

Annual Report of the

New Zealand Conservation Authority

Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O Aotearoa

FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2024 TO 30 JUNE 2025

Presented to the Minister of Conservation and tabled in the House of Representatives pursuant to section 6E of the Conservation Act 1987

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Cover photo: Toroa / northern royal albatross in flight above Taiaroa Head, Otago Peninsula. *Photo: Ligs Hoffman, Department of Conservation (DOC)*

Mission Statement photo: Kepler Track ridgeline. *Photo: Keri Moyle*

Back cover photo: New Zealand Conservation Authority, Wellington Conservation Board and DOC staff at Matiu / Somes Island in April 2025.
Photo: Asher Wilson-Goldman

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation

Tēnā koe Minister

I submit, in accordance with Section 6E of the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act), the annual report of the New Zealand Conservation Authority / Te Pou Atawhai Taiao Aotearoa (the Authority) for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. The Act requires that the Authority report each year to the Minister on the exercise of its functions and powers.

Meetings

The Authority met on six occasions during the year. The Taupō and Wellington conservation boards, respectively, hosted two of these meetings – each of which involved a day excursion alongside the local conservation board and regional departmental staff, and included meeting with local mana whenua. In Taupō, we were welcomed by Ngāti Hikairo and hosted by the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board at various points around Taupō. In Wellington, we were hosted on Matiu / Somes Island by the Wellington Conservation Board.

The approval of plans

The Authority received the Te Hiku o Te-Ika-a-Māui Conservation Management Strategy to review. This was presented to the Authority by the Te Hiku o Te-Ika-a-Māui Conservation Board's Chair, Mina Pomare-Peita, at the June 2025 meeting. A committee has been formed to review this strategy.

The Authority was not asked to approve any national park management plans during the year. A priority for the Authority is that the Department of Conservation (the Department) provides timely reviews of its management plans and strategies, which are integral to the Department's function and performance. I point out that 86% of statutory planning documents are overdue for full review, and 98% will be overdue in 5 years – a growing trend that has been evident for well over a decade now.[1] The Authority remains concerned at the state of management planning in the Department, with no clear path for improving the system.

1 These figures include conservation management strategies, national park management plans and conservation management plans.

Functions under the National Parks Act 1980

The Authority has been active in providing feedback to the Department's Policy Group on the draft of the new National Conservation Policy Statement and Area Plans, meant to replace the Conservation General Policies. The Authority has some concern, however, about the potential role change of the Authority and the regional conservation boards, and how the voice of the community will be considered in conservation plans.

Committees

The Act enables the Authority to establish committees to carry out functions or tasks delegated to the Authority between Authority meetings. In the reporting period the active committees included Biocontrol, Treaty Partnerships, Management Planning and Tourism.

Advocacy

The Authority advocated for its interests during the reporting period through submissions on:

- the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Bill
- modernisation of conservation land management draft policies
- amendments to the Fisheries Act 1996
- the Predator Free 2050 Strategy review
- policy in *Action for nature – Implementing New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy 2025–2030*
- the first of the applications under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

Minister of Conservation

As Minister of Conservation, you attended the Authority's meetings in August 2024 and June 2025. In December 2024, you kindly hosted the Authority at your office in the Beehive at Parliament. The Authority places great value on the opportunity to engage directly with you as Minister on matters of national conservation importance. As Minister of Conservation, you have a standing invitation to attend meetings of the Authority.

During the reporting year, the Authority has provided advice directly to you as Minister on a number of matters, including:

- the release of biological control agents in Mount Aspiring National Park
- the Waitangi Tribunal's report on the Treaty Principles Bill
- budget priorities for the Department for financial year 2025/26
- commentary on appointments to Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangi
- appointments to conservation boards.

Director-General

The Authority has maintained a positive and connected relationship with the Director-General (DG) during the year. This has included a series of strategic discussions with the DG and Senior Leadership Team across priority issues and challenges facing conservation. The DG and I have maintained contact between meetings as needed. The Authority aims to continue a collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship with the DG.

Conservation boards

Authority members are invited to select a conservation board for which they will act as a liaison person, to attend meetings, receive agenda papers, and liaise with the board chair. Reporting back informs the Authority of issues conservation boards may be facing and identifies actions the Authority may take to provide tangible support. Reporting also allows conservation boards to elevate significant issues.

In August 2024, the Authority hosted the annual Conservation Board Chairs' Conference in Wellington at the Te Wharewaka o Pōneke function centre. The conference is an important forum for building collaboration between the Authority and conservation boards – to share ideas and practices, and to develop a deeper understanding of the role boards play in the conservation leadership space.

In closing

Finally, I thank Authority members and support staff for their continued effort and application to their function, and I particularly thank those members who retired or whose terms expired at 30 June 2025.

'Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takatini.'

'Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many.'

Nāku iti, noa nā



Edward Ellison, ONZM
Chair, New Zealand Conservation Authority



MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure for the people of New Zealand, that the richness of New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage is valued, restored, maintained and cared for by all, in order to enhance our environment and quality of life.



Manganui Bridge, Taranaki Maunga. *Photo: Sarah Rowe*

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHORITY

The New Zealand Conservation Authority / Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O Aotearoa (the Authority) is a national statutory body, established by section 6A of the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act), that provides strategic advice on conservation issues of national importance to the Minister of Conservation (the Minister) and to the Director-General of Conservation.

The functions of the Authority are set out in the Act, as well as in the:

- National Parks Act 1980
- Wildlife Act 1953
- Marine Reserves Act 1971
- Reserves Act 1977
- Wild Animal Control Act 1977
- Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978.

The Authority also has specified responsibilities, set out in Treaty claims settlement legislation, in relation to engagement with tangata whenua. These include establishing respectful working relationships, exercising mana recognition, and acknowledging kaitiakitanga as an important foundation for Māori conservation outcomes.

A major responsibility of the Authority is the approval of the 10-year conservation management strategies and national park management plans that guide the Department of Conservation's (the Department's) management of public conservation lands, waters, and species.

The Authority is committed to collaborative models in the management of public conservation resources. This is embodied in the long history of formal engagement of New Zealanders in the conservation management of New Zealand, through bodies such as the Authority and conservation boards. The partnership between conservation boards and the Authority is a long-standing legislative mechanism that enables conservation through partnerships.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUTHORITY

The Authority has 13 members, appointed by the Minister. Authority members are appointed for 3-year terms, unless otherwise stated, and may be re-appointed. The process of appointment ensures that a range of perspectives, life experiences and geographical knowledge contributes to the advice and decisions made by the Authority. The Authority is made up of:

- two appointments in consultation with the Minister of Tourism, two appointments in consultation with the Minister for Māori Development and one appointment in consultation with the Minister of Local Government
- one appointment on the recommendation of the Royal Society Te Apārangi, one on the recommendation of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand, and one on the recommendation of Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand
- one appointment on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu
- four appointments following nominations from the public.

DR MICK ABBOTT of Waitati, appointed on the recommendation of the Federated Mountain Clubs Inc. Term: June 2024 to June 2026.

TĀNE DAVIS MNZM of Invercargill, appointed on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Term: October 2018 to June 2025.

GREG DULEY of Hawke's Bay, appointed from public nominations. Term: July 2022 to June 2025.

EDWARD ELLISON ONZM of Dunedin, appointed from public nominations, is Chair of the Authority. Term: January 2019 to June 2026.

SALLY GEPP of Nelson, appointed on the recommendation of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand. Term: August 2020 to June 2025.

INA KARA-FRANCE of Auckland, appointed after consultation with the Minister for Māori Development. Term: August 2023 to June 2026.

AROHA MEAD of Wellington, appointed after consultation with the Minister of Tourism. Term: July 2022 to June 2026.

TAK MUTU of Rotorua, appointed after consultation with the Minister of Tourism. Term: April 2021 to June 2025.

WENDY NELSON MNZM of Wellington, appointed on the recommendation of the Royal Society Te Apārangi, is Deputy Chair. Term: August 2020 to June 2026.

MARJORIE (JILL) PETTIS of Martinborough, appointed after consultation with the Minister of Local Government. Term: August 2023 to June 2025.

SHADRACH (SHAD) ROLLESTON of Tauranga, appointed from public nominations.Term: August 2023 to June 2026.

METIRIA STANTON TUREI of Dunedin, appointed from public nominations. Term: July 2022 to June 2025.

PUNA WANO-BRYANT of Waitara, appointed after consultation with the Minister for Māori Development. Term: June 2024 to June 2026. Puna resigned from the Authority in May 2025.

The diversity amongst the members brings together a wide range of knowledge, focus and skill.

3. MEETINGS

The Authority met on six occasions during the year: in August, October, and December 2024, and in February, April, and June 2025. Each meeting takes place over two days, and those held outside of Wellington involve a one-day excursion on the first day alongside the local conservation board.

3.1 Strategic advice to the Minister of Conservation

Throughout the reporting year, the Authority has advised the Minister on:

- the release of biological control agents in Mount Aspiring National Park
- the management planning system – past issues and why it needs to be fixed
- the Waitangi Tribunal's report on the Treaty Principles Bill
- recommendations for budget priorities for the Department for 2025/26
- commentary on appointments to Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangi
- recommendations for appointments to conservation boards.

3.2 Strategic advice to the Department of Conservation

The Authority continued to meet with members of the Department's Senior Leadership Team to engage on strategic issues.

Strategic discussions with the DG and Deputy Directors-General included:

- section 4 and the progress on work being undertaken by the Treaty Relationships Group of the Department
- modernisation of conservation land management (discussion of draft policies by the Department)
- public access charging – in relation to activities on conservation land
- *Action for nature – Implementing New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy 2025–2030*
- a review of the Predator Free 2050 Strategy.

3.3 Engagement with external parties

From outside the Department, the Authority hosted and heard from Forest & Bird on various fast-track applications.

3.4 Attendance at meetings 2024/25

Member	Number of meetings attended (total of 6)
Mick Abbott	5
Tāne Davis MNZM	6
Greg Duley	6
Edward Ellison (Chair)	6
Sally Gepp	6
Ina Kara-France	4
Aroha Mead	6
Tak Mutu	6
Wendy Nelson	6
Marjorie (Jill) Pettis	6
Shadrach (Shad) Rolleston	5
Metiria Stanton Turei	4
Puna Wano-Bryant	5*

* Note: Puna Wano-Bryant resigned in May before the final meeting of the year.

3.5 Treaty partner and stakeholder engagement

Regional board engagements are vital to the operation of the Authority, allowing members a close view of concerns and opportunities raised in public submissions. These engagements help provide the local context faced by Departmental staff and communities in managing public conservation lands. They also provide an opportunity for the Authority to spend time with local conservation board members, discussing matters important to their regions. The Authority meets outside of Wellington twice annually, at its April and October meetings.

17 October 2024 – Tongariro National Park, Taupō

The Authority's excursion on 17 October was hosted by staff and the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board down at Mount Ruapehu. The trip began with a visit to the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (TAC) – Ngāti Hikairo welcomed the Authority, then Department staff gave a presentation on the TAC project. We were impressed by the collaboration between the Department and iwi; it was heartening to see such positive and effective relationships in place.

The Authority then travelled to Whakapapa Village and took the Sky Waka gondola up the maunga. It was confronting to see the impacts of climate change firsthand and how little snow is on the lower slopes of the mountain. Of further concern was the vast number of unused ski club buildings.

The scale of the Department's challenge in dealing with this redundant infrastructure was evident. The Authority also received a presentation outside the Chateau Tongariro; it was distressing to hear the scale of annual funding required from the Department to keep the Chateau from falling into disrepair, at a time when Department resources are already so stretched.

9 April 2025 – Matiu / Somes Island, Wellington Harbour

The Authority's excursion on 9 April began at Queens Wharf, catching the East by West Ferry across to Matiu / Somes Island. Department rangers welcomed the Authority and Wellington Conservation Board members, after which we went to the Department staff cottage to meet and discuss issues with Angus Hulme-Moir (Operations Manager for the Kāpiti Wellington District). Angus discussed the partnerships in managing the island – for example, between the Department and Port Nicolson Block Trust. He also discussed looking to the future and how the Department could manage the handing of the island into the custodial care of mana whenua. This highlighted the Department's need for good exit strategies when land is handed back as the result of a Treaty settlement, so as not to burden mana whenua with the cost of maintaining infrastructure left behind by the Department or other Crown entities.

The Authority and the Wellington Conservation Board toured the island, including some of the structures from the former quarantine station (first for humans and later for imported stock), which are no longer in use. Angus discussed the Department maintaining these buildings so mana whenua can reuse these structures if they choose to do so in the future – especially given the challenges of building new structures on the island.

4. BUDGET

4.1 Budget and member fees

The Authority's budget for the reporting year was $142,000. Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Travelling Allowances Act 1951. The Chair receives a daily meeting fee of $700, and other Authority members receive a daily meeting fee of $450.

The Authority is just able to meet its core functions within significant budgetary constraints, following a 12.5% cut in 2022/23. However, we believe the Authority could achieve significantly more on behalf of the public conservation estate with a budget aligned with those of similar organisations.

4.2 Carbon emissions

At the October 2021 meeting, the Authority adopted a Climate Change Policy committing, as far as practicable, to calculate our carbon footprint and publish this in our annual reports. The Department's Integrated Planning and Reporting team has provided the tools to enable the Authority to fulfil this commitment.*

The 2018/19 year is included as a baseline, with all six of the Authority's meetings taking place in person.

	2018 / 19 (first year measured)	2021 / 22 (reporting year)	2022 / 23 (reporting year)	2023 / 24 (previous year)	2024 / 25 (reporting year)
CO_2e t	18.90	11.73	20.61	16.35	13.79

** Emissions reporting includes hosting the Conservation Board Chairs' Conference (see section 8.4).*

5. THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987

5.1 Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

Section 4 of the Act states that the Act 'shall so be interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi'. As a body established under this Act, section 4 applies to the Authority in the discharge of its functions.

During the reporting year, the Treaty Partnerships Committee discussed giving effect to section 4 and what it means to become an honourable Treaty partner. The Authority has developed a Section 4 Obligations paper to set out the priorities and perspectives of the Authority in relation to section 4 of the Act, and to guide the Authority's interactions with the Department.

5.2 Functions of the Authority

Section 6B of the Act sets out the functions of the Authority.

(a) Advise the Minister on statements of general policy

The Authority has given feedback to the Department's Policy Group around the work on the process for modernising conservation land management. The Authority made submissions on the draft policy paper, and the draft National Conservation Policy Statement and area plans, which are set to replace the existing the Conservation General Policy and the General Policy.

The Authority also provided feedback submissions on Class Concessions, the review of the Predator Free 2050 Strategy, and on policy in Action for Nature – New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy 2025–2030.

General policy is the highest level of statutory planning for conservation outcomes. There are two general policies: the General Policy for National Parks and the Conservation General Policy. As stated above, the Authority has submitted feedback on proposed replacement policy. It is a legal requirement to update the policies every 10 years; the current policies are 19 years old.

(b) Approve conservation management strategies

A conservation management strategy (CMS) is a 10-year statutory document that implements general policy and establishes objectives for:

- the discharge of the Department's functions in the area covered by the strategy
- recreation and tourism
- other conservation purposes.

Departmental planning staff develop CMSs in partnership with local conservation boards and tangata whenua.

At the June 2025 meeting, the Authority received one new CMS for consideration, from the Te Hiku o Te-Ika-a-Māui Conservation Board. Review of this CMS is currently underway.

The lack of progress is an issue the Authority has consistently raised with the Department. The outdated state of CMSs and of conservation management plans (CMPs) limits the ability of the Authority and conservation boards to fully exercise their statutory responsibilities.

Section 17H(4)(b) of the Act requires the DG to review a CMS or CMP as a whole, not later than 10 years after the date the CMS or CMP was approved. The Authority is aware of 7 CMSs and 10 CMPs that have not been reviewed within this 10-year period.

(c) Approve conservation management plans

Although the Authority may be asked to approve CMPs, these are usually approved by conservation boards – in some cases jointly with an iwi authority, as provided in Treaty Settlement legislation.

The Authority received no CMPs for consideration during the reporting year.

(d) Review the effectiveness of the Department's administration of general policies

When approving statutory planning documents, the Authority seeks to be satisfied that appropriate effect is given to the two statements of general policy: the Conservation General Policy and the General Policy for National Parks. The Authority advocates for the review of the general policies.

(e) Investigate and / or advise on conservation matters of national importance

Where the Authority considers a conservation matter to be of national importance, we investigate the matter and provide advice to the Minister and DG, including through:

- discussions at meetings and letters (regarding matters described in section 3 of this report)
- Authority committees working closely with Departmental staff, sharing Authority submissions (outlined in section 5.3 of this report)
- the Chair of the Authority maintaining regular contact (via phone and/or online meetings) with the Minister and the DG.

(f) Change of land status – stewardship land

The Authority is waiting for the Minister to make decisions on progressing the review of stewardship land in Western South Island.

(g) Education and publicity

Minutes, agendas and other information regarding the Authority's functions and activities – including meetings that are open to the public – are available on the Authority's website.

No education or publicity activities were undertaken during the reporting period.

(h) Priorities for expenditure by the Department

The Authority did not provide advice to the Minister and the DG on expenditure priorities for the financial year 2024/25.

(i) New Zealand Fish & Game Council liaison

Section 6B(1)(i) of the Act provides for the Authority to liaise with the New Zealand Fish and Game Council (Fish & Game). The Authority and Fish & Game provided each other with copies of agendas and meeting papers during the reporting period.

(j) Ministerial delegations

The Minister did not delegate any ministerial powers or functions to the Authority during the reporting period.

5.3 Powers of the Authority

Section 6C of the Act sets out the powers of the Authority.

(a) Committees

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

- **Biocontrol Committee:** Wendy Nelson, Ina Kara-France, Jill Pettis

  Section 5A of the National Parks Act 1980 and section 51A of the Reserves Act 1977, respectively, require the Minister to consult with the Authority before authorising the introduction of any biological control organism in any national park or reserve. This committee is a standing committee of the Authority, established in June 2007 to consider requests for biocontrol releases. It did not meet during the 2024/2025 reporting year. The committee remains in place and will convene as and when required.

- **Conservation Law Reform Committee:** Edward Ellison Tāne Davis, Aroha Mead, Sally Gepp, Shad Rolleston

  This committee was established at the Authority's February 2022 meeting to advise the Minister on conservation law reform proposals. The committee did not meet during the 2024/2025 reporting year. The committee remains in place and will convene as and when required.

- **Te Hiku o Te-Ika-a-Māui Conservation Management Committee:** Ina Kara-France, Shad Rolleston, Mick Abbott

  This committee was established at the Authority's February 2025 meeting. The role of this committee is to review the Te Hiku o Te-Ika-a-Māui Conservation Management Strategy and provide feedback to the Te Hiku o Te-Ika-a-Māui Conservation Board, the Department and the Minister.

- **Treaty Partnerships Committee:** Edward Ellison, Metiria Stanton Turei, Tāne Davis, Ina Kara-France, Aroha Mead

  The role of this committee is to ensure the Department gives appropriate effect to section 4 of the Act and remains an honourable Treaty partner through upholding the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi.

  This year, the committee has held regular meetings with Tame Malcolm, Deputy Director-General Treaty Relationships, and members of his team regarding the work of the Treaty Relationships Group.

The committee has received updates on the group's plans to uplift the capability of staff with regards to section 4. In these meetings, the committee also discussed how the Authority will continue to give effect to section 4 through the work programme for the 2025/26 reporting year.

- **Statutory Planning Committee:** Edward Ellison, Sally Gepp, Ina Kara-France, Metiria Stanton Turei, Shad Rolleston

  This committee was established to provide the Department with advice on its internal system review and design, and on all matters relating to statutory plans and strategies, such as review of the national CMS for biking.

  This reporting year, the committee has regularly met with Departmental staff. For several months, the committee was involved in advising the Department on the work on re-imagining management planning. However, the committee has recently been made aware that work has paused on reimagining management planning; the committee remains concerned at the lack of progress with the management planning system.

- **Marine Committee:** Wendy Nelson, Edward Ellison, Sally Gepp.

  This committee was established in 2020 for the purpose of advising the Department of its responsibilities in the marine space. It did not meet during the 2024/2025 reporting year. The committee remains in place and will convene as and when required. The full Authority received regular marine-related updates from the Department during Authority meetings.

- **Tourism and Recreation Committee:** Tak Mutu, Tāne Davis, Mick Abbott.

  This committee was established for the purpose of advising the Department on the future of tourism in New Zealand from a conservation perspective. The committee did not meet during the 2024/2025 reporting year, as the main items for discussion occurred with the full Authority. The committee remains in place and will convene as and when required.

- **Fast-track Committee:** Wendy Nelson, Sally Gepp and the wider Authority as needed.

  This committee was established at the Authority's February 2025 meeting. It was established for the purpose of receiving applications under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, as referred by expert panels. It will also receive presentations from applicants proposing them, and for receiving advice or concerns from other stakeholders about potential applications.

- **Herds of Special Interest (HOSI) Committee:** Greg Duley, Ina Kara-France

  This committee was established at the Authority's April 2025 meeting, to look at the proposed HOSIs and provide feedback while ensuring conservation remains the top priority.

(b) Advocacy

The Authority advocated its interests during the reporting period through several public submissions, available to read on its webpage on the Department's website. These include submissions on:

- the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Bill (June 2024)
- modernising conservation land management and exploring charging for access to some public conservation land (February 2025).

6. THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1980

6.1 Functions of the Authority

Section 18 of the National Parks Act 1980 sets out the functions of the Authority.

(a) Review the General Policy for National Parks

General policy is the highest level of statutory planning for conservation outcomes. There are two general policies: the General Policy for National Parks and the Conservation General Policy. The Authority functions as custodian of the General Policy for National Parks.

The Department is currently reviewing the two general polices as part of its project to modernise conservation land management. The Authority has provided feedback on this work as it has progressed.

(b) National park management plans

No reviews of national park management plans were conducted during the reporting period.

(c) Additions to, and deletions from, national parks

During the reporting period, the Authority received a request from the Department for proposed additions to Abel Tasman National Park.

The Authority will investigate to decide whether these additions are appropriate, as required by policy 6(d) of the General Policy for National Parks. This process is currently on hold awaiting the judgment in the Nelson Tenths Trust case pursuing redress relating to reserves, pā, urupā and cultivation that were not set aside by the Crown under the historic Spain Award of 1845.

(d) National park investigations

No national park investigations were undertaken during the reporting period.

(e) National park determinations

No determinations were made during the reporting period.

7. MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS

7.1 JD Stout Trust

The Stout Trust was established to provide grants for:

- the preservation of natural or historic sites or amenities for public enjoyment
- the promotion, creation, or preservation of works of art, including visual, audio or literary arts.

An Authority representative, Wendy Nelson, sits on the Historical and Natural Sites Panel – a board that advises on grants made by the Stout Trust.

7.2 International Union for Conservation of Nature

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a democratic membership union that uses the world's most influential organisations and experts to conserve nature and work towards sustainable use of natural resources. The IUCN has over 1,400 members from over 170 countries. The Authority is a member under the Government Agency category. Along with another government agency, the Authority is one of eight members of the New Zealand Committee of the IUCN. Wendy Nelson is the Authority's representative on the Committee, which meets quarterly.

7.3 Other organisations

Species Aotearoa – Wendy Nelson, Aroha Mead

Strategic Oversight Group for the Wildlife Review – Aroha Mead, Greg Duley

Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group – Tony Lepper (co-opted)

Wild Animal Management National Coordination Group – Greg Duley

8. CONSERVATION BOARDS

8.1 Conservation board boundaries

No conservation board boundaries changed in the reporting period.

8.2 Conservation board nominations

The Minister is required to consult with the Authority before appointing public members to conservation boards. The Authority provided advice to the Minister on the appointment process for 2025. We were encouraged by the high standard of nominations received. It was heartening to see great diversity across these nominations – not only of ethnicity, gender and age, but also of experience, knowledge and skills.



8.3 Authority / conservation board liaison

One Authority member acts as liaison with each conservation board. This liaison function includes attendance at board meetings and informal liaison with the conservation board chair. The liaison then reports interactions, highlights and issues back to the Authority at each meeting.

Conservation board	Liaison member
Te Hiku o Te Ika	Ina Kara-France
Northland	Ina Kara-France
Auckland	Ina Kara-France
Waikato	Shad Rolleston
Bay of Plenty	Tak Mutu
East Coast Hawke's Bay	Aroha Mead
Tongariro Taupō	Tak Mutu
Taranaki Whanganui	Puna Wano-Bryant
Wellington	Wendy Nelson
Chatham Islands	Edward Ellison
Nelson Marlborough	Sally Gepp
West Coast Tai Poutini	Metiria Stanton Turei
Canterbury Aoraki	Greg Duley
Otago	Mick Abbott
Southland	Tāne Davis

8.4 Annual Conservation Board Chairs' Conference 2024

The Authority hosted the annual Conservation Board Chairs' Conference on 16 and 17 August 2024, at Te Wharewaka o Pōneke function centre in Wellington. These conferences are designed to build collaboration between the Authority and conservation boards, and for the boards to develop stronger working relationships with each other and the Department. They provide the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the Government's expectations of the boards, and the role they play in conservation leadership within their communities. It is a vital opportunity to share ideas and practices.

The 2024 conference included discussions with the DG, Penny Nelson, and with the Deputy Director-General Regional Operation, Henry Weston. Topics on the agenda included:

- strategic and practical planning processes
- being an honourable Treaty Partner and meeting section 4 obligations
- the Fast-track Approval Bill
- management planning and regulatory strategy
- recent conservation publications
- the functioning of conservation boards.

8.5 Annual reports

Section 60 of the Act requires conservation boards to provide the Authority with an annual report. These are available on each board's individual page on the Department's website.

8.6 Implementation of conservation management strategies

Most conservation boards have adopted a systematic process for monitoring the progress of the implementation of the CMS for their region, and for advising the Department's operations directors in that respect. Boards report on this monitoring in their annual reports.

Under the Conservation General Policy, the Department is required to provide each conservation board with a report (at least annually) on the implementation of the CMS for that board's region.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Authority reviews performance and strategy at the June meeting each year. Members reviewed their work programme for 2024/25 (see Appendix I to this report), noting the status of actions to date. In forming the work programme for 2025/26, members agreed the Authority would focus on our own priorities, which will be informed by the Minister's priorities.

We reviewed our performance and concluded the Authority has been an effective independent advisor to the Minister and the DG.

9.1 Regular review of policies, procedures, and principles

The Authority regularly reviews our policies, procedures and principles. This year, the Authority reviewed, amended and/or adopted the following.

- NZCA Policy on Fast-track Approvals: adopted in February 2025, this policy establishes the Authority's role under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024, and how we will respond to any applications forwarded to Authority by an expert panel for comment. In parallel with this, in May 2025, the Authority adopted an Information Sheet for Presenters to guide how applicants and community/environmental groups should approach any presentation they wished to give to the Authority.

These policies, procedures and principles can be found on the Authority's webpage on the Department's website.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the Authority members and especially my deputy, Wendy Nelson, for their considered and tireless effort across a broad range of functions and advisory roles, and for their contribution to the work of the Authority. The Authority is grateful to the Executive Officer, Dr Rick McGovern-Wilson, and to the Servicing Officers – Sarah Rowe, Martina Giusto and Vicky Weeds – who have been most efficient in the support and delivery of our work.

I would also like to acknowledge the DG, Penny Nelson, and the Departmental staff, whose dedication to our public land and waters has been ever-present in their engagements with the Authority. These relationships are extremely important to the work of the Authority, and members appreciate the enthusiasm Department staff have shown in working with the Authority.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the conservation boards and their members, whose sincerity and passion have provided the Authority with valued advice, and who have played an active part in engaging the community with conservation.

– E Tū Tāngata –

11. SCHEDULES

11.1 First schedule

Conservation management strategies: approval dates and status of reviews as of 30 June 2025. The statutory expectation is that each conservation management strategy will be reviewed at 10-year intervals.

The Authority's role is to approve the strategies once they have been presented by the Department and the relevant conservation board.

The Authority does not undertake the reviews.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	DATE APPROVED	STATUS
East Coast / Hawke's Bay	14 October 1998 (East Coast) 19 October 1994 (Hawke's Bay)	Overdue for review
Nelson / Marlborough	12 September 1996	Overdue for review
Wanganui	9 April 1997	Overdue for review
Bay of Plenty	4 December 1997	Under review
Chatham Islands	12 August 1999	Overdue for review
Tongariro Taupō	30 May 2002	Overdue for review
West Coast Tai Poutini	15 April 2010	Under review
Stewart Island / Rakiura	9 February 2011	Overdue for review
Northland	8 September 2014	Current
Waikato	8 September 2014	Current
Auckland	9 October 2014	Current
Canterbury (Waitaha)	1 June 2016	Current
Otago	1 June 2016	Current
Southland Murihiku	1 June 2016	Current
Wellington	20 January 2019	Current
Te Hiku o Te Ika-a-Māui	Conservation board est. 2015	Draft received at June 2025 meeting

11.2 Second schedule

National park management plans: approval dates and status as of 30 June 2025. The statutory expectation is that each national park management plan will be reviewed at 10-year intervals.

The Authority's role is to approve the management plans once they have been presented by the Department and the relevant conservation board.

The Authority does not undertake the reviews.

NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN	DATE APPROVED	STATUS
Kahurangi	13 June 2001	Overdue for review
Westland Tai Poutini	21 December 2001	Overdue for review
Egmont / Taranaki	14 February 2002	Overdue for review
Nelson Lakes	10 October 2002	Overdue for review
Aoraki / Mount Cook	12 August 2004	Under review
Tongariro	12 October 2006	Overdue for review
Fiordland	21 June 2007	Overdue for review
Arthur's Pass	13 December 2007	Overdue for review
Abel Tasman	9 October 2008	Overdue for review
Rakiura	9 February 2011	Overdue for review
Mount Aspiring	23 June 2011	Overdue for review
Whanganui	9 August 2012	Overdue for review
Paparoa	1 February 2017	Current

11.3 Third schedule

Address list for conservation boards.

CONSERVATION BOARD	BOARD ADDRESS (c/o Department of Conservation)
Te Hiku o Te Ika	PO Box 569 Kaitaia 0441
Northland	PO Box 842 Whangārei 0140
Auckland	Private Bag 68908 Wellesley Street, Auckland 1141
Waikato	Private Bag 3072 Hamilton 3240
Bay of Plenty	PO Box 457 Whakatane 3120
East Coast Hawke's Bay	Private Bag 11010, Manawatū Mail Centre Palmerston North 4442
Tongariro Taupō	PO Box 528 Taupō 3351
Taranaki / Whanganui	Private Bag 3072 Hamilton 3240
Wellington	Private Bag 11010, Manawatū Mail Centre Palmerston North 4442
Chatham Islands	PO Box 114, Waitangi Chatham Islands 8942
Nelson Marlborough	Private Bag 5 Nelson 7042
West Coast Tai Poutini	Private Bag 701 Hokitika 7842
Canterbury Aoraki	Private Bag 4715, Christchurch Mail Centre Christchurch 8140
Otago	PO Box 811 Queenstown 9348
Southland	PO Box 743 Invercargill 9840

11.4 Fourth schedule

Statutory functions and powers exercised by the Authority.

ACT	2024/25	STATUTORY FUNCTION
Statutory functions (Conservation Act 1987)		
6B(a)	N	Advise on statements of general policy
6B(b)	Y	Approve conservation management strategies and any amendments
6B(c)	N	Review and report on effectiveness of general policies
6B(d)	Y	Investigate matters of national importance
6B(e)	N	Consider and make proposals for change of land status of national and international importance
6B(g)	N	Encourage and participate in educational and publicity activities
6B(h)	Y	Advise annually on priorities for expenditure
6B(i)	N	Liaise with New Zealand Fish & Game Council
6B(j)	N	Exercise any other powers and functions delegated by the Minister
Statutory functions (National Parks Act 1980)		
18(a)	N	Prepare and approve statements of general policy for national parks (NP)
18(b)	N	Approve NP management plans and any amendments
18(c)	N	Advise Minister and DG on priorities for expenditure
18(d)	N	Review effectiveness of general policies for NPs
18(e)	Y	Consider and make proposals for additions of land to NPs
18(g)	Y	Give advice on any other matter relating to any NP
4(2)(b)	N	Determinations re: native plants and animals preserved – introduced plants and animals exterminated
5A(2)(a)	Y	The Minister shall consult the Authority on introduction of any biological control organism
12(1)	N	The Minister shall consult the Authority on Specially Protected Areas
14(1)	N	Recommend establishment or revocation of Wilderness Areas
15(1)	N	Recommend establishment or revocation of Amenities Areas
18A	N	The Minister shall consult the Authority on access arrangements to an NP re: section 59 of the Crown Minerals Act 1991
44(1)	N	Adopt or amend statements of General Policy
Statutory powers (Conservation Act 1987)		
6C(2)(a)	Y	Establish committees
6C(2)(b)	Y	Release for public information any recommendation, report, or advice
6C(2)(c)	Y	Advocate at any public forum or in any statutory planning process

12. APPENDIX I – NZCA WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Authority has developed our purpose and priorities to best place us to deliver on our statutory functions. The purpose and priorities provide clear strategic direction and focus for the Authority's work between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025. The Authority's work programme is structured in two parts:

PART 1: Statutory functions for 2024/25: These are functions identified that the Authority must fulfil under the Conservation Act 1987. The work programme provides actions to monitor the Authority's performance against our focus areas for reporting purposes.

PART 2: Strategic priorities: These are the Authority's strategic priorities that set long-term goals and direction. These strategic priorities are the foundation of the Authority's ongoing work to deliver on our mission statement.

'To ensure, for the people of New Zealand, that the
richness of New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage
is valued, restored, maintained, and cared for by all,
in order to enhance our environment and quality of life.'

In addition, the Authority maintains a rolling 12-month calendar to establish a working plan to achieve the goals and actions set out in this work programme, and to identify further risks, issues and opportunities for conservation that the work programme does not cover.

To promote the completion of actions entered into the work programme, items yet to be addressed during 2024/25 have been pre-populated into the new 2025/26 work programme, for members to discuss and initiate.

NEW ZEALAND

CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

TE POU ATAWHAI TAIAO O AOTEAROA

ROLE

The New Zealand Conservation Authority / Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O Aotearoa (NZCA) is an independent statutory body that advises the Minister of Conservation and the Director-General of Conservation on conservation priorities at a national level.

MISSION

'To ensure, for the people of New Zealand, that the richness of New Zealand's natural and cultural heritage is valued, restored, maintained and cared for by all, in order to enhance our environment and quality of life.'

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

as set out in the Act

A. Advise on statements of General Policy

B. Approve Conservation Management Strategies and National Park Management Plans

C. Review the effectiveness of Department's administration of General Policy

D. Investigate conservation matters of national importance

E. Consider land status re-classification

F. Advocating for nature conservation

G. Advise on priorities for the expenditure of money

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

as set by in Authority

A. Giving effect to Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

B. Supporting the implementation of Te Mana o Te Taiao

C. Terrestrial Biodiversity and Taonga species

D. Rivers and freshwater ecosystems

E. Marine ecosystems

F. Climate change adaption and mitigation

G. Tourism and recreation management

H. Self-improvement

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

The Authority are required to carry statutory functions as per the Conservation Act 1987.
This page describes how the Authority will carry out these functions.

A: Advise on statements of General Policy

The Authority will: Review and report on the Department's administration of General Policies; provide insightful evaluation and advice that contributes to improved conservation outcomes and a 'check and balance' on the Department's strategic planning; and ensure the Department maintains continuous acknowledgement of the Treaty Settlements it has key responsibilities for and their related obligations.

B: Approve Conservation Management Strategies (CMSs) and National Park Management Plans (NPMPs)

The Authority will: Review, approve, and champion improvements to the planning framework to ensure timeliness and quality of the planning process.

1. Follow NZCA approval processes and seek opportunities to expedite timelines and efficacy of the approval processes whilst holding or improving the quality of decisions.
2. Approve CMS/NPMP at the third meeting after receipt.
3. Continue to push for better, more dynamic, and responsive plans, and smarter planning processes.
4. Ensure CMSs and NPMPs align with legislation.
5. Ensure Operations staff undertake their work in conformity with the statutory plans.
6. Ensure the inclusion of Treaty Settlement obligations into statutory plans.

C: Review the effectiveness of Department's administration of General Policy

The Authority will: Provide insightful evaluation and advice that contributes to improved conservation outcomes and a 'check and balance' on the Department's strategic planning.

1. Ensure General Policies are implemented in CMSs and NPMPs (via approval role – see A&B), and Milestone reporting is undertaken.
2. Provide advice on the Department's Statement of Intent.
3. Provide advice to the Department on how business, volunteer groups, and communities can engage with them more easily in order to increase conservation outcomes.

D: Investigate conservation matters of national importance

The Authority will: Maintain a scan on conservation matters of national importance and evaluate what strategic investigative action role the Authority may take or initiate.

E: Consider land status re-classification

The Authority will: Ensure the process and decision for land recategorisation is credible and robust; and that this is apparent to all stakeholders, including hapū and iwi at the inception of the process.

1. Conduct a credible and transparent investigation and provide a report with clear recommendations for action.
2. Support the relevant conservation board on specific land recategorisation matters.
3. Advise on the strategy/programme for prioritising stewardship land reclassifications.
4. Provide input to the Western South Island and Northern South Island stewardship land review processes.

F: Advocating for nature conservation

The Authority will: Be respected as an independent, and influential source of strategic advice for conservation.

1. Give clear, considered and timely advice:
    a. On all matters, relevant to the NZCA effectively fulfilling its functions; and
    b. Where this can be influential in achieving better conservation outcomes.
2. Maintain an active environmental scan to ensure the current and future operating context for conservation is well understood.
3. Maintain active links with conservation boards and the community, actively seek improved quality of conservation board nominees.
4. Follow up on submissions and advice to gauge their influence and identify where improvements in this role can be made.
5. Provide regular monitoring of and advice to achieve the Department's Strategy.

G: Advise on priorities for the expenditure of money

The Authority will: Provide advice annually to the Minister and to the Department on the expenditure of their budget.

STATUTORY PRIORITIES

The Authority have their own priorities, which take into account the priorities set out by the Minister in the 'letter of expectations'. This page describes how the Authority will give effect to these priorities.

A: Giving effect to Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

The Authority will: Meet its legal obligations under section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

1. A standing discussion on s4 matters at every meeting of the Authority to ensure non regression
2. Prioritise hui with mana whenua during excursions, and invite engagement with Māori on relevant s4 issues at every meeting of the Authority
3. Conduct an annual self-review of its performance with regards to s4 obligations
4. Seek support from its Treaty Partnerships Committee
5. Seek regular updates from the Department on s4 issues
6. Ensure the inclusion of relevant recommendations of the Options Development Group Report into statutory plans and the General Policies.

B: Supporting the implementation of Te Mana o Te Taiao

The Authority will: Support the implementation of Te Mana o Te Taiao via:

1. Regular updates on the implementation of Te Mana o Te Taiao from the Department.
2. Advocating and promoting collaboration and innovation across all sectors.

C: Terrestrial biodiversity and taonga species

The Authority will: Better understand, protect, enhance, and appreciate Aotearoa New Zealand's native terrestrial biodiversity, and ensure that conservation and efforts across major reforms and environment initiatives are connected and impactful

1. Provide strategic advice to the Director-General and the Minister for the effective management of introduced and pervasive pest species and weeds affecting native biodiversity.
2. Support the discussion and evaluation and, where appropriate, field assessment (currently in-containment or offshore) of gene drive/gene editing and other novel technologies that might help Aotearoa New Zealand become predator free by 2050.
3. Provide advice on securing and/or sustaining a social licence to responsibly use efficient pest and weed control technologies.
4. Continue to encourage the Department to undertake and sustain large-scale animal pest control and progress toward complete eradication of mammalian predators from large areas, such as Rakiura.
5. Encourage the Department to actively manage other threats to native biodiversity such as kauri dieback disease, myrtle rust, and avian flu, and to take a strong stance on biosecurity in general.
6. Advocate for conservation on private land.
7. Encourage the Department to undertake and sustain landscape-scale plant pest and weed control, such as wilding pines eradication.

Encourage the Department to produce measurable positive outcomes for biodiversity at a species and habitat level

D: Rivers and freshwater ecosystems

The Authority will: Advocate for ecosystem services that public conservation land provides to New Zealanders, with respect to values of our waterways and waterbodies.

1. Maintain active advocacy for the comprehensive protection of a representative range of rivers.
2. Use the NZCA River Report (2011) and other national freshwater management initiatives as a basis for advocacy for freshwater ecosystem management.
3. Provide strategic advice on the management of whitebait and other endangered freshwater species such as the longfin eel.
4. Ensure DOC's environmental strategies align with the National Policy Statement for Freshwater and its successors, and the ANZBS, to address cumulative impact issues in water use and management.

E: Marine ecosystems

The Authority will: Advocate for the protection of the marine environment and biodiversity.

1. Actively engage with iwi, hapu and all stakeholders on new approaches and tools to protect a representative range of marine ecosystems, habitats, and species, recognising our collective dependency on healthy coasts and marine ecosystems
2. Maintain oversight of threatened species marine by-catch and the effectiveness of monitoring of bycatch on fishing vessels, especially through the use of cameras.

STATUTORY PRIORITIES *(Continued)*

The Authority have their own priorities, which take into account the priorities set out by the Minister in the 'letter of expectations'. This page describes how the Authority will give effect to these priorities.

E: Marine ecosystems *(continued)*

3. Advocate for legislative reform to better reflect marine protection priorities – from estuaries to the deep ocean and recognising the need for protection for marine species and habitats in waters beyond national boundaries.

F: Climate change adaptation and mitigation

The Authority will: Assess the implications of, and opportunities arising from, climate change and ensure conservation planning and expenditure priorities.

1. Highlight the role of conservation in mitigating and adapting to climate change; and the means to reduce the risks of climate change to biodiversity and the Department's infrastructure and management of capital assets.
2. Show leadership with respect to landscape scale pest and weed control and its contribution as a mitigating factor – improving ecosystem health/resilience.
3. Monitor the implementation of DOC's Climate Change Adaption Action Plan.
4. Advise on connectivity of climate change adaption and mitigation efforts between reforms and environmental programmes.

G: Tourism and recreation management

The Authority will: Engage with the Department on the management of tourism and recreation activities on public conservation land and waters.

1. Advise the Department on the implementation of its Visitor Strategy and the DOC/ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) Tourism Strategy.
2. Ensure the concessions framework for tourism activities on public conservation land is fit for purpose.
3. Review the resilience, capacity and benefits of conservation lands, waters, and resources being used to provide for tourism and recreation including at specific sites, especially pressure points.
4. Work with other key stakeholders that have an interest in the tourism industry, e.g. Tourism Industry Aotearoa, MBIE, local government, and iwi, hapū and whānau.
5. Advise the Department on ways it can further enable local recreation that actively supports conservation activities.

H: Self-improvement

The Authority will: Effect continuous improvement to achieve greater value and impact, and undertake an annual self-review.



NEW ZEALAND
CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
TE POU ATAWHAI TAIAO O AOTEAROA

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Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government