

**OTAGO
CONSERVATION
BOARD**

2006/2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Otago Conservation Board Annual Report for the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007

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

MOHUA IN OTAGO

The mohua or yellowhead (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) was once one of the South Island's more abundant native forest birds, but a dramatic decline in its population over the last few decades has meant that it is now restricted to less than 30% of its former range. Being hole nesters, mohua are especially vulnerable to predation by mice, rats, stoats and possums. "Mast" years, which involve an unusually heavy flowering of native southern beech trees followed by an abundance of seed, often lead to a dramatic increase in the numbers of predators. When seed supplies fall, the predators switch to birds, including mohua.

Operation Ark was announced by the Minister of Conservation in September 2003. It aims to reduce risks for some key native species at 10 targeted sites, including mohua populations in the Dart and Caples valleys near Glenorchy and in the Catlins near Owaka. Although large scale predator control is possible, it is very expensive, so the Department of Conservation has prioritised a number of sites to achieve the maximum conservation benefit using the resources which are available. Within the sites, a selection of predator control, species recovery and/or monitoring programmes have been established using Operation Ark funding and other funding sources.

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OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD

2006-2007 ANNUAL REPORT

This report has been prepared for the New Zealand Conservation Authority pursuant to section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987. Copies of the report have been circulated to individuals and organisations with an interest in the board's activities.

1 INTRODUCTION TO BOARD MEMBERS

From 1 July 2006 to 15 October 2006, the members of the board were as follows: (The official board term expiry dates which applied during that period and the number of full board meetings attended between 1 July 2006 and 15 October 2006 are shown in the final two columns. A delay in the appointment of new board members meant that members whose terms were due to expire on 31 August 2006 remained on the board until 15 October 2006.)

Fergus M Sutherland (Chair)	Papatowai	31 August 2006	2
Ross Allan	Dunedin	31 August 2007	2
Hoani S Langsbury	Otakou	31 August 2007	0
Chas Morris	Wanaka	31 August 2008	2
Garry H Nixon	Alexandra	31 August 2007	1
Brian H Patrick	Alexandra	31 August 2006	1
Mark J Planner	Cromwell	31 August 2008	2
Iris Scott	Glenorchy	31 August 2007	2
Dr Abigail M Smith	Dunedin	31 August 2008	1
Chas F Tanner	Purakanui	31 August 2008	1
Jim E Williams	Dunedin	31 August 2006	2

The present members of the Otago Conservation Board were appointed by the Minister of Conservation for terms commencing on 16 October 2006 ending on the dates listed below. The number of full board meetings attended between 16 October 2006 and 30 June 2007 is given in the final column.

Hoani S Langsbury (Chair)	Otakou	31 August 2007	3
Ross Allan	Dunedin	31 August 2007	3
Edna McAtamney	Kyeburn	31 August 2009	2
Chas Morris	Wanaka	31 August 2008	3
Garry H Nixon	Alexandra	31 August 2007	3
Bruce J Parker	Ngapara	31 August 2009	3
Andrew Penniket	Wanaka	31 August 2009	2
Mark J Planner	Cromwell	31 August 2008	3
Iris Scott	Glenorchy	31 August 2007	3
Dr Abigail M Smith	Dunedin	31 August 2008	3
Chas F Tanner	Purakanui	31 August 2008	2
Jim E Williams	Dunedin	31 August 2009	2

2 INTRODUCTION TO BOARD DISTRICT

The boundaries of the board's area of jurisdiction correspond roughly with those of the Otago Conservancy of the Department of Conservation (see map inside front cover). However, both Mount Aspiring National Park and the Catlins Conservation Park (which comprises the major inland portion of the Catlins Coastal Rainforest Park) are wholly within the board's district, even though parts of these parks are managed by the West Coast and Southland Conservancies of the department, respectively. This was done to ensure a single approach with regard to policy and planning for these parks.

The marine boundary is the Twelve Mile Limit in relation to marine reserve issues and the Exclusive Economic Zone in relation to marine mammal issues.

Significant protected areas within the board's area of jurisdiction include:

- **Mount Aspiring National Park**
355,531 ha (192,855 ha in the Otago Conservancy, 162,676 ha in the West Coast Conservancy)
- **Catlins Coastal Rainforest Park**
This is a collective name for the Catlins Conservation Park of 50,693 ha (32,933 ha in the Otago Conservancy, 17,760 ha in the Southland Conservancy) and numerous reserves and conservation areas which are located along or near the Catlins coast.
- **Te Papanui Conservation Park**
This park comprises 20,591 ha of tussock grassland, wetlands, shrubland and silver beech forest remnants on the Lammermoor and Lammerlaw Ranges northwest of Lake Mahinerangi near Lawrence.
- **Ahuriri Conservation Park**
While most of this park lies within the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board's area of jurisdiction, it includes the Upper Dingle Burn catchment in Otago - a highly-valued "wilderness" trout fishery.
- **Otago Central Rail Trail**
An increasingly popular recreational facility for walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders, which follows the route of the former Otago Central Branch railway line for 150 kilometres between Clyde and Middlemarch.
- **Otago Goldfields Park**
A collection of 21 historic sites (e.g. Arrowtown Chinese Settlement, Gabriels Gully, St Bathans, Bendigo) which have links with the gold rushes of the 1800s.
- **Remarkables Conservation Area**
Incorporating one of New Zealand's best known scenic landmarks.
- **Wakatipu Recreational Hunting Area**
Comprising forested areas in the Greenstone and Caples River valleys.
- **Reserves and marginal strips along the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers**
The scene of numerous popular recreational activities which cater primarily for tourists (e.g. rafting, jetboating, bungee jumping, giant swing etc).

3 CONSERVATION BOARD MEETINGS

The following board meetings were held in the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007:

- **Full board Meetings**

14 July 2006	Ōtākou
15 September 2006	Lake Roxburgh
17 November 2006	Kingston
16 February 2007	Queenstown
20 April 2007	Owaka

- **Public Forums**

The board set aside an hour for a public forum during each of the five board meetings listed above. Up to eight members of the public attended each of these sessions and a few shared their comments and views on local conservation issues with the board.

- **Field Inspections**

15 July 2006	Taiaroa Head Reserves, Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust Plant Nursery, Sandfly Bay Conservation Area
16 September 2006	Sites in Roxburgh Gorge (including Doctors Point)
18 November 2006	Te Kere Haka Scenic Reserve, Cromwell Chafer Beetle Nature Reserve, Nevis Valley (Schoolhouse Flat)
17 February 2007	Mount Aurum Recreation Reserve (Skippers), McLeods Conservation Area
21 April 2007	Awakiki Bush Scenic Reserve, Bull Creek Scenic Reserve, Otanomomo Scientific Reserve, Owaka Museum

In addition to participating in formal inspections, individual members occasionally take up the Otago Conservator's standing invitation to accompany departmental staff into the field.

- **Planning Committee Meetings** 4 April 2007
(all meetings held in Dunedin) 8 June 2007
- **Mount Aspiring National Park
Management Plan Review
Working Party Meeting** 18 June 2007 (at Clyde)
- **Scientific Advisory Group Meeting** 19 March 2007
(all meetings held in Dunedin)

4 BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987

Section 6M(1)(a) Approval of Conservation Management Strategies

The board was not involved in any actions associated with the approval of conservation management strategies during the reporting period.

Section 6M(1)(b) Conservation Management Plans

In accordance with a statement in the Otago Conservation Management Strategy (p 581, Implementation (f)), the board supports the preparation of conservation management plans or their equivalent for the **Taiaroa Head Reserves**, the **Nugget Point Reserve**, the **Otago Goldfields Park**, and tussock grassland conservation parks established during the life of the CMS (e.g. the **Te Papanui Conservation Park**).

No work was done on any of these plans during the reporting period.

Section 6M(1)(c) Advice on Implementation of Conservation Management Strategies and Plans

a Otago CMS

The board and the Otago Conservator have agreed on an annual process for the provision of board advice on the implementation of the Otago CMS, which is compatible with the relevant standard operating procedure. A report on the Otago Conservancy's achievements relating to the following 19 topics was discussed during the board meeting held on 15 September 2006:

- 1 **High country tenure review**
- 2 **Protection of coastal and marine ecosystems**
- 3 **Protection of forest on SILNA Land in the Catlins**
- 4 **Protection of vegetation and other values on land not administered by DOC**
- 5 **Statutory planning (Regional and District Plans)**
- 6 **Animal pest control**
- 7 **Plant pest control**
- 8 **Weed inventory**
- 9 **Historic heritage fabric (i.e. structures, earthworks) on land administered by DOC**
- 10 **Research**
- 11 **Monitoring the general condition of the vegetation on land administered by DOC**
- 12 **Species protection (skinks, mohua, saltpan plants, freshwater fish)**
- 13 **Concessions**
- 14 **DOC participation in section 18 Crown Pastoral Land Act applications**
- 15 **Implementation of Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement**
- 16 **Recreation management (commercial and non-commercial)**
- 17 **Vehicle Access in the High Country**
- 18 **Public relations and conservation awareness programme**
- 19 **Special Places (significant achievements or disappointments not reported elsewhere)**

In addition to this, board members are asked to review specified sections of the CMS between board meetings, and are given the opportunity to comment on the implementation associated with these sections at each meeting. Generally speaking, the board is pleased with the conservancy's achievements in relation to the relevant key objectives in the Otago CMS e.g.,

- continuing steady progress with surveys, input and implementation associated with the **tenure review of pastoral leases** by Land Information New Zealand under the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 - especially the preparation of publicity brochures and the placement of signs and interpretation panels which draw the attention of the public to new areas of public conservation land (e.g. land which was formerly part of Wyuna Station near Glenorchy; and West Wanaka and Cattle Flat Stations near Wanaka);
- local consultation associated with the implementation of the **Marine Protected Areas Policy**, following co-operation between the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries at a national level;
- the settlement of the department's and the board's references on provisions in the **Proposed Central Otago District Plan** relating to the protection of significant landscapes (with the department representing the board's interests as well as its own);
- further **monitoring of concession and marine mammal viewing activity** throughout Otago, and the successful prosecution of an unauthorised tourist guide;
- ongoing intensive predator control associated with **Operation Ark** in the Lower Dart/Caples and the Catlins, with significant benefits to threatened mohua/yellowhead populations in these areas;
- the successful management, in partnership with Kāi Tahu, of **buff weka** on Te Peka Karara (Stevensons Island), Mou Waho (Harwich Island) and Mou Tapu (Crescent Island) in Lake Wanaka; and Wāwāhi Waka (Pigeon Island) and Mātau (Pig Island) in Lake Wakatipu;
- the hatching of the 500th **royal albatross** chick (one of 23 chicks which survived this season) in the Tairaroa Head Nature Reserve - a milestone which has been achieved as a result of decades of diligent work by the department, the Otago Peninsula Trust and others to protect the only mainland nesting site used by this species;
- protection of the **giant kokopu habitat** in Lake Waihola and **inanga spawning sites** along part of the Waikouaiti River as a result of fencing agreements;
- completion of the **Kanuka Track** in the Bendigo Scenic Reserve;
- the continuing maintenance and promotion of the **Otago Central Rail Trail** in co-operation with the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust and local communities;
- the restoration and maintenance of historic structures, including the **Come in Time Stamper Battery** near Bendigo; **Smith's Bakery building**, **Needham's Cottage** and the **Andersons Battery** at or near Macetown; and ongoing restoration and stabilisation work on the **St Bathans Hall** and the **Lindis Pass Hotel**;

- effective **goat, pig, thar, possum, rabbit and predator control** at key sites and as required by the Regional Pest Management Strategy;
- successful **wilding conifer control** in co-operation with landowners and other organizations (e.g. on the Remarkables and in the Kawarau Gorge), as well as work to control other weeds such as gorse, broom, Spanish heath, hawthorn, plantago, spartina and old man's beard;
- the planting of *Olearia hectorii* trees on land which was formerly part of West Wanaka Station and the protection of existing stands of this species at other locations;
- continuing work on **weed surveillance** in the conservancy;
- replacement of the **Jubilee Hut** in the Silverpeaks Scenic Reserve near Dunedin;
- successful maintenance of the predator-proof fence around 22 hectares of **Grand and Otago Skink** habitat and the completion of a second enclosure fence on Redbank ridge near Macraes Flat;
- the success of **community conservation events**, including two **Conservation Award evenings** during **Conservation Week, Sea Week** and several **Volunteer Projects**.

Some concerns raised by the board included:

- further delays to the process of achieving a **marine reserve in Otago**, as a result of delays in the implementation of the Marine Protected Areas Programme;
- continuing delays in getting the **review of the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan** underway.

While the existing Otago CMS requires the preparation of conservation management plans for the **Taiaroa Head Reserves**, the **Otago Goldfields Park**, and the **Te Papanui Conservation Park**, the board appreciates that the priorities for the department's limited planning resources over the next few years must be the reviews of the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan and the Otago CMS. The board is pleased to note that management planning for the above three areas/entities will be addressed during the preparation of the next Otago CMS.

b Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS

The board has also reached an agreement with the Southland Conservator regarding regular departmental reports on the implementation of those parts of the Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS which relate to areas of the Catlins Conservation Park in the Southland Conservancy. The board appreciates the work which was carried out by the Southland Conservancy in these areas and does not have any particular concerns.

Section 6M(1)(d)(i) Advice on Proposed Changes of Status or Classification

The board supported the disposal of a narrow **strip of public conservation land at Glenorchy**, because it was part of a closed road that had no conservation values, and it was not needed for the Glenorchy Walkway.

The board also supported the proposed transfer to Fish and Game Otago of the day-to-day management of the **Tuckers Beach Wildlife Management Reserve** beside the Shotover River near Queenstown, on the basis that:

- the reserve is recognized for its high upland game values and was specifically established to protect those values;
- there are no particularly significant conservation values in the reserve, apart from the presence of banded dotterel.

Section 6M(1)(d)(ii) Advice on Conservation Matters

The board was consulted by or gave advice to the conservation authority and the department on a number of topics, including the following:

- two concession applications (viz. Highland Resorts Ltd, Alpine Heliski Ltd);
- Draft Grand and Otago Skink Recovery Plan;
- Draft Kiwi Recovery Plan 2006-2016 (on the basis that most of the remaining Haast tokoeka live on the Haast Range in Mount Aspiring National Park);
- Review of Level of Protection for some New Zealand Wildlife;
- Review of Loder Cup Administration;
- annual Coastal Otago and Inland Otago Conservation Awards for notable conservation achievements in Otago.

Section 6M(1)(f) Liaison with Fish and Game Councils

Niall Watson, Manager - Fish and Game Otago, attended the board meeting held on 14 July 2006. He sought and obtained the board's support for that organization's proposal to vary the Water Conservation (Kawarau River) Order 1997 in order to protect the Nevis River from further artificial modification (e.g. damming and diversion). R Allan and B Parker represented the board at some meetings of Fish and Game Otago and Fish and Game Central South Island, respectively. Otherwise, informal liaison was maintained with both organizations.

Section 4 Giving Effect to the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

In accordance with a previous agreement, the board has relied on the department to carry out Section 4 consultation in connection with the significant conservation issues raised at board meetings. It is not aware of any substantive issues for which the department has not already undertaken Section 4 consultation, and it has asked the department to confirm this explicitly in reports on new agenda items.

5 POWERS OF BOARD UNDER SECTION 6N CONSERVATION ACT 1987

Section 6N(2)(a) and 6N(3) Advocacy and Statutory Planning Processes

The board formally advocated its views by lodging or following up on written submissions on the following documents and issues, among others:

- Notices of Preliminary Proposal for the tenure review of one Crown pastoral lease, viz. Ben Ledi; and one pastoral occupation licence, viz. Mt Ida Syndicate;
- A proposal to vary the Water Conservation (Kawarau River) Order 1997 to protect the Nevis River from further artificial modification (e.g. hydro dams);

- Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Otago 2006;
- Draft Biosecurity Science, Research and Technology Strategy for New Zealand;
- Draft New Zealand Energy Strategy to 2050;
- Draft Dunedin Biodiversity Strategy;
- Draft Dunedin Town Belt Management Plan.

Two major **wind farm proposals** in Otago advanced to the resource consent application stage during the reporting period –**Project Hayes** (Proposed Lammermoor Wind Farm) and the **Proposed Mahinerangi Wind Farm**. The board supports in principle wind farms and other sustainable energy generation systems, providing the adverse visual and environmental effects associated with them can be reduced to a satisfactory extent. Board members also believe that a national energy strategy should be produced before decisions are made on major developments – a strategy which determines appropriate energy types, locations of demand, transmission impacts and constraints, and prioritised sitings of generation systems to minimise effects on visual and amenity values. In the board’s view, it is unfair to require territorial local authorities to make decisions with nationally-important implications in the absence of an overarching national policy on wind farm location priorities.

In addition, the board considers it axiomatic that energy generation systems should be located as close as possible to the locations where the demand for the energy is greatest (e.g. large cities and industrial sites). This minimizes the transmission infrastructure needed to convey the energy, as well as the losses associated with transmission over distance. Because it was not persuaded that the remote, relatively unmodified areas which would be affected by the proposed developments were the best locations, the board opposed both of these wind farms in its written and oral submissions.

Section 6N(2)(b) Board Committees

The following committees or working groups have continued to function as the need arises:

- Planning Committee

R Allan (Convenor), B Parker, A Smith, C Tanner, J Williams, H Langsbury (ex officio)

The Planning Committee studies planning documents and other planning matters relating to the board's jurisdiction and formulates detailed recommendations for ratification by the full board. It also co-ordinates board responses to proposals, papers or issues between meetings of the full board.

- Scientific Advisory Group

A Smith (Convenor), R Allan (Convenor), H Langsbury (ex officio), and the following 13 specialists:

Dr Barbara Barratt	entomologist
Dr Carolyn Burns	limnologist
Dr Alison Cree	herpetologist
Dr Cecile de Klein	soil scientist
Dr Kath Dickinson	plant ecologist
Dr Jill Hamel	archaeologist
Dr John Jillett	marine biologist
Dr Peter Johnson	botanist
Dr Alan Mark	plant ecologist
Dr Jan Mosedale	tourism specialist
Mr Brian Patrick	entomologist

Prof Hamish Spencer ornithologist, conchologist
 Dr Ian Turnbull geologist

The Scientific Advisory Group is not a board committee, but a panel of advisers who can supply the board with specialised information and make recommendations for consideration by the board. The board appreciates the willingness of these experts to provide input on topical conservation issues. All board members are invited to attend meetings of the Scientific Advisory Group.

6 **BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT**

Section 30(a) Review of National Park Management Plans

The board is pleased to report that the department is making steady progress on the review of the **Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan** following the appointment of a planner who is making this task a top priority. The board's Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan Review Working Party discussed the timeframe and other aspects of the review with the new planner on 18 June 2007. The department will be releasing a draft park management plan for public comment within the next 12 months, following consultation with key individuals and interest groups.

Section 30(b) Priorities for National Park Management Plan Implementation

The board is very pleased with the department's achievements in relation to the following objectives and policy statements in the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan, and agrees that they are high priorities for implementation of the plan e.g.,

- ongoing intensive monitoring and predator control in the **Haast Tokoeka (Kiwi) Sanctuary** (much of which is located on the Haast Range in Mount Aspiring National Park) and the continuing efforts to translocate healthy chicks into the sanctuary under the Operation Nest Egg (ONE) programme (page 51, 8.7);
- effective operations to control **rowan** and **cotoneaster** in the West Matukituki (pages 51-53, 8.8).
- effective **thar** and **goat control** operations (pages 53-55, 8.9).
- completion of the **Haast Pass Lookout Track** in Mount Aspiring National Park - a significant new walking opportunity along the Haast Pass Highway (State Highway 6) between Makarora and Haast (pages 67-69, 8.18);
- replacement of the **Brewster Hut** near Makarora (pages 70-71, 8.20).

Sections 46-47 Amendment and Review of Management Plans

At a board meeting held in early 2006, **Milford Dart Ltd** presented an ambitious proposal for shortening the distance and travelling time of the road trip between Queenstown and Milford Sound. If implemented, the proposal would involve the construction of a tunnel through the Humboldt Mountains from the Hollyford valley in Fiordland National Park to the Routeburn valley in Mount Aspiring National Park, as well as a short road through part of the Routeburn valley in the latter park.

While the proposal was not inconsistent with the Fiordland National Park Management Plan, it was inconsistent with the current Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan. This meant that the department would not get the opportunity to consider the relative merits and drawbacks of the idea by way of the usual concession application process unless the latter plan was amended.

The **Director-General of Conservation** believed that the “increased knowledge” and “changing circumstances” associated with tunnelling technology and tourist traffic in and out of Milford Sound justified an amendment to the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan, in order to enable Milford Dart Ltd to lodge a concession application. Once lodged, this concession application would be handled in the usual way, including public notification, hearings of submissions (if requested by submitters), and consultation with the affected conservation boards.

The **board** agreed with the Director-General of Conservation’s view and it resolved to support the proposed amendment, subject to public notification and any associated hearings, so that a concession application by Milford Dart Ltd could be lodged and studied in greater detail. The wording of the **proposed amendment** was as follows (proposed additional words in italics):

“There will be no increase in the extent of formed roads within the existing park boundaries, *except for a road branching off the Routeburn Road for approximately 1.5 km above ground then into a tunnel through to the Hollyford Road, for use only by vehicles specifically authorised by a concession for use on that road.*”

As a result of **public notification**, 262 submissions were received by the department. 244 of those opposed the proposed amendment, 14 supported it, and four were neutral. 95 submitters asked to be heard in support of their submissions. Hearings of submissions were held in Te Anau, Queenstown and Dunedin in late June and early July 2006.

Following the hearings, the Director-General of Conservation affirmed his view that the proposed amendment was appropriate, subject to the addition of the phrase “*(if approved through the concession process)*”. The wording of the **proposed amendment** became as follows (proposed additional words in italics):

“There will be no increase in the extent of formed roads within the existing park boundaries, *except for a road (if approved through the concession process) branching off the Routeburn Road for approximately 1.5 km above ground then into a tunnel through to the Hollyford Road, for use only by vehicles specifically authorised by a concession for use on that road.*”

Pursuant to Section 47(5)(a) of the National Parks Act 1980, the **board** referred the proposed amendment back to the Director-General of Conservation, seeking assurances that the concession application process would make sure that in return for any sacrifice in Mount Aspiring National Park, there would be overwhelming conservation benefits in northern Fiordland. The board wanted assurance that the concession process (or another more appropriate planning process - if the Director-General could identify one) could:

- ensure that this proposal would help protect the conservation values of this area in the long term;
- ensure that the justification for the amendment (viz. improved visitor experiences at Milford Sound by spreading peak day time congestion) actually occurred;

- deal appropriately with the possible flow-on effects of faster and increased access to northern Fiordland, such as an altered experience for other users (e.g. trampers, climbers);
- ensure the proposal integrated with other planning exercises being undertaken in northern Fiordland.

The board was also concerned about the private nature of the proposed road and asked the Director-General of Conservation whether the phrase “*for use only by vehicles specifically authorised by a concession for use on that road*” after “*Hollyford Road*” in the proposed amendment was now really necessary. The earlier addition of the phrase “*(if approved through the concession process)*” clearly conveyed the fact that the construction of the proposed new road was dependent on a successful outcome to that process, but it did not limit the use of the road to any particular vehicles. The board preferred options on the use of the road to be kept open.

In a letter of 24 October 2006 to the board, the **Director-General of Conservation** assured the board that the concession process would address the points the board had raised, but he did not accept the board’s suggested change to the wording of the proposed amendment.

The **board** requested the New Zealand Conservation Authority to consider the proposed amendment in a letter of 21 November 2006. Pursuant to sections 47(6)(a) of the National Parks Act 1980, the letter was accompanied by a summary of the submissions received during the public notification process and a statement of the extent to which they had or had not been accepted.

In a letter of 28 February 2007, the **New Zealand Conservation Authority** asked for further information and clarification of some of the material provided by the board. As at 30 June 2007, the board was still preparing a response to this request.

Even if the New Zealand Conservation Authority eventually approves the draft amendment, this does not mean that the board will automatically support a **concession application** by the company, or that the Director-General of Conservation will approve such an application. It will merely allow the company’s application to be lodged and considered in detail.

7 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE NEW ZEALAND WALKWAYS ACT 1990

The board previously requested the Director-General of Conservation under section 8 of the New Zealand Walkways Act 1990, to investigate the establishment of a walkway linking Macetown and the Motatapu Road near Lake Wanaka. While much progress has been made on the formation of the **Motatapu Walking Track**, the route will not be available for public use until some legal matters have been resolved. When completed and opened, the new track will form part of **Te Araroa** - a proposed walking trail from the north of the North Island to the south of the South Island.

No actions were taken under sections 6, 8, 25(1)(b) or 29(1) of the Act during the reporting period.

The board strongly supports local community initiatives which aim to provide public walking opportunities that are easily accessible for most age groups, including the following:

- **Wakatipu Trails**, a proposal for the development and co-ordination of a network of linked trails around the Wakatipu, involves the Department of Conservation, the Queenstown Lakes District Council, the Otago Regional Council and a wide range of community organizations in a co-operative enterprise through the Wakatipu Trails Trust. Completion of **Lake Hayes track circuit** and the **Lakeside Trail** (Jardines Park to Jacks Point) have been recent highlights;
- **Aspiring Trails** is the Wanaka version of the Wakatipu Trails Trust on a smaller scale. It is made up of several interest groups, including the Department of Conservation, and is serviced by the Queenstown Lakes District Council;
- The **Gibbston Community Association**, with technical assistance from the Department of Conservation, is investigating the formation of a walking track along part of the Kawarau River.

The **Otago Regional Council** has made a significant contribution to the existing network of walkways and walking tracks beside waterways and the coast in Otago. The walkways at Arrowtown, Alexandra, Dunedin (Leith Valley), Wanaka (Lakeside Reserves), Beaumont, Moeraki, Henley and the Lower Clutha are valuable recreational resources for local communities and visitors.

In order to make information on public walking opportunities in Otago more easily accessible, the Dunedin-based **Southern Heritage Trust** sponsored the creation of an **Otago Trails** website, which now has a wealth of useful information on such opportunities.

8 LIAISON

Other Conservation Boards

C Morris, A Penniket and B Parker have liaised with the West Coast Tai Poutini, Southland and Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Boards, respectively. Two members of the Southland Conservation Board attended part of the board meeting held at Kingston on 17 November 2006 to discuss cross-boundary issues.

New Zealand Conservation Authority

Robyn Jebson, the NZCA member from Queenstown, attended the board meeting held at Kingston on 17 November 2006. As well as receiving the minutes of NZCA meetings and the NZCA annual report, the board finds that the authority chairperson's written summaries of the meetings are very helpful for keeping the board in touch with the authority's views and actions on a range of issues.

Takata Whenua

H Langsbury, who is affiliated to Te Rūnanga Ōtākou, and J Williams, who is affiliated to Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki, were appointed on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (Section 6P(7B), Conservation Act 1987 refers). The Kaupapa Atawhai Manager, Matapura Ellison, assists the board to liaise with all of the Kāi Tahu papatipu rūnaka in its area of jurisdiction (i.e. Ōtākou, Moeraki, Huirapa, Makaawhio, Hokonui, Awarua, Waihopai and Oraka Aparima) as required, and helps to keep the board updated on conservation issues of interest to takata whenua.

Local Government

The board continues to work to improve its ongoing communication with the Otago Regional Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Otago District Council, Clutha District Council, Dunedin City Council, and Waitaki District Council, since all of those councils have significant responsibilities for the protection of conservation values outside public conservation lands.

Malcolm McPherson, Mayor of the Central Otago District, attended part of the board meeting held at the Lake Roxburgh Lodge on 15 September 2006. Wind farm proposals and tenure review were among the issues of common interest discussed.

In return, some board members have met representatives of the councils between formal board meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Early in 2007, board members who had agreed to liaise with rural councils in Otago on behalf of the board, personally delivered letters encouraging those councils to follow the example of the Dunedin City Council in preparing a district biodiversity strategy.

Local Communities

The board continues to hold public forums in connection with formal board meetings. While only a few people attend these meetings, the board receives valuable feedback on local conservation issues from those who do turn up, and it will continue the practice. Most board members regularly liaise with members of the public on conservation related issues in the course of their professional work or as a result of personal interests.

Media

Reporters representing the Otago Daily Times and/or the Southland Times attended fewer meetings than usual during the year. The board has found it challenging to publicise several current conservation issues of public interest when newspaper reporters do not attend board meetings, but it hopes to make more progress in this area. Board members were sad to hear that Southland Times reporter Ivor Hayman, a familiar face at many board meetings, had passed away during the year.

Conservation and Other Interest Groups

The board is fortunate to have members who already participate actively in organisations such as Federated Farmers, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) and several others.

9 GENERAL

Some significant items considered by the board during the reporting period but not covered fully in the earlier sections of the report include:

Marine Protected Areas

Unfortunately, implementation of the Marine Protected Areas Policy, which relies on close co-operation between the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries, has been very slow in starting. It has taken a lot longer than expected for the two agencies to reach agreement on a Marine Protected Area classification system and acceptable protection standards. Eventually however, there are plans to establish a regional Marine Protected Areas

Forum which will consult people on the appropriate protection of the coastal waters between Oamaru and Te Waewae Bay.

The board and its scientific advisory group will continue to advocate for the establishment of a marine reserve at Nugget Point/Tokatā to protect the rich diversity of marine animal and plant life which is present in the coastal waters there. The terrestrial Nugget Point Reserve is already a very popular destination which allows visitors to see protected marine mammals and other wildlife in their natural habitat, so it is particularly appropriate for the waters adjoining this reserve to be given marine reserve status.

Marginal Strips

The board fully supports Government moves to clarify the legislation relating to the establishment and use of marginal strips, and to depict on maps all of the existing marginal strips in the country. With regard to public access opportunities, this will complement the work on outdoor walking access which will be carried out by Te Ara o Papatuanuku, the access organization proposed by the Walking Access Consultation Panel. Both landowners and recreationists will benefit from the greater certainty that up-to-date information on marginal strips will provide.

Community Contributions to Conservation

Community groups and enthusiastic individuals throughout Otago continue to involve themselves in a range conservation projects, as well as helping the Department of Conservation with its work.

The **Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust** makes significant contributions to the welfare of yellow-eyed penguins on the Otago coast, so board members were pleased to have the opportunity to visit the Trust's plant nursery at Company Bay on 15 July 2006. During a visit to the **Otago Peninsula Trust's** Royal Albatross Centre on the same day, board members were pleased to learn about the benefits to nesting albatrosses of recent improvements (e.g. anti-glare windows) to the Richdale Observatory. The **Otago Natural History Trust** has now completed the fencing around its proposed Orokonui Ecosanctuary near Waitati. Other organizations which focus on the protection of natural values include the **Papatowai Forest Heritage Trust**, the **Central Otago Ecological Trust** and **River- Estuary Care: Waikouaiti-Karitane**.

The **Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust** continues to work with the Department of Conservation on improving the increasingly-popular Otago Central Rail Trail.

National conservation organizations such as **Forest & Bird**, **FMC** (Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand) and **Public Access New Zealand** are regular advocates for the protection of conservation and recreation values in Otago through various legislative processes (e.g. tenure review, Resource Management Act matters).

Many other groups, communities and individuals are also making significant contributions at a local level (e.g. Lewis Verduyn and the **Clutha River/Mata-Au Parkway Proposal** he has been promoting). Farmers and other rural landowners are increasingly becoming involved in efforts to conserve native vegetation and other natural features on their properties via tenure review, QE II covenants and other voluntary measures. The **Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards** and the **Farm Forestry Association Awards** give some recognition to farmers who are seeking to manage their properties in a way that is ecologically sustainable.

Implementation of CMS and CMP Documents

The board looks forward to a greater emphasis on specific site outcomes when the current CMS and CMP documents (e.g. Otago Conservation Management Strategy, Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan) are reviewed. The department, the board, concession applicants and the general public would all benefit from clearer policy statements on what activities are acceptable and what activities are not acceptable at key locations on public conservation land.

10 CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

The change of board chairperson during the reporting period gave the board an opportunity to recognize the significant contributions made by Fergus Sutherland, who spent the last four of his six years on the board as board chairperson. In doing so, the board also acknowledges that the conservation work done by the Sutherlands has been and continues to be shared between Fergus and his wife Mary, who was also a board member for four years before Fergus was appointed.

Statutory planning associated with the Resource Management Act has been a major focus for the board over the last year, with a number of submissions being made in relation to activities that directly or indirectly affect conservation values in Otago. This reflects the current makeup of the board, which has several new and returning members with planning backgrounds. Having such members on the board was timely with regard to the presentation of applications for two large-scale wind farm proposals during the reporting period.

The board has noted with interest the slowing of the tenure review process over the past year or so, and the more recent announcement that the Crown intends to withdraw from the tenure review process in respect of lakeside properties to protect public amenity values etc. As well as being very active in tenure review in the past, the board is a strong supporter of the proposed network of high country conservation parks that will be formed as an eventual outcome of this process. In this regard, the board acknowledges the foresight shown in the Crown's purchase of Michael Peak Station in the Upper Manuherikia, and the likelihood that several thousand hectares of the property will become public conservation land.

I take this opportunity to thank all members of the board and its committees for their contributions to the decision-making process. These contributions are recognised both for the commitment shown by individual board members as well as for the value they have added to board decisions and outcomes. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of departmental staff, who have helped with the organization of board meetings and field trips, and by generally assisting the board in its work.

In closing, I would like to draw attention to our collective need as members of the public to learn to live with and make room for the native seals, sea lions, Hector's dolphins, southern right whales and other marine mammals which spend time on or near the Otago coast. It is especially encouraging to see increasing numbers of New Zealand sea lions and southern right whales returning to some of their former habitats along the coast. These marine mammals are the marine equivalent of the large land animals in other countries and should be valued in the same way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Langsbury', is written over a horizontal line. A vertical red line is positioned to the right of the signature.

Hoani Langsbury
Chairperson

30 July 2007