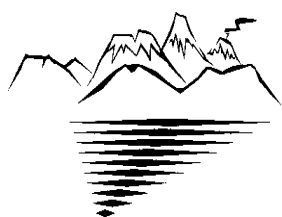


Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Annual Report 2023-2024



**Tongariro/ Taupō Conservation Board Meeting
Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro Taupō**

Annual Report of the
Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board
Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro Taupō

For the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024

*Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority / Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O
Aotearoa pursuant to section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987*

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Photographer: John Strother

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Photographer: Louisa Meredith

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Edward Ellison
Chairperson, New Zealand Conservation Authority
PO Box 10420
Wellington 6143

Tēnā koe Edward

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangatanga maha, tēnei te mihi nui ki a koutou katoa. E tika ana kia tuku i ngā kupu whakawhetai ki a Papatūānuku rāua ko Ranginui mō ō rāua manaakitanga, ā, kia whai whakaaro hoki tātou ki te tiaki, te manaaki i te Taiao mō ngā uri whakatupu. Kia kaha tātou ki te mahi tahi mō te oranga tonutanga o tēnei ao tūroa.

It is my privilege to present this report on behalf of the Taupō Tongariro Conservation Board (TTCB) as we reflect on the past year. The challenges we have faced have been considerable, and yet, our collective commitment to conservation and our responsibilities to Te Taiao remain unwavering.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional leadership and dedication of our Regional Director, Damian Coutts, and his team. Despite the pressures of the year, they have remained steadfast in their support of the Board's goals. Their hard work and resilience in navigating these obstacles have been commendable, and we owe a great deal of gratitude to them for their tireless efforts in maintaining the conservation kaupapa across our rohe.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to our Board members for their continued dedication and contribution to conservation in the Taupō Tongariro region. Each of you has brought invaluable insights and passion to our discussions, despite the ongoing pressures and uncertainties we face.

To those Board members who have reached the end of their tenure, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks. Your commitment, wisdom, and dedication to the kaupapa of conservation have left an indelible mark on our work, and we are grateful for the time and effort you have given. As you move on to new opportunities, know that your contributions will continue to shape the future of conservation in this region.

At the same time, I would like to congratulate those members who have been reappointed and warmly welcome our new Board members who will be joining us. We look forward to your fresh perspectives and the unique skills and experiences you bring to the table. Your involvement comes at a crucial time as we face significant challenges

and opportunities, and I am confident that together we will continue to make meaningful strides in protecting and enhancing our natural taonga.

I would like to acknowledge the partnership between our iwi Māori representatives and our nominated board members. This unique collaboration brings together different perspectives, allowing us to navigate the preservation of Te Taiao with a deeper understanding of both cultural and statutory obligations. It is through this partnership that we are able to make decisions that honour the land, the people, and the rich history that defines this region.

A special thank you must also be extended to all the volunteers, the individuals and groups who attend our public forums. Your willingness to give of yourself, share your insights, concerns, and knowledge with the Board is invaluable. It certainly keeps both the Board and our operational teams on their toes, ensuring that we remain connected to the diverse perspectives of our community and are constantly reminded of the importance of our shared conservation efforts. Your contributions help to shape our decision-making processes and ensure that we stay aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people we serve.

This year brought a number of surprises, particularly with the Government's fast-track bills, which were introduced with little prior consultation with Conservation Boards. These legislative changes have created an atmosphere of uncertainty, and the pace at which they were rolled out left us scrambling to adapt and provide input where possible. We hope that in the future, more collaborative engagement with Conservation Boards will be prioritised as these fast-track policies are implemented.

In addition to the legislative pressures, budget restraints have further compounded the difficulties we face. The funding environment has been tight, and we have had to make careful decisions to prioritise our work within the limitations of our resources. Despite these constraints, we have managed to maintain our commitment to the values of conservation and the protection of our natural resources.

A key issue that has seen some progress is the future of the Turoa and Whakapapa Ski Fields. Turoa Ski Field is now under new ownership with Pure Turoa Ltd, while Whakapapa Ski Field continues to operate under Ruapehu Alpine Lifts for this winter season. Both ski fields are located within a Dual World Heritage National Park and hold cultural, environmental and heritage status, being important not only as recreational and economic hubs but also as significant cultural landscapes for iwi Māori and the wider community. Their continued operation is crucial to the region, supporting not only environmental and cultural preservation but also the economic well-being of local communities. We will continue to monitor developments closely and advocate for outcomes that respect both their cultural significance and their role in the local economy.

Additionally, the fate of the famous Chateau Tongariro Hotel is still uncertain and remains a work in progress as discussions and decisions about its future continue. We

are hopeful that a resolution will soon be reached that preserves its heritage while meeting contemporary needs.

One of our most pressing concerns for the TTCB remains the outdated Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for the region. This document is a crucial tool for guiding our conservation efforts, and it is long overdue for an update. Looking ahead, there is much to be done, but I am confident that with the collective wisdom and dedication of this Board, alongside the unwavering support of Damian Coutts and his team, we will continue to uphold the principles of kaitiakitanga and ensure that our region's natural taonga are protected for future generations.

Ngā mihi nui,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Winter', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Georgina (Honey) Winter
Chair, Taupō Tongariro Conservation Board

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1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2023/24 Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Annual Report.

Section 6(O) of the Conservation Act requires conservation boards to provide the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority) with an annual report as soon as practical after 30 June each year. In recognition of this requirement the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board (the 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 (the Department), within their area of jurisdiction.

Conservation boards have several statutory roles under various Acts including:

- the recommendation of the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) to the Authority for approval.
- advising the Department and the Authority on how conservation management strategies and plans will be put into practice.
- reporting on the implementation of the CMS.
- the approval of Conservation Management Plans (CMP).
- the recommendation of National Park Management Plans (NPMP) to the Authority for approval.
- advising the Department and Authority on conservation matters, and proposed changes to status of land of national and international significance.
- liaising with the regional Fish and Game Council on conservation matters.
- carrying out other powers delegated by the Minister of Conservation, the Conservation Act or any other Act.

Conservation boards also have several functions under section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980. These functions include recommending the review or amendment of NPMPs and recommending approval of these plans by the Authority.

2. ROHE

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board's area of jurisdiction covers the area of 819,013.24 hectares.

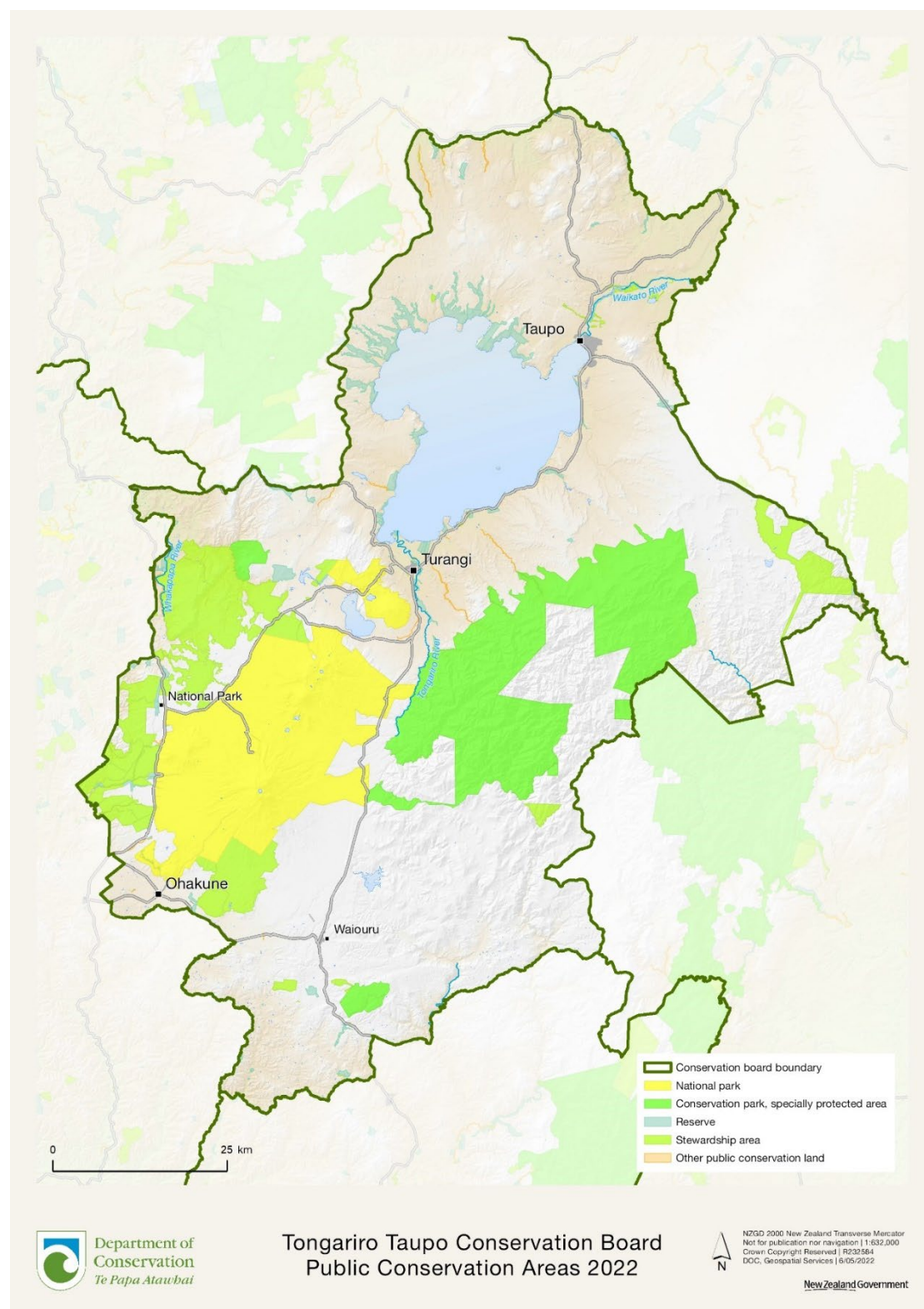


Figure 1. Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Jurisdiction

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.

2.1 Tāngata whenua

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board rohe covers an area from Taupō through to Ohakune and beyond. The iwi with interests in this rohe includes:

- Ngāti Tūwharetoa
- Ngāti Hāua
- Te Korowai o Wainuiārua (Uenuku, Tamahaki, Tamakana)
- Ngāti Rangi

There are representatives of all four iwi on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board as either statutory appointments or co-opted members.

2.2 Conservation features of the area

The main features of Public Conservation Land and Waters within the Board's boundaries are:

- Tongariro National Park – 78,847.78 ha
- Kaimanawa Forest Park – 74,541.63 ha
- Kaweka Forest Park – 39.87 ha
- 1 Ecological Area – 1,901.3 ha
- 63 Scenic Reserves – 8670.63 ha
- 1 Historic Reserves – 186.42 ha
- 23 Recreation Reserves – 1,152.68 ha
- 53 Stewardship Area – 50,648.82 ha
- 36 Marginal Strip – 439.17 ha
- Tongariro National Park lies within the Board's jurisdiction.
- Te Urewera, Whanganui National Park and Whirinaki Te-Pua-a-Tane Forest adjoin the Board's area of jurisdiction.
- Tongariro National Park is registered in the New Zealand World Heritage List.

2.3 Conservation issues in the area

Approximately 1.52% of all public conservation land in Aotearoa lies within the region. These PCL make up 26.74% of all land in Tongariro/Taupō (219,331.53ha).

The large number of issues which are of interest to the Board include:

- We are pleased to note that progress will hopefully soon be made on the CMS update. This is pleasing given the length of time the existing CMS is dated from and the time and expertise put into the review
- Giving effect to the outcomes of Treaty Settlements and working with iwi which have settled to further their development and the protection of their natural and spiritual Taonga, and to respect and work with iwi still working towards settlement.
- The impact of tourists/visitors to, especially, Tongariro National Park and the management of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Numbers.
- The impact of ungulates, particularly in Kaimanawa Forest Park where there is an imminent threat of canopy collapse.
- The impact of budget restraints on the proper protection of natural values in the rohe and both advocating for sufficient resources and helping the Department with prioritisation of the resources it has available.
- The management of Whakapapa Ski area as a separate entity and the removal of redundant structures along with monitoring of Pure Turoa's operation of the Turoa field and redundant structure removals there.
- The ongoing management of the Chateau Tongariro and ancillary buildings and chattels and the burden of cost on an already restrictive conservation purse.

3. FUNCTIONS

3.1 Board functions under section 6(M) of the Conservation Act 1987

The functions of the Board are:

- 1) To recommend the approval by the Authority of conservation management strategies, and the review and amendment of such strategies, under the relevant enactments.
- 2) To approve conservation management plans, and review an amendment of such plans, under the relevant enactments.
- 3) To advise the Authority and the Director-General on the implementation of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans for the area within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 4) To advise the Authority or the Director-General on any proposed change of status or classification of any area of national or international importance.
- 5) To advise the Authority or the Director-General on any other conservation matter relating to any area with the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 6) To liaise with any Fish and Game Council on matters within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 7) To exercise such powers and functions as may be delegated to it by the Minister under this Act or any other Act.

3.2 Board power under section 6(N) of the Conservation Act 1987

- 1) Every conservation board shall have all such powers as are reasonably necessary or expedient to enable it to carry out its functions.
- 2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), each conservation board may –
 - i. Advocate its interests at any public forum or in any statutory planning process; and
 - ii. Appoint committees of members and other suitable persons, and delegate to them functions and powers.
- 3) The power conferred by subsection (2)(a) shall include the right to appear before courts and tribunals in New Zealand and be heard on matters affecting or relating to the Board's functions.

3.3 Board functions under section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980

- 1) to recommend management plans, and the review or amendment of such plans, for parks within the jurisdiction of the Board in accordance with sections 45 to 47.
- 2) to consider and determine priorities for the implementation of management plans for national parks.
- 3) to make recommendations to the Minister for the appointment of honorary rangers under section 40.
- 4) to review and report to the Director-General or the Authority, as appropriate, on the effectiveness of the administration of the general policies for national parks within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 5) to advise the Director-General or the Authority—
 - i. on the interpretation of any management plan for a park; and
 - ii. on any proposal for the addition of land to any national park or the establishment of a new national park; and
 - iii. on any other matter relating to any national park, within the jurisdiction of the Board.

4. MEMBERSHIP

The Minister of Conservation appoints Board members under section 6(P) of the Conservation Act 1987. The process of appointment ensures that a range of perspectives, life experiences, and knowledge contribute to the advice provided and decisions made by the Board.

Board members are appointed for 3-year terms and may be re-appointed, unless they are appointed in replacement of a prior member's term. There were 12 Board members for the reporting year. Honey Winter was elected Chairperson and Clint Green was elected Deputy Chairperson.

The number of member positions include the statutory position held by Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu and were appointed by the Minister of Conservation for the reporting year.

The following table lists the membership of the Board between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024:

Board Member	Area	Term start	Term end
Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu	Tūwharetoa	1 September 1998	Life Member
Georgina (Honey) Winter	Raetihi	1 July 2018	30 June 2024
Clint Green	Tūrangi	1 July 2021	30 June 2024
Hinemoa Wanikau	Tūrangi	1 July 2018	30 June 2024
Te Ngaehe Wanikau	Tūrangi (Ngāti Tūwharetoa Representative)	1 July 2019	30 Jun 2025
Michael Richardson	Taupō	1 July 2022	30 June 2025
Karen Grimwade	Ohakune	7 July 2020	30 June 2026
Kylie Simpson	Atiamuri	1 July 2021	30 June 2024
Hannah Reinforth	Whanganui	1 July 2023	30 June 2026
Martin Wikaira	Tūrangi	1 July 2023	30 June 2026
Aiden Gilbert (Co-opted Member)	Uenuku Representative	1 July 2021	30 June 2024
Graham Bell (Co-opted Member)	Ngāti Hāua Representative	1 July 2021	30 June 2024

4.1 Members profiles

Georgina (Honey) Winter, Chair, Raetihi: Mrs Winter is an independent Business and Project Management Consultant. She is the Chair of Te Matuku Iwi Maori Partnership Board within Te Ranga Tupua region, Chair of Ruapehu Health Ltd (General Practice) Board of Directors, Trustee of Te Nehenehenui Trust (Maniapoto Post Settlement Group Entity) and Member of Te Pae Ao Joint Committee overseeing the co-management of Conservation Reserves within the Ngati Rangi boundaries. She holds qualifications in Māori and Administration, Mātauranga Māori, and Business Management. Mrs Winter is passionate about the health and wellbeing of her people and the wider communities. Conservation and addressing climate change ranks high on her list of priorities. She enjoys gardening and spending time with her whānau.

Clint Green, Deputy Chair: Clint (of Ngā Wairiki and Ngāti Apa) is a former teacher and tourism operator providing close relationships with the local community. He is familiar with the conservation estate in the boards' rohe, having spent much of his life enjoying outdoor recreation activities in the Tongariro National Park and Kaimanawa Forest Park.

Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, Statutory Position: Sir Tumu is Paramount Chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa and is a direct descendant of Horonuku Te Heuheu who in 1887, as Paramount Chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, *tukua* the mountains of Tongariro to the people of New Zealand. He is the Chairperson of the Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board, Lake Taupō Forest Trust, and Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust.

He sits on many national boards as either chair or a member. In the 2004/2005 honours list, he was made a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, as New Zealand's delegate to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee he was elected Chairperson in 2006.

Hinemoa Wanikau, Board Member: Mrs Wanikau works in administration management/governance servicing for Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa, the Post Settlement Governance Entity. She has extensive experience and acumen in business administration and management, environmental planning, and review of policies and processes between hapū and government authorities. She has an interest in geothermal activity and water quality.

Te Ngaeha Wanikau, Statutory Appointment & Board Member: Mr Wanikau is a nominee of Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa. He has experience in environmental policy, planning and analysis, and consultation with local governments and authorities. His particular interest is in providing a cultural perspective to conservation board deliberations. His outdoor recreation interests are fishing and food gathering.

Karen Grimwade, Board Member: Karen is a researcher and writer, with a special interest in local history. She has previously worked for the Department of Conservation in Tongariro in various roles. She has a degree in History and a Masters in Cultural Heritage Management. Karen is a member of the Project Tongariro executive committee and puts conservation at the head of her list of interests. She is a long-time Ruapehu skier, a regular trampster, an aspirational gardener, and a member of the Ohakune Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Kylie Simpson, Board Member: Kylie works for the Central North Island Sika Foundation Whio Recovery Project. She has a Diploma in Environmental Management, is a keen hunter, and has been involved in practical conservation initiatives. Ms Simpson was nominated by Game Animal Council member and Sika Foundation President, John Cook.

Hannah Reinforth, Board Member: Hannah (Te Āti Haunui-a- Pāpārangi, Ngāti Hinemanu, Ngāti Hauiti, and Ngāti Rangi) is the Ngā Waihua o Paerangi Trust nominee for the Board. She works as a Kaupapa Taiao Specialist with Kahu Environmental Ltd and has wide experience in iwi-led research on fish, kōura and kākahi populations, iwi-led ecological restoration plans, iwi and hapū-led freshwater monitoring plans and projects, iwi values in the national policy space, and communication between science and iwi groups.

Martin Wikaira, Board Member: Martin (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu, and Te Hikitū hapū) is the Divisional Manager of the Māori Policy Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade NZ (MFAT). Mr Wikaira has extensive experience in senior Māori management positions and knowledge of land issues pertinent to iwi, hapū and whānau.

Graham Bell, Co-Opted Member, Ngāti Hāua Trust: Graham (of Ngāti Hāua) has a background in law, attending Sacramento State University (1986) and Waikato University (1991) being admitted to the BAR in 1996. He is the chairperson of whānau land under a Ngā Whenua Rāhui covenant since 2001 as well as being a Whanganui River Māori Trust Board Trustee for 14 years working on the Whanganui Awa Claim, which has made the awa a legal entity in its own right. Graham also has experience working for the Department as a Field Centre Manager in Taumarunui for 3 years.

Graham retired in 2021 after serving 20 years working with Te Puni Kokiri/Ministry of Māori Development. He is pleased to represent Ngāti Hāua iwi on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board and is presently attending as a co-opted member. Graham enjoys mountain & road bike riding, spending time on the whānau land in Tangarakau, and spending time with whānau & friends.

Aiden Gilbert, Co-Opted Member, Uenuku Charitable Trust: Aiden is the Chair of Uenuku Charitable Trust. The Trust consists of fifteen trustees who represent the interests of their people. The Trust was set up to promote, develop and sustain equality and equity amongst Uenuku.

5. MEETINGS AND FIELDTRIPS

The Board held six meetings during the reporting period. Venues for the meetings vary each year to ensure a wide coverage and enable members of the public in the district to attend meetings and access the Board.

Meeting date	Location/Venue
27 July 2023	Taupō, DOC Office
21 September 2023	Uenuku Charitable Trust Office, Raetihi
23 November 2023	Tūrangi, DOC Office
22 February 2024	Uenuku Charitable Trust Office, Raetihi
11 April 2024	Tūrangi, DOC Office
27 June 2024	Taupō, DOC Office

5.1 Agendas

The Board hosted and heard from numerous speakers at its meetings, including:

22 Feb 24 – Te Heke Ngahuru Strategy Wānanga

The Board were joined by the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board to receive a presentation from Tahinganui Hina (Strategic Māori Relationship Mgr. DOC) and Kahureremoa Aki, the Project Manager, Ngā Tāngata Tiaki and was updated on Te Heke Ngahuru – The Strategy to improve the Health and Wellbeing of the Whanganui River.

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing Sustainability Project team (DOC) has attended regularly to keep the board updated on the progress of this important project. Department staff also attended throughout the year.

Regional and District staff attend all board meetings including the Regional Director Operations, Statutory Manager and Operations Managers. In addition, other Department personnel attended and presented on a range of topics including:

- 22 Feb 24 - Tongariro Alpine Crossing Concessions
- 27 Jun 24 – RAL Redundant Infrastructure Project
- 27 Jun 24 – Tongariro Alpine Crossing Carrying Capacity
- 27 Jun 24 – Future Visitor Network Project

The agendas and minutes from all Board meetings can be found on the Board's webpage.

5.2 Field trips and site inspections

Field trips are an excellent opportunity for Board members to become more aware of conservation issues within their region.

23 Nov 23 – The Board attended a site visit to the National Trout Centre in Tūrangi to discuss the important work being done to manage the health and population of trout in the region.

21 Feb 24 - The Board conducted a field trip to the Chateau Tongariro Hotel and ancillary buildings and the Whakapapa Ski Field to discuss the upcoming redundant infrastructure project.

26 Jun 24 - The Board attended a site visit to Whakaipo Bay. During the summer this site is a popular spot for campers and boat owners, both locals and visitors. The popularity of the site is increasing and often reaches maximum capacity causing concern about environmental impacts and visitor safety. Various mitigation measures planned for later 2024 were discussed.

5.3 Members' Attendance 2023/24

Board Member	Meetings (total 6)	Fieldtrips (total 3)
Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu	0	0
Georgina (Honey) Winter	6	3
Clint Green	4	1
Hinemoa Wanikau	1	0
Te Ngaehe Wanikau	2	0
Michael Richardson	5	2
Karen Grimwade	6	3
Kylie Simpson	4	1
Hannah Reinforth	5	0
Martin Wikaira	3	2
Aiden Gilbert	4	2
Graham Bell	2	0

6. MAHI

6.1 Board Committees

The Conservation Act 1987 enables the Board to establish committees to carry out functions or tasks delegated by the Board. Committees that were active during the reporting period, and members involved in those committees included:

CMS Subcommittee:

Subcommittee - Karen Grimwade and Honey Winter

The purpose of the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board CMS Subcommittee is to advise the Department on conservation management processes including CMS review, CMS Monitoring, NMP, FPMP and business planning as required by the Conservation Act 1987. This function is not able to be carried out as legislated for in the Conservation Act, as the CMS, NPMP and FPMP are so out of date that they are no longer functioning as intended. Although, they are a precious information resource and still highly valued as archival documents.

Karen Grimwade continues to keep an evolving document tracking the issues and options that impact the TTCB rohe and operations within the rohe. It is hoped that this list might act as a resource for when the board/planners start working properly on the CMS.

Te Pae Ao Joint Committee:

Appointed members - Karen Grimwade and Honey Winter

Te Pae Ao is a joint committee established by the Ngāti Rangi Claims Settlement Act 2019 to administer 9 Crown-owned reserve sites in the rohe of Ngāti Rangi. Te Pae Ao has four members who are appointed for a term of three years from 28 September 2023, two members appointed by Te Tōtarahoe o Paerangi and two members appointed by the Director-General of Conservation. During their appointed term Te Pae Ao are responsible for the preparation of the Te Pae Ao reserve management plan and operational management plan, the granting of authorisations for activities on the reserve sites, and the administration of the beds of the Rotokura lakes (where relevant).

6.2 Special events

- Jul 23 - Turning of the first sod ceremony for the Te Ara Mangawhero Cycle Trail establishment
- Jul 23 - Te Korowai o Wainuiārua Deed of Settlement signing in July.
- Sep 23 - Annual Conservation Board Chairs conference in Waitangi Treaty Grounds
- Feb 24 - David Lumley's farewell in February, Dave Lumley held the position of the Operations Manager for Tūrangi/Central Plateau and has retired after 50 years of service. David Conley has accepted the role to manage both Tūrangi/Central Plateau and Fisheries.
- Feb 24 - Pure Tūroa Hearings, Deputy Chair, Clint Green attended the hearings as a representative of the TTCB on the panel.
- Feb 24 - Joint wānanga with the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board regarding the Te Heke Ngahuru strategy

7. STATUTORY ACTIVITY

7.1 Annual Work Plan

After receiving its Letter of Expectation from the Minister of Conservation, the Board sets out its work plan for the upcoming year. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the full Board Annual Work Programme. The Minister's Letter of Expectation for 2023/2024 outlined the following priorities.

Government and ministerial priorities:

- Support the implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao – the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy
- Embed the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in accordance with the obligations of section 4 of the Act in all aspects of work.
- Support the transition to a lower-carbon conservation delivery model, having regard to the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019. Board-specific priorities.

For the 2023-24 year, the Ministers priorities for the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board are to:

- Understand further the pressures and impacts of ungulates throughout the Tongariro-Taupō area
- Maintain strong working relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi and mana whenua.
- Continue to increase Board engagement and networking with the community to understand and reflect their interests in the work of the Board.

The Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board Priorities for 2023/2024

- Continuing the development of the working relationship with mana whenua, including through exploring and understanding the new settlement instruments across the rohe.
- Working towards the creation of a current and updated CMS and the implementation of statutory planning documents.

The Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board worked hard to achieve its own priorities and made good progress. The Minister's expectations were addressed where possible and where funded.

7.2 Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS)

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board (TTCB) is unable to monitor the Tongariro Taupō CMS as was intended in the Conservation Act 1987, as the CMS is unfortunately fundamentally out of date. As stated in previous annual reports, the under-resourcing of DOC in planning functions and planning staff has been a long-articulated frustration.

The TTCB now has representatives from four iwi from around the rohe on the Board and are therefore positioned and ready to work alongside iwi and hapū to progress the CMS. We have an independent planner ready to proceed. We only await the Departments go-ahead to start work.

The TTCB has local iwi representative's support to proceed. This will be reported upon further in the Chair's report.

The Board receives updates on work plans and business plans from CNI DOC staff and takes an active interest in all matters – in particular matters of public interest.

Currently, the Board is seeking to stay up-to-date on the liquidation/receivership of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts, the operation of newly appointed operators of Turoa Skifield (Pure Turoa) and the abandonment status of the Chateau Tongariro and surrounding support buildings – some of which are listed as heritage buildings and integral to Whakapapa Village.

The TTCB takes an active interest in the constant flow of legislative and planning reviews, attempting to submit when members have the time and ability to do so. This activity is not funded by the Department. In submissions, we aim to represent our community (the local public) and not be ‘expert’ submissions, and thus focus on a general need to protect and preserve our taonga and use clear and prescient language to communicate these aims. The list of submissions and communications is included below.

7.3 Tongariro National Park - National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

As stated in our last report - The Tongariro National Park Management Plan (NPMP) remains out of date. Another year goes by with no progress. In a similar situation to our CMS, it is a source of continuing frustration to the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board. The outcome is that DOC staff and interested members of the public must operate with outdated guiding document. This situation is particularly frustrating in view of the recent challenges faced in the region where current planning to guide DOC staff and the public would have been a huge advantage.

8. ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

All Board members have responsibility for liaising with other groups when opportunities arise, and some members have specific roles in liaison. The Board appointed various members to liaise with other groups and agencies:

8.1 Board and Authority liaisons

The Board holds a liaison relationship with neighbouring conservation boards. Liaison roles for the reporting year were held by:

- Karen Grimwade – Liaison Whanganui Taranaki Conservation Board
- Michael Richardson - Liaison to Waikato Conservation Board
- Clint Green – Liaison Hawkes Bay Conservation Board
- Kylie Simpson – Liaison Bay of Plenty Conservation Board

The Authority has a liaison member with the Board to facilitate communication. The Authority liaison attends Board meetings and reports to the full Authority on matters raised. Tak Mutu was the Authority’s liaison for the reporting year.

8.2 Advice to the Department

The Board provided advice to the Department on the following issues:

- Tongariro Alpine Crossing booking system
- Management of Kaimanawa Wild Horses
- The threat of the Golden Clam
- Huts in the Tongariro National Park
- Various concession applications
- Mountain biking on Public Conservation Land

8.3 Submissions

The Board advocated its interests during the reporting period through several submissions, available to read on its webpage:

- October 23 – Submission to DOC on Draft National Bike Policy
- Mar 24 - The development of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing concession conditions.
- Mar 24 - Lease arrangements regarding the Chateau Tongariro and associated buildings.
- Apr 24 - Fast Track Approvals Bill Submission
- May/June 2024 - Provided feedback to the Proposed National Review of Biking Policy.
- Jun 24 - Feedback on the International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy 2024 (IVCTL)

Throughout the reporting period, the Board issued the following letters:

- July 23 - Letter to the Minister in support of progress around the Chateau Tongariro
- August 23 - Letter to the National Geographic Board in support of the National Park Waimarino name change
- March 2024 – Letter of support for the Tongariro Alpine Crossing new concession conditions.
- March 2024 - Letter of support for Te Hangaruru
- April 2024 – Letter to Ms Penny Nelson regarding the Chateau Tongariro and associated buildings

8.4 Community advocacy and involvement

The Board believes that engaging with members of the public is very important. Meetings were held in different parts of the Tongariro Taupō region and opportunities for the public to attend Board meetings were advertised.

Members of the public attended the Public Forum at several of the year's meetings and a range of issues were raised. The Board appreciated their input and efforts made to attend the meetings and responded by letter with a response to questions asked or concerns raised.

Public forum issues raised were:

Murray Wilson

- RAL and the Chateau Tongariro Hotel
- Tupapakuraa Falls Track work by the National Park Village Association.
- Te Ara Mangawhero and Te Hangaruru bike trails.
- Acknowledging the signing of Te Korowai o Wainuiārua.

Peter Zimmer

- 1080 Operations near the Ōwhango catchment
- Hide from view GNS seismic equipment on Mt Ruapehu
- Place survival shelters on Mt Ruapehu
- Consideration of live streaming Conservation Board meetings

- Acknowledgement of the progress made on the Ohinetonga track slip

8.5 Community visibility

The Board maintains a presence on the Department's website, and via the quarterly Conservation Board Newsletter. Members attended community events when important. It should be noted that Board community engagement is not funded.

8.6 Iwi liaison and advocacy

There are representatives of all four iwi with interests in the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board rohe on the Board, and each board meeting offers the opportunity for the iwi representatives to update their fellow members on current topics of interest or areas of concern.

9. FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Travelling Allowances Act 1951. The Chairperson receives a daily meeting fee of \$330, and other Authority members receive a daily meeting fee of \$250.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Board wishes to record the great support it has had from the DOC team in the Tongariro Taupō region led by Damian Coutts, the Regional Operations Director. alongside him always going the extra step has been Karen Rainbow, the Regional Statutory Manager, and Board Support Officer Louisa Meredith. Operations Managers, Dave Conley and George Taylor have been regular attendees at meetings and their advice is much appreciated.

We have also appreciated the involvement of Tak Mutu, our liaison member from the New Zealand Conservation Authority who has been a regular participant in our meetings and the regular participation of Jill Sheehy, (Taranaki Whanganui Liaison) Laura Crossman, (Bay of Plenty Liaison) and John Maneer, (East Coast and Hawkes Bay Liaison).

The Board also wishes to acknowledge the huge contributions of the two outgoing Board Members, Hinemoa Wanikau and Kylie Simpson. Both have made huge contributions over their tenure and their advice, knowledge and careful considerations will be sorely missed around the boardroom table.

The board also wishes to acknowledge and thank Aiden Gilbert for his time as a co-opted member of the Conservation Board, while the Te Korowai o Wainuiārua Statutory Appointment was completed. We are thrilled to now have a permanent statutory seat for Te Korowai o Wainuiārua.

Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Work Programme

1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Work Programme overview

This Work Programme has been developed in response to the Letter of Expectation from the Minister of Conservation dated 19 July 2022.

#	Task	Action	Progress
1	Te Tiriti Relationship with Iwi	<p>Develop and enhance relations with our four main Iwi.</p> <p>Continue the development of the working relationship with mana whenua, including by way of exploring and understanding the new settlement instruments across the rohe.</p>	<p>TTCB continues to build on already established relationships and communication with iwi.</p> <p>All four main iwi in the rohe are represented on the TTCB and thus communication channels are strong. All iwi support the need to progress the CMS and other planning documents</p>
2	Conservation Management Strategy	<p>Provide advice to the Department, the NZCA and the Minister of Conservation on the implementation of a new and updated Conservation Management Strategy. Continue to seek funding and resources from the Department to fulfil our statutory role as guardians of the CMS. This has proved impossible in recent time – we seek a way forward.</p> <p>The Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board is working to ensure the continuation of the four main iwi within the rohe are sitting around the Conservation Board table. Also, The Board is working with iwi representatives on the Board, and local iwi on the principles required to undertake a review of a new CMS to replace our outdated one.</p>	<p>The TTCB continue to seek a way forward to progress our CMS and other planning documents – all of which are over a decade out of date. We are constantly frustrated in this process. We continue to log CMS issues and options and stay in touch with our proposed planner – who just awaits the go ahead to start work.</p> <p>Our Chair Honey Winter has taken a proposal to the Chairs Conference, supported by Tak Mutu of NZCA, that as we are ‘ready to go’ in terms of iwi support and board intention, that we are enabled to make a start.</p>

		<p>To continue to work with the Catalyst Group on bringing together all parties who are working on how to progress our CMS. The aim is to formulate shared principles and values to make a start.</p> <p>In consultation with Iwi partners begin reviewing some key issues and new policy requirements or gaps in advance of beginning the formal review of the CMS.</p> <p>Establish the foundations of the CMS from the above towards the creation of a current and fit for purpose CMS</p>	<p>In summary, much effort has been made, but no progress as yet. We are hopeful of a go ahead soon.</p>
3	Biodiversity	<p>Provide an overview and advice to the Department on the implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy</p> <p>Support the community and the Department where necessary in conversations about predator control actions. Monitor management of deer populations by the Department and hunter groups.</p> <p>Understand further the pressures and impacts of ungulate throughout the Tongariro-Taupo rohe as required by the Minister of Conservation's letter of expectation. We plan to do this via regular contact with community, including Sika Foundation and a field trip into see the worst of the damage by ungulates in place - the Kaimanawa Forest Park.</p> <p>It should be noted that Biodiversity mahi over and above, Board meetings is not funded by the Department in this coming year.</p>	<p>The TTCB continue to be actively interested in the dire biodiversity threats we face in our rohe. We make it a priority to see for ourselves via field trips, when funding allows. Most members are active in various independent conservation activities and strongly advocate for good biodiversity outcomes.</p> <p>The Department has recently presented to us regarding the Implementation of the Te Mana o te Taiao, Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy. The Department has not advised us how the implementation will be funded.</p>
4	Visitor and tourist management and facilities	<p>Overview of the impact of visitors on the conservation land and natural taonga within the Board's rohe and the provision, use and maintenance of the facilities they need.</p>	<p>The TTCB has actively supported the Department in their work to reset the visitor numbers using the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. This is an ongoing process.</p>

		<p>Take advantage of the reset in visitor numbers as a result of Covid-19 and the closure of borders to promote new policies which allow enjoyment of national park/world heritage area by the community while controlling impact.</p> <p>This is mainly being achieved by consulting with the Department and other stakeholders in working towards a cap on the number of visitors using the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.</p> <p>It should be noted that extra advocacy in this mahi is not funded by the Department. Also that the cap on the Visitor Numbers on the TAC has been put on hold due to the situation with Mt Ruapehu.</p>	
5	Liaison roles – other boards, statutory relationships; Fish & Game etc.	<p>Appoint Board Members to Liaison roles, including neighbouring boards and encourage regular contact.</p> <p>Invite representative from other boards to attend TTCB meetings.</p> <p>Participate in conservation board chair hui.</p> <p>The Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board notes how vitally important liaison with iwi, community, stakeholders and other Conservation Boards is. But it must be noted that this mahi is not funded nor enabled by the Department.</p>	<p>As listed in the Liaison Section above – members of the TTCB are appointed to liaise with neighbouring boards.</p> <p>Ability to attend neighbouring board meetings is listed as a priority in the Minister’s Letter of Expectation – but is impacted by lack of budget to do so.</p>
6	Working with the Department	<p>Provide advice to the Department on any Concessions or issues they require consideration from the Board.</p> <p>Advocate on behalf of the community and the Department where necessary for anything that enables the Department to fulfil their roles and obligations in the Tongariro Taupo region.</p> <p>Advocate for the environment locally and nationally.</p>	<p>The TTCB provides advice when it is sought, and often raise issues of community interest.</p> <p>The Department do not actively involve board members in issues on an operational basis, only as information and seeking of advice at bi-monthly board meetings.</p>

		<p>The TTCB Board members will all aim to work to advocate for the environment and conservation locally and nationally. It must be noted that this mahi is not funded by the Department which limits what work can realistically be undertaken by the TTCB.</p> <p>Strengthen operational/governance relationships through a culture change in the Department, with a greater emphasis on the implementation of statutory planning documents.</p>	<p>Although the TTCB continues to seek the implementation of up-to-date statutory planning documents, the Department does not enable nor fund this function. This is frustration as it is a key legislatively required function.</p> <p>The Board notes that local Department of Conservation staff are unfailingly helpful. We acknowledge their commitment to their jobs despite funding cuts and restructuring making their functions less than easy to perform.</p>
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This report is presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required by the Conservation Act 1987 and distributed to interested parties. Members of the public are welcome to attend conservation board meetings.

If you would like more information on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board please see the website www.conservationboards.org.nz or contact the Board Support Officer for Central North Island, at the Department of Conservation via e-mail lmeredith@doc.govt.nz.