

NEW ZEALAND

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**CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**  
TE POU ATAWHAI TAIAO O AOTEAROA

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23 June 2022

Hon Poto Williams  
Minister of Conservation  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Tēnā koe e te Minita

**Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Conservation**

Congratulations on your appointment and welcome to the Conservation portfolio; the New Zealand Conservation Authority / Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O Aotearoa (**Authority**) looks forward to working closely with you. I am writing to you, on behalf of the full Authority, to provide an introduction and overview of our role, and to highlight the areas and issues that are of particular focus for us.

In its nature, conservation is focused on intergenerational progress; this is a pivotal time for this progress, with several high profile and high value workstreams that hold potential for considerable positive change. I hope to work closely with both you and Penny Nelson, Director-General of Conservation, to ensure the Department of Conservation / Te Papa Atawhai (**Department**) is strategic and purposeful in its management of public conservation land and waters for the enduring benefit of our future generations.

***An introduction to the Authority***

The Authority is an independent statutory body, established by section 6A of the Conservation Act 1987 (**Act**). Its primary purposes are to act as an independent advisor to you and the Director-General on conservation matters of national importance; to monitor the effectiveness of the Department's administration of general policies; and, to approve statutory management plans and strategies.

Its membership is appointed by the Minister of Conservation in consultation with various Ministers, on recommendation from key stakeholders, and from public nominations (see Attachment 1 for a list of current members). The Authority is committed to collaborative models in the management of public conservation lands and waters, and advocates for the public interest in the Department's management of these areas.

The Authority meets six times a year, and you are invited to all of these meetings (see Attachment 2 for details). The Authority undertakes a significant portion of its work outside of formal meetings, by way of committees. This enables us to form working relationships with Department staff and ensure we are well informed to provide you and the Director-General with high quality and timely advice.

In addition to its functions in the Act, the Authority has functions in the National Parks Act 1980, the Wildlife Act 1953, the Marine Reserves Act 1971, the Reserves Act 1977, the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, and the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978.

***Our role as independent advisors to you and the Director-General***

The Authority investigates issues it considers of national importance, to effectively provide high-quality advice to you and the Director-General, in accordance with its functions under

section 6B(d) of the Act. Throughout the past year, in addition to discussions within its meetings, the Authority has advised the Minister on the following matters:

- The Milford Opportunity Project's Masterplan, in October 2021
- Toxoplasmosis in Maui and Hector dolphins, in November 2021
- Marine Conservation, in December 2021
- Control of Deer, goats, and pigs, in December 2021
- Budget priorities for the financial year 2022-23, in December 2021
- Stewardship Land reclassification project, in January 2022
- Conservation Board's annual reports 2020-21, in February 2022
- Appointments to conservation boards in 2022, in March 2022
- Stewardship Land options to streamline processes, in March 2022
- Otago Conservation Management Strategy partial review, in May 2022

The Authority would value a regular exchange of views on issues of significance to conservation. I have found routine meetings with the Minister to be mutually beneficial and suggest that we continue this tradition to keep abreast of the matters each of us may be considering in between meetings. In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to offer my personal number as a means of contact for discussion of issues as and when required (+64 21 900 014).

Similarly, I maintain regular monthly meetings with the Director-General, whose attendance, alongside that of her Senior Leadership Team, at the Authority's meetings enables an exchange of strategic advice and guidance on issues important to the Department's future success.

### ***The current focus areas of the Authority***

The Authority is currently in the process of forming its workplan for the upcoming reporting year; I look forward to sharing this with you when it is finalised. Alongside its strategic priorities, that provide long term goals and direction (included in Attachment 3), the Authority has identified the following areas that are crucial to deliver on in the upcoming year:

- 1. Conservation Law Reform:** The Authority are currently engaging with the Department on the programme of conservation law reform. We have established a committee that will be working closely with yourself and Department staff, initially on the Wildlife Act Review. I believe we are strategically placed to provide input into critical junctures in this workstream. At this early stage, the Authority supports the ambition of this work to create a fit for purpose ecosystem-based approach to species protection and management that reflects the full relationship that whānau, hapū and iwi have with taonga species and te taiao. We will be workshopping the fundamental questions posed in fuller scale law reform at our August meeting.

We are also engaging on the Conservation Management and Processes issues, that will endeavour to deliver more immediate improvements to the conservation system.

- 2. Stewardship Land Reclassification:** The Authority has long advocated for reclassification of stewardship land, and the implementation of the Government's commitment to end mining on public conservation land. We are supportive of the work of the National and Manawhenua Panels in progressing this work and are currently investigating the Authority's procedure and involvement in resulting recommendations relating to additions to national parks, in accordance with our statutory functions under the National Parks Act 1980 and in the General Policy for National Parks. This will

include investigation into issues Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu have expressed regarding National Park access.

3. **Climate and biodiversity crises:** The Authority has been engaged in the development of Te Mana o te Taiao / Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (**TMoTT**) and were pleased to see the Implementation Plan launched earlier this year; and the Authority has regularly advised Directors-Generals and Ministers on its importance. To be achieved, however, there will need to be a range of implementation measures across Government, across land tenures, and across domains (marine, land, and freshwater). We will continue to advocate for the Department to champion the changes required for TMoTT to succeed.

To ensure true measurement and success of initiatives to adapt to the looming climate and biodiversity crises (such as TMoTT, Predator Free 2050, and the Department's Climate Change Adaption Action Plan), the Authority stresses the necessity for further commitment to scientific environmental research and ongoing socialisation of these significant issues.

4. **Marine conservation:** The Authority continues to advocate for marine protection in such matters as the Marine Protected Areas Reform; there is a consistent need to elevate marine conservation to appropriately achieve an integrated mountain-to-sea approach to biodiversity and conservation efforts.

#### ***Our role as advisors and approvers of general policy and statutory plans***

The Authority has functions to advise on statements of general policy, and to approve conservation management strategies and plans under section 6B of the Act. The Authority has functions to advise on, prepare, and approve statements of general policy for national parks, and to approve management plans for national parks under section 18 of the National Parks Act 1980.

These statutory documents ensure the most robust protection for Aotearoa New Zealand, by providing documents, developed in a democratic process with New Zealanders and more recently in partnership with whānau, hapū, and iwi that guide the Department's management of our public conservation lands, as well as the public's use of, and access to, those lands.

5. **Partial reviews of the general policies:** In 2019, in response to the Supreme Court decision in the Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki matter, the Minister and NZCA initiated reviews of the two general policies to ensure they gave better recognition of the role of tangata whenua in conservation management, and to help the Department meet its Tiriti obligations. The Options Development Group (**ODG**) was established to provide advice to the you and the NZCA on how best to give effect to the Court's decision. The Authority received ODG's report in April 2022 and is dedicated to ensuring the partial reviews of the General Policy for National Parks and the Conservation General Policy are completed to accurately give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi / Tiriti o Waitangi. The Authority expects that enhanced conservation outcomes should flow from strong Māori-Crown partnerships.
6. **Conservation Management Strategies (CMSs) and National Park Management Plans (NPMPs):** The Authority has long been concerned with the statutory management planning system, and the Department's processes to give effect to this system. Although, we were able to approve the Otago CMS partial review at our most recent meeting, this is the first statutory strategy or plan to come before the Authority for consideration and approval since the Wellington CMS in 2018.

The increasing delays in reviewing statutory plans has been a considerable focus for Authority work over the past two years. Following a report and subsequent addendum to the Minister and Director-General on the matter in December 2020 and March 2021 (respectively), the Department actioned the Authority's second recommendation, for an

external review of the management planning system to be undertaken. The Department has engaged the Environmental Defence Society (EDS) for this review, and the report is due in October 2022.

### ***Our role as advocates***

The Authority, in accordance with section 6B(g) of the Act, has a function to encourage and participate in educational and publicity activities for the purposes of bringing about a better understanding of nature conservation. In the past year, members have attended various events including: the EDS Conference 2021 *Transforming Aotearoa*; the Minister's conservation law reform announcement in Wellington; the launch of the TMoTT Implementation Plan; and meetings of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), JD Stout Trust, and the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group. Members are based across the country and will continue to be available to attend and provide support to you in events such as these, as and when opportunities arise.

In addition, the Authority advocates for conservation by periodically making submissions on a range of issues. Most recently, this has been on items such as the *Proposed Changes to the Wetland Regulations* and *Te Ara Paerangi – Future Pathways*. Members are currently preparing submissions on the *Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity*, and the *proposed changes to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management* and *National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (including wetland regulations)*.

### ***The Authority's relationship with the conservation boards***

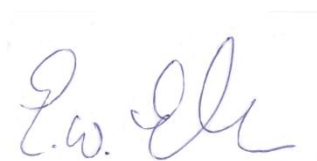
Another of the Authority's roles is to act as a conduit for all fifteen Conservation Boards (see Attachment 4) to report on the implementation of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans, and to raise conservation issues relating to any area within their rohe.

Conservation Boards have a regulatory function in monitoring the use of and access to the public conservation land that covers one-third of Aotearoa New Zealand. The relationship between Conservation Boards and the Authority is enabled through liaison roles, an annual conference, and regular reporting. This year, the Conservation Board Chairs' Conference is scheduled for 20 and 21 August and offers an excellent opportunity for Board Chairpersons to meet one another and engage on common issues; to receive direction on your expectations as Minister; and meet with the Director-General.

The Authority would like to meet with you as soon as is convenient, to introduce ourselves and to learn about your priorities; to this end, I would like to invite you to attend our next meeting in Wellington on 18 and 19 August, and invite you also to attend a session with the Conservation Board Chairpersons at the Conference scheduled for 20 and 21 August.

No reira

Nāku iti noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Ellison', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Edward Ellison ONZM  
Chairperson NZCA

## **Attachment 1: Membership of the Authority as at 23 June 2022**

In consultation with the Minister for Māori Development

- Nicole Anderson of Kerikeri (*1 June 2018 to 30 June 2023*)
- Puke Timoti of Hamilton (*7 August 2020 to 30 June 2023*)

In consultation with the Minister of Tourism:

- Tak Mutu of Rotorua (*25 April 2021 to 30 June 2023*)
- *Vacant position*

In consultation with the Minister of Local Government:

- Shane Te Ruki of Te Awamutu (*23 November 2021 to 30 June 2023*)

On the nomination of Te Runanga o Ngāi Tahu:

- Tāne Davis MNZM of Invercargill (*1 October 2018 to 30 June 2023*)

On the recommendation of Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand:

- Sally Gepp of Nelson (*7 August 2020 to 30 June 2023*)

On the recommendation of Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand:

- Robin McNeill MNZM of Invercargill (*7 August 2020 to 30 June 2023*)

On the recommendation of the Royal Society of New Zealand:

- Wendy Nelson MNZM of Wellington (*7 August 2020 to 30 June 2023*)

From public nominations:

- Edward Ellison ONZM of Dunedin (Chairperson) (*1 January 2019 to 30 June 2023*)
- Robyn Jebson of South Westland (*1 July 2017 to 30 June 2022*)
- Tony Lepper ONZM of Alexandra (*1 July 2017 to 30 June 2022*)
- Viv Shaw of Te Anau (*7 August 2020 to 30 June 2023*)

The bios for all the members can be found at this web page:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/nz-conservation-authority/membership/current-members/>

## **Attachment 2: Authority meetings 2022-23**

The Authority generally meets on the third Thursday and Friday of every second month. Two of the six meetings are held outside of Wellington and include a fieldtrip on the Thursday, to allow for interaction between the Authority, the regional conservation board, and Department staff, and to provide an appreciation of management issues facing the region.

There is a standing invitation for you to attend meetings of the Authority, and it is recommended that your office contact the Authority's Executive Officer to ensure the following meeting dates are confirmed in your diary:

In addition, on the Thursday evening of each Wellington meeting, we invite the Minister of Conservation, the Director-General of Conservation, and the Department's senior leadership team to have dinner with the Authority.

18 and 19 August 2022 in Wellington

Conservation Board Chairpersons' Conference, 20 and 21 August 2022 in Wellington

20 and 21 October 2022 in Invercargill with the Southland Conservation Board

8 and 9 December 2022 in Wellington

16 and 17 February 2023 (TBC) in Wellington

20 and 21 April 2023 (TBC, venue TBD)

15 and 16 June 2023 (TBC) via MS Teams

17 and 18 August 2023 (TBC) in Wellington

19 and 20 October 2023 (TBC, venue TBD)

7 and 8 December 2023 (TBC) in Wellington

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### Attachment 3: The Authority's Strategic Priorities

<b>STATUTORY ROLE FOR MANAGEMENT PLANNING AND LAND STATUS</b>
A. Conservation Management Strategies
B. National Park Management Plans
C. Land status recategorisation e.g. stewardship land
D. Treaty of Waitangi and post-Treaty settlement conservation management
<b>INFLUENCE AND 'STEP CHANGE' OPPORTUNITIES</b>
E. Strategic advice to the Minister and DG in the context of conservation in today's economy, the governance requirements, and strategic advice on public policy documents and legislation
F. Opportunities for step change in conservation
G. Visitor management on public conservation lands and waters
<b>ADVOCACY ON NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR CONSERVATION</b>
H. Climate change adaptation and mitigation
I. Rivers and freshwater ecosystems
J. Marine ecosystems and protected areas
<b>MONITORING AND EVALUATION</b>
K. Effectiveness and efficiency of the Department's conservation management
L. NZCA's performance

The full details for these priorities, including the Goals and Actions, can be found at this web page:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/nz-conservation-authority/strategic-priorities/>

## Attachment 4: Conservation Boards in Aotearoa New Zealand

