundation for work on the proposed Generation 2 TWT CMS. The Board was provided with progress updates on the strategic projects in subsequent meetings throughout the year.

(b) Approve Conservation Management Plans

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

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

The Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board implements a system of monitoring categories and places within the CMS and CMPs on a three yearly reporting cycle. The Board was briefed as follows:

Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan

The Board commended the Department on its work securing Kaimanawa Forest Park from the threat of *Pinus contorta* and other significant weed surveillance and management programmes, as well as good conservation outcomes on a small scale, for snail protection. The Board noted concern however with ongoing decline in stoat vulnerable threatened species and weed/pest vulnerable habitats within the Park and predict that many of the ecological values of the Park will continue to decline in those areas where cyclic (5 yearly) Animal Health Board operations for disease management is not occurring.

The poor ranking of Kaimanawa Forest Park in the Department’s Natural Heritage Management System (NHMS) was seriously questioned by the Board and it stated that important regional

conservation priorities appear to be suffering at the expense of the 'national' ranking system. The Board recommended that the current inspirational objectives must be retained in anticipation of greater funding (either from the crown or the wider community) in order to protect important Park values.

Tongariro National Park Management Plan – Section 6 – Whakapapa Village

The Board reported that this section of the Tongariro National Park Management Plan (TNPMP) has received insufficient effort and investment. As a consequence the Department has failed to achieve the majority of its objectives and the village is undergoing rapid deterioration. It noted however that the objectives relating to public safety, volcano monitoring and workshop services have, for the most part, been adequately maintained.

The Board also noted that the state of the village is not in keeping with the status of the land, nor does it respect the cultural values inherent in its dual World Heritage Site status.

A number of follow up actions were recommended for the Board to perform along with a key message for the Department to action immediate intervention within a new long-term framework.

Kaupapa Maori including He Kaupapa Rangatira

The Board has particular interest in monitoring *He Kaupapa Rangatira* (A Joint Initiative) given that the progress of its development and implementation was the underpinning objective in the deferral of the TWT CMS Review (as noted earlier). *He Kaupapa Rangatira* was to have provided the principal means by which the Treaty principles and objectives would be implemented and achieved for Ngati Tuwharetoa and Ngati Rangi.

In considering the Department's monitoring report and presentation, the Board noted that progress with *He Kaupapa Rangatira* is slow and relationships are variable. The Department enjoys good relationships with some hapu however these relationships tend to develop on an issue by issue basis. Overall, lines of communication are open and outcomes are improving.

The Department has sought to progress a body of work under its Shared Values Strategic Project that will assist in the development of an effective and lasting *He Kaupapa Rangatira* process. The Board noted that this will take time but its progress is encouraging and will make a valuable contribution. The Board determined that the biggest influence on progress will be the Treaty of Waitangi claims process which is due to conclude by 2015.

Public Involvement – Section 3.6 & Concessions – Section 3.8

Noting the areas long history of community work and its annual summer programme, the Board reported that great success had been achieved with public involvement in some areas, but overall the Department had not met its full objectives.

Limited opportunities have been provided for the public to be involved and there has been a decline in the commitment to the Summer Nature Programme. The Board also raised concern over a recent relationship stock that highlighted a gap between Department perceptions of partnership and the partner experiences.

In its feedback members provided a number of suggestions for the Department to action but did not consider that the current CMS outcomes would need to be amended when next reviewed.

With regard to Concessions, the Board noted that concession applications are processed efficiently with the Department having well developed systems and overall, noted that the application

process has improved. The Board reported its concern that monitoring of concessions with regard to compliance and performance remains poor as is the Department's communication with concessionaires.

Taupo Basin

Monitoring reports have identified duplication of a number of management objectives relating to the Taupo Basin and it has been recommended that these be combined at the next CMS review. On the whole, the Board felt that the Department is meeting the management objectives for this area within the resources available. However, some gaps have been identified, particularly in relation to community volunteer engagement and communication, and relationships with landowners and other stakeholders. With the changed focus of the Department towards conservation partnerships, it is hoped these shortcomings will be rectified. Of some concern is the fact that the NHMS has identified no sites worthy of protection within the Taupo Basin which seems to be at variance with Te Matapuna wetland being recognised as "internationally important". Funding for predator and weed control is likely to be an ongoing issue for this area.

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

There has been no progress on the addition of Rangataua Forest to the Tongariro National Park or the gazettal of Tongariro Forest as a conservation park. These areas are currently subject to a Treaty of Waitangi claim. The gazettal of the proposed scenic reserve at Huka Falls is currently on hold due to outstanding Treaty issues.

(ii) Advise on any other conservation matters

The Board is provided with a summary of concession applications at each meeting and is consulted when the application meets the Board's concession trigger criteria including:

- a proposed activity that is the first of its kind in the conservancy
- a proposed activity that is not provided for or envisaged in the relevant CMS/CMP, or it is unclear
- a proposed activity that is considered high impact or requires public notification

Accordingly, and on behalf of the Board, the Concessions Committee advised on a concession application from Bike Taupo and Once Upon a Time; an access easement from St Peters School Trust Board; and a concession variation application from Ruapehu Alpine Lifts.

(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

An Eastern Fish and Game Council representative continues to be informed of the Board's work through agenda papers and minutes. In its December 2012 meeting, board member Colin Paton was elected as the Board's representative to attend all Eastern Fish and Game Council 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.

Powers of Boards

(a) Advocacy

When appropriate the Board may advocate on issues relating to conservation values on both public and private land such as the protection of indigenous flora and fauna, landscape, cultural and historic values, water quality, and environmental degradation. Advocacy is generally performed by way of providing comment on discussion documents from other Government organisations and statutory plans developed by regional and district councils.

Treaty/Iwi Relationships

The Board has a statutory requirement to include the paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa and has several other Board members with local iwi affiliations. These connections play a vital role in improving the Board understandings of iwi perspectives.

Submissions

The Board forwarded a submission to the National Science Challenge Development advocating for the reduction of small introduced animals in the conservation estate via more effective pest control.

(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:

Recreation, Historic and Concessions	Barbara Morris; John Bishara; Pete Masters; Neville Young
Volcanic Hazards	Colin Paton; Ellen Forch; Pete Masters
Management Planning and Policy	John Bishara; Pete Masters; Cam Speedy
Statutory Planning	Don Cameron; Pete Masters; Neville Young
CMS Review (<i>jointly with TWCB</i>)	Pete Masters; Don Cameron; Tumu Te Heuheu (ex-officio); Ellen Forch; Cam Speedy; Neville Young
Tangata Whenua	Te Ngaehe Wanikau; Cam Speedy; Barbara Morris
World Heritage	Tumu Te Heuheu; Don Cameron; Ellen Forch; Cam Speedy
Conservation Awards (<i>jointly with TWCB</i>)	Cam Speedy; Pete Masters

FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1980

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

The Board did not recommend any national park management plans, or consider any reviews or amendments, in the reporting period.

RESERVES ACT 1977

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

LIAISON

All Board members receive the minutes of NZCA meetings and liaison is maintained through NZCA member Brian Stephenson. The Board is very grateful to Catherine Tudhope and Katrina Edwards, Statutory Bodies Advisors, 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/Taupo and Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Boards have a reciprocal agreement to attend meetings.

Board minutes are distributed to a number of individuals, groups and organisations and Board members also liaise with their own communities of interest during the reporting year. This liaison is seen as a very important way of providing an interface with the community.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



As we go into the management of change process the Board has to allow time for the Department to settle down. Only time will tell how this process will progress into the departments strategic vision. There has been no process for the Board and concern about the Boards expected statutory roles as they align to the new restructure of the department is on going. I find it hard to fathom this situation as the role is huge between DOC and the Public. However, I encourage the Board to continue their work with a view of being flexible and adaptable to change. Despite the changing times and terms of office ending for some members of the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board I thank all members for remaining on the board at least until the commencement of 2014

or until further advice from the Minister which ever should come first.

The board members work has been most efficient and engaging. I would also like to thank the many DOC staff who have done much of the background work that assist in our monitoring and reporting statutory functions., My gratitude goes to: the Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservator Damian Coutts, Mark Davies as acting conservator for the tremendous work he has done with the Board. Darryn Ratana and Rex Hendry TWCB chairpersons, I thank them for their roles on both boards and their participation in bringing both boards working together. Louise Davies who left in May 2013 was board support officer for almost 5 years; she provided exceptional support to the board. I wish to thank her replacement: Dinny Snowdon-Rameka for taking over the role and continuing on with this supportive work.

Pete Masters
Chairperson
August 2013

Adoption of Report

Moved: That the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board adopt the Annual Report for 2012/2013 to be forwarded to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required under section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987

Carried 16 August 2013