



Northland Conservation Board

Te Runanga Papa Atawhai O Te Taitokerau

Annual Report 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority pursuant to Section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987



Cover photograph:
Judi Gilbert, Richard Robbins and Jeannie Hogarth on the Te Paki Coastal Walk.
Photo: Laree Furniss.

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Chairperson's Foreword

Ka Mihi Atu kia Koutou e te Tangata tuturu o te Taitokerau. Mihi koutou e nga Ahikaroa, mihi te tohu mana e nga Kaitiaki, e mihi e mihi e mihi. No reira tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.

Greetings to the many people of Northland. To those especially left at home to keep the fires burning strong, and to guard what's important, I greet you and the Mana left to you, the most humblest.

I'd like to first mention the unshakable attention of service the board members have given over the last twelve months. Thank you.

Northland has a lot to offer us, historically remember we are the descendents of those that started a conversation, well before 1840, about how we will live together in this country. That conversation still carries today.

We have the most bio diverse places in New Zealand, both land and marine areas offer a full satisfaction to the many international and national visitors.

These places also offer us a peace of mind, places to visit to take time out of our busy lives, to tune into something that is always there. These places are always living and breathing no matter what we as people live through in our daily lives. I'm not sure we take advantage of this gift to alleviate or balance the busyness we live with daily.

Moving forward, the board has been focused on the development of the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for the future of Biodiversity and Places in Northland. We have also shared a keen interest in the developments of the Department of Conservations new structure.

Conservation Management Strategy

To make sure we live in a place that is second to none in New Zealand we need to insure our many places reflect our sustainable future;

- Culturally
- Environmentally
- Socially
- Economically

In no particular order these bullet points work hand in hand, they represent the CMS so as all sectors of Northland play a part in it toward the 'Bigger Picture'.



Changes for the Department of Conservation (DOC);

Recently you would have heard about the changes the Department is making internally to reflect our present and our future. This will have an effect on families and our thoughts are with them.

For the financial year to come, 2014/2015, the Department will have its local plans ready for delivery. This will reflect the work and effort put in by the Public, the Board, and the Department in the CMS.

The Board's role will be monitoring the Department's local plans on behalf of our Region and people in Taitokerau-Northland.

On reflection 2012/2013;

- We have shared our views on genetically modified organisms[GMO's],
- Highlighted threatened species mainly Kukupa,
- Formed working groups for the CMS,
- Have had Public hearings on the CMS,
- Site visited the Far North's places,
- Contributed advice and support to the formation of the Kauri National Park,
- Sustained relations with other Agencies and groups alike,
- Sustained some relations with Hapu in Taitokerau,
- Sustained the Board's profile through social media,
- Continued a relationship with the New Zealand Conservation Authority,

These are just a few items we have worked on over the last twelve months. On behalf of the Board I would like to thank the Department of Conservation for the assistance we have had over the time the Board has operated (1990's). Jeannie Hogarth has been an invaluable Support Officer both administratively and institutionally (knowledge), thank you Jeannie.

Finally, I will put a challenge out to you. Visit our places in Northland as often as is possible and tell your friends about it.

Nga Mihi nui
Regards



Mita Whare Harris
CHAIRPERSON

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1 Introduction

The Northland Conservation Board is one of thirteen [13] bodies appointed nationwide by the Minister of Conservation under s.6P of the Conservation Act 1987.

The functions of the Board are outlined in s.6M and the powers that enable the Board to carry out those functions are under s.6N of the Act.

The role of the Conservation Boards as laid out in the Conservation Act 1987 is as follows:

- to recommend the approval of conservation management strategies
- to approve conservation management plans
- to advise on how conservation management strategies and plans will be put into practice
- to advise on proposed changes to the status of land areas of national and international significance
- to advise on proposals for new walkways
- to liaise with Fish and Game Councils on conservation matters
- to carry out other powers delegated to them by the Conservation Minister, the Conservation Act or any other Act.

Section 6O of the Conservation Act requires that every Conservation Board provide the New Zealand Conservation Authority with an annual report as soon as practicable after 30 June each year. In recognition of this requirement, the Northland Conservation Board submits its Annual Report for consideration.

2 The Board's current area

The Northland Conservation Board's area of responsibility currently covers the same boundaries as the Department of Conservation's Northland Conservancy.

Northland is a long narrow peninsula, the features setting it apart from the rest of the country being its subtropical climate and 1,700km of indented and very scenic coastline. The Region covers a land area of 1.25 million hectares, supporting a population of just over 150,000.

Northland's economy is based on pastoral farming, forestry, and horticulture, with well over half the region's land area devoted to beef and sheep farming. Northland is a popular holiday destination, making tourism a significant industry.

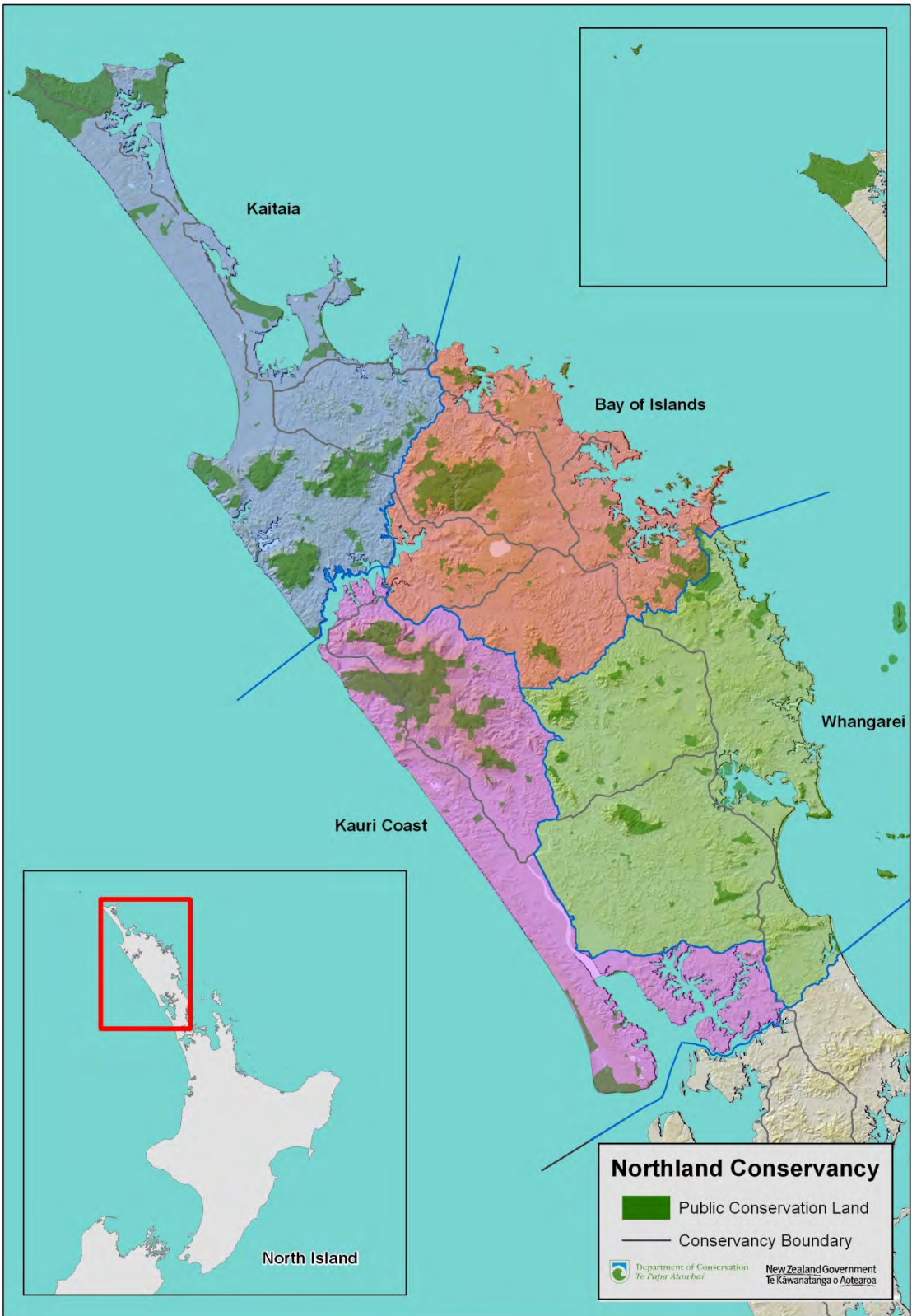


Figure 1 Map of the Northland Conservation Board area

In ecological terms, Northland is notable as home to two high profile species the kauri and the kiwi.

One of the most magnificent trees in the world, the kauri, was prolific in the north but much of the region's kauri forest is now gone. A number of relatively large kauri dominated tracts do remain, principally the Waipoua/Mataraua/Waima ecosystem and the Puketi/Omahuta/Maungataniwha complex but other individual forests as well.

Kiwi too are an important ingredient that makes Northland special, but the Northland brown kiwi is under threat and special effort is required to maintain several large viable populations in the region.

Notable are the harbours, headlands, islands, and reserves of Northland's eastern seaboard, the islands that provide offshore sanctuary to the very best of New Zealand's natural treasures and the wild and rugged yet beautiful west coast.

However, Northland also has the dubious distinction of being the region with more native plants and animals at risk than anywhere else in the country.

The arrival of new pests, which is not an uncommon occurrence, poses great risks to our native biota. The threat to Northland's Kauri Forest from the spread of *Phytophthora taxon agathis* [PTA] is cause for concern at present.

In terms of history and culture, Northland was the cradle of both the Maori and European settlement of New Zealand. For both cultures, the North has a long, fascinating, and sometimes turbulent past and the region's historic sites and buildings still reflect this history.

The majority of historic places are of Maori origin, with many holding a deep spiritual significance amongst the region's Iwi. On Crown administered land alone almost 3,000 historic places have been recorded. The sites include fortified pa, traces of ancient gardens, coastal midden, and sculptured, terraced hillsides.










Around Kerikeri and Waitangi there are a number of significant historic buildings relating to early European settlement in the area.



3 Membership

There were 10 appointed Members and 2 Co-opted Members of the Northland Conservation Board in 2012/13.

- Mita Harris, Chair, Bay of Islands
- Ian McGill, Deputy Chair, Bay of Islands
- Judi Gilbert, Whangarei
- William Goodfellow, Bay of Islands
- Helene Leaf, Hokianga
- Peter O’Hara, Mangawhai
- Hori Parata, Whangarei
- Richard Robbins, Kaitaia
- Tracey Andrews-Smtih
- Robert Willoughby, Russell

Northland Conservation Board members

 Mita Harris, Chair	 Tracey Andrews-Smith	 Judi Gilbert	 William Goodfellow	 Helene Leaf
	 Peter O’Hara	 Hori Parata	 Richard Robbins	 Robert Willoughby

Department of Conservation	 Andrea Booth	Community Support Manager	 Jeannie Hogarth	Board Support Officer
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4 Conservation Board meetings

The Northland Conservation Board held four [4] meetings during the reporting period. The venue for Board meetings is chosen to ensure as wide a coverage as possible is made of the region and to enable members of the public throughout Northland to have access to the Board.

1. 24 August 2012 - Bay of Islands Area Office, Kerikeri
2. 16 November 2012 - Kauri Coast Area Office, Dargaville
3. 15 March 2013 - Kaitaia Area Office, Kaitaia
4. 31 May 2013 - Northland Conservancy Office, Whangarei



Northland Conservation Board members with Piet Nieuwland, DOC Management Planner in the middle

5 Members' attendance

Board Member	Area	No. of meetings attended*
Judi Gilbert	Whangarei	4
William Goodfellow	Bay of Islands	3
Mita Harris	Bay of Islands	4
Helene Leaf	Hokianga	3
Ian McGill	Bay of Islands	3
Peter O'Hara	Mangawhai	3

Hori Parata	Whangarei	4
Richard Robbins	Kaitaia	4
Tracey Andrews-Smith	Kaitaia/Bay of Islands	3
Robert Willoughby	Russell	3

* From a total of four meetings

6 Site visits

6.1 Te Paki Coastal Walk - multi day visit

In the early 1990's, the then Northland Conservation Board [under the Chairmanship of Richard Drake] visited the Far North and discussed a vision being promoted amongst the Kaitaia Department of Conservation['DOC'] staff for the development of a track that would include the top half of the North Island from 90 Mile Beach, Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga, Tapotupotu to Kapawairua[Spirits Bay]. This vision was embraced by the then Board and the challenge was given for the Northland Conservation Board to participate in such a walk if and when this became a reality.

Fast-forward the clocks to 2007 when the Department of Conservation began to seriously consider this proposal and take the first steps to bring the vision to reality.

In 2012, we now have what can be considered one of the most stunning walks in the country. The track links a series of beautiful bays and remote natural beaches. It is well on the way to becoming a major tourism attraction for the North with its spectacular scenery and conservation, cultural and historic values. It provides a different set of facilities and experience from others in the area, which will increase the profile of the area and visitation, especially with the population of Auckland on our doorstep.

To give testimony to the above, on a brilliantly sunny, barely a cloud in the sky, Far North day in March 2013, a group of Intrepid Trampers [Board Members Judi Gilbert, Hori Parata [accompanied by his brother Joe from Australia] and Richard Robbins, together with the Board Support Officer, Jeannie Hogarth and lead by Laree Furniss, Programme Manager Visitor & Historic Assets, Kaitaia and DJ Neho, Programme Manager, Threats, Kaitaia] commenced a two-day section of the Walk from Kapowairua/Spirits Bay to Tapotupotu Beach.



From left: Jeannie Hogarth, Judi Gilbert, Hori Parata, Richard Robbins, and Joe in front of the DOC Kaitaia Office

6.1.1 Day One – Kapowairua/Spirits Bay to Pandora Beach



Judi Gilbert and Laree Furniss starting out on the first stage of the walk from Kapowairua/Spirits Bay to Waitahora Lagoon

Kapowairua/Spirits Bay is a stunning sweep of smooth sand and multi-coloured shells and pristine turquoise water. Behind the dunes is the characteristic windswept scrub of the Te Pahi region and large marshlands with captivating native bird and plant life. The walk to view the newly established boardwalk at the Waitahora Lagoon was a Botanist’s pathway. Judi Gilbert was in her element and impressed the Group with her extensive knowledge of the variety of flora to be viewed along the walk. This made quite a long walk on a very hot day seem a “doddle” [well not quite!!]. The wetland area was equally stunning and on such a brilliant day, all aspects of this section of the walk showed off their best parts.

On reaching the Waitahora Lagoon, the newly established boardwalk came into view. The design was perfect for the landscape and the engineering undertaken to erect the structure was impressive. Laree outlined the problems that had been encountered during the construction of the boardwalk including a harrowing experience during one of the Northern hurricane type weather patterns when it was thought the ferocity of the weather would destroy the structure and take it out to sea.



Laree Furniss at Waitahora Lagoon.

After crossing the boardwalk, the Group took a well-earned lunch break before proceeding over a rocky headland towards the overnight stop at Pandora Beach. The work that had gone into upgrading the track from the Lagoon to Pandora was highlighted. The track was carefully designed to blend in with the landscape while, at the same time, providing an almost ongoing stunning panoramic view of the coastline all the way to Pandora.



Judi Gilbert on the boardwalk

The Pandora campsite is in a picturesque setting in beautiful Pandora Bay. It is only accessible on foot and although has minimal [but adequate] facilities, this is a genuine spot to experience the true wilderness experience. For the Board Support Officer a night in a tent was a totally “new experience”!

6.1.2 Day Two – Pandora to Tapotupotu

Another beautiful day greeted the Group to make the walk from Pandora to Tapotupotu. The walk undulates along the top of Darkies Ridge, with long views across the Te Paki Reserves and to both the north and west coasts, including sand dunes, Cape Marie Van Diemen and the distant Cape Reinga Lighthouse.



Judi Gilbert, Laree Furniss and Richard Robbins on the track from Pandora to Darkies Ridge

Fauna and flora abound including Fernbirds and Grey Warblers and a myriad array of native plants, which saw Judi making frequent stops to contemplate the variety on offer during the course of the day.

Upon reaching the summit, the route to Tapotupotu was on the new section of track specifically established as part of the Te Paki Coastal Track. The tracks were extremely well placed and a well thought out route to provide visitors with a wide range of experiences and sites. However, there were three “climbs” along the way that tested the resilience of the Team but, as happens in situations like this, the view from the top of each climb was stunning and well worth the effort.

It was a weary but very, very happy Team that finally reached Tapotupotu Beach.

The site of the relatively new boardwalk at Tapotupotu was a welcome sight.

The Board had viewed the boardwalk shortly after its completion and this return visit highlighted the value of the structure and reinforced how well it blended into the landscape.



The group at the end of the walk

6.1.3 Summary

The objective of the visit was to

- Fulfil an intention made 20 years previously
- View the upgraded tracks and structures that form part of the Te Paki Coastal Track
- Experience the two-day walk from a “visitors” perspective
- Provide feedback to the Department on the experience, identify areas that could be improved and consider if the walk met the criteria to showcase and expand people’s appreciation of the natural and cultural values of Te Paki and environs.

As well as meeting all of the above, the walk provided the Board Members who participated with invaluable background and a firsthand experience of what the Department is providing for visitors, which more than met expectations.

Apart from the obvious highlights already mentioned, what really impressed the Team most was the commitment, dedication, passion and obvious love for the work they do, of the Kaitaia Area staff who contributed to the visit.

Laree Furniss and DJ Noho in particular provided full, frank, and knowledgeable commentary along the way, as well as showing excellent leadership and encouragement. Staff of the Department in Kaitaia are to be congratulated for being some of the best ambassadors for conservation. The opportunity for Board Members to spend time with the Department's staff in an environment where the work takes place cannot be overvalued.



DOC staff Laree Furniss and DJ Noho

Was the visit worthwhile – it certainly was and it is hoped that subsequent Boards will take the opportunity to participate in similar experiences.

So from 1993 to 2013 – Good things take time and are well worth waiting for.

The Board greatly appreciates the opportunities provided by the Department to view issues, first hand and especially to work alongside staff of the Department.

7 2012/13 Year in review

This was the year of developing the Board's Profile and establishing an effective and efficient Board that added value to conservation outcomes within the region.

The need to raise the profile of the Board was a major project lead by the Chair, Mita Harris.

It was also the year when the Board was not afraid to tackle the "hard" issues within the region, e.g. the poaching of kukupa. Again, spearheaded by the Chair, the Board drew attention to this practice and pulled no punches in identifying the problem and getting the message out there that the poaching of kukupa was illegal and totally unacceptable.

The value and benefit of utilising social media was a key focus in the development of a Communication Strategy for the Board. The need for the Board to keep pace with technology and use it to best advantage – not only to raise the profile of the Board, but to raise awareness to the many and varied conservation and environmental issues within the region.

Mining on conservation managed land was a significant issue identified by the Board as having wide sweeping consequences for the region and beyond. The Board acknowledged that mining itself was dealt with under the *Crown Minerals Act*. The Department of Conservation's role was addressing applications for permission to access areas on conservation managed land. The Board has begun a vigorous information gathering campaign to ensure that if and when the issue arises in Northland it will be best placed to provide informed and well founded comment on any application.

Northland has experienced one of the driest years on record with consequent impact on habitats and species, as well as raising the incidence of FIRE within the region. The long-term impacts of this weather pattern will not be immediately apparent, but is likely to impact on species trends in the long term, given the effect on habitats.

With the drought in the region, the issue of water – quantity and quality – has been highlighted. The Northland Conservation Board, particularly through the Chair, Mita Harris, is working closely with Regional and District Councils to provide whatever support and assistance it can to develop a sound long-term water strategy for the region.

The Board followed closely the development of the new structure for the Department of Conservation and the flow on implications of this. The full impact of the new structure will not become apparent until it is fully implemented in the 2013/14 year. The Board will continue to work closely with the Department, particularly within the Northland region and will provide whatever support and assistance it can to ensure that the good work that has been undertaken over the years is not lost as a result of the new structure, particularly the potential loss of highly skilled and knowledgeable staff who may no longer have a place within the new directions the Department is taking. This is an aspect of the proposal that the Board will be taking an active interest in.

The review of the Conservation Management Strategy has been a highlight and as the 2012/13 year draws to a close the Board is about to embark on the review of the final draft Conservation Management Strategy for Northland. The Board actively participated in the consultation process and was part of the Hearings Committee set up to hear submitters speak to their submissions on the draft document. The Board looks forward to the implementation phase of the Conservation Management Strategy once it has been approved.

Overall, 2012/13 has been a year of consolidation and revitalisation to ensure that the Board is well placed to move forward in an ever changing and evolving conservation and environment landscape. Board Members are conscious of the fact that their term is finite and the clear message is that each Board Member is responsible for ensuring that their tenure is well utilised and the actions taken by the Board are such that as Board Membership changes the good work being undertaken is carried on in a seamless and evolving manner.

To this end, the Board has taken ownership of the Induction process for new Members with a mentoring programme being established to provide new Members with the best

possible guidance and support to bring them up to speed with the workings of the Board as swiftly as possible.

The Board looks forward to the 2013/14 year and hopes to make major strides in terms of raising its profile and making a positive impact on conservation and the environment in Northland. It will increase its engagement with the community and take every opportunity to fulfil its mandate as the conservation voice of the Northland Community.

8 Natural Heritage

8.1 Kauri National Park for Northland

The Board continued to follow with great interest the investigation into the establishment of a Kauri National Park based on the forests of Waipoua in Northland.

The Department of Conservation completed and presented the Section 8. National Parks Investigation Report which was presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority in 2012. The Authority established a Committee to review the Report and undertake the required consultation with Iwi and the community.

The Board continues to participate in the consultation process and is being kept up-to-date with progress.

The issue of co-governance continues to be a sticking point in the process. The criteria for the establishment of a National Park as outlined in the *National Parks Act 1977* makes no provision for co-governance – a key component crucial to Te Roroa for the establishment of a National Park as outlined in the current proposal.

The issue of expanding the National Park to include other Iwi rohe in Northland has been highlighted. It is envisaged that as Treaty Claims are settled the issue of including areas within each Settlement becoming part of a National Park for Northland could be considered.

8.2 “Save the Kukupu” campaign

Mita Harris, Chairperson, launched an all out advocacy campaign to highlight the plight of the kukupu/kereru [Native Wood Pigeon] in Northland, particularly in the February/March period when, it is sad to report, poaching of this unique species is rife.

The Board fully supports the ongoing advocacy relating to this protected species and Board Member Tracey Andrews-Smith is seeking sponsorship for a full on campaign to be rolled out before the 2013/14 “poaching season”.

The Board believes that education and advocacy is the key to eliminating the practice of poaching and will continue to campaign along for the kukupu until poaching is no

longer an issue. As past Board Member, Kevin Prime said [back in the 1990's when he was a Member of the Board] he “wanted to see the kukupa become so abundant it surpassed the possum as the “pest of the North”. The current Board echoes this sentiment.

8.3 Threats and responses

8.3.1 Kauri Dieback [Phytophthora taxon Agathis [PTA]

The Board is following closely progress being made in the ongoing research into Kauri dieback [Phytophthora taxon agathis [PTA]. It is acutely aware of the danger this poses to our iconic Kauri trees in Northland and is also aware that the Department is actively working to protect kauri in reserves it manages. The Department has joined forces with a number of other agencies to establish the Kauri Dieback Management Team, which works to combat kauri dieback at a regional and national level. The Kauri Dieback Management Team consists of the Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Conservation, Auckland Council, Northland Regional Council, Waikato Regional Council, Bay of Plenty Regional Council and representatives of tangata whenua including Northland Conservation Board Member, Hori Parata.

8.3.2 Mining

The Board continues to build up a strong “tool kit” of information on the impacts of mining in general and, in particular, impacts on the environment especially as it relates to the Northland region.

The Board notes that mining is covered by the *Crown Minerals Act* and acknowledges the current role of the Department in respect to mining applications i.e. the Department's only role is to assess applications for access to sites on/across land administered by the Department.

The Board will continue to take a proactive approach to mining and will undertake a reconnaissance visit to the West Coast of the South Island in 2013/14 to obtain background information from this area that has had extensive firsthand experience of mining and its impacts. By taking this approach the Board will be in a very good place to address any situation in Northland that may arise as well as continuing to take an holistic overview of mining and its impacts throughout the country.

9 Conservation Management Strategy

In December 2012, the Department of Conservation released the Draft Conservation Management Strategy [CMS] for Northland for public submission.

Extensive public consultation took place to encourage people to make a submission. The Board took the opportunity to promote the CMS and encourage public participation by way of submission at every opportunity including sharing a site at the three day Dargaville Field Days in early March 2013.

Submissions closed in March 2013 and a Hearing of Submitters took place in April 2013. The Chair, Deputy Chair, and Board Member Tracey Andrews-Smith represented the Board at the Hearings. The Board Members present were impressed with the quality of the submissions and the passion and commitment to conservation and the environment within a wide range of communities and individuals in Northland.

The Department is in the process of reviewing the Draft CMS taking into account the issues raised at the Hearings. Taking part in the hearing of submissions has provided an excellent foundation for the Board as it prepares to review the revised draft CMS.

This Board has worked closely with the Department with regards to the CMS and appreciated the excellent work being undertaken by Piet Nieuwland, Statutory Planner. Piet has literally been “Mr CMS” since DOC was established, having lead the charge for the first CMS which commenced in the early 1990s. The Board acknowledges Piet’s commitment to this work and his ability to go the *extra mile*, particularly in keeping the Board up-to-date and involved in the process – this is appreciated and has enabled the Board to be well placed to review the final draft document.

The Board is expected to receive the revised CMS document in early August 2013. It will then have six months to complete the review. The Board intends focusing solely on the review of the CMS from August to November 2013 with a view to completing the process by the end of November 2013.

10 Liaison

10.1 Department of Conservation

The Board continues to enjoy an extremely good relationship with the Department of Conservation in Northland. The Northland Conservancy Team, lead by Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland has always embraced the concept of Conservation Boards and go out of their way to assist and support the Board to carry out its mandate.

The 2012/13 year was no exception and the Board wishes to record its gratitude to Chris Jenkins, all four Area Managers and their Teams, Andrea Booth, Community Support Manager and Piet Nieuwland, Statutory Planner [Conservation Management Strategy] for their ongoing support and information sharing. The commitment and passion for conservation of all the Conservancy staff is commendable. The Board is provided with open and comprehensive advice on a wide range of issues, when required and the hospitality afforded the Board when it meets in each of the Areas through the year is acknowledged and appreciated.

The Board noted with some concern the proposed new Structure for the Department across the country. It also noted the impact on staff at all levels as they come to grips with the “new DOC”. The uncertainty that surrounds any restructuring is unsettling and in many cases counter productive.

The Board appreciates the need for the Department to meet its fiscal responsibilities, but for the Board the *Jury is out* at the moment in terms of whether the new DOC will provide the right type of conservation outcomes. The move to empower communities to undertake much of the work DOC currently undertakes is one aspect the Board will be following very closely. The potential loss of key staff with years of experience and knowledge is something the Board finds difficult to quantify and accept.

The future of Conservation Boards is also of concern in the new regions that have been developed as part of the new Structure. It is obvious that changes will need to be made in terms of Board composition as a result of the new boundaries. What form this will take is still to be advised by the Minister.

The Board is hopeful that any conservation losses are minimal and that the new DOC does not *throw the baby out with the bath water*.

The Board looks forward to working in the new DOC environment and building on the excellent relationship it currently has in the current Northland Conservancy. The quality of the leadership of Chris Jenkins cannot be overstated. He leads by example and has built up credibility for the Department across all agencies and groups throughout the Region. It is hoped that he will be able to continue this excellent work in the new DOC.

10.2 Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserves Advisory Committee

Ian McGill continued to represent the Board on the Department of Conservation led Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserves Advisory Committee. This Committee was set up following the establishment of two Marine Reserves in the Whangarei Harbour. The Committee meets at least once a year and on an *as required* basis.

10.3 New Zealand Conservation Authority

Yvonne Sharp, Member, New Zealand Conservation Authority, continued to represent Northland's interest as part of her role on the Authority. Yvonne's attendance at Board meetings continued to add value and her ability to act as spokesperson for the Board and feed back Northland issues to the Authority continues to be of real value.

At a meeting of the Authority on the West Coast in April 2013, Yvonne took the opportunity to pave the way for Board representatives to visit the West Coast to discuss mining issues and gain valuable information from a Conservancy well versed in this type of activity. Yvonne has now set the path for the visit and the Board is very grateful for her proactive action on its behalf in this regard.

The Authority is currently reviewing the *Section 8 Kauri National Park* proposal for Northland. Yvonne has been appointed Chair of a special Committee set up to undertake consultation regarding the proposal and report back to the full Authority on its findings. Again, having Yvonne [a Northlander and previous Mayor of the Far North

District Council] in this key role is adding value to an issue that is extremely complex and requires a sensitive and professional approach to move it through – Yvonne fulfils this role perfectly.

The Board is grateful to the Authority for providing Yvonne with the time to continue her valuable liaison role with the Board.

10.4 Fish and Game Council Northland

Richard Robbins continued to represent the Board at meetings of the Fish and Game Council Northland. This representation continues to provide a valuable connection between the Council and the Board. Richard joined Councillors on site visits during 2012/13, which enabled him to report, first hand, on some of the major projects being undertaken by the Council in Northland. Without the ongoing support of the Council, many of Northland's diminishing wetlands would not still exist.

Rudi Hoetjes, Manager, Fish and Game Northland provided a presentation to the Board outlining the role and responsibilities of Fish and Game Councils, which was of particular interest to relatively new Board Members. He also attends meetings of the Board held in Whangarei.

The Board is pleased to have established a good relationship with Fish and Game Council Northland.

10.5 Iwi

The Board appreciated the efforts of its Maori Board Members in providing an ongoing link with Iwi/Hapu in the region. The Board is extremely fortunate to have such able and respected Members who continue to provide important feedback on issues of concern to tangata whenua and assist the Board in developing ways to provide support and assistance to Iwi/Hapu where possible.

In 2012/13, the Board welcome the appointment of Aaron Taikato as the Department's Pou Tairangahau and looked forward to working with him in his new role.

The establishment of a Conservation Board as a result of the Te Hiku Settlement in the Far North was noted. This Board was likely to be appointed in the 2013/14 year and the Northland Conservation Board looks forward to establishing a good relationship with this new Board which, when established, will be responsible for the Far North area which is currently part of the Northland Conservation Board jurisdiction.

10.5.1 Te Rarawa

The Board continued its good relationship with Te Iwi o Te Rarawa through the ongoing attendance at Board meetings by Rongo Bentson. This contact is extremely important and Rongo continues to provide a key link between Te Rarawa and the Board,

which is greatly appreciated. The Board will follow very closely the impact of the establishment of the Te Hiku Conservation Board.

10.5.2 Ngapuhi

Board Member Helene Leaf provided comprehensive updates on issues relating to Ngapuhi, particularly relating to the settlement of Ngapuhi Treaty Claims. The importance of ensuring Ngapuhi is kept informed and consulted with was highlighted. It is hoped that although Helene's tenure on the Board ceases in 2013, that she will continue to act as a conduit between the Board and Ngapuhi. All Board Members were provided with a copy of the Report produced by Ngapuhi entitled "Ngapuhi Speaks". The independent Report was produced with the hope that it would truly reflect the evidence given by the Ngapuhi Speakers to the Waitangi Tribunal from the people's perspective.

10.5.3 Ngatiwai

Board Member Hori Parata continued to advocate issues of particular significance to Ngatiwai and drew attention to issues for the Board to consider within its mandate. One longstanding issue of concern to Ngatiwai was the need to have the trig station on Mount Manaia removed. It is pleasing to note as the Annual Report is completed that the structure will finally be removed at a ceremony at the site in Whangarei in June 2013.

10.5.4 Te Rawhiti

Board Member Robert Willoughby provided regular updates on issues within his rohe in Russell, Bay of Islands. Of particular note were the many marine-related projects being undertaken by Te Rawhiti in conjunction with schools in the area. A project "*Fish Forever*" lead by students of Bay of Islands College was of particular note. The continuation of a rahui for another season at Rakaumaungamaunga was noted as was the forthcoming expiry of rahui at Deep Water Cove.

The Board greatly appreciated the input from the Maori Board Members. This was invaluable and ensured that the Board was made aware of the wide-ranging issues facing Iwi/Hapu in Northland. The need to progress Treaty Settlements was highlighted as until these have been effected the social and economic inequities being experienced in Northland could not be addressed.

The Board would continue to seek opportunities to engage with Iwi/Hapu in Northland using the Maori Board Members as the key contacts to make this happen.

10.6 Northland Regional Council

Mita Harris, Chairperson, Northland Conservation Board met regularly with the Chair of the Northland Regional Council during 2012/13. The current Chair of the Northland Regional Council, Craig Brown, was a frequent attendee at Board meetings when he was

a Councillor and this continued liaison between Council and the Board at Chair level is providing an invaluable continuous link between both organisations.

10.7 Environmental Defence Society

The Board continued to send representatives to the Environmental Defence Society Annual Conference. Ian McGill represented the Board at the June 2013 Conference. The theme of the Conference was “*Our Place – State of the Environment 2013*” with particular emphasis on freshwater quality – an issue of particular interest to the Board.

10.8 Board meeting - Public Forum

The Board continued to be impressed with the quality of public participation at Board meetings throughout 2012/13. The Board’s practice of rotating meetings based on the four Areas of the Department continues to prove worthwhile and provides an opportunity for all sectors within Northland to attend meetings, meet and interact with Board Members and be provided with a platform to make presentations on issues of major concern to individuals and groups within each Area.

In 2012/13, the following issues were highlighted by members of the public during the Public Forum section of each meeting:

- Adverse activities being undertaken at the Ruakaka Wildlife Refuge in Whangarei [particularly relating to kiteboarding].

The Board was able to follow these up with the Department of Conservation and was confident that with goodwill from all parties a suitable resolution to the issue raised.

- Removal of Mangroves

The Board followed closely the outcome from applications for the removal of mangroves and supported the submission from the Department of Conservation relating to these applications. Board Member Peter O’Hara was instrumental in facilitating a meeting between all parties [both for and against the applications] including the Department of Conservation, in an endeavour to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.

- Genetic Engineering/Genetically Modified Organisms[GE/GMOs] . GE Free Northland continued to draw attention to the issue of GE/GMOs and, in particular, advocating for local authorities to ensure at the very least that a “precautionary approach” was taken in relation to any applications relating to GE/GMOs in Northland.

The Board supported this view and actively promoted this in submissions into District and Regional Council Plans at all levels

11 Statutory planning

11.1 Regional Policy Statement for Northland

The Board made submissions on the Regional Policy Statement for Northland Discussion Paper [2011/12] and the Draft Policy Statement in December 2012. The two main issues submitted on were:

1. Maintaining and enhancing indigenous ecosystems. – Genetically Modified Organisms [GE/GMOs]

The Board strongly recommended that the Regional Policy Statement give effect and uphold the precautionary principle and liability policy on GE/GMOs as contained in the Long Term Council Community Plan. It further recommended applying a precautionary approach to the management of natural and physical resources where there is scientific uncertainty and/or a threat of serious or irreversible adverse effects on the resource and the built environment. Such activities should be classified as discretionary or non-complying activities in regional and district plans.

2. Protecting outstanding special places with the intention to protect and where feasible avoid adverse effects

The Board recommended that the Regional Policy Statement for Northland

- Identify values and characteristics of outstanding natural features and landscapes of regional or local significance to ensure they are protect;
- Recognise that areas have landscape values which add to the sense of place and amenity of an area that these values be maintained or enhanced where possible;
- Ensure activities within the coastal environment wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins are appropriate in relation to the level of natural character;
- Identify areas of high amenity value and maintain or enhance these values;
- Enhance public access;
- Recognise that restricting public access in some areas is appropriate and give direction about when and how access will be restricted.

11.2 Review of the Resource Management Act

The Board made a submission on the *Resource Management Act* “Improving the Resource Management System Discussion Document’ released for public comment in February 2013.

The Board supported the balanced use approach to the resource management of natural and physical resources, social and economic matters. Best sustainable practice goes to

the triple bottom line with a balanced management of impacts and effects, stakeholder engagement, accountability and transparency as part of longer term strategic planning.

The Board expressed concern regarding the requirement that decision makers must “recognise and provide” for a hierarchy of principles within the best practice section, that requires the burden of providing substantive evidence to be placed onto the defendant party whom, at times, will be the Department of Conservation.

The Board supportive the directive to achieve the appropriate balance between public and private interest in the use of land [water].

12 Recreation and tourism

12.1 Tracks and walkways

The Board noted progress being made on the upgrade of various tracks and walks within the region together with the Northland sector of the Te Araroa Trail.

12.2 Far North Multi-Day Walk



Waitahora Lagoon

As reported on earlier, it was good for those Board Members who were able to do so to view, first hand, the new opportunities being provided for visitors in the Far North with the establishment of the Far North Multi-Day Walk.

The quality tracks and facilities being provided are impressive and will provide visitors with a unique experience in one of New Zealand's most unique sites.

The Board congratulates the Department and all involved in making this opportunity available.

12.3 Rakau Rangatira/Big Trees Project

The Board was kept informed on progress with the Rakau Rangatira/Big Trees Project based on the Waipoua Forest.

13 Promotion

13.1 Loder Cup

The Board nominated Wade Doak, QSM for the 2013 Loder Cup. As well as being an eminent Marine Biologist, Wade was instrumental in establishing the Riverlands Landcare Group near his property at Tutukaka in Whangarei where he and his wife Jan propagate a wide variety of native flora. He is a very skilled photographer and has used this skill to photograph a wide range of flora throughout Northland, which has been subsequently published in books and magazines.

13.2 Dargaville Field Days

The Board participated in the Annual Field Days in Dargaville in March 2013. It was allocated a section of a booth occupied by the Department of Conservation, Biodiversity Northland, and the Northland Regional Council.

The prime objective for the Board at the 2013 event was to encourage public participation and making submission on the draft Conservation Management Strategy for Northland as well as to raise the profile of the Board. Participation was seen as extremely worthwhile and one the Board intends to build on for future Field Days, as well as look at similar opportunities held throughout the region during the year.

14 Goals and objectives – Outcomes strategy

14.1 Board profile

During 2012/13, the Board focussed on reviewing its "Goals and Objectives" and invited key speakers to make presentations at Board Meetings to provide the Board with guidance in terms of making its Goals and Objectives pertinent, realistic, sustainable, and measurable. The need for constant review was highlighted so that successive Board had a living document that was continuously being updated.

The raising of the Board's profile continued to be progressed in 2012/13. Mita Harris, Chairperson provided inspirational leadership in this regard and proactively sought opportunities for the Board to engage in a wide range of activities throughout 2012/13. The Board saw this move as essential to establish its credibility in the region and provide a sound working platform for successive Boards.

Board Members also noted the need to ensure new Board Members were assimilated well into established Boards. To this end, a mentoring scheme has been adopted so that each new Member could receive a full and pertinent introduction to what it means to be a Member of a Conservation Board.

14.2 Working meetings

In 2012/13, the Board established "Working Meetings" between formal Board meetings.

These meetings proved extremely valuable and enabled those Board Members able to attend to engage in full, frank and comprehensive discussions on a wide range of issues facing the Board. It also provided an opportunity to set programmes, chart progress and deal with "housekeeping" issues that are not able to be addressed adequately at formal Board meetings.

Board Members appreciated the opportunity to engage together in this manner and Working Meetings will now become a key fixture on the Board's calendar each year.

15 Communication

15.1 Communication Strategy

The Board continued to work on the draft Communication Strategy drafted by Board Member, Peter O'Hara.

Angelika Cawte, IT Consultant, was engaged by the Board to assist in updating its current webpage on the Department of Conservation website. She also made a presentation to the Board on a wide range of technologies that the Board could consider in relation to raising its profile and getting the conservation message across to as wide an audience as possible.

The Board acknowledged the value in embracing new technologies and the final Strategy will reflect the most appropriate platforms for the Board to work from now and into the future.

16 Conclusion

The review of the Conservation Strategy for Northland continued to be the main focus of the Board in 2012/13. The ability of the Board to keep up with progress and actively engage in the process was significant. Becoming more accessible to the public and promoting the Board and what Board's "do" was a key goal for 2012/13 and the processes around the review of the CMS enabled the Board to engage with the community at all levels.

The Board actively sought to promote opportunities to present itself to the public and will continue to build on this in the coming year. It is essential that all Board Members acknowledge their role and responsibilities and exercise these vigorously and effectively in their respective locations. Linking in with the Department of Conservation is a key component of this engagement and the Board appreciates opportunities to work alongside and support Department driven initiatives.

Each Board Member has brought individual networks to the Board e.g. Iwi/Hapu, community projects [*Project Island Song* – Richard Robbins; *Fish Forever* – Robert Willoughby] to name but a few.

The outcome from the settlement of Treaty Claims in the region will provide an opportunity for Board Members to more effectively engage with Iwi/Hapu and provide appropriate support at all levels when and as required.

The Board will continue to promote the ongoing protection of our ecology and engage with local authorities and others to ensure the Northland region has the best possible economic, social, cultural, and ecological balance throughout the region. The best quality water supply should not be negotiable – it should be a given for all communities and the Board will proactively engage with communities to make this happen.

Northland's unique species and habitat is crucially important to the Board and the need to ensure ongoing protection, nurturing, and enhancement of these taonga must be a priority.



New Zealand Native Hibiscus (*Hibiscus richardsonii*)

The Board acknowledges and thanks Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland and his Team and wishes them all well in the new structure that the Department is about to implement. The Board will watch with interest how this new structure evolves to ensure that the conservation gains made since the Department was established in 1987 are not lost or diminished in this new age.

The Board itself is facing an uncertain future i.e. where do Boards fit in this new structure? What will the composition of Board's be and what boundaries will each Board be representing? There will be enormous challenges to be faced but the current Board is certainly up for these.

The Board looks forward to building on the progress made in 2012/13 that will provide an excellent foundation to move the Board forward in 2013/14 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mita Harris', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Mita Harris
CHAIRPERSON