

Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board



Annual Report

1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015



Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board

ANNUAL REPORT

1 JULY 2014 – 30 JUNE 2015

*Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
Pursuant to Section 6 (O) of the Conservation Act 1987*

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Cover: Castlepoint Lighthouse. *Photo: Joe Hansen*

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1. Chairperson's report

I am honoured to deliver the first Annual Report of the newly re-established Wellington Conservation Board, following the review of the Conservation Boards in 2013. The region is fairly well represented by the geographic spread of membership: Jim Rainey and Richard Steedman cover the northern part of the Board's area, myself and Jonathan Proctor are in the Manawatu area; Don Adams in the Wairarapa area; and Karen Fifield, Pene Lefale, Barry Wards and Phil Gurnsey in the Wellington area. We do have some concern that, as a Board, we do not have representatives from the Kapiti Coast, nor do we have extensive coverage of iwi within our region. Although our combined experience and knowledge means that we bring a generally well-informed approach to discussions, it has been a challenge to have all Board members present in all planned meetings.

The Board has been aware of the importance of developing and following good practice in its meetings and has worked to make these more efficient. We have moved from meetings being a two-day exercise, including a day for visiting local sites to a one day meeting with the afternoon being reserved for visiting sites, around local issues. We have held our meetings at a range of locations in order to give local communities the opportunity to engage with the Board and for Board members to raise their profile and community engagements. We took a look at the site for the proposed land swap in connection with the Ruataniwha Water Storage project, about which the Minister sought our advice.

We set up two sub-committees: one for concessions and the other for the review of the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). The former was tasked with the development of clear guidelines for concessions based on existing triggers. The latter is tasked with overseeing the review of the CMS and advising the Board and the Department of Conservation of progress. Unfortunately, progress has been slowed due partly to the process but largely to the scale and scope of the review itself. We have appointed liaison people for a wide range of groups, including our neighbouring Boards, local hunting and tramping groups, as well as the Ruahine Users Group and Fish & Game. The liaison role is not well-defined and I believe this may need clarification to avoid members over-committing themselves. We have also worked with Department of Conservation to consider applications for the second round of the DOC Community Fund (formerly the Community Conservation Partnership Fund).

I believe that the setup of the Board following the Review was well thought-out and that the Department of Conservation staff are well intentioned toward us. However I think the Board structure is still bedding in, and that Department of Conservation processes need refining further in order for Board members to feel that their voices and inputs are worthwhile.

I would like to extend my thanks to fellow Board members for their contributions this year and, in particular, to Don Adams for so ably taking on the role of Deputy Chairperson.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

Anne Lawrence

Chairperson

Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board

2. Introduction

Following the review of the Conservation Boards completed in 2013, Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board was re-established in March 2014 by the Minister of Conservation. It is one of 14 statutory bodies appointed by the Minister under Section P of the Conservation Act 1987. The functions and powers of the Board are outlined in Sections 6M and 6N respectively. Each of the 14 Conservation Boards has their own geographically defined area with up to 12 members.

In a 'Letter of Expectation' sent to the Board the Associate Minister of Conservation, Nicky Wagner, provided the Board with a clear work programme for the year.

- **Conservation Management Strategy**

The Board was invited to work with the Department to progress the review of the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy (CMS).

- **Stewardship land**

The Board was invited to work with the Department to provide advice to the Minister on any priorities for reclassification of stewardship land within its region.

- **Other functions**

The Board may be called upon to provide advice of proposed land changes of status for nationally and internationally important areas which include World Heritage, Ramsar, national parks and conservation parks. It was expected that with the Department's assistance the Board would provide advice and support in those processes.

- **Advocacy**

The Board was invited to review its advocacy power in light of its functions and the conservation outcomes it wants to see achieved on behalf of the Wellington community. In considering how best to exercise its advocacy power, the Board should consider its unique position and voice, and what it can add to the debate that won't be heard from any other contributor.

- **Profile**

The Board was challenged, along with the Department, to work towards raising the profile of the Board within the region and emphasising the role it plays in achieving the advances of conservation outcomes for the benefit of the community.

- **Regional work programme and monitoring**

The Board was invited to advise the Department on the development of performance indicators, systems and tools that will enable it to monitor and measure progress.

The Board developed a work programme for 2014/15 that was accepted by the Minister of Conservation (**Appendix 1**).

3. Membership of the Board

Members are appointed to the Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board by the Minister of Conservation, and are representative across the different communities and interests within the region.

During 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 there have been 9 members on the Board (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Board membership during 2014/15

Name	Area	Date first appointed	Term ends
Anne Lawrence (Chairperson)	Palmerston North	1 May 2014	30 June 2018
Karen Fifield	Wellington	1 May 2014	30 June 2016
Pene Lefale	Wellington	1 July 2014	30 June 2017
Jim Rainey	Mangaweka	1 May 2014	30 June 2016
Richard Steedman	Taihape	1 July 2014	30 June 2018
Barry Wards	Upper Hutt	1 May 2014	30 June 2016
Phil Gurney	Wellington	1 May 2014	03 July 2015
Jonathon Procter	Palmerston North	1 July 2014	20 June 2017
Don Adams (Deputy Chairperson)	Masterton	1 May 2014	30 June 2018

4. Board's area

4.1 Coverage

The Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board's coverage extends from the bottom of the North Island to the mouth of the Turakina River in the west, up Turakina River and over the top of the Ruahine Forest Park, down the eastern boundary of the Forest and then out across to the east coast near Waimarama. It includes the three Wellington harbour islands Matiu/Somes, Mokopuna and Makaro/Ward, as well as Kapiti and Mana islands.

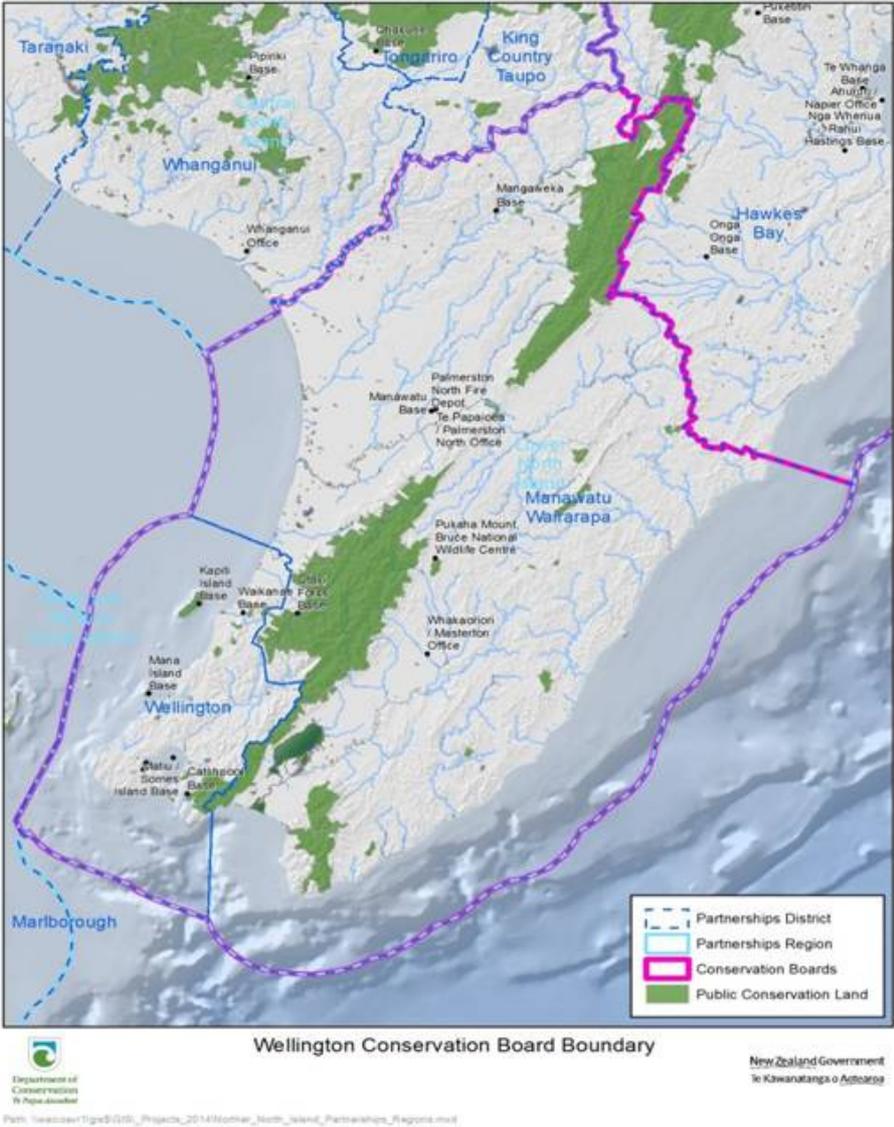


Figure 1. Map of Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board area

4.2 Significant areas of natural and historic importance

MANAWATU

Ruahine Forest Park

Vegetation in the park varies as the forests in the north are generally a mix of podocarps, including red beech, rimu, miro, mataī and mountain beech, with kahikatea dominating swampy areas. Further south the dense growth of leatherwood (tūpare), forms the largest unbroken expanse in the country.

Manawatu Gorge Scenic Reserve

One of only a few places in the world where a river passes through a dividing range. Tawa and podocarp species dominant the steep bush clad hills. A long term collaborative project with many partners is enhancing the biodiversity and recreation opportunities of the area.

Manawatu estuary

Listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands as a Wetland of International Importance. This estuarine wetland has one of the most diverse ranges of birds to be seen at any one place in New Zealand, a total of 95 species have been identified at the estuary. It is a significant area of salt marsh and mudflat and a prized feeding ground for many birds including the migratory eastern bar-tailed godwit.

Manawatu/Horowhenua coastal dunes

These dune systems are habitat for fragile and rare wetland plants and hold particular importance for whānau, hapū and iwi. The Foxton Beach dune fields are recognised as one of the largest parabolic dunes systems in the southern hemisphere.

WAIRARAPA

Pukaha/Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre

Located in the northern Wairarapa, the centre plays an important role in the captive breeding of New Zealand's endangered bird species, as well as fulfilling an educational role by giving the public the opportunity to see these birds. Native birds are also being returned to the adjoining Pukaha Mount Bruce forest.

Tararua Forest Park

With increasing altitude from the edge of the park lowland podocarp/tawa or podocarp/kamahi forest, passes into montane podocarp/beech, then subalpine pure beech (forming a sharp treeline), to alpine tussock grasslands.

Aorangi Forest Park

Beech forest dominates the north of the range with hīnau and mataī characterising the hardwood forests and lower altitudes. The shrublands of the river terraces and coastal foothills are generally dominated by tauhinu while elsewhere mānuka and kānuka are the prevalent species at low altitude. Small areas of sub-alpine shrubland occur on the higher peaks.

Lake Wairarapa and Lake Onoke

The lakes and their associated wetlands and scattered forest remnants are the largest wetland system in the lower North Island. The wetlands contain mudflats, lagoons, sand flats, marshlands, salt marshes and back waters. The area is considered to be of national and international importance for indigenous plant and animal communities.

WELLINGTON

Rimutaka Forest Park

Beech forest dominates much of the park, joined by podocarps at lower altitudes. These forests support hundreds of indigenous plant species and provide habitat for a range of invertebrates, freshwater fish, reptiles, and birds including reintroduced brown kiwi.

Turakirae Head Scientific Reserve

Turakirae Head offers earthquake-raised beaches that record a continuous geological upheaval over the past 7,000 years. It also has Wellington's largest fur seal colony.

Waikanae Estuary

This nationally-significant reserve protects a natural mosaic of freshwater lakelets, saltwater lagoons and marshes, tidal sand flats and sandy beach at the mouth of the Waikanae River, and is connected to the Kapiti Marine Reserve and Kapiti Island Nature Reserve, providing a rare sequence of protection for animals that move between sea, river and land habitats.

Kapiti Marine Reserve

Kapiti Marine Reserve links the world-renowned bird sanctuary on Kapiti Island with the protected Waikanae estuary on the mainland, creating a rare continuum of protected land and sea. The reserve covers two areas – a small section to the north of the seaward side of the island, and a larger section between the protected areas of Kapiti Island and Waikanae Estuary.

Kapiti Island Nature Reserve

This 1,965 ha sanctuary is 5 km off the west coast of the lower North Island. It is home to many native species that are either very rare or entirely absent from the mainland, including: kōkako, brown teal/pāteke, saddleback/tīeke, stitchbird/hihi, takahē, North Island tomtit/miromiro and little spotted kiwi/kiwi pukupuku.

Mana Island Scientific Reserve

Many bird species can be seen on Mana Island including takahē, little penguin/kororā, brown teal/pāteke, fluttering shearwater/pakahā, Australasian gannet/tākapu, yellow-crowned parakeet/kākāriki, little spotted kiwi/kiwi pukupuku and North Island robin/toutouwai.

Matiu/Somes Island Scientific and Historic reserves

Matiu/Somes Island, the largest of three islands located in Wellington Harbour, is a

predator-free scientific reserve. It is also a historic reserve with a rich multicultural history.

Taputeranga Marine Reserve

Taputeranga Marine Reserve is 6 km from the city centre on Wellington’s south coast, providing easy access to study, interact with and record marine life and habitats.

5. Board meetings and field visits

The Board decided to rotate its meeting locations between Manawatu, Wairarapa, and Wellington to enable Board members to view issues and opportunities across the region.

During 2014/15, the Board’s formal programme comprised three meetings and three field trips. Meetings of the Board were held in Masterton, Wellington and Palmerston North.

A fourth meeting was scheduled to be held in May on the Kapiti Coast but had to be postponed due to significant rain events that occurred the previous day.

5.1 Meetings

Table 2. The Board scheduled three full-day meetings.

Date of meeting	Meeting Venue	Location
22 August 2014 - Inaugural	Department of Conservation Masterton Office	Masterton
28 November 2014	Cabinet Room Old Government Buildings,	Wellington
27 February 2015	Department of Conservation Palmerston North Office	Palmerston North

5.2 Field trips

Visits to specific locations provided opportunities for the Board to:

- Become more familiar with the conservation values of key places
- Discuss management challenges and approaches with DOC staff and stakeholders
- Increase understanding and opportunities for conservation growth

2014/15 field trips:

- 23 August 2014: Pounui Wetlands and Onoke Spit, Lake Ferry Hotel, Pinnacles Campground, Palliser Lighthouse, Wairio Wetland

- 29 November 2014: Makara Beach and project West Wind, Owhiro Stream and Taputeranga Marine Reserve
- 28 February 2015: Proposed Ruataniwha dam site, Ruahine Forest Park

5.3 Board member's attendance

Table 3. Board attendance at 2014/15 meetings and field trips

Board Members	Number of meetings attended (3 held)	Number of fieldtrips attended (3 held)
Anne Lawrence (Chairman)	3	3
Karen Fifield	3	3
Jonathon Procter	2	2
Richard Steedman	2	2
Pene Lefale	2	2
Jim Rainey	2	2
Don Adams	3	3
Barry Wards	3	3
Phil Gurnsey	3	3

For approved Board activities, Members are paid \$140 per day and the Chairman \$190 per day.

5.4 Board sub-committees

The Board formed two sub-committees in 2014/15.

Concessions

Interim committee formed on 22 August 2014, members were Don Adams, Phil Gurnsey and Barry Wards.

Conservation Management Strategy

CMS sub-committee members Anne Lawrence, Phil Gurnsey and Jim Rainey attended a 'places' workshop on 27 March 2015.

5.5 Liaison roles

In order to network and raise its profile, the Board agreed to assign liaison roles with the neighbouring Fish & Game, other conservation boards and other groups.

The following liaison roles were agreed for 2014/15:

- Iwi Liaison – Richard Steedman, Jonathan Procter
- Whaka Rongotai – Phil Gurnsey
- Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board – Richard Steedman
- Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board – Jim Rainey
- Rangitikei Environment Group – Jim Rainey
- Fish & Game Manawatu – Jim Rainey
- Wairarapa Liaison (includes local Fish & Game and hunting groups) – Don Adams
- Aorangi Steering Group – Don Adams
- Project Kaka – Barry Wards
- Wellington Wairarapa Forest & Bird – Barry Wards
- Wairarapa Moana Representative – Phil Gurnsey (assistance of Barry Wards and Karen Fifield)
- Marine Reserves – Phil Gurnsey
- Nature Connections – Karen Fifield
- Strategic Advisory Committee for Kapiti Island Reserves – Barry Wards (Board appointed role)

5.6 Other meetings and activities

Conservation Boards’ Chairs Meetings

Anne Lawrence (Chairman) attended the Conservation Boards’ Chairs meetings and lunch hosted by Hon Nicola Wagner (Associate Minister of Conservation) held in November 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate the sharing of ideas between Conservation Boards’ Chairs around achieving conservation outcomes in their communities.

Community Conservation Partnership Fund

Jon Proctor and Barry Wards, as Board representatives, ably assisted the Department at two meetings to consider applications to the second round of the Community Conservation Partnership Fund. The application process had two phases and assessment panels. Jon Proctor attended the first. Barry Wards attended the second. The Fund was first established in 2014 to provide \$26 million over four years for community-led conservation projects around New Zealand.

6. Public involvement

The Board informs and interacts with the public through forums, correspondence, an annual report, DOC website and media releases. The Board’s formal relationships with specific organisations are described in section 13.

6.1 Public Forum

During 2014/15, the Board welcomed individuals to a Public Forum, a half an hour session scheduled at each meeting, to enable people to speak to the Board about agenda items or other conservation issues. The Board regards the Forum as an important opportunity to hear from the community and hopes to see more people take up this prospect in 2015/16.

Matters raised by speakers who participated in these Forums included:

- Removal of fire pits at Holdsworth Campsite, Tararua Forest Park
- Implementation of a Marine Reserve on the Eastern Wairarapa coast
- Concern with the level of development, pollution and rubbish at Red Rocks
- Concern from the Manawatu Gorge biodiversity project with respect to guardianship and partnership with DOC and other groups
- Ruataniwha Land Exchange

6.2 Correspondence

The Board values receiving information from people who have interests and/or a long-term association with specific areas within the Wellington region.

6.3 Distribution of the Board's Annual Report

This is the first Annual Report for the re-established Board. The primary audience is the New Zealand Conservation Authority. The Board will circulate the report more widely to increase awareness of the Board's role and conservation issues in the Manawatu, Wairarapa and Wellington regions.

6.4 The Board's website

The Board posts information about the region, meeting agendas and minutes, the Board Members and Annual Report on its pages of the DOC's website.

6.5 Media

The Board sought guidance from the Department on a policy for dealing with the media. Until guidelines were available the Chairperson was the first point of contact for the media.

Media releases were considered at meetings and distributed as appropriate. Two releases were circulated during the annual report period. The first was to inform the public of the inaugural Board meeting and to provide an update on the Conservation

Management Strategy process. The second was to announce the commencement of the pre-draft consultation phase for the review of the Wellington Conservation Management Strategy.

7. Advising on implementation of the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS)

Section 6M of the Conservation Act 1987

As the Board was re-established from July 2014, it did not advise on implementation of the current Wellington and Whanganui CMSs. The review of the new Wellington CMS began in 2014/15 and the Board was involved in this process.

There has been no activity on Conservation Management Plans during 2014/15, although it is an agenda item at meetings. The Board requested an update and information on Marine Protected Areas within its jurisdiction, and received a briefing from Sean Cooper, DOC Marine Ecosystems Manager, at its meeting in November 2014.

8. Review of the CMS

Section 7H (4) of the Conservation Act 1987

8.1 Background

The Wellington Te Rūnanga Papa Atawhai o Te Upoko o te Ika Conservation Board area is presently covered by two existing CMSs for Wellington and Whanganui, which expired in 2005 and 2007 respectively.

Development of the replacement draft CMS started in 2009/10, reflecting the new Board boundaries that included parts of Hawke's Bay. The 2009/10 draft CMS was never notified. On this basis, the expiry dates for the two existing CMSs were extended by the Minister of Conservation to allow this review process to be completed.

The existing CMSs and the draft CMS will be reviewed and information still considered relevant will be used to augment the new CMS covering the areas.

The review of the Whanganui CMS for the area not in the Wellington Conservation Board area has not yet begun.

8.2 Updates provided to the Board

The Board was updated by various Department staff at meetings on the CMS process and its expected level of involvement as per statutory processes.

Drafting of the CMS was to occur after the public pre-consultation. Notification of the draft CMS will be available in late 2015 or early 2016.

The Board provided input through a workshop exercise on places within the region. It was also updated on the initial consultation process and partnerships teams work to engage with local communities from pre-draft consultation from February to May 2015. There was a high level of response from the community. However, in reviewing the process the Board would have appreciated receiving a more specific programme of meetings and engagements to enable it to be more active in the process.

The Board is expected to be involved in the CMS process in 2015/16, by supporting Department staff who are preparing for the draft's public notification..

9. Advocating for conservation within the region

Section 6N of the Conservation Act 1987

The Board considers at each meeting any opportunities and priorities for statutory advocacy and the availability of members to prepare submissions.

During 2014/15, the Board:

- Responded to a request from the Minister of Conservation on the Ruataniwha Land Exchange.

10. Advocating for conservation at a national level

Section 6N of the Conservation Act 1987

The Board did not make any submissions during 2014/15.

11. Advice to NZ Conservation Authority

Section 6M of the Conservation Act 1987

No formal advice was sent to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA). However, the Board did receive NZCA's minutes, memos and Annual Report which were considered at Board meetings.

The Board were pleased to have Waana Davis, NZCA (Liaison Officer) in attendance providing guidance to members at their meeting in November 2014.

12. Advice to the Director-General of Conservation

Section 6M of the Conservation Act 1987

12.1 Concessions

The Board reviewed applications for, and progress with, concessions at each meeting and provided advice. The Board also accepted to use the existing triggers (initially as a draft to gauge amount of interest required) for concessions reports provided by the Department.

12.2 DOC response to Ombudsman Report on Routeburn guided concession decision for discussion with Conservation Boards

The Department's response to the Ombudsman Report on the Routeburn Guided Concession was considered by the Board. The Board responded with a letter commending the review and encouraging the raising of the bar of DOC staff in consistency of application and interpretation of concessions.

13. Liaison

13.1 Nature Central

The Board was updated regularly at their meetings on Nature Central by Sarah Owen (Programme Co-ordinator). Nature Central blends with Regional Councils in the area to look at ways of working together on bigger projects such as wilding pines, Whareroa Farm, education and shared services.

13.2 Fish & Game

Liaison was maintained with Fish & Game in the Wairarapa and Palmerston North with relevant members reporting at meetings on any activity.

13.3 Other conservation boards

The minutes and agendas of neighbouring Boards (Hawke's Bay, Tongariro/Taupo, and Whanganui) were provided for member information. Liaison roles were assigned to Board members for neighbouring Boards.

Steve Fouhy (Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board Liaison Officer) attended the Board's November and February meetings and gave updates on Board's activities.

Kevin Trerise (East Coast/Hawke's Bay Conservation Board Liaison Officer) also attended the Board's February meeting and to update the Board on activities in that area.

Appendix 1. Work programme 2014/15

- Establishing a robust Wellington Conservation Board governance team, that enables members to reflect the voice of their local communities including iwi, hapū, whānau and enable wide support for conservation within the Board Rohe while providing strong support to the conservation growth opportunities.
- Develop and maintain constructive communications with neighboring Boards to ensure cross boundary issues are recognised.
- Develop productive relationships with Directors and Managers that support the implementation of LNIR conservation work programs within the respective districts.
- Allocate portfolio responsibilities to ensure effective issue leadership.
- Contribute and participate in the Development of the Wellington CMS via the consultation, planning overview and draft strategy ratification processes.
- Understand and support the Treaty Settlement process and Departmental obligations under Section 4 (Conservation Act 1987) for iwi, hapū and whānau engagement; obligations and prospects.
- Provide support for the Department's current and future partnership growth initiatives with local government, iwi, hapū, whānau, communities and businesses, within the respective districts.
- Provide leadership, support and input to agreed concession triggers within the respective districts and provide guidance in the establishment of Concessions where the Board 'triggers' are activated.
- Engage appropriately where opportunities arise and provide support for the work programs for Ecological Management Units and other sites of significance of each respective districts.