

# Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board (Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro/Taupo)

Annual Report 2011-2012



# **Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board**

Te Poari Papa Atawhai  
o Tongariro/Taupo

## **Annual Report**

1 July 2011 - 30 June 2012

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority  
pursuant to Section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987

Serviced by the Department of Conservation

Turanga Place  
Private Bag  
Turangi

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## Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board Members



**From left to right (standing):** Louise Davies (Board Support Officer), John Bishara, Don Cameron, Te Ngaeha Wanikau, Cam Speedy

**From left to right (seated):** Barbara Morris, Colin Paton, Ellen Forch, Pete Masters (Chairperson)

**Absent:** Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, Neville Young



Sir Tumu Te Heuheu



Neville Young

**Cover Photo:** *Enthusiastic participants at the “Living Legends” Whakaipo Community Planting day September 2011*  
*Photo: DOC*

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Conservancy Amalgamation**

In December 2010, the Department formally amalgamated the Tongariro/Taupo and Whanganui Conservancies to become the Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy.

Both the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board and Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board remain unaffected in this reporting year and continue to exist as separate bodies. The Minister of Conservation approved changes to their respective areas of jurisdiction to mirror boundary changes made in the conservancy amalgamation and these became effective 1 July 2011.

## **Introduction to the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board**

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board is an independent statutory body, appointed by the Minister of Conservation. It was established by section 6L of the Conservation Act 1987.

The Board has the responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the conservation management strategy (CMS) and conservation management plans (CMPs) for its region. As well as providing for interaction between the public and the Department of Conservation at the conservancy level, the Board also acts as an advocate for the protection of conservation values. Its prime role is to advise the Department and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA).

The functions of the Board are set out in Sections 6M of the Conservation Act 1987, and in the National Parks Act 1980 and the Reserves Act 1977.

## **Area of Responsibility**

The Board's current area of responsibility covers the Department's Ruapehu and Taupō-nui-ā-Tia Areas within the greater Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy (refer to the map). The area in question encompasses 818,700 hectares, of which approximately 221,000 hectares is administered by the Department of Conservation (representing almost 27% of the total area of the Board's district). The Board's district is unique in that it has no ocean coastline and includes the Lake Taupo sport fishery.

The Board's district is dominated by the volcanic landscape of Tongariro National Park, the beech forest and tussock ranges of Kaimanawa Forest Park and by New Zealand's largest lake, Lake Taupo. Tongariro, Erua and Rangataua Conservation Areas to the east and south of the national park offer a diverse range of ecological features and recreational opportunities.

Tangata whenua have long had a special relationship and history with the mountains, lakes, waterways and geothermal features of this area. Tongariro, New Zealand's first national park, grew from the Ngati Tuwharetoa gift of its mountains to the nation in 1887. The park received World Heritage status in 1988 for natural landscape values and in 1993 for its cultural landscape values, recognising the special significance of the mountains to Ngati Tuwharetoa and Whanganui iwi.

The district contains many rare, uncommon, vulnerable or threatened native plants, birds, communities and ecosystems. Managing these in light of weeds, predators, fires and other threats remains an ongoing challenge.

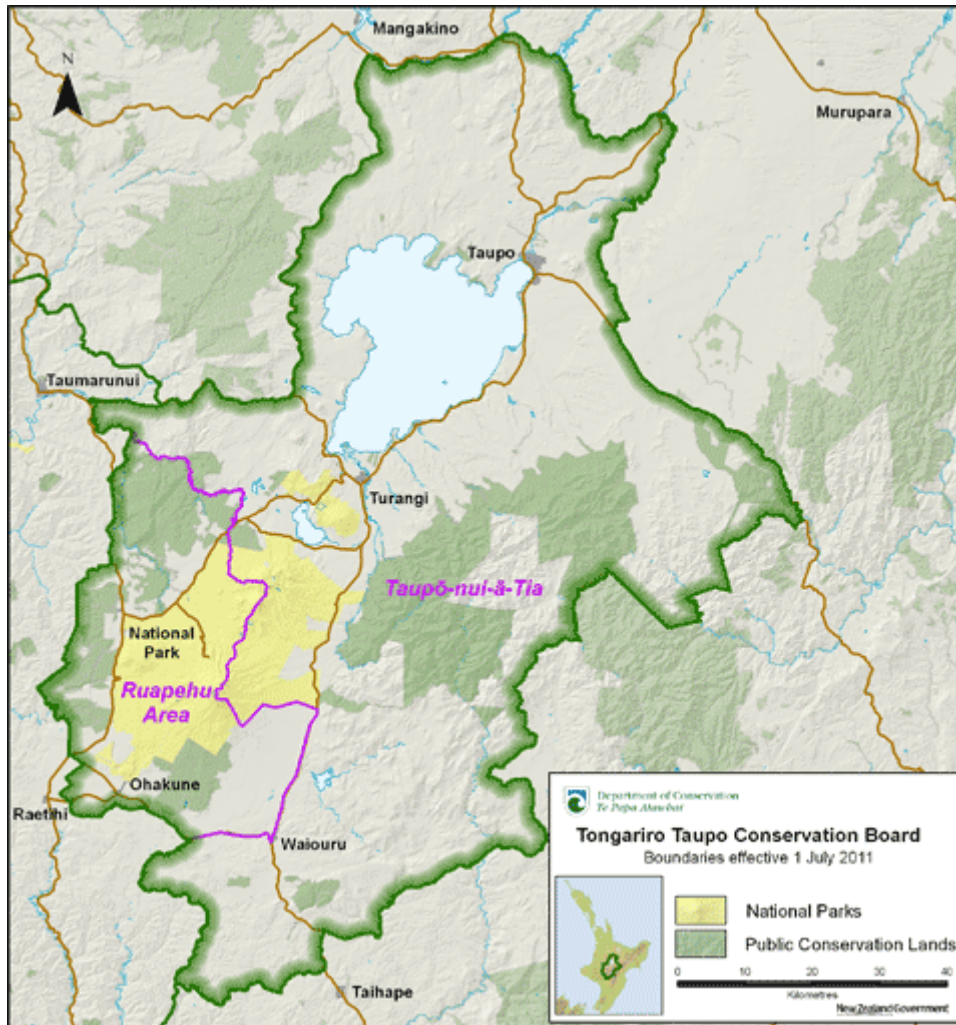
Lake Taupo and its tributaries provide opportunities for world-class fishing and numerous other forms of water recreation. The sports fishery is managed by the Department although the lake and river beds are owned by Ngati Tuwharetoa.

The landscape of the area is unique in New Zealand and large numbers of national and international visitors come here for sightseeing and recreation. Tongariro National Park is the most visited national park in New Zealand and numbers are expected to rise further. In contrast, the surrounding mountain ranges retain a feeling of remoteness and isolation which is increasingly sought by recreationists – New Zealanders in particular.

A large number of issues occur on these lands which are of interest to the Board. These include:

- management of plant and animal species such as the blue duck (whio), kiwi (western North Island Brown), and 3 species of mistletoe.
- management of recreational facilities such as huts and tracks
- management of historic sites
- concession activities, including those relating to recreation and tourism, grazing, research, and leases.

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board has a responsibility to the people of the Tongariro/Taupo district, and the wider New Zealand population, to ensure these lands and the biodiversity which they contain are protected and enhanced.



*Map of Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board Area*

### **Membership of the Board**

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board consists of ten members who are appointed for up to a three year term by the Minister of Conservation. Included on the board is the mandated appointment for the paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa. The remaining nine public appointments are made having regard to their experience, expertise and links with the local community including tangata whenua. Members may have knowledge of nature conservation, natural earth and marine sciences, cultural heritage, recreation, tourism, and Māori perspectives. This process ensures a diversity of experience and background and a spread across the main geographical and ecological zones within the board's area.

The names, locations of the members of the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board, and attendance record at meetings from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 were as follows:

<b>Appointed Member</b>	<b>Year Appointed</b>	<b>Home Location</b>	<b>Meetings Attended (5 held)</b>
John Bishara <sup>2</sup>	2011	Wellington	2
Don Cameron	2008	Ohakune	5
Dr Ellen Forch <sup>2</sup>	2011	Auckland	3
Peter Masters	2008	Taupo	5
Barbara Morris <sup>1</sup>	2011	Taupo	4
Garth Oakden <sup>3</sup>	2008	Turangi	1
Colin Paton <sup>1</sup>	2011	Taupo	5
Cam Speedy <sup>1</sup>	2011	Turangi	3
Sir Tumu te Heuheu	1998	Taupo	2
Te Ngaeha Wanikau <sup>2</sup>	2011	Turangi	1
Alex Wilson <sup>3</sup>	2001	Rotorua	1
Neville Young <sup>1</sup>	2011	Wellington	4

<sup>1</sup> Members who were newly appointed 1 January 2011

<sup>2</sup> Members who were newly appointed 19 September 2011

<sup>3</sup> Members whose terms expired 31 August 2011

At its February 2012 meeting, Pete Masters was re-elected as Chairperson for a further twelve months.

### **Conservation Board Meetings**

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board held five meetings during the report period. A combined discussion and field inspection with Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board was scheduled to coincide with one of the meetings. The meetings were as follows:

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Meeting Venue</b>	<b>Location</b>
12 August 2011	Turangi Conservancy Office	Turangi
7 October 2011	Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Pursuits Centre	National Park
2 December 2011	Kaiteke Hall	Owhango
24 February 2012	Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Creche, Top 'o' the Bruce	Whakapapa
25 May 2012	Tongariro National Trout Centre	Turangi

### **Field Inspections**

The Board regards inspections as an important part of exercising its functions because they provide opportunities to discuss management issues on site and share ideas with Department staff. Wherever possible, field inspections are arranged to coincide with topical conservation issues so that the Board can be provided with relevant background information.

*Friday, 2 December 2011/Saturday, 3 December 2011:* Members from both the Taranaki/Whanganui and Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Boards met at Kaitieke for a joint board discussion. An informal evening presentation was given by Dan Steele, local conservationist/farmer, on his natural and historic restoration project for private land adjoining the Whanganui National Park. With the two-day meeting themed around recreation and enhancing public access to the outdoors, board members conducted a site visit of the Bridge to Nowhere and were provided with a history of the Mangapurua settlement. In addition to input from Conservancy and Area staff, local concessionaires updated the members on the recreational opportunities available in and around Whanganui National Park and how they have benefited local business.



*Board members discuss the interpretation panels at the Bridge to Nowhere Photo: DOC*





*Friday, 24 February 2012:* Dave Mazey (General Manager, Ruapehu Alpine Lifts) provided a presentation on the indicative development plans (IDPs) for the Whakapapa and Turoa ski areas for which it is responsible. This was followed by a site inspection and explanation of the IDP for the Whakapapa Ski Field and included a visit to the newly built Knoll Ridge Café.

*Dave Mazey, General Manager RAL, guides members on a site inspection at Whakapapa skifield Photo: DOC*

### **Guest Speakers and Presentations**

Departmental staff and guest speakers are invited to give presentations to the Board. The Board received the following presentations for this reporting period:

August 2011

- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2011

October 2011

- Ruapehu District Plan Update (*Guest speaker*)

December 2011

- Natural & Historic Restoration Project on private land adjoining Whanganui National Park (*Guest speaker*)
- Recreational use by local communities (*Guest speaker*)
- Kia Wharite

February 2012

- Freedom Camping
- Indicative Development Plans for 2x ski areas (*Guest speaker*)

May 2012

- Taupo rainbow trout fishery study into decline of numbers & spawning migration patterns
- National Cycleways Mountains to Sea (Nga Ara Tuhono) Progress Report

The Board is grateful for the time and effort staff and guest speakers put into preparing and delivering these very informative presentations.

### **Budget, Fees and Allowances**

The Board's budget for 2011/12 was \$18,000. Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Allowances Act 1951. The chairperson receives a daily meeting fee of \$190 and other Board members receive a daily meeting fee of \$140. Members may be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses incurred while engaged on Board business.

## **STATUTORY FUNCTIONS – CONSERVATION ACT 1987**

### **Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987**

Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 states “This Act shall so be interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi”. As a body established under the Conservation Act 1987, section 4 applies to the Board in the discharge of its functions.

## **Functions of the Board**

### **(a) Recommend the Conservation Management Strategy for approval**

A conservation management strategy (CMS) is a 10-year statutory document that implements General Policy and establishes objectives for the management and protection of the natural and historic features and wildlife of the region, and for recreation, tourism and other conservation purposes. Conservation Boards are actively involved in the preparation, review and amendment and approval of CMSs.

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) was approved in May 2002 and has a lifetime of ten years. Following the recent merge of the Tongariro Taupo Conservancy with Whanganui Conservancy it will however, be replaced by one CMS for Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy that will manage the Ruapehu, Whanganui, Taranaki and Taupō-nui-ā-Tia Areas.

Although it was intended that the review project would be initiated in October 2011, the Board resolved at its August meeting to support a request to the Minister of Conservation to defer the CMS Review. It was agreed that a deferral of the review would enable the progress of the development and implementation of *He Kaupapa Rangatira* (A Joint Initiative) which was to have provided the principal means by which the Treaty principles and objectives would be implemented and achieved for Ngati Tuwharetoa and Ngati Rangi.

### **(b) Approve Conservation Management Plans**

In its meeting of May 2011, the Board received a proposal to construct a new recreational trail that would require amendments to the Kaimanawa Forest Park Management Plan (KFPMP). Following further information provided at its August 2011 meeting, the Board agreed to support a partial review of the KFPMP subject to written permission being obtained from a landowner adjoining the Kaimanawa Forest Park to allow the development, and use, of the track across their land.

### **(c) Advise on the implementation of the Conservation Management Strategy and Conservation Management Plans**

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board implements a system of monitoring categories and places within the CMS on a three yearly reporting cycle. The Board was briefed on three of the 20 sections of the CMS. The sections covered were:

#### *Visitor Information & Community Involvement*

The Board commended the Department on its work in visitor information and community involvement and considers that the CMS strategy is being well met.

In its August 2011 meeting, the Board was advised that the Department of Conservation's Summer Nature Programme "Active in the Park" was facing some challenges. Changes to the marketing approach had reduced costs whilst maintaining participant levels however a further review of the programme was intended. The Board noted its concern that this 'excellent' programme did not receive the support that it should.

As well as commending the Department on its involvement with community events such as the annual Sika show (with resultant positive feedback from hunting groups), the Department was also praised for the video material and information available on its website.

#### *Achieving Conservation on Areas not administered by DOC*

The Department reported that it is continuing to undertake a significant amount of work to promote conservation outside the areas it administers. Main activities have included the provision of support to private landowners and community groups for funding applications; provision of technical advice to assist community-led projects; and facilitating inter-agency cooperation with community groups. The Board agrees that the Department has made significant progress during the reporting period and is meeting the CMS strategy.



Although the Department aims to sustain and grow conservation work by others both on and off public conservation land, the Board advised that the CMS objectives will need to be revised to meet with the new Vision for the Department, particularly with regard to the rules for initial engagement and subsequent involvement with those individuals/community groups wishing to contribute toward conservation. In addition, the Board advised that the CMS objectives need to reflect the importance of its role as a bridge between the Department and potential community conservation partners.

The Board advised constraint with regard to pushing conservation values on unwilling landowners and stressed the importance of partnerships with an aim for better conservation outcomes. It was suggested that the CMS should outline clearer guidelines regarding public/private aspirations and how the Department manages these.



*DOC has been working with owners of Wairakei Golf Course to develop a sanctuary for rare & threatened native species. Photo: DOC*

### *Enhancing Public Access to the Outdoors*

The Board's general opinion is that good progress is being made with implementation of the CMS provisions regarding enhancing public access to the outdoors however advised that "*Objectives Achieved*" must not induce a feeling of complacency as the provision of recreation opportunities is always a work in progress and there remains a number of objectives assessed as not yet achieved or partially achieved.

Provision for new cycleways has continued to be a focus for the Department and has successfully contributed toward an increase in visitor usage of public conservation lands, particularly for first-time participants. The Board noted that ongoing maintenance of these cycleways could present problems for the Department in the future.



*Dual walking & cycling track Photo: DOC*

The Board also noted that there will be pressure on the Department to maintain a high standard of visitor experience on some tracks/facilities, particularly those most used by international visitors. As the provisions of the Destination Management Framework (DMF) begin to influence funding-allocation decisions, it is the Board's view that as representatives of the community it will need to

support and guide the Department's efforts to ensure fair allocation of limited resources, particularly in relation to provision of visitor facilities.

A number of recommendations were made by the Board regarding resolution of visitor access to the southern Kaimanawa Forest Park; improved access for disabled visitors where practicable; consideration of conservation gains when evaluating new recreation opportunities; and seeking alternative contributory funding options for ongoing cycleway maintenance. It is also recommended that in its efforts to adhere to the requirements of the DMF, the Department does not abdicate its responsibility to provide recreational opportunities for all users of public conservation land.

### *Freshwater Fishery Management*

The Board was reminded that the Tongariro Taupo area is not well endowed with indigenous freshwater fish species and when compared to other parts of the country only supports low numbers of fish and low species diversity. It is considered that the Department is currently working to its objectives.

The Department was commended for its cooperative work with Tongariro River Advocates, Genesis Energy, and iwi to support and improve the Tongariro River catchment strategy as well as its continued role in educating freshwater users to avoid the spread of aquatic pests (including but not exclusively didymo).

A highlight since the last report has been the opening and operation of the Genesis Freshwater Aquarium that includes a native fish display and is touted by the Department as being the biggest freshwater advocacy advance over the last two years.

### *Taupo Sports Fishery*

Reporting measures relating to the Taupo Sports Fishery include its sustainability, angling opportunity and community engagement plus control of risks.

It was determined that the major issue inhibiting the Department's ability to fully meet implementation of the CMS is the fact that the harvest total for fishermen is circa half as of 10 years ago which impacts on funds gained from licence sales, anglers' satisfaction, and the health of the tourist industry. The Board commended the Department on its efforts to effect improvements in the fishery.

Board recommendations include developing a more user-friendly licence system, including the issue of plastic card licences. The Board also supports additional research into aspects of the sports fishery and looks forward to progress in this area.

## **(d) (i) Advise on any proposed change of status or classification**

There has been no progress on the addition of Rangataua Forest to the Tongariro National Park or the gazettal of Tongariro Forest as a conservation park. These areas are currently subject to a Treaty of Waitangi claim. The gazettal of the proposed scenic reserve at Huka Falls is currently on hold due to outstanding Treaty issues.

## **(ii) Advise on any other conservation matters**

The Board is provided with a summary of concession applications at each meeting and is consulted when the application meets the Board's concession trigger criteria including:

- a proposed activity that is the first of its kind in the conservancy
- a proposed activity that is not provided for or envisaged in the relevant CMS/CMP, or it is unclear
- a proposed activity that is considered high impact or requires public notification

Accordingly, and on behalf of the Board, the Concessions Committee advised on a concession application from Adventure South Guiding, and a concession variation application from Tukino Mountain Clubs Association.

**(e) Advise on walkways**

The Board formerly had the function of advising the Conservation Authority and the Director-General on proposals for new walkways. This function was repealed by section 82 of the Walking Access Act 2008.

**(f) Liaison with Fish and Game Council**

An Eastern Fish and Game Council representative continues to be informed of the Board's work through agenda papers and minutes. There were no matters arising from the liaison which required direct Board input.

**(g) Ministerial Delegations**

The Minister did not delegate any ministerial powers or functions to the Board during the reporting period.

**Powers of Boards**

**(a) Advocacy**

When appropriate the Board may advocate on issues relating to conservation values on both public and private land such as the protection of indigenous flora and fauna, landscape, cultural and historic values, water quality, and environmental degradation. Advocacy is generally performed by way of providing comment on discussion documents from other Government organisations and statutory plans developed by regional and district councils.

*Treaty/Iwi Relationships*

The Board has a statutory requirement to include the paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa and has several other Board members with local iwi affiliations. These connections play a vital role in improving the Board's understanding of iwi perspectives.

*Submissions*

Game Animal Council Bill:

The Board supported the principle objective of the Bill that will enable the creation of a Game Animal Council as a statutory body to advise and make recommendations to the Minister of Conservation on behalf of the hunting community. In its submission, the Board supported the Bill's purposes to: provide information and education to the hunting sector; raise awareness and advocate views of the hunting sector; conduct research into game animals and their management; and to reduce conflict within the sector. It is the Board's belief that a Game Animal Council has the potential to enhance positive interactions and co-operative outcomes between the Department of Conservation and hunting interests, but recommends that it would need to retain independence from the Department on game animal issues and should therefore provide advice directly to the Minister.

**(b) Establishment of Committees**

The Conservation Act enables the Board to establish committees and delegate to them functions and powers. The committees active during the reporting period were:

Recreation, Historic and Concessions	Barbara Morris; John Bishara; Pete Masters; Neville Young
Volcanic Hazards	Colin Paton; Ellen Forch; Pete Masters
Management Planning and Policy	Pete Masters; John Bishara; Cam Speedy
Statutory Planning	Don Cameron; Pete Masters; Neville Young
CMS Review	Pete Masters; Don Cameron; Tumu Te Heuheu (ex-officio); Ellen Forch; Cam Speedy; Neville Young
Tangata Whenua	Cam Speedy; Barbara Morris; Te Ngaeha Wanikau
World Heritage	Don Cameron; Tumu Te Heuheu; Ellen Forch; Cam Speedy



## **FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1980**

### **(a) Recommend National Park Management Plans, Reviews or Amendments**

The Tongariro National Park Management Plan came into effect in October 2006. A partial review of the management plan began in late 2009 in consultation with the Board for activities that arose as a result of changed circumstances or increased knowledge.

Following endorsement at its May 2011 meeting, the Board resolved that the recommended changes be forwarded to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) for approval. Representatives from the Board and the Department presented the Draft Tongariro National Park Management Plan Partial Review at the NZCA meeting on 23 June 2011.

At its August meeting, the Board was updated on responses to questions and initial feedback from the NZCA regarding proposed policy changes to concessions for mountain biking and the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, and over-snow passenger transport. The Board also considered and agreed to several minor wording changes as recommended by the NZCA regarding the draft Tongariro National Park Management Plan partial review.



*Trampers overlooking Tama Lakes in Tongariro National Park  
Photo: J Johnson*

Following its review by the Minister of Conservation, the Tongariro National Park Management Plan Partial Review was subsequently approved by the NZCA at its meeting on 13 October 2011. As well as being publicly notified, an addendum to the Tongariro National Park Management Plan was developed and sent to all submitters to the partial review.

## **RESERVES ACT 1977**

There were no matters raised under the Reserves Act 1977 that required consultation with the Board during the reporting year.

### **LIAISON**

All Board members receive the minutes of NZCA meetings and liaison is maintained through NZCA member Brian Stephenson who also attended the February meeting. The Board is very grateful to Catherine Tudhope and Katrina Edwards, Statutory Bodies Advisors, for keeping regular contact with the Board.

The Board has continued liaison with adjoining Conservation Boards through an exchange of minutes and shared correspondence on matters of national importance. As a result of the amalgamation and a need to discuss whole of conservancy outcomes, the Board Chairs from both the Tongariro/Taupo and Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Boards have a reciprocal agreement to attend meetings.

Board minutes are distributed to a number of individuals, groups and organisations and Board members also liaise with their own communities of interest during the reporting year. This liaison is seen as a very important way of providing an interface with the community.

## **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

As I write this Chairs Report for the 2011/12 reporting year, nature has recently demonstrated its power through the recent eruptions on Mt Tongariro and provided a timely reminder that we live in a very alive and changing landscape. This is what makes Tongariro National Park so unique and why the mountains hold a special place in our minds.

The board has just completed its first full year under the new environment encompassing two boards within the new Tongariro Whanganui Taranaki Conservancy. This has worked far better than I had anticipated. The size of the new Conservancy is such that only with the two boards could I say that we would be able to meet the boards responsibilities for providing feedback to the Department with a full understanding of local issues.

The meeting of the two boards once a year to share ideas and issues has been a great success. I am sure that what we saw as future problems such as the review of the new CMS will in fact, fall into place far easier than we expected because of this relationship.

I would like to thank Darryn Ratana, the Chair of the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board to his commitment to get the two boards working together.

The board has continued to work on its CMS monitoring programme with at least one or two reports per meeting. This has ensured that both the board members and departmental staff interrelate. My thanks to the staff for their reports, presentations and their presence at our meetings.

### **Acknowledgements**

There are a number of people I wish to thank: the Conservator, Damian Coutts, for his commitment to the board's work; Community Support Manager, Mark Davies, for all of his face-to-face work with the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board. Especially I would like to thank our Board Support Officer, Louise Davies, for her work over the last year and in keeping both boards running very smoothly. The Department has had a lot of changes in the last year and she was one that was affected but at no time did she let that affect her work.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the board members for committing to attending meetings and to the board's work. As the vision of the Department focuses on conservation with communities, our role as the interface between the community and the Department will become even more important.



Pete Masters  
Chairperson  
August 2012

### **Adoption of Report**

**Moved:** *That the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board adopt the Annual Report for 2011/2012 to be forwarded to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required under section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987*

**Carried** 10 August 2012