

Assurance Review

Task Assignment 130 - NZ Subantarctic Operation

Purpose

To improve effective operations in the Subantarctic to deliver prioritised work on our NZ Subantarctic Strategy

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Executive Summary Key Findings

1. **There is a disconnect between strategy, multi-year planning, annual planning, and the seasonal implementation of work.** The intended 2016 strategy has not been completed, and multi-year plans are inconsistently developed and applied, or are absent.
 - **There is a risk** that siloed work plans may limit DOC's ability to realize the desired benefits and outcomes in the Subantarctic.
2. **There are two distinct work programmes with two different lines of accountability in play within DOC for Subantarctic activities.** The Conservation Services Programme (SPA - Bio Group), and Operation Endurance (SPA - Operations Group).
 - **There is a risk** that programmes inadvertently duplicate effort, or work against each other, or create scenarios where people don't understand the SPA for the work that is underway.
3. **There is a strong reliance on individuals and the relationships between them to enable the work to be delivered.** Coherent and consistent use of shared organizational systems and processes is lacking or absent.
 - **There is a risk** of limited resilience in the programme or ability for DOC to maintain the quality of the work if those key individuals leave DOC. Lessons may be lost and mistakes are potentially repeated.
4. **DOC's Subantarctic logistical arrangements have low resilience.**
 - **There is a risk** of ongoing disruption during planning and delivery phases due to limited availability of vessels with the necessary performance.

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Executive Summary Recommendations

Full recommendations and supporting information can be found in the body of the report.

Governance and Strategy

1. Establish a DD-G Subantarctic Task Force with clear Single Point Accountability to enable a coordinated approach.
 - SPA: Mike Slater
2. Develop an over-arching strategic approach that considers biodiversity, heritage, visitor and the infrastructure required to support all activities in the Subantarctic.
 - SPA: Martin Kessick
6. Bring all Subantarctic work under a single programme with SPA sitting with the head of the programme.
 - SPA: Mike Slater

Work prioritization and seasonal planning

- SPA: Mike Slater
3. Prioritise all Subantarctic work using the strategy, 10-year pathway, multi-year plans, and single programme structure.
 4. Undertake a structured annual ‘stop and review’ to ensure prioritized work was delivered.
 5. Undertake seasonal planning using the single programme structure with SPA at the programme level.
 7. Align DOC planning schedule with the NMCC planning schedule

Logistics: maritime and rotary wing

- SPA: Mike Slater
8. Establish a larger vessel panel to improve resilience.
 9. Undertake full risk assessment of the Enderby heli-pad to assist in prioritizing the engineered solution.

Operations and field work

10. Undertake a full review of the events leading up to the loss of Flint to ensure self-assurance of lessons learnt.
 - SPA: Mike Slater
11. Continue socialization of the draft Antipodes report, SPA to determine next steps.
 - SPA: Martin Kessick

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Report methodology

TA130 Purpose:

To improve effective operations in the Subantarctic to deliver prioritised work on our NZ Subantarctic Strategy

Scope:

- Understand progress against Strategy development
- Understand the process of work prioritization
- Explore the concept of the Centre of Subantarctic Expertise
- Understand seasonal issues related to OPERATION ENDURANCE and chartered vessels
- Summarise the review of the Antipodes Island 'evacuation' due to COVID
- Understand the events leading up to the loss of Flint

Approach:

- Conduct current state assessment
- A document review was undertaken to understand progress made against seasonal plans, strategy development, and task assignments
- Observations were made during formal interviews, as well as phone calls and conversations with staff from Biodiversity and Operations.
- Findings were distilled from observations and themes.

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Context

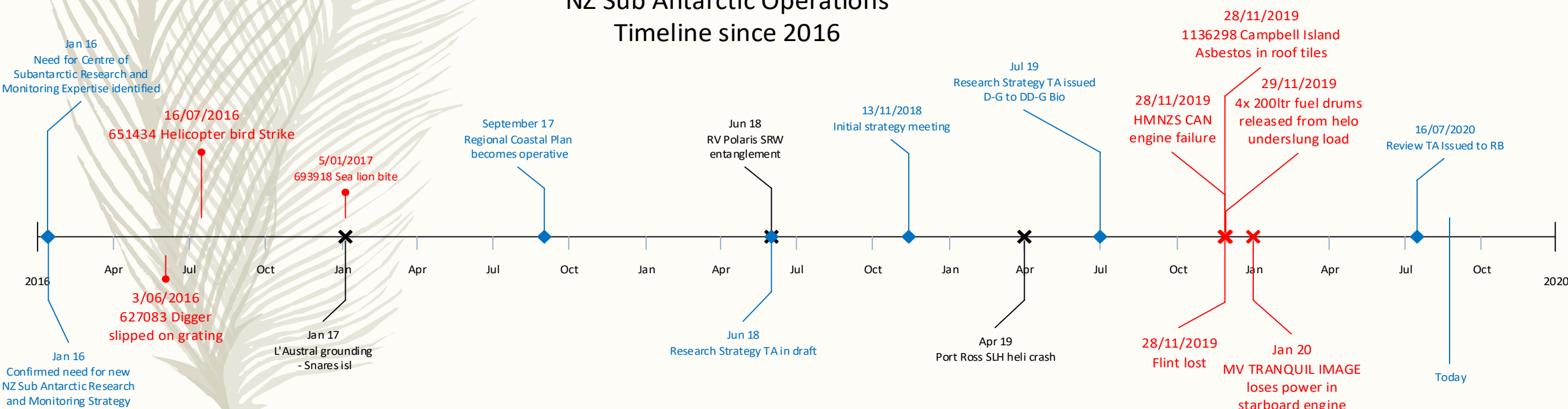
The Kermadec and Subantarctic Islands and their coastal marine areas are unique. The islands themselves have one of the highest levels of protection in New Zealand statute as nature reserves under the Reserves Act 1977. The Subantarctic Islands are also national reserves under the Reserves Act and are internationally recognised as world heritage areas.

A review was undertaken in 2015 which identified a need for an overarching strategy. The 2018/19 Task Assignment to develop the strategy has a focus on research and monitoring - [DOC-6014762](#).

The 2019/20 operating season highlighted challenges around coordination of work. For example, what is referred to as 'break-ins' (where others seek to send resources to the Subantarctic at short notice) resulted in confused SPA, increased churn, and reduction in planned work.

The 2019/20 Subantarctic season had a cluster of incidents during both OP ENDURANCE and the Conservation Services Program. The timeline below shows the 2015 review, DOC incidents, external agency incidents, and key milestones, and depicts the 2019/20 cluster of incidents.

NZ Sub Antarctic Operations
Timeline since 2016



*Minor incidents from Risk Manager not recorded on this timeline as they number over 50 and would not fit easily.

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Current Mental Models

- We know all the answers
- We rely on our own institutional knowledge
- The Navy is difficult to work with
- We have to do the work
- We must be the Expedition Leader of Op Endurance
- The incidents last year were not our fault

Current State

- LEGEND**
- ✗ No evidence provided, or poor behaviors, or low maturity approach
 - ! May exist, but either not being used or out of date
 - ✓ In place and being used

BIODIVERSITY RESEARCH PROGRAMME
OPERATION ENDURANCE



TA130
Quality Element

RESEARCH AND
MONITORING STRATEGY

PRIORITISED WORK
PROGRAMME

SEASONAL WORK
PLANNING

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Interview Statements

"I can honestly say we have no clear direction"
 "We need to understand and plan for risks"
 "We are making good judgement decisions in the absence of a strategy"

"There is no clear prioritization process. We need it but we never see it"
 "CSP becomes a priority as it is commissioned by external funding"
 "Even when we work with the subants team there is no prioritised work plan, no time frames, and deliverables are not visible"

"We just use our own contacts (to plan)"
 "There is no clear plan or decisions being made"
 "I was struck by how little involvement Bio had" [in Operations planning]
 "We copy and paste from previous seasons"
 "We had a blizzard of requests from all levels last season"

Findings

2005 NZ Subantarctic Islands Research Strategy does not guide seasonal priorities.
 The new [since 2016] NZ Subantarctic Research and Monitoring Strategy is currently in draft.
 The new Strategy appears to be focused on research and led by Biodiversity and there are concerns it doesn't adequately meet Operation's needs. Silos exist currently.

Work programmes are developed within business groups independently.
 Prioritization in each group is being based on different strategic documents (Ops - CMS, while Bio - CSP).
 Work is prioritized based on funding rather than conservation values. Silos exist.
 Risk mitigation not considered as part of prioritization.

Risk in DOC's Subantarctic operations is seen as H&S and wider risk management is not considered as part of the planning cycle.
 Siloed logistical and operational planning leads to inefficiencies.
 In the absence of multi-year planning there is a felt pressure to get everything done in the current year.

Recommendations

1. Establish a governance group with clear Single Point Accountability to enable a coordinated approach.
2. Develop an over-arching strategic approach that considers biodiversity, heritage, visitor and the infrastructure required to support all activities in the Subantarctic.

3. Prioritise all Subantarctic work using the strategy, 10-year pathway, multi-year plans, and single programme structure.
 - All 'break-ins' need to be prioritized against the seasonal priorities.
4. Undertake a structured annual 'stop and review' to ensure prioritized work was delivered.

5. Seasonal work planning should be undertaken under a single programme structure holding the SPA at the programme level.

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Quality Element

CENTRE OF RESEARCH AND
MONITORING EXPERTISE

OPERATION ENDURANCE
& CHARTERED VESSELS

SPA & DECISION MAKING

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Interview Statements

“No-one knows what this is”
“If we want to treat these islands as something special then we need to put the necessary funding and support around them”

“We lose sight of our Team Membership role”
“The navy isn’t the most efficient approach”
“There is opportunity to utilize the Navy, they are robust operators with deployable assets, but we need to develop (wider) vessels capabilities”
“When other research teams have berths they must obtain all the permits and then we are just a transport provider”

"It's difficult to find the decision maker"
"We are making good judgement decisions in the absence of a strategy"
“Continuity relies on people not systems”
“SPA should be Tier 3 level thinking and work, but I need all the components to do that well”

Findings

Executive understanding of the intent has not been shared, understood, adopted or resourced throughout the relevant parts of DOC.
There was general support for better coordination between Biodiversity and Operations groups.

NMCC are seeking a layered planning approach from Agencies in the form of a strategy, operational planning and tactical planning.
Logistics pool of vessels has limited resilience.
Current panel of vessels not sufficient to guarantee adequate resilience.

There is inconsistent clarity around who holds SPA.
SPA is even more unclear when considering multi-agency operations.
In DOC’s current functionally focused structure there is no obvious home for SPA for developing an over-arching strategy broaching all functional Groups. E.g. Biodiversity, Heritage & Visitor, Operations.

Recommendations

6. Bring all Subantarctic work under a single programme with SPA sitting with the head of the programme.
The Executive will:
- Provide adequate resourcing
- Utilise Leader-Led communications

7. Align DOC planning schedule with the NMCC to ensure DOC multi-year priorities are considered for OPERATION ENDURANCE.
- Ensure single point of contact with NMCC is followed to ensure consistent planning.
8. Go back to market and establish a larger vessel panel to improve resilience.

6. Repeated:
Bring all Subantarctic work under a single programme with SPA sitting with the head of the programme.
- As a minimum the structure should include staff from Biodiversity, Operations, Heritage & Visitors.

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Quality Element

ENDERBY FUEL CACHE

FLINT

ANTIPODES COVID-19
EVACUATION

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Interview Statements

"We've been raising an issue of the fuel store being above the helipad for a long time, but funding and a decision never happens"
"There are overriding issues with the pad, it is out of sight and out of mind and we struggle to get anyone to own it (the issues)"

"We had potential weaknesses when preparing our staff and dogs (for working around sea lions)"

[Intentionally left blank]

Findings

Fuel is owned by Southern Lakes Helicopters.
Fuel store listed on AMIS.
Safety concerns have been raised due to:
- The location of the pad being down-hill of the fuel stores
- Poor stability of the pad structure
An engineering assessment and plans have been developed for a site upgrade. Funding has not been secured to improve safety measures for the helicopter pad and fuel store.

A debrief of the retrieval of Flint was conducted.
- The debrief is specific to the retrieval of Flint and doesn't adequately consider the events leading up to the loss of Flint.
Lessons have been implemented into SOP's.
The current review is not sufficient to understand the events leading up to the loss of Flint.

The internal review remains in draft and is currently being put to contributors for comment.

Recommendations

9. Undertake a full risk assessment to assist in prioritizing the engineered solution.
- A business case should be written based on the risk assessment and the decision made to undertake the required upgrade.

10. Undertake a full review or investigation of the events leading up to the loss of Flint to ensure self-assurance of lessons learnt.

11. Continue socialization of draft report and SPA needs to determine next steps.

Appendix 1: '7 S' Findings & Recommendations

The Department uses the McKinsey 7 S model to analyse and improve organisation effectiveness. The model helps to highlight potential improvements and ensures a wholistic approach is taken to organisation improvement. The 7 S model can be used at both an organisation or team level and is commonly used to facilitate change, help implement new strategy and to understand weaknesses (blind spots).



'7 S' Findings

Lack of strategy or long-term planning is driving siloed work.

There is no common operating picture between work programmes.

Bespoke processes are developed in silos. Core systems only partially implemented.

Decision making is driven by different constraints between Operations and Biodiversity Groups

Staff are hugely committed and passionate about the work they do in the Subantarctic

Skill development is ad hoc and expectations of approach to work is not clear to staff

There appears to be limited commonality between team cultures

'7 S' Recommendations

Long- and medium-term planning needs to be completed as a priority and aligned with key partner planning.

Continue the current 'strategy on a page work' at Director level and ensure this work includes multiple channels.

All Subantarctic work should be brought under a single programme with SPA sitting with the head of the programme.

As a minimum the structure should include staff from Bio, Ops, Heritage, Rec.

DOC's new Business Planning System to be implemented to map out strategy, pathways, 4-year plans, and seasonal priorities.

DOC's Trilogy, Mahi Oranga, risk management and other underpinning systems should be used to plan, task and undertake work.

The head of the programme should have a broad range of expertise relating to programme management rather than lean too heavily into just one area of work within the Subantarctic.

Identified high risk constraints need to be escalated to the programme sponsor.

Staff capability and development opportunities should be managed within the single programme.

Lessons learnt should be shared between Raoul and Subantarctic programmes.

The single programme structure should have a focus on skill development to ensure redundancy within the programme.

Develop a shared strategy and 10-year pathway for the single programme to enable shared values and culture.