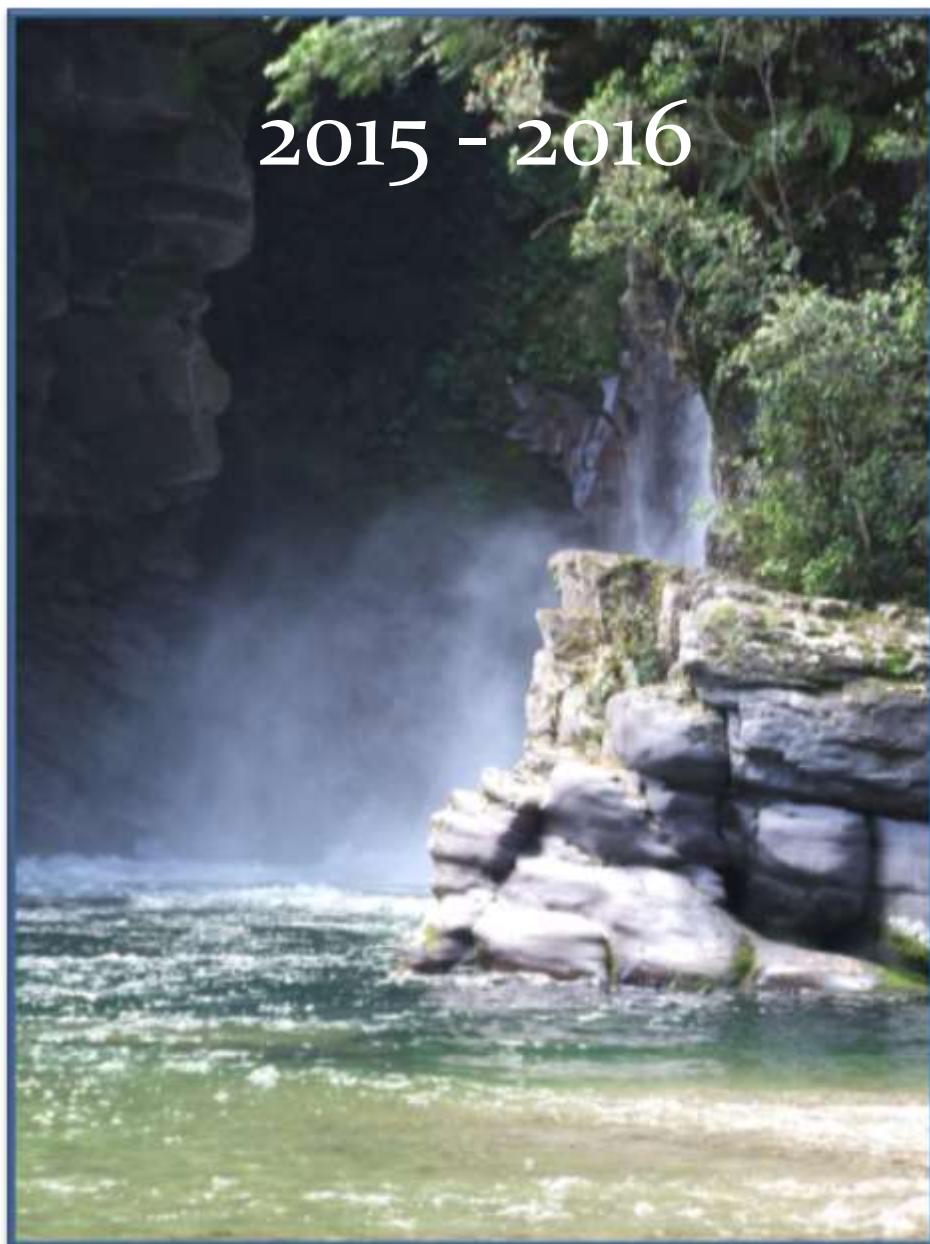




**Tongariro Taupō
Conservation Board**
Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro Taupō
Annual Report



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1.0 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

John Bishara

Chairperson Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board

I ahu mai tenei i runga i te hau matao e pupuhi ana mai o te tihi o Tongariro. Ka rere tonu te hau kei nga taumata o nga paemaunga e tu mai nei, kei reira Te Waonui o Tane, me nga wai tapu e rere tonu ana hei oranga mo nga mea katoa.

Ki nga ahuatanga katoa kei roto i tenei Taiao mai te whenua ki te rangi, mai te awatea ki te to o te rangi, tenei te mihi mai i a matou nga tangata e noho manaaki ana i te Poari Tiaki mo Te Rohe Tongariro / Taupō, ki a koutou hoki nga tangata huri noa

I am pleased to introduce the 2015 2016 Annual Report for the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board.

Primarily, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the very important national assets the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board have responsibility for. These assets are manifested within four management plans:

Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan
Tongariro National Park Management Plan
Tongariro Forest Management Plan
Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS)

These plans are not just specific to the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board but are intrinsically linked with the management plans of the Bay of Plenty and Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Boards that make up our larger geographic region. One of the unique features of our Central North Island region is the significance of our mountains, lakes, rivers, fauna and flora, which all have constant environmental, cultural and conservation/protection consideration and affect the whole country. *“What we do here has impacts not just locally but also nationally and globally” (Te Ngaehe Wanikau).*



Mt Tongariro
Photographer Alexandra Walters (3 March 2016)

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board provides a critical sounding board for the Department of Conservation (Te Papa Atawhai) and, during the reporting period, this was enhanced by the completion of the Department's ongoing restructuring programme. The new structure and appointment of key roles with a greater understanding of the Department's purpose has been well received by the Board, and provided renewed trust and confidence in our ability to address and complete tasks. As an example, a 'light at the end of the tunnel' has been confirmed for the

review of the Board's CMS, including possible structural changes with pending Treaty Settlements that government and Iwi are progressing.

Communication is an important aspect of our Board and we have found field visits, together with opportunities for members of the public to attend locally at our Board meetings, has been immensely valuable.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board Members for their contributions during the year and pay special tribute to retiring members Dr Ellen Forch and Colin Paton for their service and commitment to the work of the Board. Both Ellen and Colin provide a very good example of the skills required for a Conservation Board. Ellen is a resident of National Park with extensive academic background who brought a very evidenced-based and reasoned approach and, Colin, a resident of Taupō, lifetime hunter and fisherman, who is passionate about conservation and recreation and knowledgeable about our local conservation estate. *Nga mihi mahana ki a korua e nga rangatira hoki.*

On behalf of my fellow Board Members, I would also like to thank our Department staff for their constructive contribution in assisting the Board throughout the year.

I hope you will find the following reports valuable in providing a broad sense of the activities and initiatives that are occurring across the Tongariro Taupō region. I encourage you to follow up on anything about which you would like more detail by looking at the various newsletters, articles and reports that are available on the web page www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/statutory-and-advisory-bodies/conservation-boards/tongariro-Taupō/, many of which are referenced throughout this report.

Nō reira
Tēnā tātou katoa.



John Bishara
Chairperson Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board

2.0 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The Board membership remained the same as the previous year and this continuity afforded the Board a strong sense of identity. Members continued to provide strong representation for their communities of interest and assisted the Department in addressing opportunities and concerns held by some communities. The Department’s District teams engaged Board members in community initiatives, many of which were youth and conservation education focused.



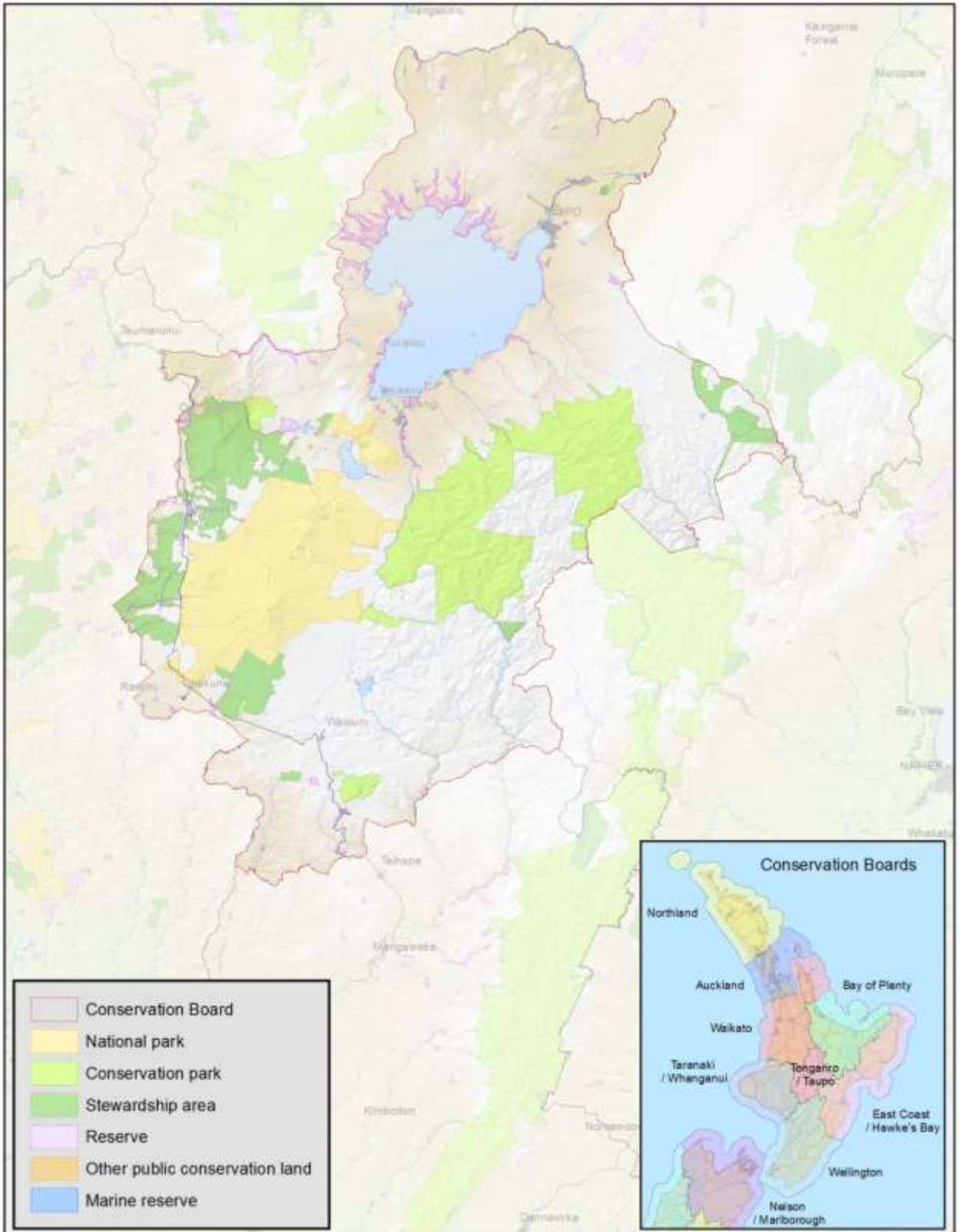
Board members – John Bishara, Colin Paton, and Ellen Forch



Board members – Peter Zimmer, Laurie Burdett, and Mike Britton.
Photographer: Alexandra Walters (3 March 2016)

A summary of the Board membership and meeting attendance during the report period was as follows:

| Board Member | Home location | Board meetings | Liaison meeting, functions | Special meetings |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| John Bishara (Chair) | Wellington | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Mike Britton (Deputy Chair) | Wellington | 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Laurie Burdett | Taupō | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Dr Ellen Forch | Auckland & National Park Village | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Colin Paton | Taupō | 5 | 4 | 0 |
| Geoff ‘Snow’ Rameka | Taupō | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Sir Tumu Te Heuheu | Turangi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Te Ngaehe Wanikau | Turangi | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Peter Zimmer | Ōwhango | 5 | 9 | 1 |



Tongariro / Taupo Conservation Board

3.0 THE BOARD'S AREA

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board area is dominated by major landscape features with Lake Taupō forming the headwaters of the Waikato River. This expansive body of water has tributaries which are in large part fed by the mountains that hold centre stage in the region, Mt Ruapehu, Mt Ngauruhoe and Mt Tongariro. The mountains and their slopes form the core of the Tongariro National Park, which is New Zealand's first national park and only dual World Heritage site. Areas to the east including the Kaimanawa Forest Park and adjoining rugged mountain ranges which remain more remote, containing giant podocarp and beech forests, clear rivers and rare wildlife. The Tongariro Forest Park is located just northwest of the park and is home to a national whio security site and a North Island brown kiwi sanctuary. On the western side of the National Park, the Ruapehu Conservation Area consists of the Erua Forest and Southern Tongariro Forest. The largest population of short tail bats in New Zealand is found in the Rangataua Conservation Area near to the township of Ohakune on Mt Ruapehu's southern slopes.

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing is one of the most traversed alpine tracks in the world with a significant international audience creating unique management challenges for the Department, the Board, communities, and Iwi. Board members provide a community perspective to these issues, bringing great passion and personal knowledge to their advocacy and statutory role in partnership with the Department of Conservation (Te Papa Atawhai), Iwi, communities, and business in looking after these unique and iconic places.

To the north of Lake Taupō, there are five geothermal power-stations, and until recent years, vast forest plantations covered the landscape. Large scale dairy conversions have changed the horizon and have created a new set of dynamics for the regions waterways. The iconic Huka Falls attracts hundreds of thousand visitors to this natural feature each year.

Business has collaborated with community and the Department to develop a kiwi, takahē, and falcon sanctuary within the Wairakei Golf Course. These collaborative efforts provide unique opportunities especially for young people to have encounters with New Zealand's special wildlife.

4.0 BOARD FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

4.1 Board Meetings summary

| Meeting date | Meeting Venue |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 21 August 2015 | Turangi – Bridgewater Motel |
| 9 October 2015 | Ruapehu District Council Chamber, Taumarunui Combined Meeting with Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board |
| 4 December 2015 | Te Kahukura o Tanemahuta Whare, Taupō |
| 3 & 4 March 2016 | Whakapapa Visitor Centre, Whakapapa |
| 24 May 2016 | Turangi, Department of Conservation Office |

The venues and content of the meetings held during the year reflect the scope of the work of the Board and this included a combined Board meeting with the Taranaki Whanganui

Conservation Board in the Ruapehu District Council Chambers. During this meeting the Boards received a project update from Department staff and Ohakune 2000 Limited Project Lead on the proposed Turoa to Ohakune and Horopito walking and cycle trail (Te Ara Maungawhero). A “flyover” video was presented of the sites where the project designers intend to combine old and new assets to create a network of trails and facilities. An overview was also given of the full process needed to ensure this project comes to life, including the statutory processes required to enable the activities within the Tongariro National Park plan.

4.2 Fieldtrips highlights

| Field Trip date | Field Trip Destinations |
|-----------------|---|
| 3 March 2016 | Tongariro Alpine Crossing staging sites Ketetahi Road and Mangatepopo Road Tongariro Forest Park, Kapoors Road head/start of 42 Traverse Whakapapa Village Infrastructure |
| 4 March 2016 | Tongariro Forest Park, Dominion Road Ōwhango end of 42 Traverse |



Whakapapa River Bridge Crossing at Ōwhango end of 42 Traverse – Board member Ellen Forch and Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board liaison - Novena McGuckin



Kapoors Road Carpark entrance to 42 Traverse – Board member Colin Paton

Photographer: Alexandra Walters (March 2016)

4.3 Special events

In March 2016, the United States Park service celebrated its 100-year anniversary and this occasion was marked by the US Ambassador Mark Gilbert, the Departments Director-General Lou Sanson, invited guests and support staff walking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. A Board member, Peter Zimmer, also attended and noted that the hike was a first-hand experience and opportunity to enjoy the wilderness and beauty of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing (TAC). At the same time the Director-General was able to



Tongariro Alpine Crossing – US Ambassador Party
Photograph provided by Peter Zimmer (2 March 2016)

observe some of the issues and challenges associated with increasing visitor numbers on the TAC. The US Ambassador Mark Gilbert, who was accompanied by his wife and 10 embassy staff, was impressed by the beauty and ruggedness of an ever changing landscape. All visitors thoroughly enjoyed the experience which was evident by a lot of smiles and storytelling at the end of the day. Four local guides from Ngāti Tuwharetoa added much appreciated cultural background information to the experience.

5.0 SIGNIFICANT ADVOCACY AND STATUTORY WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE BOARD BY COMMITTEE

5.1 Statutory Processes Committee

Council Communication

As part of the Board's advocacy role, comment is made on council plans. This was not a long-term planning year for councils, with only the exceptions to the long-term plans being available for the Board's comment. On invitation from Horizons Regional Council, the Board remains open to the potential of providing comment on the ongoing monitoring of the effects of the Horizons One Plan. This plan affects the southern part of the Boards area and the focus is on intensive land use in relation to water quality objectives.

To the north, the Board provided comment on the Waikato Regional Council consultation, "Let's Talk Water". The focus of this work is mainly related to water allocation and the Board expressed concern regarding any further effect on native fresh water ecosystems. The Board noted that while their area is part of the upper catchment for the Waikato River, power schemes, dams and extensive water diversion are present, limiting places for native fish to seek refuge and impacting on their ability to migrate back to the sea. The Board intends to be part of the ongoing community discussion with the regional council.

Resource Management Processes

The Board was asked to comment on an application by Mighty River Power to be exempt from the requirement to provide marginal strips above and below the Whakamaru Dam. While acknowledging the need for an exemption in close proximity to the dam for safety reasons, we questioned the extent of the proposed exemption. The Board was concerned about the loss of public access to the lake and diminishing walking trails around the lakes edge. The Board requested the application be publicly notified.

Grass and Silver Carp Farm application

The Board were impressed with the planned sustainability of the farming processes detailed in this application. The information provided was however insufficient to allay concerns around the potential for these fish to escape and establish in the wild as an invasive species in the Waikato River. On this basis the Board did not support the application and subsequent information provided did not alleviate the Board's concerns. It is noted that this application has now been withdrawn and is not proceeding at this time.

Concessions

The board received applications for the Fish Cruise Lake Taupō Booking Office and the Stir Café (Kiva Han Ltd.) at the Taupō Boat Harbour to consider and these were both supported by the Board. Comments were provided to the Department in relation to the location of the café.

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Ski Field Licence Application

During the year, the Board received Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) licence application for Whakapapa Ski Field for comment and this was followed later in the year by the RAL Turoa Ski Field application. In both cases the Board supported the approval in principle for these licences, and also provided additional information for the applicant and the Department to consider.

The Board sub-committee noted the process for assessing these applications was complicated and time consuming with consideration of the six principles from the Conservation Management Strategy and the Tongariro National Park Management Plan required. The Board had some specific questions around the Indicative Development Plan for Turoa and although not part of the application specifically, look forward to working with RAL in the future to gain further clarity on this.

Non-Statutory Management Planning – Whakaipo Bay Management Plan

In 2004 the Conservation Board requested the Department to prepare and implement a management plan for Whakaipo Bay Recreation Reserve due to the growing use of this area. In 2008, a public consultation process was completed which produced the *Whakaipo Bay Recreation Reserve Concept Plan*. In March 2014, the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board (TTCB) expressed concern the plan had not yet been finalised and the concepts not fully implemented. A steering group resulted which was comprised of membership from Tuwharetoa Māori Trust Board, Taupō District Council and the Conservation Board. The Department oversaw the process and a working group was also formed with community representation.

A substantial community consultation process was implemented which first identified the values of the reserve and then produced a draft plan for comment. The Board acknowledged the excellent job the Department had done of identifying and portraying the values of the reserve, as expressed by the community, to be protected. While this is a non-statutory document, there is a clear list of actions to be completed during the ten-year life of the plan that should improve the user experience for all. Again, the Board congratulates the Department for a comprehensive process.

This collaborative process with stakeholders is one the Board aspires to duplicate particularly across the western bay area of the Board's region.

5.2 Strategic Planning

The primary planning documents for the Board are the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) and the Tongariro National Park Management Plan (TNPMP) which are now both due for revision. These plans are at the heart of the Board's responsibilities and the management of the protected areas in the Central North Island. It is the Board's view that their revision should be undertaken as soon as possible.

The Board was pleased by the advice received that the New Zealand Conservation Authority and the Department of Conservation are revising the format of CMS's and that the timetable for their revision was being advanced.

Within the Board's area, negotiations with Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Ngāti Haua, Ngāti Uenukue, Ngāti Rangi, Ngāti Maniapoto, and Whanganui Iwi in respect of Te Kāhui Maunga are of special significance and the final agreements reached will lead the planning processes and responsibility for these places into the future. The Board is very supportive of this process and is of the view that the protection of the wide values of the area and the Park will be significantly enhanced as part of the outcome.

Monitoring of the implementation of the CMS

In terms of fulfilling the Board's responsibility in monitoring the implementation of the CMS, this has been made difficult by the age of the plan and Departmental processes which are not directly connected back to it. The Board is pleased that the new CMS format and associated processes should enable more direct links to be made between the CMS and Departmental priorities.

The Board has asked to be consulted in the future as part of the annual budget process so it can provide advice on the priorities it sees as critical to meet the expectations of the CMS and relevant management plans. The Department has initiated a mechanism for this process to occur.

The Board is, however, pleased with the reporting by the Department which has become more comprehensive and is responsive to the requests the Board has made for relevant information. Given the resources available to it, the Board believes the Department does a good job in its management of the area and this relates, in no small degree, to the dedication and skills of the staff.

Stewardship Land

In response to a request from the Minister of Conservation, the Board, working with Departmental staff, undertook a review of the stewardship land within the Board's area with a view to recommending any priority areas that would benefit from a change to their current land categorisation. The Board identified three areas as its top priorities for a classification review. It also identified several large and smaller areas around Tongariro National Park that could be considered for addition to the National Park as part of any legislation passed through settlement negotiations.

Tongariro Alpine Crossing

The 'great walk' is now a major international tourist attraction. It is facing real use pressure and several unique management challenges with its route over an alpine volcanic landscape and logistical problems in respect of access, the provision of services such as waste and toilets and in ensuring visitor safety. The Board has been briefed by the Department on the options being considered to improve the experience and safety of visitors and looks forward to being able to advise the Department on the most suitable options.

Tongariro Forest Park

The Department briefed the Board on possible options to develop access and facilities in the Tongariro Forest Park to provide a range of alternative recreational opportunities and to take pressure off the National Park. The ideas were only at a concept stage, but the Board accepted this was an opportunity to accommodate different and often incompatible activities in a well-planned and innovative development.

5.3 Policy comments

In response to concession application reporting on applications for the collection of flora and fauna in the National Park, the Board agreed to provide formal policy comment to the Department after some concerns were raised. This policy advice was provided by a board member with specific skills in this area. These recommendations related to applications for the collection of biological material in the National Park and included comments on providing specific undertakings around material collection purposes, storage information and the need to consult with local iwi around the use of indigenous knowledge and traditional medicines.

6.6 COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE BOARD

During the year Board members attended a wide range of meetings and events. The main roles were as a representative in attendance on behalf of the Board or as a participant as an integrated part of an event or project.

Kids Greening Taupō

Board members contributed a significant amount of time to the Kids Greening Taupō programme. This is a partnership between Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board, Greening Taupō and the Department. The programme which involves 2 kindergartens, 2 primary schools and 1 college was launched in September 2015. The programme provides students with the opportunity to connect with their local environment and to shape the future of their place. Board members participated in two days of events for the launch of Kids Greening Taupō. A community evening (supported by local community groups and education providers) was held at Tauhara College. Guest Speaker Ruud Kleinpaste entertained the audience speaking on “Bugs in the System - Connecting Kids with Nature in the Age of Technology”



Tauhara College “Evening with Ruud Kleinpaste – Board Member Geoff “Snow” Rameka “master of Ceremony”
Photograph taken by Department Staff



The next day at Spa Park, Taupō, over 150 people from the community attended a day of conservation themed activities.

Spa Park – Kid’s Greening Taupō Launch - Board members Peter Zimmer and Colin Paton (4th and 5th from left to right)

Photograph taken by Department Staff

Kaimanawa Horse Muster

The bi-annual Kaimanawa Horse Muster took place on 27 April 2016 and Board members were invited to attend by the Department. Two Board members took up this opportunity and noted the horse count revealed approximately 400 horses in the area. Due to the fragile nature and rarity of some of the local native flora 300 horses is the desirable number for this area. This ensures there is enough food for the horses throughout the seasons and the native biodiversity impact is minimised. The weather was perfect and the whole operation went very smoothly. 104 horses were mustered and separated into stallions, mares and foals, and weanlings. They all appeared to be in good condition and 99 horses were trucked towards their new homes the next day. Two mare foal combinations were released back into the wild. This is the first time that approved homes have been found for all the horses. We are grateful to the organisations that worked so hard to achieve this - the Kaimanawa Heritage Horses who found homes for 95 horses and the Kaimanawa Wildhorse Preservation Society who found homes for four which has been a good outcome.

Community Group Liaison Roles

A Board member has supported the Leave No Trace initiative in the region, and provided representation on the monthly Ohakune 2000 regional development committee. Board representation has been provided to the Tongariro Alpine Crossing Technical Advisory Group (TACTAG) as well.

Sika Foundation

Retiring Board member Colin Paton was a strong advocate towards the formation of the Central North Island Sika Foundation which originated at our board meeting last year from an address by Dave Conley, a Department staff member. This Board has now been established and the Sika Foundation Executive includes a Conservation Board representative as of 8 July 2016.

7.0 ADVOCACY

The 2014/2015 Letter of Expectation from Associate Minister for Conservation, Hon Nicky Wagner, challenged the Board to raise their profiles within their communities of interest. This Board has taken this seriously with some examples of this mentioned above. In the coming year, the Board will continue to focus on creating authentic relationships with communities, iwi and the Department to grow conservation. As the expanding tourism industry benefits communities

economically, but puts pressure on infrastructure and natural values, the Board will work constructively with the Department to develop solutions and opportunities to ensure that we provide for a high quality natural experience for visitors and users while protecting the cultural, historic, scientific and natural capital of New Zealand's unique landscape and waters.

8.0 LIAISON WORK

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Region shares boundaries with five conservation regions. Five liaison roles are assigned amongst board members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Tūroa te Ao Conservation Awards – Tūroa te Ao – Act for Nature Awards:

With a 14-year history, Conservation Awards have always had a place in the Tongariro Taupō community. After a four-year hiatus, the awards were re-launched in 2014 as the Tūroa te Ao – Act for Nature Awards at the encouragement of the Conservation Board. The primary aim of the Awards is to increase awareness and involvement in conservation, however they also provide the opportunity for the Board to raise its profile in the community. Board members are actively involved in the process, supporting the Department to encourage nominations from the community, assisting in the judging process and taking part in the ceremony itself.

2015 Conservation Awards Results

| Category | Award Recipient |
|---|-------------------------|
| Business Conservation Award | Genesis Energy |
| Conservation Community Group Award | Bike Taupō |
| Individual/Leadership Conservation Award | Laura Dawson |
| School Conservation Project Award | Wairakei Primary School |