



# Northland Conservation Board

*Te Runanga Papa Atawhai O Te Taitokerau*

## Annual Report

### 1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014

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



Cover photograph:

Northland Conservation Board members (seated from left: Judi Gilbert, Ian McGill, Mita Harris, Richard Robbins, Hori Parata, Tracey Andrews-Smith and Piet Nieuwland, DOC (standing in the middle).

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## Foreword from the Chair

Kia ora koutou katoa, nga mihinui.

*Greetings to all Northlanders living in this sacred part of Aotearoa.*

To all Board members past, present, and future, I acknowledge your work and efforts.

### Challenges

Our 2013/14 Board members have taken on some demanding projects and other challenging issues over the last 12 months, including

- The completion of the Northland Conservation Management Strategy (CMS),
- The induction of 5 new members to our Board,
- A review of Boards throughout New Zealand,
- A new way of working.



### Conservation Management Strategy for Northland

Northland's Board handed over a completed Strategy to the Conservation Authority in December 2013. Northland was the first Board in New Zealand to do so. I want to thank everyone who contributed to this process. We now await formal approval of the Strategy by the New Zealand Conservation Authority and look forward to our responsibility to monitor the implementation of the Strategy.

### New Members

I want to welcome our new members to the Board

- Alan Martin
- Luana Pirihi
- Doug Klever
- Mike Finlayson
- Willie Wright

The new members took part in an induction day at the Mokouiarangi Marae near Horeke. They bring with them a wealth of new experiences and expertise to this role. In having new members, the term for others has passed - let me thank you for your contributions made before and during my time as Board Chair.

- William Goodfellow

- Judi Gilbert
- Hori Parata
- Helen Leaf
- Robert Willoughby

Best wishes from us for the future.

## **Review of Conservation Boards**

The Minister of Conservation, the Hon Dr Nick Smith, called for a review of all Conservation Boards in New Zealand. A small Committee was set up and Chaired by the Secretary for Conservation, MP Nicky Wagner.

Though there were no significant changes to Board structure or boundaries, an outcome from this review was for the Minister to deliver a Letter of Expectation to Boards.

The role and function of Conservation Boards had not been reviewed since their inception in the early 1990's. We welcome a Letter of Expectation from the Minister. It sets clear direction for the work of Boards both nationally and locally, which will guide us to focus on our new priorities.

## **New way of working**

The 2014/15 year will be the first financial year that the Department of Conservation operates under its new structure. The Board looks forward to working with the Department through reporting and partnerships.

## **Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi**

Under the Conservation Act, there is a duty bound expectation to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi. The Board will pay careful attention to this role.

Treaty Settlements in Northland/Taitokerau are continually moving forward. I want people to know that we have Board members who are able to provide advice and assistance in this area. While the Board works closely with the Department of Conservation, I would like to highlight that Conservation Boards are independent from DOC, and with that independence comes responsibility.

## **Looking Forward to 2014/2015**

### **Partnerships**

- Aligning Board members' responsibilities with local affiliations.
- Support the growth of environmental organisations in Northland.

## **Environment**

- Monitor the new Conservation Management Strategy for Northland.
- Be a voice for the environment and support the environment sector.

## **Youth**

- Help introduce youth to natural areas.
- Support the development of educational resources.

## **Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi**

- Delivery on Treaty obligations through partnerships.
- Support and assist where we are needed.

## **Marine Protected Areas**

- Assist and support hapu/communities to extend/build on existing marine protected areas.
- Provide support and advice to the marine conservation sector.

I am satisfied that our Board members are experienced and very capable of achieving the work that lies in front of us over the next 12 months.

Lastly, I want to challenge hapu and the wider community to support and encourage youth and families to use our natural environment often, to visit a marine protected area, and to consider natural areas as a healing place.

Nga Mihi – Arohanui



Mita Whare Harris  
CHAIR

# 1. Introduction

The Northland Conservation Board is one of fourteen [14] bodies appointed nationwide by the Minister of Conservation under s.6P of the Conservation Act 1987.

The Northland Conservation Board/Te Runanga Papa Atawhai O Te Taitokerau serves a conservation advisory role, along with offering community perspective on conservation management issues for the Northland region.

A major responsibility of the Board is overseeing the implementation of the Northland Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). The CMS implements general policies and establishes objectives for the integrated management of natural and historic resources, including any species managed by the Department, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes.

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 & 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



Figure 1: Map of current Northland Conservation Board area

The Northland Conservation Board's area of responsibility boundaries differ from the restructured Department of Conservation boundaries. Following the Ministerial review of Conservation Boards post the implementation of the new Department of Conservation structure, it was decided that trying to align Conservation Board boundaries with the new Department of Conservation boundaries, was impractical. The Minister made the decision to retain the current post Departmental restructure Board boundaries for the present.

Northland is a long narrow peninsula; the features that set it apart from the rest of the country are 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.

**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 North Island 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 risk 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 Māori 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 Māori 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**

Due to the impending restructure of the Department of Conservation, in 2012/13, the Minister of Conservation cancelled the 2013 Board appointment process and extended the terms for those members of Conservation Boards whose terms ended on 30 June 2013. The Minister wrote to all affected members seeking their agreement to continue as members until 30 April 2014.

This change had a profound effect on the Northland Conservation Board. Affected Northland Conservation Board members included William Goodfellow, Helene Leaf, Ian McGill, Hori Parata, Richard Robbins, and Robert Willoughby.

All members affected agreed to continue in the role except for Peter O'Hara due to his commitments outside of Board membership. However, given that the Board was about to commence the review of the Conservation Management Strategy [CMS] for Northland, he indicated his willingness to participate in the review, if required.

This was also the view taken by Board members Helene Leaf, Robert Willoughby and William Goodfellow i.e. that they would remain on the Board until the completion of the review of the CMS, which was scheduled to be completed before the end of 2013. Ian McGill, Richard Robbins, and Hori Parata agreed to continue until 30 April 2014 with Ian McGill and Richard Robbins indicating that they would be seeking reappointment for a further term.

Nominations for Board appointments were called after the completion of the review of Conservation Boards and applications closed at the end of January 2014. The Minister announced his Board appointments in April 2014 and the following nine [9] members were appointed to the Northland Conservation Board [the Minister reduced the number of members for most Boards to assist in ensuring a quorum for Board meetings].

Board member	Term
<b>Mita Harris, Bay of Islands, appointed as Chair*</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 16
<b>Tracey Andrews-Smith*</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 16
<b>Mike Finlayson, Kaitaia</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 17
<b>Doug Klever, Kaitaia</b>	01 May 14 – 30 June 16
<b>Ian McGill, Bay of Islands*</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 15
<b>Alan Martin, Whangarei</b>	01 May 14 – 30 June 15
<b>Luana Pirihi, Ruakaka</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 17
<b>Richard Robbins, Kaitaia*</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 15
<b>William Wright, Whangarei</b>	01 July 14 – 30 June 15

\*Reappointed Board members



**Group photo of Northland Conservation Board (NCB) members and DOC staff**

Top row from left: Willie Wright (NCB), Doug Klever (NCB), Piet Nieuwland (DOC), Mike Finlayson (NCB), Mita Harris (NCB), Richard Robbins (NCB), Sue Reed-Thomas (DOC), Carolyn Smith (DOC), Chris Jenkins (DOC), Ian McGill (NCB)

Bottom row from left: Tracey Andrews-Smith (NCB), Nicola Douglas (DOC), Alice Hosted (DOC), Alan Martin (NCB), Luana Pirihi (NCB), Jeannie Hogarth (DOC)

The Minister decided to stagger the appointments so that eventually the membership terms would be synchronised with three positions becoming vacant each year.

The Northland Conservation Board made a decision to co-opt those new members whose terms did not [officially] commence until 01 July 2014, so that all members could participate in the first meeting of the new Board that was held on 30 May 2014.

### **3.1 Northland Conservation Board Induction Day 2014**

The Board led a very successful Induction Day for new Board members at the Mokonuiarangi Marae, Utakura on 23 May 2014. This provided new Board members with an opportunity to meet re-appointed Board members and an introduction to what it means to be a member of a Conservation Board. The setting was perfect for this occasion – it also happened to be one of the Northland Conservation Board Chair, Mita Harris’ home Marae. The inclusion of members of Mita’s whanau enriched the day.

Nicola Douglas, Director Conservation Partnerships Northern North Island and Chris Jenkins, Director Conservation Services, Northern North Island lead representation from the Department of Conservation and provided an insight for old and new Board members into the new Department of Conservation Structure.

It was a day for getting to know one another in a warm and friendly environment where no question was a “silly question” and it provided a benign introduction to Conservation Board membership.

The success of this event is evidenced by the relaxed and friendly camaraderie that has developed within the Board and this is auguring well for advancing conservation and environment issues within Northland.



**Ian McGill, Richard Robbins, and Mita Harris**

## **4. Conservation Board meetings**

The Northland Conservation Board held two [2] formal Board meetings during 2013/14. 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. 08 November 2013 - Whangarei Office, Whangarei
2. 30 May 2014 - Whangarei Office, Whangarei

At the meeting on 08 November 2013, the Board passed a resolution to approve the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland be presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority.

Due to the impending review of Conservation Boards following the implementation of the restructure of the Department of Conservation, and the need for the Board to concentrate on the review of the Conservation Management Strategy [CMS] for Northland, the Board made a conscious decision to focus on the review of the CMS. The only meetings held would be working meetings that would include the review the CMS.

However, the Board was conscious of the need to ensure that it honoured its commitment to the Northland communities that it represented, to maintain as high a profile as possible during this time. To this end, a Public Forum was held in Kerikeri in February 2014, which provided the Board with the opportunity to discuss the outcome from the Minister's review of Conservation Boards and the completion of the review of the CMS. This worked very well with a good cross section of the Northland communities attending and being heard.

### **4.1 Working meetings**

In 2012/13, the Board established "Working Meetings" between formal Board meetings. In 2013/14, these meetings continued to add value to the working of the Board, particularly during the review of the Conservation Management Strategy and the Ministerial review of Conservation Boards.

The benefit these meetings are providing in developing relationships between Board members, and providing continuity and opportunity for the Board for greater engagement with communities is significant. They ensure the work of the Board does not depend on formal Board meetings to chart progress, but rather they enhance and add value in providing an opportunity to measure and reflect on projects moving forward and to introduce new work in a timely manner.

## 5. Site visits

Due to the implementation of the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and the uncertainties surrounding the possible outcome of the review of Conservation Boards undertaken in 2013/14, the Board had limited opportunity to undertake site visits. However, the opportunity arose for the Board to undertake a 'hands on' review of a portion of the Horeke Cycle Trail [part of the Government's network of cycle tracks throughout New Zealand].

Department of Conservation staff who outlined the background to the development of the track and the expansion across Northland accompanied the Board.

All Members and Department of Conservation staff took to cycles provided for the visit and experienced firsthand the excellent tourism opportunity being provided. From feedback of the cycle way thus far, visitor and local use was high as was the quality of the track that had been constructed.

The Board hopes to undertake more site visits in 2014/15, particularly in association with the monitoring of the implementation of the CMS.



### **Riding the Horeke Cycle Trail.**

From left: Jeannie Hogarth (Board Support Officer), Richard Robbins, Pauline Moretti (DOC), Ian McGill, Judi Gilbert, Mita Harris, Adrienne Tari, Hori Parata

## **6. 2013/14 Year in review**

The 2013/14 year was a milestone for the Northland Conservation Board as it represented the year when the Board completed the review of the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland. It also included a restructure of the Department of Conservation that resulted in a Ministerial review of all Conservation Boards.

With all the changes occurring, the Board continued to focus on raising its profile and, in particular, increasing opportunities for engagement with all communities in Northland.

Mita Harris as Chair lead by example and took every opportunity to draw attention to the Board through major advocacy campaigns including the “Save the Kukupa”, “Water Quality”, and “Marine Protection”. Numerous press releases were issued and it was pleasing to note that local media in particular were quick to pick up on these and give the issues a high profile in the news media and on local radio.

The impact of the implementation of the restructure of the Department of Conservation saw a major shift in the Department’s focus with a split into two major areas of “service” and “partnerships”. This also resulted in a major change in conservation boundaries with the Northland Services and Partnerships boundaries being extended from Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga to Hamilton taking in parts of Auckland and Coromandel. This was a significant change for the Department and at the time of this report staff were still coming to grips with their new roles and responsibilities.

Following the restructuring of the Department, the Minister of Conservation undertook a review of all Conservation Boards. Initially this was to see if it would be possible to align Conservation Board boundaries with the new Department of Conservation boundaries. A Ministerial Review Committee was established and it undertook consultation with all Conservation Boards, stakeholders, interest groups, and individuals. At the completion of the Review it was noted that aligning Conservation Boards with the new Departmental boundaries was impractical and, for the time being, the boundaries of all Conservation Boards were kept at pre-restructuring areas.

For Northland this meant that its boundary would continue to be from Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga, to the northern end of the Kaipara Harbour. The Northland Conservation Board would continue to share responsibility for the Kaipara Harbour with the Auckland Conservation Board.

A further outcome from the Ministerial Review was a reduction in number of Members of Conservation Boards with Northland’s Board reducing from 10 Members to 9.



Nominations for Board members were called in December 2013 and the Minister announced appointed members in April 2014.

The Northland Conservation Board was pleased to retain Mita Harris, Ian McGill, Tracey Andrews-Smith, and Richard Robbins – key members who had made significant contribution to the work of the Board and, in particular, the review of the Conservation Management Strategy.

The Board welcomed new Members Luana Pirihi, Willie Wright, Alan Martin, Doug Klever, and Mike Finlayson. All new members brought with them an eclectic mix of backgrounds that would complement those of returning Board members and add a new dimension to the Board as the assimilation of old and new members progressed.

In welcoming the returning and new members, it is to be noted the loss of several key members through retirement including Judi Gilbert, Robert Willoughby, Helene Leaf, Peter O'Hara, and William Goodfellow. Helene, Peter and William's terms had, in fact, ended on 30 June 2013 but due to the Minister cancelling appointments in 2012 and the impending review of the Conservation Management Strategy, Helene, William, and Robert agreed to continue on as members until the review of the Conservation Management Strategy had been completed. Peter O'Hara did not elect to continue due to personal commitments.

All retiring members had made significant contribution to the work of the Board. Of particular note was Judi Gilbert's 7 years of membership. Her invaluable contribution, particular in the area of regional and district plan submissions, had ensured that the Board played a major role in contributing to these very important documents. Judi's attention to detail and total commitment of time and energy to ensure that the Board 'got it right' will be greatly missed.



**Mita Harris and Judi Gilbert**

The Board now looks forward to building on its successes in the past and adding new projects and programmes to its work in Northland.

The Board's decision to hold working meetings of the Board between formal Board meetings has been a significant step forward and has enabled a smooth flow of work to progress and provide a more inclusive base for members to work within. It has also meant that members are more able to link with their communities and with one

another to more effectively engage and participate in conservation projects and programmes within their local communities. This process will continue in 2014/15.

The work undertaken by Mita Harris, Board Chairperson, in engaging on a regular basis with the Chair of the Northland Regional Council and Mayors of the District Councils stepped up a gear in 2013/14 and a pattern of regular meetings has now been well established. This is pleasing to note especially in the changes that took place following the 2013 Local Body elections that saw significant changes in leadership in Northland. As well, the Chair has set in place the framework for regular meetings with the Chair of the Auckland Conservation Board and this is being extended to include the representation from both Boards at Board meetings. This is particularly important now that both Boards have completed the review of their respective Conservation Management Strategies that have highlighted the commonality of issues and areas of mutual interest and concern.

The Board has also followed with great interest the progress of Treaty Settlements within Taitokerau and the implications that these Settlements will have in terms of conservation management and relationships within the region. The establishment of the Te Hiku Conservation Board in the Far North is of particular interest to the Board as, once it is established, will see the top half of Northland from Kaitaia to Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga, become part of the Te Hiku Conservation Board area of management.

The Board was consulted on the proposal to establish a Kauri National Park in Northland based on the Waipoua Forest and the rohe of Te Roroa. The Board acknowledged the concerns expressed by Te Roroa and, in particular, the issue of co-governance. The Board supported the proposal to establish a Kauri National Park in Northland in principle, but accepted the need for Te Roroa's concerns to be heard and acknowledged before any such proposal could proceed. The issue is now in the hands of the Minister of Conservation who continues to undertake consultation with Te Roroa.

Provision has been made in the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland to consider the implications of the establishment of a Kauri National Park in Northland should this proposal come to pass.

2013/14 was a good year for the Northland Conservation Board, full of challenges and opportunities. The Board can look back with pride on a year where members were tested and not found wanting. The completion of the review of the Conservation Management Strategy was a model of members working together to achieve the best possible conservation strategy for Northland. This included outcomes that were measurable and incorporated the wishes of the communities of Northland who had offered their ideas of the best conservation outcomes for Northland through the submission process. As the Board fully participated in the hearing of submissions, members are well versed in the expectations from the communities who will be

watching with interest to see how well the Board monitors the implementation of the Strategy.

The Board looks forward to the challenges and opportunities in 2014/15 with a new and energised membership keen to make their mark and to add value to the conservation outcomes that will continue to grow conservation within Northland well into the future.

## **7. Conservation Management Strategy**

It was a long time in the making but the final Conservation Strategy for Northland document, presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority in December 2013 was a major piece of work the Northland Conservation Board was proud to be associated with.

The Board acknowledged and appreciated the time and effort that staff of the Department of Conservation in Northland put in to the public consultation phase of the Strategy and, in particular, the care and attention given to the submissions presented on the draft Strategy.

When the Board received the draft document for review in August 2013, it did so confident in the knowledge that it had been involved in its development over many years and successive Boards, and the manner in which the Department had undertaken the review.

The Board noted the difficulties that had been experienced in developing the template for all Conservation Management Strategies in order to achieve a semblance of consistency throughout the country. It also acknowledged that in the case of Northland this consistency was maintained but not at the expense of ensuring local content and flavour was retained in all aspects of the document. This was extremely important and retaining this made the review of the document by the Board a much easier task.

The Board was involved in the hearing of submissions on the document and was very impressed with the articulate presentations from organisations, interest groups and individuals, as well as the meticulous and well thought out written submissions provided. This demonstrated to the Board the depth of concern for conservation and the environment in Northland and the commitment of those involved in conservation at all levels. Given that the majority of these are volunteers, this commitment and knowledge was even more impressive. Being part of the hearing process enabled the Board members involved to make a major contribution to discussions during the course of the review of the document.

It was a very proud moment for the Board when Mita Harris, Chair, Nicola Douglas, Director Conservation Partnerships, Northern North Island and Piet Nieuwland,

Management Planner, Department of Conservation, presented the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland to the New Zealand Conservation Authority in Wellington on 11 December 2014.

The Board wishes to place on record its sincere admiration and appreciation of the commitment and work on the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland made by Piet Nieuwland, affectionately known as “Mr CMS”. Piet’s involvement in the CMS since 1990 has provided him with background and knowledge second to none - not only in terms of his work on the document, but his invaluable personal contribution, background and knowledge. Piet’s main interest has always been to provide the best conservation strategic document for Northland. His personal passion and interest in conservation was obvious and it added value and flavor to the final document.

Thank you, Piet Nieuwland, for producing a document that Northland can be proud of. The Board thanks Piet for his personal support and commitment to the Board in providing ongoing updates during the course of the production of the Strategy and for his participation, support, and assistance to the Board during the Board’s review of the final draft. Piet Nieuwland, the Board salutes you.

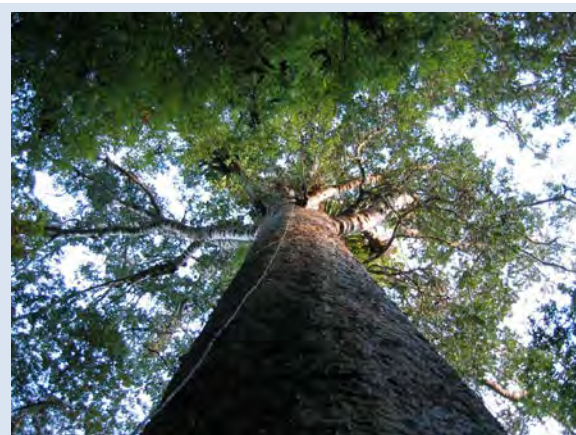
## **8. Natural heritage**

The monitoring of the implementation of the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland will have a major impact on the work of the Board, which will include an even greater focus on the natural, historic, and cultural heritage of Northland. In 2013/14, the following issues were highlighted:

### **8.1 Kauri National Park Proposal**

The Board supported, in principle, the establishment of a Kauri National Park based on the forests of Waipoua. This support was qualified to ensure that the concerns raised by Te Iwi o Te Roroa were fully considered and addressed, together with the potential impact on the conservation values of the area under consideration from increased use as a result of a National Park status being conferred on the area.

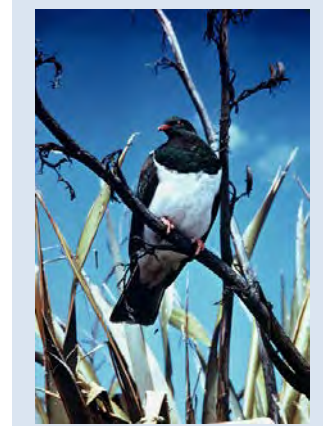
The decision on the establishment of a Kauri National Park in Northland is still with the Minister of Conservation at the time this Report was finalised.



**Kauri tree in Puketi Forest**

## 8.2 “Save the Kukupa” Campaign

The Board continued to raise awareness to the plight of the kukupa in Northland, particularly in the February/March period when poaching was a real problem. This campaign is ongoing and will continue until the protection of kukupa can be guaranteed.



Kukupa in flax

## 8.3 “Kiwis for Kiwi” Northland Forum

Richard Robbins represents the Board on the “Kiwis for Kiwi” Northland Forum. Representation on this body is wide-reaching and is proving an extremely effective opportunity for networking not only in relation to the protection of kiwi, but other conservation and environmental issues and concerns all participants are involved with.

The Board proactively seeks out opportunities to become involved in this type of group to enable it to cover as wide a range of conservation and environmental issues where the Board’s involvement and participation can make a meaningful contribution.

# 9. Threats and responses

## 9.1 Kauri Dieback [*Phytophthora taxon Agathis* [PTA]]

The Board continues to follow closely any progress being made in the ongoing research into kauri dieback. It is acutely aware of the danger this poses to Northland’s iconic kauri trees and is also aware that the Department of Conservation is a major player on the PTA Leadership Group [Chris Jenkins, Director Conservation Services, Northern North Island].

While acknowledging and supporting the work being undertaken to address this significant risk to kauri in Northland, the Board will continue to do its bit. This includes advocating widely on the issue and highlighting the risks and the actions that visitors to Northland must take i.e. using hygiene stations, ensuring they keep onto the designated tracks etc, to ensure this disease does not spread.

The Board believes that by constantly drawing this matter to attention through local community engagement and issuing press releases, it can play its part in minimising the potential for this deadly disease to spread. The potential adverse outcome should PTA ever take hold is too significant to contemplate or ignore.



Mita Harris getting his boots cleaned to prevent the spread of kauri dieback (PTA)

## 9.2 Mining

The Board continues to monitor closely potential applications for mining activities within Northland and beyond. The Board intends to visit the Coromandel area in 2014/15 to meet with locals who have been heavily involved in the protection of species and habitat from the adverse impacts of mining in the Coromandel. The Board hopes to learn from the experience in this region so that it can be best placed to address any similar operations that may be undertaken in Northland.

The Board acknowledges the implications of the Crown Minerals Act. It also notes that the Department of Conservation's involvement in any applications to mine is in granting of permits to access potential sites. However, the Board in its role will continue to advocate on the issue and will take every opportunity to ensure that it has all the facts available so that if and when it is required to have a voice on the issue it is well placed and well informed to do so.

## 9.3 Genetic engineering/GMOs

The Board continues to advocate a precautionary approach to GMOs and was pleased to note that local Councils were adopting this approach for inclusion in their relevant District Plans.

The Board's main aim in terms of GMOs was to ensure the protection of conservation values in Northland; particularly should field trials go wrong. The Board's prime concern was to ensure that no activity within Northland would adversely affect conservation values and/or have an adverse impact on the environment.

The Board made a submission on the Regional Policy Statement for Northland advocating the reinstatement of the precautionary approach clause that had been in the previous Statement but had been removed in the draft under review. The Board looked forward to seeing this clause included when the Regional Policy Statement was finalised.

## **10. Liaison**

### **10.1 Department of Conservation**

The Board appreciated the impact the major restructuring of the Department of Conservation had on staff in Northland. This significant restructure saw staff having to come to terms with new roles and responsibilities in an extended region.

The Northern North Island Region replaced the old Northland Conservancy with extended boundaries. The previous Conservator Northland, Chris Jenkins, was appointed to the new role of Director Conservation Services, Northern North Island, which effectively doubled his previous area of management. The Board saw this appointment as significant and one that could only benefit the new structure and way of work of the Department in the region. Chris Jenkins has played and continues to play a major role in leading the Department in Northland. The Board congratulated Chris on his new role and thanked him for his significant contribution to conservation in Northland and, in particular, his support, and commitment to the Board. The Department and Northland are fortunate indeed to have someone of the calibre of Chris Jenkins leading the new age of the Department in the region.

The responsibility for Conservation Board's in terms of engagement with the Department of Conservation now falls under the Partnerships banner. For Northland, this has meant a new leadership from a new position of Director Conservation Partnerships. For the Northland Conservation Board this has come in the form of Nicola [Nicki] Douglas, Director Conservation Partnerships based in Hamilton. Nicki is responsible for the Northland and Waikato Conservation Boards. In Northland, she is supported by Sue Reed-Thomas, Conservation Partnerships Manager, Whangarei and Carolyn Smith, Conservation Partnerships Manager, Far North. Both Sue and Carolyn are very familiar with the Northland Conservation Board.

Nicki Douglas supported Mita Harris, Chair, Northland Conservation Board and Piet Nieuwland, Strategic Planner, Department of Conservation, on presenting the

Conservation Management Strategy for Northland to the New Zealand Conservation Authority on December 2013.

The Northland Conservation Board looks forward to working with Nicki, Sue, and Carolyn and is confident that this new “partnership” will produce some significant and meaningful gains for conservation in Northland.

## **10.2 Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserves Advisory Committee**

Ian McGill continued to represent the Board at meetings of the Whangarei Harbour Marine Reserves Advisory Committee. The Committee met twice in 2013/14 – the last meeting held in June 2013 included a site visit to NIWA. Ian McGill was unable to attend, as he was overseas at the time of this meeting, but Mita Harris, Chair attended in his place. Mita reported to the Board that the site visit, in particular, had been well organised and well worthwhile. He had been impressed with NIWA’s facility in Whangarei and the work that was being undertaken.

## **10.3 New Zealand Conservation Authority**

The Board continued to receive excellent support and advice from Yvonne Sharp, member, New Zealand Conservation Authority. Yvonne was the Authority’s Northland Liaison member and attended all the meetings of the Northland Conservation Board. Yvonne’s knowledge of the region, especially Local Body politics having been Mayor of the Far North District Council, together with her strong commitment to conservation, provided significant added value to meetings of the Northland Conservation Board.

Yvonne’s wise counsel and support to the Board was unstinting and she never wavered in her commitment to provide the Board with updates of work of the New Zealand Conservation Authority and, in particular, those issues of interest and concern to Northland.

Yvonne was a fantastic advocate for Northland and the Northland Conservation Board, and the Board’s gratitude to her and respect and admiration for her are immeasurable. While accepting Yvonne’s decision to retire from the New Zealand Conservation Authority after completing two terms, the Board acknowledges that she has left ‘big shoes to fill’ as her contribution and friendship has been greatly appreciated. The Board thanked Yvonne for her contribution and wished her and her family all the very best for the future.

The Board looks forward to welcoming Yvonne’s replacement, Mike Simm and the New Zealand Conservation Authority when it next visits Northland.



## **10.4 Other Conservation Boards**

Following the Ministerial review of Conservation Boards, the need for all Boards to make a meaningful effort to engage with one another, was highlighted.

To this end Mita Harris, Chair took the lead in establishing a platform for meaningful, measurable, and ongoing relationship with his counterpart on the Auckland Conservation Board. Both the Northland and Auckland Board Chairs acknowledge the value in working together, particularly with the shared overview of the Kaipara Harbour. Opportunity will be taken for representatives from both Boards to attend respective Conservation Board meetings, particularly where issues of mutual interest are being discussed.

The Northland Conservation Board is committed to working with other Conservation Boards and the Board will proactively seek opportunities to engage with other Boards as opportunity and need arises. The issue of mining will provide an excellent springboard for inter-Board engagement as the Northland Conservation Board builds up a "Mining Toolkit" to enable it to be in the best possible position to address issues relating to this activity within the Northland region.

It is hoped that more frequent meetings between all Conservation Board Chairs will be organised in 2014/15 as the Minister seeks to implement the outcomes from the Ministerial Review of Conservation Boards and oversee the implementation of his *Letter of Expectation* for all Boards to adhere to.

## **10.5 Iwi/Hapu/Runanga**

The Board continued to seek opportunities to engage with Iwi/Hapu in Northland. It was fortunate to have Helene Leaf, Tracey Andrews-Smith, Robert Willoughby, and Hori Parata as members in 2013/14 and welcomed the addition of Luana Pirihi and Willie Wright in the new Board appointments. Luana and Willie are already making a significant contribution.

### **10.5.1. Te Uri o Hau and Te Roroa**

During the course of the review of the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland, the need to engage with Te Uri o Hau and Te Roroa in a meaningful way was highlighted. The Board Chair met with the Chair of both Te Uri o Hau and Te Roroa to discuss the Conservation Management Strategy and ensure that both organisations were fully au fait with the contents of the document and comfortable that it reflected aspirations and met Treaty Settlement expectations.

In forwarding on the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland, the Northland Conservation Board ensured that a *caveat* be included to provide an ongoing window of opportunity for Te Uri o Hau and Te Roroa to engage with the NZ

Conservation Authority during the period the NZ Conservation Authority was reviewing the Strategy.

### **10.5.2. Other Hapu**

The Board acknowledged the need to work harder to establish relationships with the various Hapu in Northland, particularly those who were still to finalise Treaty Settlements. This was extremely important in order for all parties to be able to work together in a post settlement environment. The Board Chair has made a commitment to meet with as many representatives of the various Hapu in Northland and seek invitations for the Board to visit Marae, during the course of 2014/15. The Maori Board members will play a significant role in this regard and the initial stages are looking very promising indeed.

### **10.5.3. Te Hiku Conservation Board**

The Board noted the impending establishment of the Te Hiku Conservation Board in the Far North. This will be finalised once legislation is passed in relation to Treaty Settlements in the Far North region.

The Board will look for opportunities to work with the Te Hiku Conservation Board so that each complements the other and work together to achieve the best outcomes for conservation in the whole Northland region.

## **10.6 Fish & Game Councils**

Under Section 6M(f) of the Conservation Act 1987 the Board is required

*“to liaise with any Fish & Game Council on matters within the jurisdiction of the Board”*

The Board takes this issue seriously and is pleased that Board member, Richard Robbins continues to represent the Board at meetings of Fish & Game Council Northland. It also values the relationship it has with Rudi Hoetjes, Manager, Fish & Game Council Northland.

Fish & Game Councils are not only set up to provide hunting and fishing opportunities. The Councils also develop and provide significant areas of habitat that benefit a wide range of species throughout the region. A major issue for both the Council and the Board is “water quality”. Fish & Game Council Northland has this as a priority as does the Board and we look forward to working collaboratively on this issue in 2014/15.

The Board looks forward to continuing the good relationship established and hopes to have an opportunity in 2014/15 to meet with Members of Fish & Game Council Northland and view the work that they do.

## **10.7 Local Authorities**

Following the Local Authority elections in 2013, Mita Harris, Chair, was quick to take steps to meet with the new Chair of the Northland Regional Council and the new Mayor of Whangarei District Council and the Far North District Council.

Prior to the Local Body elections, the Board Chair had established a very good working and personal relationship with the previous Chair of the Northland Regional Council and this appears to be continuing with the new Chair.

Establishing relationships with all local authorities is a priority for the Northland Conservation Board. The Board and Councils have much in common and the benefits to conservation and the environment with all agencies working together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, are significant.

## **10.8 Environmental Defence Society**

The Board continues to send representatives to the Annual Conference of the Environmental Defence Society. The Key Note Speakers and Programmes offered provide excellent information for the Board. In addition, the opportunity to network with a wide cross section of communities engaged in issues of mutual interest and concern is significant.

## **10.9 Board Meeting Public Forum**

The Board continued to welcome members of the public to its meetings. The passion and commitment of the public of Northland to give unstintingly of their time to promote and engage in conservation programmes is significant and commendable. All the contributors are volunteers and the Board continues to acknowledge the invaluable work of volunteers, without them, much of the conservation gains in Northland would not have been possible.

The Board appreciates the time members of the public give to attend Board meetings with most of the regular attendees developing good relationships with individual Board members, particularly in their specific region.

In lieu of a formal Board meeting, the Board held a specific Public Forum in Kerikeri in February 2014. This was well attended and provided the Board with an opportunity to hear, first hand, about the work being undertaken in the Northland communities, and the issues and concerns of communities. It enabled the Board to identify where the Board could provide support and advice to assist in addressing the issues and supporting projects.

The success of this specific Public Forum indicated to the Board that not only was it an opportunity to raise the profile of the Board but provided an opportunity for

individuals and groups to meet collectively and share experiences, issues and best practice. The Board intends to hold more of this type of forum in 2014/15.

## **11. Statutory Planning and Concessions**

The Department of Conservation Shared Services Team continues to provide the Board with a Statutory Planning Report and Schedule of Concessions relating to Northland for all Board agenda.

The Board was invited to comment on a major concession application relating to Otehei Bay, Urupukapuka Island, Bay of Islands in 2013/14. Rolien Elliot, Conservation Services Manager, Bay of Islands provided the Board with extensive background and information on the application that enabled the Board to provide meaningful comment on the application. The Board looks forward to receiving ongoing updates on progress with this concession that, if approved, will have a significant beneficial impact on the Island especially in terms of providing increased tourist facilities and opportunities.

## **12. Publicity and promotion**

### **12.1 Loder Cup**

The Board did not forward any nominations for the 2014 Loder Cup. Its previous nomination had been unsuccessful and no new nominees were forthcoming. However, it will continue to seek potential nominees as the annual opportunity becomes available.

### **12.2 Communication strategy**

The Board continues to review its Communication Strategy and intends formalising this early in the 2014/15 year. The Board acknowledges the importance of engaging with as wide an audience as possible using the most up-to-date and effective technology. The Board is fortunate to have the services of Angelika Cawte, Media & Communications Consultant. Angelika attends meetings of the Board and will continue to assist the Board to develop its social media profile and finalise the Communication Strategy.

The input to the Strategy from new Board members will add a new dimension to the draft ably put together by past Board member, Peter O'Hara. Board member, Tracey Andrews-Smith has a wide knowledge of the new age technology, particularly social media, and her skills and input alongside that of Angelika Cawte will set the Board up to maximise these new age opportunities to raise its profile and extend the conservation message.

### **12.3 Press releases**

The Board, lead by the Chair, Mita Harris, took a major leap forward in promoting the Board and highlighting conservation and environmental issues in 2013/14 using press releases. These included post Board meeting press releases and in 2013/14, the following major issues:

- Save the Kukupa
- Maui's Dolphin
- Kauri dieback[PTA]
- Impact of power boat races on Bottlenose Dolphins in the Bay of Islands
- Arbor Day Plantings – *planting trees for cleaner waterways*.
- Introducing the new members of the Northland Conservation Board

The Board is committed to continuing to raise the profile of issues within Northland through the news media and, in particular, through press releases. The Board is pleased with the news coverage of Board media releases in Northland and has built a credible profile within the media so that all the press releases put forward are taken seriously and their coverage extended.

The Board is indebted to Angelika Cawte for her professional expertise in finalising the press releases so that they are presented to the highest quality that has contributed markedly to their being taken seriously by the news media.

### **13. Goals and objectives**

One of the first tasks for the new Board in 2014/15 will be to review the current *Goals and Objectives* to bring them into line with the recommendations of the Ministerial Review into Conservation Boards and ensure that they meet the present day requirements and are best placed for successive Boards to build on in the future.

## 14. Conclusion

2013/14 was a milestone year for the Northland Conservation Board with the completion of the review of the Conservation Management Strategy for Northland. This was a time for the Board to acknowledge its role as the conservation voice of the people of Northland, to take notice of what individuals and communities saw as priorities for their specific regions and to ensure that the final Conservation Management Strategy reflected the wishes of the people.

By being closely involved in the development of the Conservation Management Strategy over several years the Board was able to, 'hand on heart', review the final Strategy in a professional and well-informed manner.

2013/14 was also a time of uncertainty in terms of the impact of the implementation of the restructuring of the Department of Conservation and the challenges that this would present to the Board.

The Ministerial Review of all Conservation Boards was another challenge, but it was also an opportunity for all Boards to express their views to the Minister through the Review Team and, hopefully, have these concerns taken seriously and considered as part of the implementation of the outcome from the Review.

The Northland Conservation Board is well placed to move forward and implement the recommendations contained in the Conservation Board Review with many of the recommendations already part of the core work of the Northland Board.

With the appointment of new members to the Board and the challenges ahead, 2014/15 is shaping up to be an exciting one for the Northland Conservation Board and all members are definitely up for the challenge. There is much to do and the Board can look back on 2013/14 as a year when it was tested but was not found wanting.



Mita Harris

Chair

NORTHLAND CONSERVATION BOARD

22 August 2014