

WAIKATO CONSERVATION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025



Presented by the New Zealand Conservation Authority pursuant to Section 6 (O) of the Conservation Act 1987.

This report is presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required by the Conservation Act 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 Waikato Conservation Board please see the website <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/conservation-boards/waikato/> or contact the Board Support Officer at the Department of Conservation in Hamilton by 0800 275 362.

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Front Cover: *Mautohe Cathedral Cover*
Image courtesy of *DOC Media Team*

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Chairperson's Report

Tena koutou

The 2024-2025 year has been a challenging period for the Waikato Conservation Board, marked by significant changes within the Department of Conservation (DOC) support team.

At Christmas, our Statutory Manager, Ritish Chandra, resigned from the Department, leaving a vacancy without an immediate replacement. This role has since been filled by former Statutory Manager Michelle Lewis, who returned on a shared basis. Early in the new year, our Board Support Officer, Tanya Hadfield, experienced a serious health issue and sadly passed a few months later. Michele Samson was initially brought on to cover Tanya while on extended leave and then following Tanya's passing a few months later, Michelle accepted the position permanently.

As a result of these staffing disruptions, the Board held only two meetings in 2025 while the Department worked to restore stability. We are pleased to report that support for the Waikato Conservation Board is now on a firm footing, and we look forward to a productive future.

Following the significant loss of Board members last year, there was a six-month delay in appointing replacements, coinciding with the loss of DOC staff—further compounding the disruption. We now welcome new members: **Alexia Becroft**, **Dr. Aroon Parshotam**, and **Nagarajah Manoharan**, all of whom are quickly gaining familiarity with their roles.

The Board is deeply appreciative of the efforts of DOC staff, particularly **Tinaka Mearns**, Director for HWT, for her consistent support, along with other departmental staff who assist us as we travel within their rohe.

Despite these challenges, the Board has maintained a two- to three-month meeting cycle. As Chair, I am grateful to my colleagues—Deputy Chair **Charlotte Muggeridge**, members **Flora Bartholomew**, **Gaylene Roberts**, **Shelley Langton-Meyers**, and our new appointees—for their commitment and support.

Alan Cockle, our long-serving former Chairperson, resigned from the board in December. He had been seconded to provide advice and guidance during two years of significant change. His contribution was invaluable, and we are deeply grateful for his service. Regretfully, this seconded position was removed in September.

Board field trips have been limited this year, with only one two-day visit to the newly repaired walking track to **Mautohe Cathedral Cove**—an iconic Aotearoa destination attracting thousands of visitors daily. As noted in last year's report, Cyclone Gabrielle destroyed a major section of the track, requiring extensive planning, significant funding, and many months of restoration. Board members joined DOC staff and Minister Potaka for the reopening of this site before Christmas, an event warmly welcomed by the Hahei community and local tourism operators.

During meetings, the Board has received updates from DOC staff on several key issues:

- The current status of the **critically endangered Māui dolphin**
- The spread of **invasive kelp Caulerpa** in the Hauraki Gulf and control measures
- Progress and funding for the **Predator Free 2050 program** and its impact on the Waikato region

The Board has also contributed to several submissions, including to Government on the **Fast Track Permissions Policy** and **Tourist Visitor Levy**, and to the Waikato Regional Council. We are currently liaising with the Auckland Conservation Board regarding the **Hauraki Gulf / Tikapa Moana Marine Protection Bill**.

Looking ahead, the coming summer may see developments on the Government's Fast Track legislation, including an application by **Oceania Gold** to mine beneath DOC estate land. The Board has established a working group to liaise closely with DOC staff on this matter.

Naaku noa, naa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Chappell', written in a cursive style.

Rob Chappell
Chairperson
Waikato Conservation Board

Introduction

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 Waikato Conservation Board submits this annual report.

Conservation boards are appointed by the Minister of Conservation under section 6(P) of the Conservation Act 1987. Board functions are outlined in section 6(M) and the powers, which enable the conservation boards to carry out those functions, are under 6(N) of the Act.

Conservation boards are independent advisory bodies, established by statute. They represent the community and offer interaction between communities and the Department of Conservation (the Department), within their area of jurisdiction.

Conservation boards have several statutory roles under various Acts including:

- The recommendation of the Waikato 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 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; and
- 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 national park management plans and recommending approval of these plans by the Authority.

Conservation Board Region

Waikato Conservation Board

The Waikato Conservation Board's area of jurisdiction extends from the west coast of the North Island between Port Waikato and Mokau, across to the western edge of Lake Taupo and north to the Coromandel Peninsula. It is characterised by a variety of different landscapes, resulting from a history of uplifting, sea level change, volcanism and the influence of major river systems, such as the Waikato River.

Stand-out features of the Waikato include the west coast harbours – Kawhia, Aotea and Raglan; spectacular coastal cliffs at Moeatoa and Te Toto Gorge, Waitomo karst system; volcanic cones such as Pirongia and Karioi, and the exposed volcanic plugs (remnants of older volcanoes) on the Coromandel range; the lakes and wetlands of the Waikato and Hauraki plains; and rugged coastline, including the many islands off the Coromandel Peninsula.

The range of landscapes, altitude and east-to-west contrast provides for a great diversity of ecosystems, including the southern limit for some species, such as kauri, and northern limit of others, such as subalpine vegetation found at its northern-most limit on Moehau. Historically rare ecosystems, such as Kopuatai Peat Come and Waitomo karst, are internationally important. Some ecosystems are well represented, such as the tall podocarp-broadleaf forests of Pureora (including the largely intact forest at Waipapa), whereas other once widespread ecosystems, such as lowland kahikatea forest, are now threatened. These ecosystems in turn provide habitat for a wide diversity of native flora and fauna.

The area also extends out to the 12-nautical mile limit with respect to coastal and marine issues, and out to the 200-nautical mile limit, with respect to protected species.

The Board's area of responsibility is nearly 270,000 ha of Public Conservation land (12% of the total area 2,250,000 hectares). The land is described in more than 500 separate parcels for various purposes, including forests, wetlands, caves, marine reserves, offshore islands, historic sites, wildlife protection, and recreational areas.

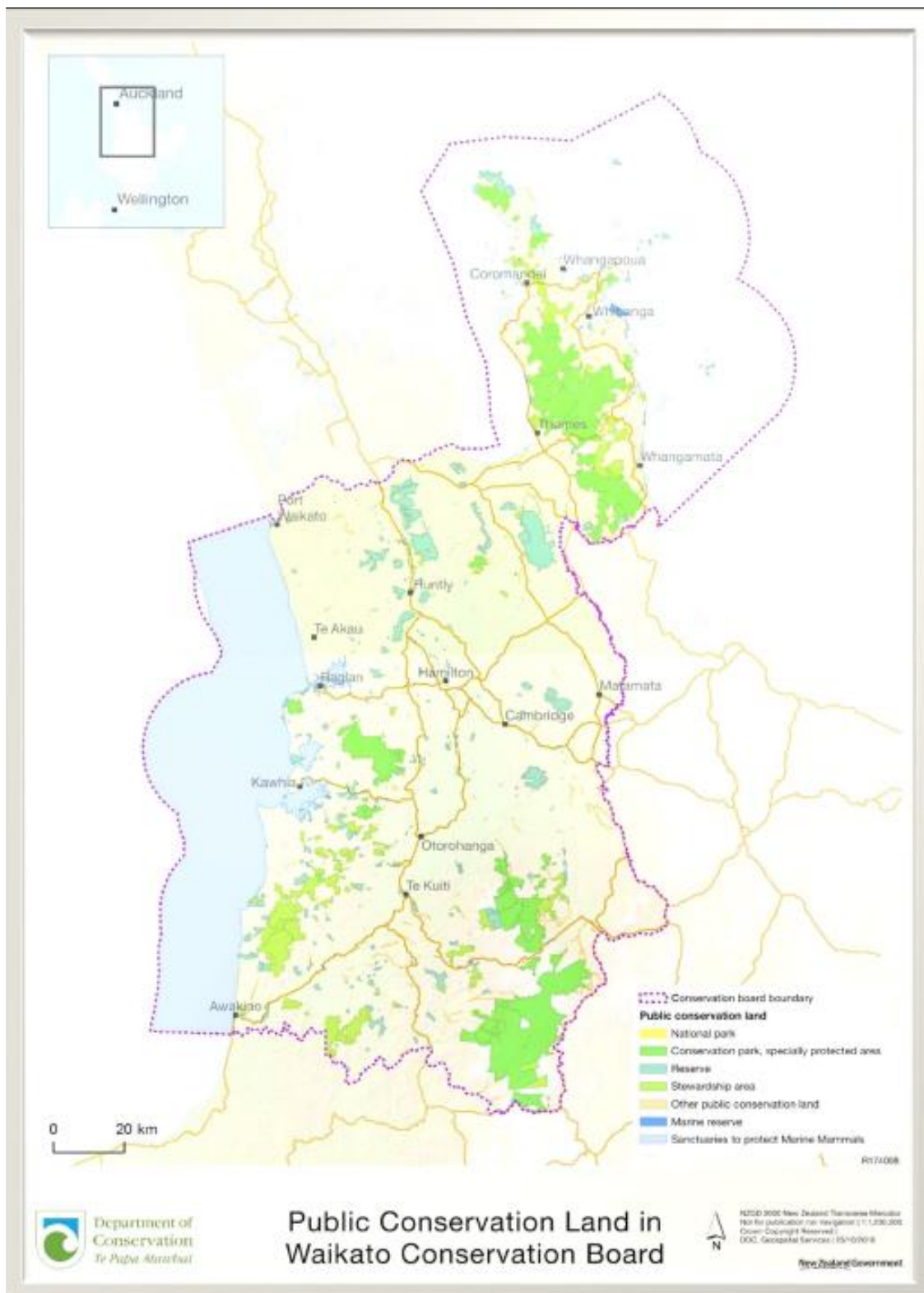


Figure 1 Waikato Conservation Board Jurisdiction

Board Functioning

Board functions under section 6M 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 the review and 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:
 - a) on any proposed change of status or classification of any area of national or international importance; and
 - b) on any other conservation matter relating to any area with the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 5) To liaise with any Fish and Game Council on matter within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 6) To exercise such powers and functions as may be delegated to it by the Minister under this Act or any other Act.

Powers of the Board under section 6N of the Conservation Act 1987

- 1) Every 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:
 - a) advocate its interests at any public forum or in any statutory planning process; and
 - b) 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.

Functions of the Board under section 30 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 give advice to the Director-General or the Authority:
 - a) on the interpretation of any management plan for a park; and

- b) on any proposal for the addition of land to any national park or the establishment of a new national park; and
- c) on any other matter relating to any national park, – within the jurisdiction of the Board.

Board Membership

There were 9 Board members for the reporting year, appointed by the Minister of Conservation. Rob Chappell was elected as Chairperson and Charlotte Muggeridge as Deputy Chairperson.

The following table lists the membership of the Board between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023 and their term of office.

Table 1: Board Membership

Board Member	Area	Term Start	Term End	Years Served
Rob Chappell	Coromandel	7 Jul 2020	30 Jun 2026	5
Charlotte Muggeridge	Hamilton	2 Jul 2021	30 Jun 2027	4
Alexia Becroft	Taupiri	1 Nov 2024	30 Jun 2026	1
Dr Aroon Parshotam	Hamilton	1 Nov 2024	30 Jun 2027	1
Dr David Pattermore	Morrinsville	1 Nov 2024	30 Jun 2027	1
Flora Bartholomew	Te Kuiti	1 Jul 2019	30 Jun 2025	6
Gaylene Roberts	Hamilton	1 Jul 2019	30 Jun 2025	5
Nagarajah Manoharan	Hamilton	1 Nov 2024	30 Jun 2027	1
Dr Shelley Langton-Myers	Pokeno	2 Jul 2021	30 Jun 2025	4

Member Profiles

Rob Chappell of Coromandel Chairperson

Appointment term: 7 July 2020 to 30 June 2026

Robin brings strong nature conservation, marine science, and governance skills to the Board. He is a former DOC employee and spent five years working on the Chatham Islands. Mr Chappell provides good support to the Board Chair in the governance space. He also has a good understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Charlotte Muggeridge of Hamilton Deputy Chairperson

Appointment term: 7 July 2021 to 30 June 2027

Charlotte is a resource management lawyer. She has extensive experience in environmental issues having sat on a number of environmental and community boards at local, regional, and international levels. Charlotte regularly presents on environmental issues both locally and nationally.

Charlotte is the co-author of New Zealand's first legal textbook on Subdivisions (Subdivisions Law and Practice, LexisNexis, 2024). She was awarded the Property Council Central Region Judge's Choice award in 2022 for her contribution to the industry.

Alexia Becroft of Taupiri

Appointment term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2026

Alexia is a self-employed dairy farmer with a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Environmental Science and Biology. She holds a Certificate in Sustainable Nutrient Management and has participated in Food HQ's Strategic Thinking for Agrifood Management Programme. Alexia is deeply committed to supporting the primary sector in making meaningful change towards a sustainable future.

Dr Aroon Parshotam of Hamilton

Appointment term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2027

Aroon has over 25 years of experience in environmental Science, Environmental management and economics. Aroon also participates in various science management groups including being on the editorial board of Frontiers of Environmental Economics in Ecological Economics.

Dr David Pattermore of Morrinsville

Appointment term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2026

Appointment term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2027

David as a senior scientist and lecturer brings extensive experience in conservation biology, ecosystem science, ecology, pollination biology, horticultural & agricultural land management, community group management, conservation advocacy, partnerships with iwi/hapū and resource management law.

Flora Bartholomew of Te Kuiti

Appointment term: 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2025

Flora is a self-employed dairy farmer and holds a Certificate in Biology, a Bachelor in Horticultural Science and a Diploma in Business Management. She has three QEII blocks on her property and is a member of the New Zealand Farm Forestry and Federated Farmers. Flora also holds a Certificate in Sustainable Nutrient Management in NZ Agriculture.

Gaylene Roberts of Hamilton

Appointment term: 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2025

Gaylene (Waikato, Raukawa, Maniapoto) was nominated by the head of the Kahui Ariki, the Māori Sovereign. She serves on the Board as part of the Waikato Raupatu Lands Settlement 1995. Gaylene brings extensive governance experience, currently a Board member of the Raukawa Settlement Trust. She has also been involved in committees associated with the Waikato District Health Board, Iwi Consultative and Mana Whenua.

Nagarajah Manoharan of Hamilton Appointment term: 1 November 2024 to 30 June 2027

Nagarajah is an experienced manager, with 30 years of estimating work, 20 years on the MSD Benefits Review Board, and 7 years of face-to-face research monitoring. He is also the past Chairperson of Southeast Kirikiriroa Community Association, past President of the Waikato Ethnic Council. Nagarajah is currently the Waikato Supervisor for the National Research Bureau, and the President of the United Nations Association of New Zealand (Waikato branch).

Dr Shelley Langton-Myers of Pokeno Appointment term 2 July 2021 2024 to 30 June 2025

Shelley is an Ecologist, Entomologist, and Lecturer for the EcoQuest Centre for Indigeneity, Ecology and Creativity. She brings a conservation science background to the Board, and is well versed in conservation issues, policy, and eco-tourism.

Board Meetings

The board held 4 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.

Table 2: Board meeting dates and locations

Board meeting date	Meeting location and venue
Friday, 18 October 2024	Trust Waikato – 4 Little London Lane, Hamilton
Friday, 13 December 2024	DOC Te Rapa – 5 Northway Street, Hamilton
Friday, 25 February 2025	DOC – 2/20 Joan Gaskell Drive, Whitianga
Friday, 30 May 2024	DOC – 73 Rostrevor Street, Hamilton

Attendance

The table below summarises the number of Board meetings attended by members out of the total number of meetings held during the year.

Members attended other meetings and events in their role as Board members, including subcommittee meetings and representative roles.

Table 3: Board meetings attended by members.

Board Members	Board Meetings	Liaison Meetings	Special Events
Rob Chappell	4		
Charlotte Muggeridge	4		
Alexia Becroft	3		
Aroon Parshotam	3		
David Pattemore	3		
Flora Bartholomew	3	2	
Gayle Roberts	2		
Nagarajah Manoharan	3		
Shelley Langton-Myers	4		

Field Trips & Site Inspections

Field trips are an excellent opportunity for Board members to become more aware of conservation issues within their region and to meet with community members undertaking conservation activities.

Table 4: Field trips and site inspections

Board meeting date	Meeting location and venue
Thursday, 24 February 2024	<p><u>Mautohe Cathedral Cove</u> is one of the busiest iconic visitor sites in Aotearoa catering to many thousands of visitors daily. As noted in my report last year, Cyclone Gabrelle had destroyed a significant section of the track which required both considerable planning, a large funding injection along with many months to restore using both expertise and staff. Waikato Conservation Board members joined Department staff Director Tinaka Mearns, local Operations Manager Nick Kelly and Minister Potaka in reopening this site pre-Xmas much to the delight of the local community tourist operators of Hahei.</p> <p>The WCB spent an afternoon prior to the February meeting with local Doc Community Relations Ranger and supervisor for the project Matt Flynn inspecting the work and observing the significant numbers of day visitors utilizing the access to this very picturesque location.</p>

Department Involvement in Board Meetings

DOC Staff who regularly attended our meetings include:

- *Ritesh Chandra - Statutory Manager, HWT (2024-25)*
- *Tanya Hadfield - Board Support Officer, HWT (2024-25)*
- *Tinaka Mearns - Director Regional Operations HWT*
- *Michelle Lewis - Statutory & Community Manager, HWT*
- *Carisse Enderwick - Senior Statutory Advisor, HWT*
- *Michelle Samson - Board Support Officer, HWT (2025)*

In addition to the above the following DOC Staff also attended meetings:

- *Niwha Jones - Operations Manager, Waikato*
- *Avi Holzapfel - Operations Manager, Hauraki*
- *Kakahurimu Paekau - Pou Tairangahau, HWT*
- *Rachel McMillan - Senior Visitors Advisor*

Training

Date	Details	Facilitator	Attendees
12 December 2024	Induction for 4 new appointees	Ritesh Chandra	Alexia Becroft Aroon Parshotam David Pattemore Nagarajah Manohoran

Annual Work Plan

Please refer to Appendix 1 for the full Board Annual Work Programme and progress commentary.

Statutory Activity

Waikato Conservation Management Strategy

The CMS has now been in operation for 15 years.

The Board receives verbal updates from Operations Managers intermittently at board meetings.

Advice & Advocacy

All Board members are responsible 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.

Table 5: Board liaisons and representatives

Board Members	Group / Agency / Organisation
Flora Bartholomew	Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board
Rob Chappell	Chatham Islands Conservation Board

Other Conservation Boards Liaison

Michael Richardson – Tongariro Taupo

Bruce Clarkson – Taranaki Whanganui

Tori Ngataki – Auckland

Lyndell Kennedy – Bay of Plenty

Authority Liaison

Shadrach Rolleston - NZCA

Community Advocacy & Involvement

The Board believes that working with conservation organisations and members of the public is vital to the Board's purpose as a voice of the community for conservation.

Board member reports are tabled at meetings, and the Environmental Scan agenda item allows members to provide updates on any activities they have undertaken to pursue conservation interests, or advocate for good conservation outcomes.

Iwi Liaison & Advocacy

The makeup of the Board includes members who have strong iwi affiliations throughout the Waikato region. This enables the Board to connect and understand iwi/hapū concerns.

Acknowledgements

The Board wishes to thank the DOC team for supporting the Board.

The Board wishes to acknowledge the attendance and discussion at Board hui by:

- Tinaka Mearns – Director Regional Operations, HWT

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Appendix 1 – Annual Workplan

Board’s strategic priorities and reporting requirements 2024-2028

Purpose

Conservation Boards established under section 6L of the Conservation Act 1987. The Boards have a clear purpose to act as the lead community voice for conservation by providing strategic, independent advice within the Board’s boundary to:

- DOC Regional Operations Director/s, and
- New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) via the Authority’s Liaison person.

Aligned with section 6M of the Conservation Act 1987, Conservation Boards also provide advice (through public submissions and Board Member contributions on local, regional or national committees/Boards) on conservation matters within the Board’s boundary.

Being effective

For the Board to feel effective as the lead voice of the community for conservation, the Board regularly discusses and reviews its strategic priorities and related reporting requirements of DOC.

Strategic priorities for 2024-2028

The Board’s strategic planning process highlights the following priorities for Financial years: 2024 to 2028. It should be noted, the Board’s strategic planning process is reasonably fluid to accommodate changes in the conservation space driven by external factors like: legislative changes, Councils Plan changes, Fish and Game priorities, and DOC’s priorities.

- **Te Mana o te Taiao**

The Board supports the implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao in the Whitianga, Hauraki, Waikato and Maniapoto districts.

Reporting requirement

The Board requests reports on the biodiversity work aligned to the implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao, as practicable.

Hauraki Gulf/Tikapa Moana Marine Protection Bill

Once legislated, the Board supports the implementation of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Protection Bill for the Coromandel district.

Reporting requirement

The Board requests updates on the education and monitoring work of any new Hauraki Gulf Marine protected areas, as practicable.

- **Legislative changes**

The Board seeks to be informed regarding the Minister’s modernising conservation legislative changes and understand the operational implications for the Board.

Reporting requirement

The Board requests update reports on modernising conservation legislative changes, as practicable.