

OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD









2011/2012 ANNUAL REPORT

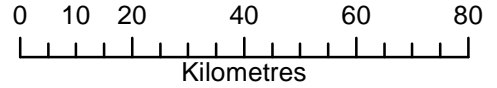
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WEST COAST
CONSERVANCY

Hawea
Conservation
Park

-  DOC Offices
-  Conservation Park
-  Area boundary
-  Conservancy boundary
-  Mount Aspiring National Park
-  Other Conservations Areas & Reserve



Makarora
Field Base

Ahuriri Conservation Park

CANTERBURY
CONSERVANCY

Oteake
Conservation Park

WANAKA
AREA OFFICE

Oteake
Conservation
Park

Glenorchy
Field Base

Oamaru
Field Base

WAKATIPU
AREA OFFICE

CENTRAL OTAGO
AREA OFFICE

Macraes
Field Base

SOUTHLAND
CONSERVANCY

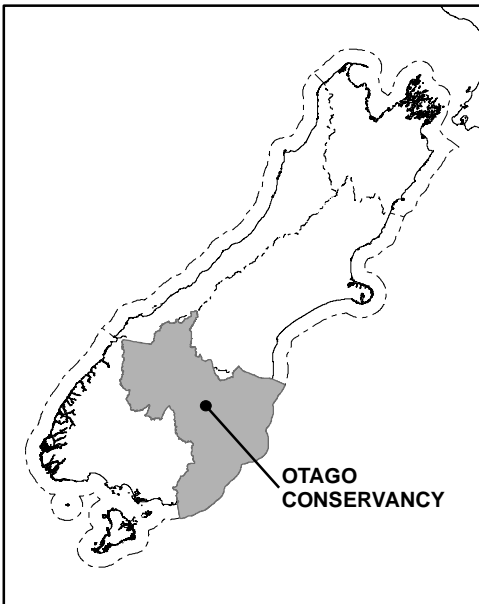
Te Papanui
Conservation Park

COASTAL
OTAGO AREA
OFFICE

OTAGO
CONSERVANCY
OFFICE

Catlins
Conservation
Park

Owaka
Field Base



OTAGO CONSERVANCY Public Conservation Areas

August 2012

Otago Conservation Board Annual Report for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012

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

Photograph: Front Cover

Members of the Otago Conservation Board and Department of Conservation staff who work with the Board on a ridge in Glencoe Station near Herbert, North Otago. The southern slopes of the Kakanui Mountains can be seen in the background. On 28 April 2012, the lessee of Glencoe Station accompanied Board members to points in that pastoral lease which provided good views of the 4,035 hectare Waianakarua Scenic Reserve and adjoining areas of public conservation land.

From L to R: Andrew Penniket, Susan Stevens, Iris Scott, David Holdsworth, Mark Clark (Board Support Officer), David Barnes, Abby Smith (Board Chairperson), Ken Stewart (DOC Community Relations Manager). [Note: Board members not shown: Gordon Bailey, Francie Diver, Garry Nixon and Jim Williams.]

[Photograph by Bruce Parker]

Photograph: Back Cover

Members of the Otago Conservation Board and Department of Conservation staff who work with the Board inspecting the Waianakarua Scenic Reserve from its northern boundary with Glencoe Station on 28 April 2012. Part of the North Otago coastline can be seen in the distance.

[Photograph by Mark Clark]

ISSN 1176-6646 (Print)

ISSN 1179-2450 (Online)

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OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD

2011-2012 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 to 19 September 2011, the members of the Board were as set out below. The official Board term expiry dates which applied during that period and the number of full Board meetings attended between 1 July and 19 September 2011 are shown in the final two columns. Those Board members whose terms officially ended on 31 August 2011 continued in the role until new Board members were appointed. Chas Tanner resigned in February 2011 and was not replaced.

Assoc Prof Abigail M Smith (Chair)	Dunedin	30 June 2011	2
Gordon Bailey	Queenstown	30 June 2013	2
Francie Diver	Alexandra	30 June 2013	2
Dr David Holdsworth	Dunedin	30 June 2012	2
Chas Morris	Wanaka	31 August 2011	1
Dr Garry H Nixon	Alexandra	30 June 2013	1
Andrew Penniket	Wanaka	30 June 2012	2
Iris Scott	Glenorchy	30 June 2013	2
Chas F Tanner	Purakaunui	31 August 2011	0
Dr Jim E Williams	Dunedin	30 June 2015	2

The present members of the Otago Conservation Board were appointed by the Minister of Conservation for terms commencing on 19 September 2011 or earlier, and ending on the dates listed below. The number of full Board meetings attended between 19 September 2011 and 30 June 2012 is given in the final column.

Assoc Prof Abigail M Smith (Chair)	Dunedin	30 June 2013	3
Gordon Bailey	Queenstown	30 June 2013	3
David Barnes	Dunedin	30 June 2014	3
Francie Diver	Alexandra	30 June 2013	3
Dr David Holdsworth	Dunedin	30 June 2013	3
Dr Garry H Nixon	Alexandra	30 June 2013	2
Andrew Penniket	Wanaka	30 June 2013	2
Iris Scott	Glenorchy	30 June 2013	3
Susan Stevens	Gibbston	30 June 2014	3
Dr Jim E Williams	Dunedin	30 June 2015	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.
- **Hāwea Conservation Park**
The Hāwea Conservation Park covers about 105,000 ha of public conservation land around Lake Hawea and the Hunter River, as well as areas on the McKerrow Range near Makarora. Large areas in the park are covered with native beech forest and shrublands.
- **Oteake Conservation Park**
About 65,000 ha of public conservation land on the St Bathans, Hawkdun, Ida, Ewe and St Mary's Ranges to the north of Ranfurly and St Bathans have been included in this new conservation park. Its vegetation is dominated by tussock grasslands.
- **Otago Central Rail Trail**
This very popular recreational facility for walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders follows the route of the former Otago Central Branch railway line for 150 kilometres between Clyde and Middlemarch. It is now one of the official New Zealand Cycle Trails.
- **Coronet Peak / Remarkables / Treble Cone**
Parts of the public conservation land at these sites are occupied by commercial skifields that are well-known for winter recreational activities, but are popular summer destinations too.
- **Morning Star Beach Recreation Reserve**
Adjoining the Shotover River at Arthurs Point near Queenstown, this recreation reserve is the site of major commercial jetboating, rafting and giant swing operations. The DOC Wakatipu Area office recently relocated to a building in the reserve.

Populations of the following significant or well-known indigenous species can be found within the Board's area of jurisdiction (including the western part of Mount Aspiring National Park):

- **Lizards** (Otago skink/mokomoko, grand skink/mokomoko, jewelled gecko/moko kākāriki)
- **Birds** (Royal albatross/toroa, Haast tokoeka, yellow-eyed penguin/hōiho, buff weka, mōhua/yellowhead, South Island robin/kakaruai, Stewart Island shag/kōau)
- **Marine Mammals** (New Zealand sea lion/pakake, Hector's dolphin/upokohue, New Zealand fur seal/kekeno, southern right whale/tohorā)
- **Invertebrates** (Cromwell chafer beetle *Prodontria lewisii*, *Peripatus* species)
- **Freshwater Fish** (Gollum galaxias *Galaxias gollumoides*, kōura/freshwater crayfish, lowland longjaw galaxid *Galaxias cobitinis*)
- **Plants** (Hectors tree daisy *Olearia hectorii*, rare grass *Simplicia laxa*, rare cresses *Lepidium kirkii* and *Lepidium sisymbrioides*, *Pittosporum patulum*)

Otago is the southern limit for naturally-occurring stands of beech forest (i.e. *Nothofagus menziesii* in the Catlins) and a number of other native plants, including ngāio/kāio (*Myoporum laetum*), akiraho (*Olearia paniculata*), and some plants found only on rocky scree slopes.

3 CONSERVATION BOARD MEETINGS

The following Board meetings were held in the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012:

- **Full Board Meetings**

1 July 2011	Dunedin
16 September 2011	Cromwell
24 November 2011	Hawea
10 February 2012	Dunedin
27 April 2012	Herbert

- **Public Forums**

The Board set aside some time for a public forum during each of the five Board meetings listed above. Up to five members of the public attended each of these sessions and many of them shared their comments and views on local conservation issues with the Board.

- **Field Inspections**

24 November 2011	Pakituhi Hut on Breast Hill Track, Gladstone and Hawea Conservation Areas
9 February 2012	Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve and Lighthouse Reserve
28 April 2012	Glencoe 'Reserve' Conservation Area, sites adjoining Waianakarua Scenic Reserve

In addition to participating in formal inspections, individual members often visit sites on existing and proposed public conservation land to update themselves on values and management issues.

4 BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987

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

The Board was not involved in any statutory actions associated with the approval of conservation management strategies (CMS) during the reporting period.

Throughout the past 12 months, however, the Department of Conservation has been producing preliminary draft sections of the next Otago CMS and inviting comments on them from Board members. The Board appreciates the opportunity for such input at this early stage of the CMS review process.

The Board has found it helpful to hold CMS workshops in connection with most of its recent Board meetings, so that Board members have time to discuss these draft CMS sections with each other and with key DOC staff in a less formal setting.

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

On 27 April 2012, the Board formally approved the **Pukekura Reserves (Taiaroa Head) Management Plan** in respect of the Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve and Taiaroa Head Foreshore Wildlife Sanctuary only. On 14 May 2012, the Dunedin City Council approved the plan in respect of the other reserves at the site. These approvals were a significant milestone for all affected parties, since work to develop a management plan for the site began over 20 years ago.

This management plan was co-ordinated and developed by the Dunedin City Council with input from the Department of Conservation, the Korako Karetai Trust and Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou, and addresses the future management of the reserve land at Taiaroa Head (Pukekura) at the northern end of the Otago Peninsula. The Board had a statutory role to fulfil in connection with the approval of the management plan because it is a conservation management plan in respect of the

nature reserve and the wildlife sanctuary. Among other things, the new plan enables all interested parties to co-operate in the management of the internationally-renowned mainland colony of **Northern Royal albatross/toroa** (*Diomedea sanfordi*) in a co-ordinated way.

The Board notes that management policies for the **Nugget Point/Toccatà Reserve**, the **Otago Goldfields Park**, and the **four conservation parks in Otago** (viz. **Catlins Conservation Park**, **Te Papanui Conservation Park**, **Hāwea Conservation Park**, and **Oteake Conservation Park**) are being formulated during the preparation of the next Otago CMS.

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

a Otago CMS

The Board has collated and summarised advice given to the Department on the implementation of the Otago CMS since August 1998, when the document was approved by the New Zealand Conservation Authority. This advice has been presented in the form of questions on specific management issues which need to be addressed as the Department prepares a new Draft Otago CMS. Topics have been listed under the four Areas in the DOC Otago Conservancy (i.e. Coastal Otago Area, Central Otago Area, Wakatipu Area and Wanaka Area), in harmony with the 'place-based' approach being used for the review of CMS documents.

With regard to the implementation of key objectives in the current Otago CMS, the Board recognises the Otago Conservancy's significant contributions towards the achievements and other conservation highlights listed below. The Board is particularly pleased that there is an increasing level of involvement by local businesses, community-based organisations and individuals in mainstream conservation projects.

Notable achievements during the reporting period included the following:

- the re-opening of the **Papatowai Campground** in the Catlins on 19 December 2011 after a three-year closure, following the completion of work to upgrade the kitchen block, waste water treatment system and toilets;
- the upgrading of the popular **Moke Lake Campsite** near Queenstown (including new toilet blocks and a shelter) and the **Boundary Creek and Kidds Bush Campsites** by the Haast Pass Highway, to cater for the increasing number of users of campgrounds managed by DOC in Otago;
- the opening of the **Grandview Range and Deans Bank Tracks** near Wanaka for day walkers and mountain bikers - the latter track having been designed by Bike Wanaka and formed by local volunteers;
- the upgrading of the **McKellar Saddle section of the Greenstone/Caples Track** and the **McKellar Hut**, which is located in the Greenstone Conservation Area just south of the Fiordland National Park boundary;
- the upgrading of sections of the **Diamond Lake Track** near Wanaka and the replacement of 28 timber bridges along the **Catlins River Track**, a 12 kilometre tramping track near Owaka in South Otago;
- ongoing work to provide improved **public recreational access** in Otago, e.g. the proposed **Clutha Gold Trail** (Beaumont to Roxburgh) and **Roxburgh Gorge Trail** (Roxburgh to Alexandra), the proposed **Arrow River Trail**, the proposed **Around the Mountains Trail** (Walter Peak to Kingston via Southland), work towards linking the separate parts of **Te Araroa in Otago**, etc;
- the successful translocation of **jewelled gecko/moko-kākāriki** from an Otago Peninsula site, where they were assessed to be at extreme risk of being poached by international wildlife smugglers, to the Orokonui Ecosanctuary in the Orokonui Nature Reserve;

- the survival and reproduction of **Otago skinks/mokomoko** in the Mokomoko Dryland Sanctuary near Alexandra following their reintroduction in late 2009 – a success for the Central Otago Ecological Trust in particular, but also for the Department, which has supported the establishment and management of the sanctuary in the Aldinga Conservation Area;
- continuing good results from **grand and Otago skink/mokomoko** management within the mammal-proof enclosure at Macraes near Palmerston;
- the survival of 20 **albatross/toroa chicks** at the Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve on the Otago Peninsula, as a result of efforts by staff from DOC and the Otago Peninsula Trust to minimise threats and disturbances;
- the survival of high numbers of **mōhua/yellowheads** in the Catlins, following large-scale aerial 1080 operations in 2009 and other ongoing pest control efforts;
- evidence of a thriving population of **South Island robin/kakaruai** in the West Matukituki Valley, following the translocation of 12 birds from the Dart Valley in 2008;
- the establishment of the **Springvale Scientific Reserve** near Alexandra, celebrated with a public open day to help people identify and appreciate the rare native plants (e.g. the tiny annual buttercup *Ceratocephala pungens*) which are protected at the site;
- the purchase by the Nature Heritage Fund of an **area near Duntroon in North Otago** that includes several threatened native plant species (e.g. the critically-endangered native broom *Carmichaelia hollowayii*), as a direct result of effective advocacy by the Department;
- the restoration of the **Deep Creek Hut** (in the Pisa Conservation Area near Wanaka) to its original form, following a New Zealand Historic Places Trust assessment that it was a significant example of a late 19th century high country musterers' hut;
- the renovation of the **Tailings Hut** (in the Mt Ida Conservation Area near Ranfurly) with help from volunteers from as far afield as Auckland and Australia;
- successful work to stabilise and repair the **Lindis Pass Hotel** ruins, using a new cement-based material that can cope with the climatic extremes experienced at the site;
- the creation of the **Wakatipu Heritage Trust**, with the objectives of identifying, promoting, organising and managing the conservation, restoration and development of the countless historic sites, structures and buildings in the Wakatipu basin. The Department of Conservation, the Queenstown and District Historical Society and the Queenstown Lakes District Council have co-operated to form the Trust so that they can achieve more by working closely together than they can as separate organisations;
- significant gains in **wilding conifer control** efforts with assistance from the Wakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group, High Country Station owners and others;
- the success of **community conservation events** organised by the Department, including two **Conservation Award functions** during **Conservation Week**, **Sea Week** and several **Volunteer Projects**.

The above list shows that there has been much to celebrate in terms of improved recreational facilities, community involvement and species protection on Otago's land surface.

The outlook in Otago's **freshwater and marine environments** is less encouraging, however, despite the Board's and the Department's best efforts to achieve better protection for the native flora and fauna in those environments.

Relatively few **freshwater rivers and streams in Otago** are completely surrounded by public conservation land and can be managed by the Department to retain and enhance their conservation values. Outside public conservation land, the water quality in many rivers and streams is much lower than it should be, often as a result of discharges and run-offs from adjoining land use. Native freshwater flora and fauna also face serious threats from introduced species, including didymo. Along with the Department, the Board does what it can with limited resources to advocate for the improved protection of freshwater conservation values through various Resource Management Act processes.

In addition to this statutory advocacy, the Board hopes to highlight the importance of freshwater values in Otago by having a separate **Freshwater Place** in the next Otago Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) - one that stands alongside Places for the well-known and more visible landscape features (e.g. the distinctive block mountain ranges of Central Otago). The recent release of the New Zealand Conservation Authority's excellent paper titled '**Protecting New Zealand's Rivers**' was timed very well to inform the current CMS review process.

The Board also wants a separate **Marine Place** to be included in the next Otago CMS, because the marine environment tends to be even more 'out of sight, out of mind' than freshwater systems are. Not one square metre of the Otago coastal marine environment is yet fully protected in a marine reserve, despite consistent and considerable efforts by the Department, the Board and other organisations over a couple of decades to make progress in this area. This is in stark contrast to the position on land, where the continued protection of iconic areas - such as Mount Aspiring National Park, the Remarkables Conservation Area and the Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve - is so widely valued and supported by the community that it is almost taken for granted.

Board members regularly express their deep disappointment with the lack of **Marine Protected Areas Policy Implementation** in Otago. The relevant priority statement in the Otago CMS 1998, page 526 ("*obtaining approval for a marine reserve in Otago, and establishing appropriate management for it*"), is unlikely to be achieved before the current Otago CMS has been reviewed and a new Otago CMS has been approved. As it has done a number of times previously, the Board recently urged the Minister of Conservation to take whatever steps are necessary to help change this situation for the better.

b Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS

The Board has previously reached an agreement with the Southland Conservator regarding occasional 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 carried out by the DOC Southland Conservancy in these areas and does not have any particular concerns.

c West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS

The Board has an interest in the West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS because it covers those parts of Mount Aspiring National Park which are administered by the DOC West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancy. The Board is satisfied that the West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS 2010 is consistent with the new Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan.

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

The Board was not asked for its advice on any proposed changes of status or classification outside of Mount Aspiring National Park during the reporting period.

(A proposal involving **Mount Aspiring National Park** is mentioned separately on page 12 of this report, since it involves Board advice given under the National Parks Act 1980.)

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

The Board was consulted by or gave advice to the New Zealand Conservation Authority and the Department on a number of topics, including the following **Concession Applications**:

- Proposed restoration and use of historic **St Bathans Post Office** building for accommodation - the Board supported this proposal in principle, but advised the Department that the area around the public counter should be retained in its present state for the benefit of visitors;
- **Aro Ha Investment Trust** - The Board supported this applicant's proposal, which involves construction of a miniature hydro scheme and bridge in/over an unnamed stream about 7 km south of Glenorchy, as part of a luxury lodge development (Aro Ha Health Retreat) on Wyuna Station;
- **Heli Tours Limited** - The application by this company was supported by the Board, because all the proposed landing sites in Otago are existing landing sites located outside Mount Aspiring National Park;
- **Riverstone Holdings Ltd (Fiordland Link Experience Monorail)** - This application does not affect public conservation land in the Otago Conservancy directly. According to sections 10.3.5.2 and 10.3.5.3 of the Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement, however, approval of the proposed 'Snowdon Monorail' could mean that a proposed development of the same or a similar kind (e.g. monorail or road up the Greenstone valley, gondola up the Caples valley - both valleys being in the Otago Conservancy) would also have to be approved, if Ngāi Tahu made an application along those lines.

The Board considers that any such additional development would have much greater effects on recreational activity in that general area than the 'Snowdon Monorail' itself. In the absence of a firm proposal from Ngāi Tahu, the Board advised the Southland Conservator of the Department that the application should be declined, on the basis of unknown potential effects in Otago and inadequate information on the combined effects of the 'Snowdon Monorail' and any additional Ngāi Tahu proposal.

(Other concession applications involving **Mount Aspiring National Park** are mentioned separately on pages 12-13 of this report, since they involved Board advice given under the National Parks Act 1980.)

The Board also gave advice in connection with:

- the proposed '**Around the Mountains Cycle Trail**', which runs through a small section of the lower part of the Te Kere Haka Scenic Reserve near Kingston. The Board has no concerns about the construction of this trail;
- the presentation of annual **Coastal Otago and Inland Otago 2011 Conservation Awards** for notable conservation achievements in Otago;
- nominations for the **2012 Loder Cup Award**.

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

F Diver maintained informal liaison with Fish and Game Otago and Fish and Game Central South Island.

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.

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:

- Preliminary proposals for the tenure review of the **Kinross, Caithness and Mt Difficulty/Kawarau** pastoral leases;
- Proposed Plan Changes 5A-5W to the Central Otago District Plan;
- Application for a variation to the Kawarau Water Conservation Order in order to include the Nevis River;
- Draft Hereweka/Harbour Cone Management Plan.

Tenure Review

The Board fully supports the continuation of voluntary tenure review involving pastoral leases in the Otago high country - a process administered by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) rather than by the Department of Conservation. Some valuable new areas of public conservation land and exciting new opportunities for public recreation have been or are in the process of being established following tenure review on **Allandale, Greenvale, Riverslea, Cambrian and Cambrian Hills** Stations, among others. A number of pastoral leases in Otago have recently entered the tenure review process and several Board members have taken part in property inspections during the reporting period.

Proposed Plan Changes 5A-5W to the Central Otago District Plan

Board members generally support the recent decisions made by the Central Otago District Council in connection with these proposed plan changes. The Board is heartened to see an increasing recognition by the Council that the extensive and iconic natural landscapes of Central Otago need protection from unsympathetic development.

Freedom Camping

The problem of unauthorised waste disposal by tourists along the sides of roads and highways (e.g. the Haast Pass/Tioripatea Haast Pass Highway) has been brought to the Board's attention by members of the public for many years. After much publicity and public discussion on this issue, it is pleasing to see that the Government, the Department of Conservation, the New Zealand Freedom Camping Forum, the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ), district councils, and others are taking the problem seriously by means of a range of measures, including legislation, targeted education, prevention, and the enforcement of bylaws.

Section 6N(2)(b) Board Committees

The Board has decided that it no longer needs a separate **Planning Committee**, because email communication enables all Board members to be involved in any significant decisions and recommendations that are needed between full Board meetings.

The **Scientific Advisory Group** is a panel of advisers who can provide the Board with specialised information on topical conservation issues. The Board appreciates the willingness of these experts to provide input as the need arises. Electronic communication means that actual meetings of the group are no longer necessary. The Group currently comprises the following people:

A Smith (Convenor), and the following 14 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 Brent Lovelock (tourism specialist)	Emeritus Professor Sir Alan Mark (plant ecologist)
Mr Brian Patrick (entomologist)	Prof Hamish Spencer (zoologist)
Dr Ian Turnbull (geologist)	Ms Nicola When (environmental law)

6 BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Sections 7(2), Addition of Land to National Parks

In November 2011, the Board advised the New Zealand Conservation Authority and the Director-General of Conservation that it supported the proposed addition to Mount Aspiring National Park, of three areas totalling 299.2594 hectares in the Landsborough and Haast River valleys - areas acquired by the Nature Heritage Fund for addition to the park. In doing so, the Board observed that the addition of an area of about 75 ha in the Landsborough River valley was not ideal for the purposes of a national park boundary, since the area does not adjoin Mount Aspiring National Park.

The Board has asked the Conservator, West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancy to investigate the possibility of adding other areas in the Landsborough River valley to Mount Aspiring National Park, in order to create a more rational national park boundary in that area.

Sections 30(a), 45 - 47 Review of National Park Management Plans

The Board's statutory involvement in the review of the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan ended during the previous reporting period. The New Zealand Conservation Authority formally approved the plan on 23 June 2011, and printed copies of it were made available to the Board and interested members of the public towards the end of 2011. The plan can also be viewed under 'Publications' on the DOC website (www.doc.govt.nz).

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

The Otago and West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancies of the Department have implemented the following objectives and policy statements (among others) in the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan (MANPMP) during the reporting period:

- the ongoing monitoring of Haast Tokoeka (Kiwi) in the **Haast Tokoeka (Kiwi) Sanctuary** (much of which is located on the Haast Range within Mount Aspiring National Park) and the successful translocation of healthy chicks into the sanctuary under the Operation Nest Egg (ONE) programme, as well as the translocation of a further 10 birds to the Orokonui Ecosanctuary near Dunedin (MANPMP, pages 30-31, 6.2.1);
- the improved protection of **mōhua in the Makarora valley** following the purchase of nearly 200 new predator traps with a generous donation from the Mōhua Charitable Trust. The Trust intends to continue working with the Department on mōhua protection in the region (MANPMP, pages 30-31, 6.2.1);
- continuing successful **tahr** and **goat control** operations (MANPMP, pages 33-37, 6.2.3);
- the rebuilding and opening of the **Siberia Hut** on the Gillespie Pass Circuit Track after the previous hut was destroyed by fire (MANPMP, pages 62-64, 6.6.3.1);
- the construction of a **new bridge at Spaniard Creek on the Dart/Rees Track** to reduce the risks for track users (MANPMP, pages 62-64, 6.6.3.1).

Section 30(f) Advice on Interpretation of National Park Management Plan

The Board gave advice on the following triggered **Concession Applications** and **Roading Realignment Proposal**:

- (i) **Milford Dart Ltd**
- (ii) **Routeburn Walk Ltd**

On two occasions during the past year, the Board advised the Department that it should not grant concessions because they were clearly inconsistent with the new Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan. These applications involved the proposed construction by

Milford Dart Ltd of a private bus tunnel linking the Routeburn and Hollyford Valleys, and a request by **Routeburn Walk Ltd** for a significant increase in the number of walkers it guides on the Routeburn Track. On both occasions, the Department chose not to accept the Board's advice and made a preliminary decision to grant the application. The proposals have since gone on to the public submissions stage and the Board has lodged submissions opposing them.

The Board considers that if the Department grants these concessions, it will be undermining the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan and the rigorous public process which was undertaken to draw it up. The Board is concerned that, with respect to these concession applications and some others, the Department is putting its desire to appease business interests ahead of its statutory obligations under the Conservation and National Parks Acts.

(iii) **Aerially-assisted trophy hunting**

The Board has consistently opposed aerially-assisted trophy hunting (or heli-hunting) within Mount Aspiring National Park on the grounds that it has unacceptable impacts on other park users. The Board believes that permitting such activity to take place in the Olivine Wilderness Area of the park would clearly be inconsistent with the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan 2011, as well as the National Parks Act 1980 and the Wilderness Policy 1985. For these reasons, the Board advised the Department to decline applications from three commercial helicopter companies to conduct aerially-assisted trophy hunting in parts of Mount Aspiring National Park which included the Olivine Wilderness Area.

As well as giving advice to the Department of Conservation on specific applications, the Board has conveyed its concerns about the adverse impacts of aerially-assisted trophy hunting to the Minister of Conservation and to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

(iv) **Proposed Realignment of Haast Pass Highway at Gates of Haast**

During the reporting period, the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) sought and received the Board's advice on revised options for the proposed realignment of State Highway 6 at the Gates of Haast. The NZTA has yet to announce a final decision on the proposal.

7 LIAISON

Other Conservation Boards

I Scott, A Penniket and D Barnes have been liaising with the West Coast Tai Poutini, Southland and Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Boards, respectively. The Board believes that it is helpful for one or more representatives of the four southernmost conservation boards to occasionally attend meetings of the neighbouring boards, since a number of significant conservation issues are common to all four regions. Helen McPhail (Southland Conservation Board) and David Round (Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board) each attended one meeting of the Otago Conservation Board during the reporting period.

New Zealand Conservation Authority

The minutes of NZCA meetings, the NZCA annual report, and the Authority Chairperson's written summaries of the meetings kept the Board updated on the Authority's views and actions. A Smith attended a conference for Board Chairs hosted by the NZCA in Wellington in May, which she found most valuable.

Takata Whenua

F Diver and J Williams were appointed on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (Section 6P(7B), Conservation Act 1987 refers). The DOC Otago Conservancy Pou Kura Taiao, Matapura Ellison, has assisted 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 has kept the Board updated on conservation issues of interest to takata whenua.

Local Government

The Board seeks to maintain a good working relationship 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. Some Board members have met or contacted representatives of the councils between formal Board meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Local Communities

Public forums were held in connection with each of the Board's five formal meetings during the reporting period. The Board receives valuable community feedback on local conservation issues from those who take part in these forums. Many Board members also 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 a couple of meetings during the year, and the Board received generally good coverage in these newspapers.

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 others. Some of these organisations send reports, meeting minutes and newsletters which are circulated to Board members.

Community Contributions to Conservation

The Board recognises the impressive achievements of the many local organisations, councils, community groups and enthusiastic individuals throughout Otago who involve themselves in conservation projects.

Of particular note during the reporting period is the Department's **Project Gold** initiative, which was launched by the Otago Conservancy during Conservation Week in September 2011. The project aims to fill Otago once again with golden blooms of the kōwhai, attracting tūi, bellbird/korimako and other native birds. People throughout Otago are being encouraged to plant kōwhai in their gardens, farms, local schools, parks, and reserves. To help this happen, DOC staff and the Board have been distributing numerous **Project Gold** kits with planting information and eco-sourced seeds suited to the different parts of Otago. The Board fully supports this project as an innovative way to involve as many people as possible in conservation work that will benefit them and their communities well into the future.

The Board participates directly in the recognition of organisations and individuals who have contributed a lot to conservation by choosing the winners and runners-up for the annual Otago Conservation Awards. Separate awards are presented for Coastal Otago and for Inland Otago during Conservation Week every year. In 2011, the winner of the **Conservation Award for Coastal Otago** was Valerie Fay, with Setpoint Solutions Ltd and Roy Johnstone as the runners-up. The winner of the 2011 **Conservation Award for Inland Otago** was the Wakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group, and the runners-up were Graeme Harford and the Malcam Charitable Trust: Conservation Corps.

8 CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

It was an eventful year for the Otago Conservation Board. We were delighted to finally approve the **Pukekura Reserves (Taiaroa Head) Management Plan**, the culmination of many years' work and coordination. We enjoyed meeting many others involved in conservation at the Conservation Award functions during Conservation Week, and the launch of **Project Gold**. And the Board was pleased by progress made in dealing with unacceptable waste disposal by some **freedom campers**.


On the other hand, we were disappointed to find that our brand new **Mount Aspiring National Park Plan** appears to have less weight than we think it should in the reaching of concession decisions. The role of Conservation Boards appears to be changing as the Department changes, and we are concerned to make sure our advice and support for conservation remains useful and used.

In fact, changes occurred all year. Restructuring of the Department, along with changes in personnel and their roles at the Conservancy level were challenging to keep up with. Of most relevance to the Board was the departure, after decades of service, of Board Support Officer Mark Clark. We bid him farewell and welcome Ainslee Hooper to the role.

Change also came to the Board itself. We farewelled Chas Morris, whose term was completed this year. We welcomed Susan Stevens and David Barnes, who joined the Board in September. Every board member works hard to keep on top of a wide variety of issues, considering carefully the implications of decisions, and contributing to the work of the Board responsibly and diligently. The only reason we get so much done is the commitment of the board members and I thank each and every one of them warmly.

While it is valuable to look back on the year past, now is the time to look ahead to another year. The Board looks forward to battling **wilding pines** and **poachers**, supporting **kowhai** and **mohua** and **skinks**, working with our **colleagues in Otago and beyond**, and, in 2013, releasing a new **Conservation Management Strategy for Otago**.

Best wishes,



Associate Professor Abigail M. Smith
Chairperson

25 July 2012

