

Annual Report of the

New Zealand Conservation Authority

Te Pou Atawhai Tajao O Aotearoa

FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2014 TO 30 JUNE 2015

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

Annual Report of the **New Zealand Conservation Authority**

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For the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

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National Park, 2015.

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23 November 2015

Honourable Maggie Barry Minister of Conservation Parliament Buildings WELLINGTON

Dear Minister

I submit, in terms of section 6E of the Conservation Act 1987, the annual report of the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority) for the period 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. The Act requires that the Authority shall in each year report to the Minister on the exercise of its functions and powers.

The Authority has appreciated the opportunities it has had to meet with you during the year and discuss matters of national importance to conservation.

Pest control and biosecurity continued to be a Strategic Priority for the Authority during 2014-2015 and we have been delighted with the outcome of the Battle for our Birds initiative, and urge a continuation of effort from the Department on this. We also look forward to the benefits of your War on Weeds campaign.

A major task was the receipt and approval of the Northland, Auckland and Waikato Conservation Management Strategies (CMSs). These CMSs became operational during the year in review.

The Authority has enjoyed a strong focus during the past year on strategic discussions with the Director-General and senior managers to improve New Zealand's conservation gains and make best use of the resources available to the Department. In support of this we reviewed the Department's 4-Year Plan and discussed each of the five Intermediate Outcomes.

Another highlight of this year has been to work closely with conservation boards; two of our meetings were held out of Wellington in conjunction with the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board and the Southland Conservation Board. The Authority also hosted a Conservation Board Chairpersons' Conference in November 2014 to better understand your priorities; share best practice on topics such as conservation management strategy monitoring and implementing workplans; and, to give effect to the inaugural Letters of Expectation to the Conservation Boards.

Looking forward, the Authority will be considering stewardship land and net conservation benefit, and providing advice to you on these matters. We expect to finish our review of the three South Island CMSs and will hold meetings with the Conservation Boards, iwi and other key stakeholders in the East Coast and Nelson-Marlborough regions.

Yours sincerely

Dr Warren Parker Chairperson

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.

The New Zealand Conservation Authority members (August 2015)



Front row (sitting) left to right: Rauru Kirikiri, Warren Parker (Chairperson), Sandra Cook, Judy Hellstrom Back row left to right: Gerry McSweeney, Mike Simm, Jan Riddell, Jo Breese, David Barnes, Devon McLean, Mick Clout, Mark Christensen, Waana Davis.

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1. OVERVIEW OF 2014/15

The New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority) met on six occasions during the year—in August, October and December 2014; and in February, April and June 2015. The October meeting was held in Taupo with a field trip the previous day to the Wairakei Kiwi Sanctuary, Tokaanu Hot Springs, Lake Rotoaira and Tongariro Trout Hatchery. The February meeting was held in Invercargill with a field trip the previous day to Waituna Lagoon and Wetlands, and the Fonterra Plant at Edendale. All other meetings were held in Wellington.

In October 2014, the Authority welcomed the Honourable Maggie Barry as the new Minister of Conservation

A major task was the receipt and approval of the Northland, Auckland and Waikato Conservation Management Strategies (CMSs). These CMSs became operational during the year in review.

The Authority continued its emphasis on providing strategic advice to the Minister and to the Director-General of the Department of Conservation (the Department) and his senior staff. This included areas such as the release of biocontrol organisms, and advice on Intermediate Outcomes and stewardship land.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW ZEALAND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

The Authority is a statutory advisor to the Minister of Conservation and to the Director-General of Conservation on conservation issues of national importance. It was established by section 6A of the Conservation Act 1987.

The functions of the Authority are set out in section 6B of the Conservation Act 1987, and 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. It also has specified responsibilities, set out in Treaty claims settlement legislation, with regard to consultation with tangata whenua.

The Authority has the important function of approving the 10-year conservation management strategies and national park management plans that guide the management of public conservation land, waters and species by the Department.

The Authority is committed to the partnership model between New Zealanders and the Department for the management of public conservation resources. This is embodied in the long history of formal citizen engagement in New Zealand conservation management and the diverse make-up of its membership; likewise with the conservation boards. The conservation boards and the Authority are a long standing legislative mechanism of the 'conservation through partnerships' ethic of the Department.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUTHORITY

The Minister appoints the 13 Authority members, including the Chairperson.

The members are selected in consultation with the Minister of Tourism (two appointments), the Minister of Māori Affairs (two appointments), and the Minister of Local Government (one appointment), on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (one appointment); and on the recommendation of the Royal Society of New Zealand (one appointment), Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand (one appointment), and Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (one appointment). In addition, four members are appointed following nominations from the public. This process ensures that a wide range of perspectives, life experiences and geographical knowledge contributes to the advice provided and decisions made by the Authority.

Members of the Authority are appointed for three-year terms, with current terms expiring 30 May 2017. There was no change of membership during the reporting period.

4. MEETINGS

The Authority met for four one-and-a-half day meetings, all held in Wellington. In addition, two one-day meetings were held in Taupo and Invercargill, both associated with one-day field trips (to the Wairakei Kiwi Sanctuary, Tokaanu Hot Springs, Lake Rotoaira and Tongariro Trout Hatchery in October; and to Waituna Lagoon and Wetlands, and the Fonterra Plant at Edendale in February). Field trips are a vital part of the Authority's modus operandi, providing the opportunity to view concerns and opportunities raised in public submissions in situ, and to appreciate the local context faced by Departmental staff and communities in managing public conservation lands. It is also an opportunity to spend time with local conservation board members discussing matters important to their region.

During the course of the year the Authority hosted and heard from Jan Wright (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment), Sir Mark Solomon (Iwi Leaders' Group Conservation Forum), and Mike Jebson (QE II National Trust) at its meetings.

4.1 Attendance record of members at meetings of the Authority

Member	Number of meetings (out of total of 6)
David Barnes	6
Jo Breese	5
Mark Christensen	5
Mick Clout	5
Sandra Cook	4
Waana Davis	6
Judy Hellstrom	4
Rauru Kirikiri	6
Devon McLean	5
Gerry McSweeney	3
Warren Parker	6
Jan Riddell	5
Mike Simm	5

5. BUDGET, FEES AND ALLOWANCES

The Authority's budget for 2014–2015 was \$146,000. Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Travelling Allowances Act 1951. The chairperson receives a daily meeting fee of \$290, and other Authority members receive a daily meeting fee of \$215. Members may be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses incurred while engaged on Authority business.

6. THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987

6.1 Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 states: "This Act shall so be interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi." As a body established under the Conservation Act 1987, section 4 applies to the Authority in the discharge of its functions.

6.2 Functions of the Authority

(a) Advise the Minister on Statements of General Policy

General Policy is the highest level of statutory planning for conservation outcomes. No changes were proposed or made to General Policy in the reporting period.

(b) Approve Conservation Management Strategies

A conservation management strategy (CMS) is a 10-year statutory document. Its purpose is to implement General Policy and to establish objectives for the discharge of the Department's functions in the area covered by the strategy, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes. The CMSs are developed by departmental planning staff in partnership with local conservation boards, and there are opportunities for input from the public, tangata whenua and other interested parties. While most CMSs are now older than 10 years, their review was put on hold in December 2009 while a national framework was developed (completed November 2010). Restructuring of the Department has delayed work on the reviews.

Northland CMS

The Authority continued its consideration of the Northland CMS during the reporting period. The Committee had previously been delegated the power to approve the CMS if certain criteria were met. The CMS was approved by the Committee on 8 September 2014, with the decision ratified by the Authority at its 9 October 2014 meeting. The CMS became operative on 29 September 2014.

Auckland CMS

The Authority continued its consideration of the Auckland CMS during the reporting period. The Authority approved the CMS at its 9 October 2014 meeting with it becoming operative on 17 November 2014.

Waikato CMS

The Authority continued its consideration of the Waikato CMS during the reporting period. The Committee had previously been delegated the power to approve the CMS if certain criteria were met. The CMS was approved by the Committee on 8 September 2014, with the decision ratified by the Authority at its 9 October 2014 meeting. The CMS became operative on 29 September 2014.

(c) Approve Conservation Management Plans

The Authority may be asked to approve a conservation management plan but generally they are approved by conservation boards, in some instances jointly with an iwi authority as provided in Treaty Settlement legislation. No conservation management plans were approved by the Authority during the reporting period.

(d) Review the Effectiveness of the Department's Administration of General Policies

The Authority did not review the effectiveness of the Department's administration of Statements of General Policy during the reporting period. When approving statutory planning documents, the Authority seeks to satisfy itself that they give effect to the two Statements of General Policy appropriately.

(e) Investigate or Advise on Conservation Matters of National Importance

Conservation matters of national importance discussed with the Director-General and senior staff during the reporting period included:

- Marine reserves
- Kauri dieback
- Himalayan Tahr Management

- Stewardship land
- Honeybees: biodiversity issues and commercial opportunities
- Battle for our Birds
- National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management
- National Park Management Plan model
- NZCA obligations resulting from Treaty Settlements
- Department of Conservation Intermediate Outcomes

These discussions were iterative in nature. As more information is received and understanding and thinking evolves, further discussion will take place.

The Deputy Director-General Policy and Regulatory Services kept the Authority informed of policy and legislative initiatives across the range of the Department's interests.

The Authority informed the new Minister of Conservation, Honourable Maggie Barry, on its functions and priorities when Minister Barry took up the Conservation Portfolio.

Advice was provided to the Acting Minister of Conservation for Pike River Issues, Hon Dr Nick Smith, on additions of land to Paparoa National Park.

The Authority also discussed conservation matters using the expertise from its membership. Conservation matters of national importance discussed following presentations from its members included:

- Predator Free NZ
- Statutory obligations resulting from Claims Settlement Acts
- Engagement with tangata whenua

Other matters of national importance for conservation that the Authority provided advice on during the year were:

Himalayan tahr

A condition of the Himalayan Thar Control Plan is that the Department reports annually to the New Zealand Conservation Authority on its implementation of the plan. The annual report for 2012/13 and operational plan for 2013/14 were received at the April 2014 meeting.

The Authority expressed concern over the interpretation of the increasing number of Himalayan tahr being culled, when population numbers are not fully known. The Authority requested the Department to undertake a population assessment of Himalayan tahr and a vegetation survey to understand the impact they are having on the environment. This additional assessment was received by the NZCA at its meeting in April 2015.

Grass and silver carp

Grass and silver carp are used in New Zealand as a biological-control organism for aquatic-weed control. The Minister of Conservation's approval to use them for this purpose is required if the status of the site is a reserve or national park. The Minister is required to consult the Authority before reaching a decision. During the reporting period the Authority was consulted on one application for the release of grass carp into lakes Turtira, Waikopiro and Opouahi in Hawke's Bay.

Biocontrol of Scotch broom

The introduction of any biological-control organism to control wild animals or animal pests or plant pests in any reserve (s51A Reserves Act 1977) or national park (s54 National Parks Act 1980) requires the approval of the Minister. The Minister is required to consult the Authority before reaching a decision. In June 2014, the Minister sought advice from the Authority on a request from the Department to release broom gall mite into

Molesworth Recreation Reserve and Matai Flat Clarence Ben Scenic Reserve to control Scotch broom.

(f) Change of Land Status

The Authority has been considering stewardship land and net conservation benefit in relation to land exchange. The Minister of Conservation sought the Authority's advice on this matter as a result of the recommendations in the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's report on stewardship land. The Authority has discussed this topic over the course of several meetings; and provided advice directly to the Department relating to some specifics of their work on this. At the time of this annual report, the Authority's advice to the Minister had not been finalised.

See section 7.3 of this report for change of land status for national park land.

(g) Walkways (repealed)

(h) Education and Publicity

Copies of minutes and agendas and other information regarding the Authority's functions and activities (including its meetings, which are open to the public) can be found at www.conservationauthority.org.nz.

Customary use of native species became a media issue during the course of the year and the Chairperson made media statements in response to this issue.

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

(i) Priorities for Expenditure by the Department of Conservation

As a result of changes in the way government departments are expected to identify and report on operating intentions, the Authority has adapted the way it makes input into priorities for Departmental expenditure, including developing a better understanding of the factors that determine the Department's decisions about where to direct its resources.

During the reporting year the Authority had two discussions with the Department on its draft 4-Year Plan, and had a discussion on each of the Department's five Intermediate Outcomes. During these strategic discussions the Authority provided feedback directly to the Department on priorities and expenditure.

(j) New Zealand Fish and Game Council Liaison

Section 6B (1) (i) of the Conservation Act 1987 provides for the Authority to liaise with the New Zealand Fish and Game Council (NZF&GC). The Authority and NZF&GC provided each other with copies of agendas and meeting papers during the reporting period.

(k) Ministerial Delegations

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

6.3 Powers of the Authority

(a) Establishment of Committees

The Conservation 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 included:

- Northland Conservation Management Strategy
- Auckland Conservation Management Strategy
- Waikato Conservation Management Strategy
- Grass Carp

In addition, the Canterbury (Waitaha), Otago and Southland Murihiku Committees were established in anticipation of receiving the three CMSs.

(b) Advocacy

The Authority advocated its interests during the period at the following conferences:

- EDS conference August 2014. The Environmental Defence Society's conference Navigating our Future: addressing risk and building resilience, was held in Auckland, 5–7 August 2014.
- IUCN World Parks Congress, held in Sydney, 12–19 November 2014. The Authority's mian areas of focus were: governance, including shared governance with indigenous people; financing for protected areas; marine; World Heritage; and emergent thinking.
- Ramsar Symposium, held in Hamilton, 17–19 March 2015. The mission statement of the Ramsar Convention is "Conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international co-operation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world."

7. FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1980

7.1 General Policy for National Parks

The Authority did not review, or make any changes to, the General Policy for National Parks during the reporting period.

7.2 National Park Management Plans

No national park management plans were reviewed or approved during the reporting period.

7.3 Additions to, and Deletions from, National Parks

Addition of land to Kahurangi National Park

Since 2012 the Authority has been considering protection of the Mokihinui River Catchment. During the previous reporting period the Department was in the process of consultation with LINZ and the Buller District Council over the ownership of the Mokihinui riverbed and access roads. While this process was still ongoing during the current reporting period, the Authority requested advice from the Department on adding the Mokihinui River Catchment (excluding the riverbed and access roads) to the Kahurangi National Park under section 7 of the National Parks Act 1980.

Addition of land to Paparoa National Park

The Authority considered the addition of land to Paparoa National Park during the reporting period. It made a recommendation to the Acting Minister of Conservation for Pike River Issues that specific areas be added to the National Park.

Deletion of land from Westland Tai Poutini National Park

The Authority supported a proposal to dispose of approximately 863 m² from Westland Tai Poutini National Park along the Southern approach to the Fox River Bridge at Fox Glacier to enable the road to be realigned.

7.4 National Park Investigations

No national park investigations were undertaken during the reporting period.

7.5 National Park Determinations

No determinations were made during the reporting period. Determinations are made to waive the requirements that introduced plants and animals be exterminated in national parks and native plants and animals be preserved. They are generally made as part of a national park management plan process.

8. MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS

8.1 JD Stout Trust

The Authority is a trustee of the JD Stout Trust. The Trust makes donations or interestfree loans for conservation and cultural purposes. The Trust met twice during the reporting period. Waana Davis is the Authority's representative on the Trust.

8.2 The World Conservation Union (IUCN)

The Authority is one of nine members of the New Zealand Committee of the IUCN. The Committee meets quarterly. Jo Breese is the Authority's representative on the Committee.

The Authority re-evaluated its membership of the IUCN during the year, and agreed that it should continue to be a member because of the Authority's value as an independent voice for New Zealand conservation.

Jo Breese attended the IUCN's World Parks Congress in Sydney in November 2014.

9. CONSERVATION BOARDS

9.1 Conservation Board Boundaries

There were no changes to Conservation Board boundaries during the reporting period.

9.2 Conservation Board Nominations

The Minister is required to consult with the Authority prior to appointing public members to conservation boards.

The Authority provided its advice to both the Department and the Associate Minister of Conservation on the appointment process for 2015.

9.3 Authority/Conservation Board Liaison

One Authority member acts as liaison with each conservation board. This liaison includes attendance at board meetings and informal liaison with the board chairperson, which is reported back to the Authority at each meeting. The importance of the relationship between the boards and the Authority was highlighted in the Conservation Boards Review.

The Authority held a Conservation Board Chairpersons' Conference on 21–22 November 2014. The objectives of the Conference were to do with: understanding the Minister of Conservation's priorities; sharing best practise and experiences; conservation management strategy processes for review and monitoring of implementation; conservation board workplans and reporting on the Letters of Expectation; section 4 requirements; conservation board role in advocacy; and improving relationships between the Authority, the conservation boards and the Department of Conservation.

9.4 Annual Reports

The conservation boards are each required by Section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987 to provide the Authority with an annual report. Once complete, these reports will be available from the boards and posted on the relevant board website pages.

9.5 Implementation of Conservation Management Strategies

Most conservation boards have adopted a systematic process for monitoring progress of the implementation of the CMS for their region and for providing advice to the Department's conservators in that respect. Boards report on this monitoring in their annual reports.

With the release of the next generation CMSs in Northland, Auckland and Waikato, those conservation boards have developed a new monitoring and reporting template, in consultation with the Authority.

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 its region.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Authority is to undertake a review of its performance in December 2015. The Authority's strategic priorities can be viewed on its website.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Authority would like to thank the staff of the Department who have attended our meetings or serviced, supported and briefed the Authority during the reporting period.

We would like to especially note our thanks to Lou Sanson, the Director-General of Conservation, with whom we have enjoyed some robust debates; Rick McGovern-Wilson, whose knowledge has been invaluable to our work; Aprille Gillon, Dianne Parker and Katrina Edwards for their efficient servicing of the Authority; and Doris Johnston and Sarah Bagnall for working with us on policy and planning issues and who have now left these roles within the Department.

On a personal note I would like to thank my Authority colleagues and all the members of the conservation boards. They are generous with their time and willingly apply their knowledge, skills and diverse life experiences to the work of the Authority and conservation boards.

Dr Warren Parker Chairperson New Zealand Conservation Authority

12. SCHEDULES

FIRST SCHEDULE

Conservation management strategies: approval dates and/or status of reviews as at 30 June 2015.

Conservation management strategy	Date approved	Situation as at 30 June 2015
Northland	8 September 2014 Operative as of 29 September 2014	Operative.
Auckland	9 October 2014 Operative as of 17 November 2014	Operative.
Waikato	8 September 2014 Operative as of 29 September 2014	Operative.
Bay of Plenty	4 December 1997	Review not currently scheduled within next 5 years.
East Coast/Hawke's Bay	14 October 1998 (East Coast) and 19 October 1994 (Hawke's Bay)	In first stages of review process.
Tongariro/Taupo	30 May 2002	Review not currently scheduled within next 5 years.
Whanganui	9 April 1997	Part review (Rangitikei/ Manawatu) in first stages of review process as part of Wellington CMS. Review of the rest of the CMS not scheduled within
Wellington	13 March 1996	next 5 years. In first stages of review process.
Chatham Islands	12 August 1999	Review will begin in 2016.
Nelson/Marlborough	12 September 1996	Project planning for the review has begun.
West Coast Tai Poutini	15 April 2010	Operative.
Canterbury	14 June 2000	Under review. Referred to NZCA in August 2015.
Otago	15 August 1998	Under review as Canterbury (Waitaha). Referred to NZCA in August 2015.

Conservation management strategy	Date approved	Situation as at 30 June 2015
Mainland Southland / West Otago	10 July 1998	Under review as Southland Murihiku.
		Referred to NZCA in August 2015.
Stewart Island/Rakiura	9 February 2011	Operative.
Subantarctic Islands	16 July 1998	Under review as part of Southland Murihiku CMS.
		Referred to NZCA in August 2015.

The Director-General of Conservation put review of the CMSs on hold while a CMS national framework and natural heritage and destination management prioritisation tools were developed. These were approved in 2011 and the review of CMSs began, first with Northland, Auckland and Waikato as a group and then with Canterbury, Otago and Southland as a group. The remainder will follow. The statutory expectation is that each CMS will be reviewed at ten-year intervals.

SECOND SCHEDULE

National park management plans: approval dates.

National park management plan	Date approved
Abel Tasman	9 October 2008
Aoraki/Mount Cook	12 August 2004
Arthur's Pass	13 December 2007
Egmont	14 February 2002
Fiordland	21 June 2007
Kahurangi	13 June 2001
Mount Aspiring	23 June 2011
Nelson Lakes	10 October 2002
Paparoa	18 November 1992
Rakiura	9 February 2011
Te Urewera Note: as result of the Te Urewera Act in July 2014 administration passed from the Department to the Te Urewera Board; under the Act, Te Urewera is no longer a national park, but a separate legal entity for whom the board members act as trustees	13 February 2003 (the national park management plan will remain in force until it is replaced by a management plan approved by the Te Urewera Board)
Tongariro	12 October 2006
Westland Tai Poutini	21 December 2001
Whanganui	9 August 2012

THIRD SCHEDULE

Address list for conservation boards.

Conservation board	Board address (c/- Department of Conservation)
Northland	PO Box 842 Whangarei 0140
Auckland	Private Bag 68908 Newton Auckland 1145
Waikato	Private Bag 3072 Hamilton 3240
Bay of Plenty	PO Box 528 Taupo 3351
East Coast/Hawke's Bay	Private Bag 11010 Palmerston North 4442
Tongariro/Taupo	PO Box 528 Taupo 3351
Taranaki/Whanganui	PO Box 528 Taupo 3351
Wellington	Private Bag 11010 Palmerston North 4442
Chatham Islands	Private Bag 11010 Palmerston North 4442
Nelson/Marlborough	Private Bag 5 Nelson 7042
West Coast Tai Poutini	Private Bag 701 Hokitika 7842
Canterbury Aoraki	PO Box 5 Aoraki/Mt Cook 7946
Otago	PO Box 5244 Moray Place Dunedin 9058
Southland	PO Box 743 Invercargill 9840



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www.conservationauthority.org.nz