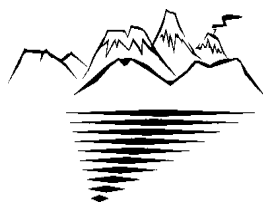


Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Annual Report 2022-2023



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Tongariro/ Taupō Conservation Board Meeting
Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro Taupō

Annual Report of the
Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board
Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro Taupō

For the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023

*Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority / Te Pou Atawhai Taiao O
Aotearoa pursuant to section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987*

Cover photo: Man standing on peak above Emerald Lakes on Tongariro
Photographer: Jimmy Johnson

Back cover photo: Board Field trip into the Kaimanawa Forest park
Photographer: Karen Rainbow

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Edward Ellison
Chairperson, New Zealand Conservation Authority
PO Box 10420
Wellington 6143

Tēnā koe Edward

I submit, in terms of section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987, the annual report of the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board (the Board) for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. The Conservation Act requires that the Board report each year to the New Zealand Conservation Authority on its operations.

This report is my last as my third term on the board has come to an end and I have not been reappointed. So, it is a time for me to reflect on the progress and successes of not just the past twelve months but over the last 9 years. When I started my time on the board, we were optimistic as the governance arrangements for public conservation land had just gone through a review and the role of boards and the Conservation Authority, had just been confirmed. The then Associate Minister had been given the task of directly working with the boards and being available to them. The board's role primarily focused on the development of policy and management planning, and the monitoring of the Department's performance in delivering on these policies and plans. The reality has been though, that the restructuring of the department that separated planning and permissions teams from the local conservation districts, and a lack of priority given to this work by the Department has made the board's role very frustrating. And personally, looking back on 9 years I am disappointed with what I, personally, feel I have achieved.

That being said, it has been very rewarding to serve on a board with members with great integrity and who bring such a range of skills and experience. What we have done is to make progress in the areas of relationship with the mana whenua of our rohe and put the building blocks in place to allow the development over the next few years of a conservation management strategy appropriate for our special places, their natural and spiritual values.

The first big step was to bring onto the board very senior representation from the main iwi groups in our rohe. The board has had the statutory appointment of members, as a result of Treaty Settlement, from Ngāti Tūwharetoa and Ngāti Rangī. It then invited Uenuku and Ngāti Haua to appoint co-members to the

Board. It is a great step forward that Ueneku have now achieved their own Settlement and will have a Statutory seat on the board from now on. We look forward to a Settlement for Ngāti Haua but in the meantime are very appreciative of their participation on the board.

The second important step was to appoint the Statutory/seconded iwi representatives as co-chairs, with them chairing meetings of the board, when possible, in their rohe. This has been an important step in recognising the fundamental co-governance role. It has brought a great richness to the discussions around the board table and provides a pathway for the development of place specific plans and policies in the near future. And it will set the board up as the appropriate body to oversee the delivery of those policies in the future. This has been to ensure their voice at the board table as an interim measure prior to their own Settlements. We have been delighted to see this come to fruition and see the regular involvement of Aiden Gilbert and Graham Bell. This step has now been endorsed by the Minister in deciding not to appoint a full Board to allow for the statutory numbers to be kept within the provisions of the legislation while including our co-opted members.

The other initiative agreed last year of appointing co-chairs from each of the iwi to chair the meetings held in their rohe, has been frustrated to an extent by Covid-19. This has meant that a number of the meetings of the Board have been virtual rather than in person. Despite that, the involvement of the co-chairs and Honey Winter, who is deputy chair, has significantly enhanced the work of the Board. This close involvement of the iwi in the work of the Board has given us real optimism for the future and our ability to progress our work and conservation in the region.

Upcoming are negotiations on a Treaty Settlement over Tongariro National Park and I think ancillary to those, the board can play an important role in giving assurance that the outcomes will give greater long-term protection for the park and those values that we all share.

In terms of the review of the conservation management strategy, although we have not made much progress over the last 12 months, as reported in my report last year, the board sees a clear way forward. While aspects of the present legislation should be reviewed, that is not the reason why no progress has been made with CMS review; it is because, as noted above, the process has been (deliberately) starved of resources and tangled up with unwieldy departmental policies and procedures. The Board is seeking to secure some minimal resources to allow it, in association with its iwi partners, to produce a new style CMS that reflects the values of our rohe. One that is iwi centric. The reality is that the four iwi have gone a long way in developing their own ideas on how to achieve the protection of their taonga. Letting them take the lead and identifying common values and objectives between iwi and the wider community on a backdrop of the natural values already enunciated in the existing CMS gives the board a way forward. The board has made representation to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for support for it to follow this path.

There are major issues facing the national park and the protected lands of the Tongariro Taupō basin. Obvious ones relate to the future of the Ruapehu ski fields. Both short and longer term. The financial failure of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts raises some immediate challenges which are not directly within the board's responsibilities, but the longer-term implications are. Especially when the impact of climate change is part of the mix. The question of how might the use of the area change, especially given the public statements by prospective bidders that a winter only option is no longer viable and the future of the club huts in the face of societal change are all issues of fundamental concern to the board.

The future of the Chateau Tongariro and the 20 plus buildings associated with the hotel are also of major concern. The transition from the Tourist Hotel Corporation to a private overseas owner was poorly thought through and now there is a situation where few public facilities in terms of food and shelter are open and potential solutions may be held up while concession disputes are resolved. Urgent action is required by the Government to resolve these issues.

On the positive side the Board is pleased that progress is being made on improving the management of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing, especially in respect of the transport concessionaires. A good outcome should facilitate visitor appreciation of the spiritual and natural taonga they are privileged to visit while at the same time ensuring their enjoyment and safety.

At the same time these big issues, that are not necessarily directly related to the protection of taonga values, can overshadow activities that should be a top priority. Over recent years good progress has been made in the control of plant and animal invasive pests. But with Government seeking to hold/reduce expenditure and having to fund some big-ticket public facilities (or bale out failed commercial operations), resources available for this essential work may be further restricted. A few years of reduced effort could take decades to recover. Monitoring this work and the priority given to it needs to be a high priority for the board in future.

An area of focus for the board has been the impact of ungulates on the vegetation of Kaimanawa Forest Park, namely deer and goats. The issue is very serious due to an event of beech die-back, an issue at any time but made much worse because the understory of the forest, including the regenerating beech, is being eaten out. It is an interesting quandary that the Sika Deer Foundation has been working closely with the Department helping to both control ungulates and, through trapping programmes, other predators. Ideally all ungulates would be removed from our conservation lands and so it is a compromise to allow selective control of (Sika) deer to improve hunting while at the same time these very deer will always threaten the values of the park.

These are issues the Board does need to keep on top of because advising on priorities and ensuring management decisions are in the best interests of protecting natural and spiritual values is at the heart of its mission.

Once again, I would like to highlight the individual contributions of the members of the Board and single a few out for their special input – and their contribution to keeping me still learning after all these years. Our Statutory and co-opted iwi representatives have played an incredible role in bringing the board and our iwi partners into a close and collaborative relationship. Te Ngaehe Wanikau from Ngāti Tūwharetoa has over a number of years been a key leader on the Board, and I am grateful for how much he has taught me over the last 9 years. Dave Milner from Ngāti Rangi helped the Board embrace its co-chair structure to give effect to real co-governance. And I also want to thank Aiden Gilbert from Ueneku and Graham Bell from Ngāti Hāua for their special voice and contribution.

It is a great Board, but I would also like to make a special note of recognition for our deputy chair Honey Winter for her wisdom and support and Karen Grimwade who has made a real contribution to the review of the CMS and also preparing submissions and other documents on behalf of the Board.

I would also like to give special thanks to the support we have had from Karen Rainbow, the Regional Statutory Manager, and Board Support Officer Rena Nicholson. They, alongside Damian Coutts, the Regional Operations Director and the area managers have given the Board great advice and help during the year. As someone who has attended meetings for the 9 years, I would also like to note the huge contribution to conservation by Dave Lumley.

So, it is with regret I sign off but again note the Board has a core of dedicated and talented members that represent their communities. Because of this, the Board is in a good position if the resources are made available to it, to make real progress in the next few years in completing a strong CMS and progressing policies that are important in the protection of our dual heritage national park and the other significant conservation areas of the central North Island.

Nō reira

E noho ora mai



Mike Britton
Chairperson
Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board

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1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2022/23 Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Annual Report.

Section 6(O) of the Conservation Act requires conservation boards to provide the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority) with an annual report as soon as practical after 30 June each year. In recognition of this requirement the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board submits this annual report.

Conservation boards are appointed by the Minister of Conservation under section 6(P) of the Conservation Act 1987. Board functions are outlined in section 6(M) and the powers, which enable the conservation boards to carry out those functions, are under 6(N) of the Act.

Conservation boards are independent advisory bodies, established by statute. They represent the community and offer interaction between communities and the Department of Conservation (the Department), within their area of jurisdiction.

Conservation boards have several statutory roles under various Acts including:

- the recommendation of the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) to the Authority for approval.
- advising the Department and the Authority on how conservation management strategies and plans will be put into practice.
- reporting on the implementation of the CMS.
- the approval of Conservation Management Plans (CMP).
- the recommendation of National Park Management Plans (NPMP) to the Authority for approval.
- advising the Department and Authority on conservation matters, and proposed changes to status of land of national and international significance.
- liaising with the regional Fish and Game Council on conservation matters.
- carrying out other powers delegated by the Minister of Conservation, the Conservation Act or any other Act.

Conservation boards also have several functions under section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980. These functions include recommending the review or amendment of NPMPs and recommending approval of these plans by the Authority.

2. ROHE

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board's area of jurisdiction covers the area of 819,013.24 hectares.

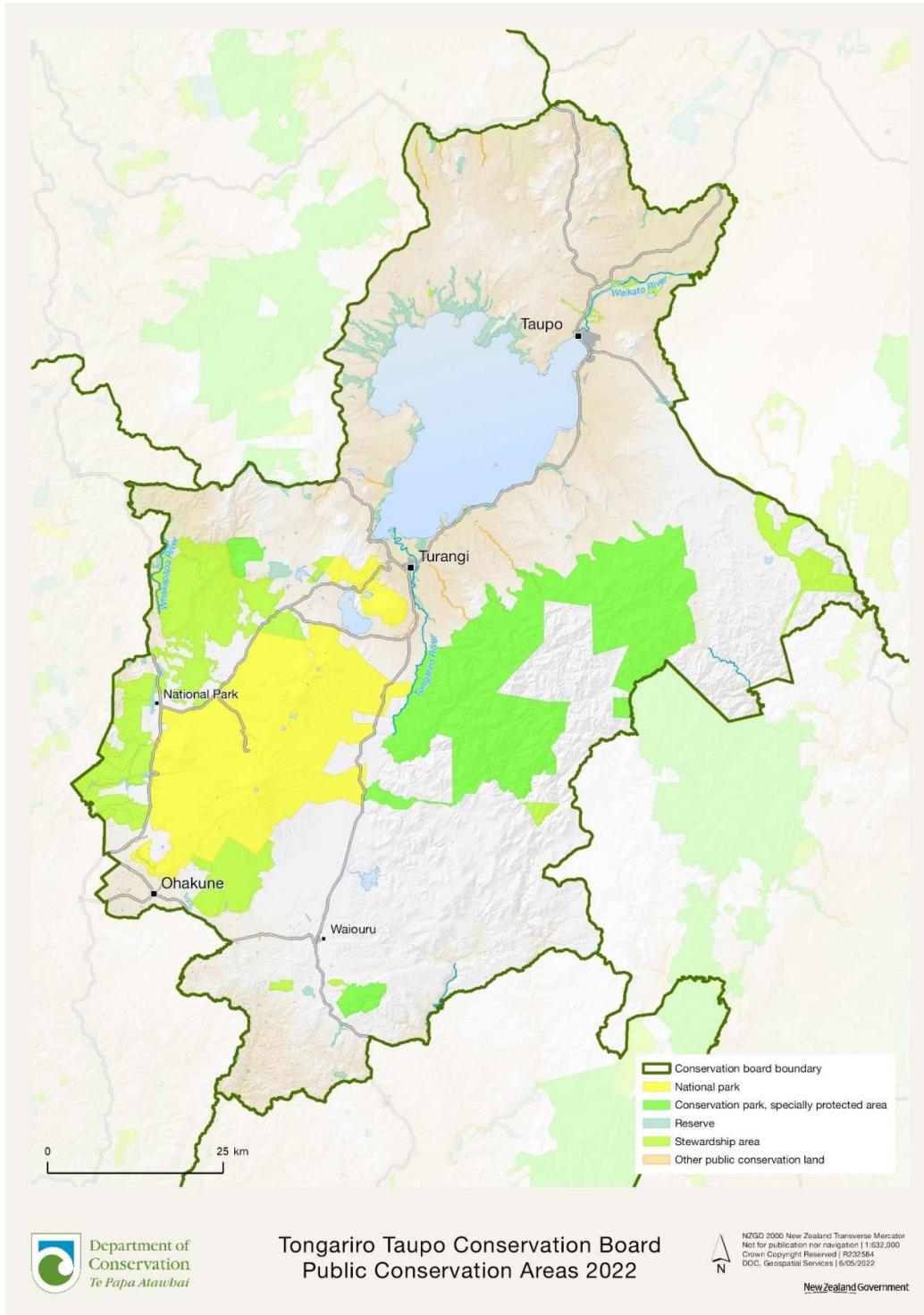


Figure 1. Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Jurisdiction

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.

2.1 Tāngata whenua

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board rohe covers an area from Taupō through to Ohakune and beyond. The iwi with interests in this rohe includes:

- Ngāti Tāwharetoa
- Ngāti Hāua
- Te Korowai o Wainuiārua (Uenuku, Tamahaki, Tamakana)
- Ngāti Rangī

There are representatives of all four iwi on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board as either statutory appointments or co-opted members.

2.2 Conservation features of the area

The main features of Public Conservation Land and Waters within the Board's boundaries are:

- Tongariro National Park - 78,847.78 ha
- Kaimanawa Forest Park - 74,541.63 ha
- Kaweka Forest Park - 39.87 ha
- 1 Ecological Area - 1,901.3 ha
- 63 Scenic Reserves - 8670.63 ha
- 1 Historic Reserves - 186.42 ha
- 23 Recreation Reserves - 1,152.68 ha
- 53 Stewardship Area - 50,648.82 ha
- 36 Marginal Strip - 439.17 ha
- Tongariro National Park lies within the Boards jurisdiction.
- Te Urewera, Whanganui National Park and Whirinaki Te-Pua-a-Tane Forest adjoin the Board's area of jurisdiction.
- Tongariro National Park is registered in the New Zealand World Heritage List.

2.3 Conservation issues in the area

Approximately 1.52% of all public conservation land in Aotearoa lie within the region. These PCL make up 26.74% of all land in Tongariro/Taupō (219,331.53ha).

The large number of issues which are of interest to the Board include:

- Update of our Conservation Management Strategy and Management Plans which are all now a decade out of date. This is now an urgent matter.

- Giving effect to the outcomes of Treaty Settlements and working with iwi which have settled to further their own development and the protection of their natural and spiritual Taonga, and to respect and work with iwi still working towards settlement.
- The impact of tourists/visitors to, especially, Tongariro National Park and the possible opportunity the impact of Covid19 has given to reset.
- The impact of ungulates, particularly in Kaimanawa Forest Park where there is imminent threat of canopy collapse.
- The impact of budget restraints on the proper protection of natural values in the Rohe and both advocating for sufficient resources and helping the Department with prioritisation of the resources it has available.
- The board is striving to stay up to date on the current socio-economic crisis within Tongariro National Park with the financial collapse of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts and the abandonment of the concession relating to The Chateau Tongariro Hotel.

3. FUNCTIONS

3.1 Board functions under section 6(M) of the Conservation Act 1987

The functions of the Board are:

- 1) To recommend the approval by the Authority of conservation management strategies, and the review and amendment of such strategies, under the relevant enactments.
- 2) To approve conservation management plans, and the review an amendment of such plans, under the relevant enactments.
- 3) To advise the Authority and the Director-General on the implementation of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans for the area within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 4) To advise the Authority or the Director-General on any proposed change of status or classification of any area of national or international importance.
- 5) To advise the Authority or the Director-General on any other conservation matter relating to any area with the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 6) To liaise with any Fish and Game Council on matter within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 7) To exercise such powers and functions as may be delegated to it by the Minister under this Act or any other Act.

3.2 Board power under section 6(N) of the Conservation Act 1987

- 1) Every conservation board shall have all such powers as are reasonably necessary or expedient to enable it to carry out its functions.
- 2) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), each conservation board may -
 - i. Advocate its interests at any public forum or in any statutory planning process; and
 - ii. Appoint committees of members and other suitable persons, and delegate to them functions and powers.

- 3) The power conferred by subsection (2)(a) shall include the right to appear before courts and tribunals in New Zealand and be heard on matters affecting or relating to the Board's functions.

3.3 Board functions under section 30 of the National Parks Act 1980

- 1) to recommend management plans, and the review or amendment of such plans, for parks within the jurisdiction of the Board in accordance with sections 45 to 47.
- 2) to consider and determine priorities for the implementation of management plans for national parks.
- 3) to make recommendations to the Minister for the appointment of honorary rangers under section 40.
- 4) to review and report to the Director-General or the Authority, as appropriate, on the effectiveness of the administration of the general policies for national parks within the jurisdiction of the Board.
- 5) to give advice to the Director-General or the Authority—
 - i. on the interpretation of any management plan for a park; and
 - ii. on any proposal for the addition of land to any national park or the establishment of a new national park; and
 - iii. on any other matter relating to any national park, within the jurisdiction of the Board.

4. MEMBERSHIP

The Minister of Conservation appoints Board members under section 6(P) of the Conservation Act 1987. The process of appointment ensures that a range of perspectives, life experiences, and knowledge contribute to the advice provided and decisions made by the Board.

Board members are appointed for 3-year terms and may be re-appointed, unless they are appointed in replacement of a prior member's term. There were 12 Board members for the reporting year. Mike Britton was elected Chairperson and Honey Winter was elected Deputy Chairperson.

The number of member positions include the statutory position held by Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu and were appointed by the Minister of Conservation for the reporting year.

Three members' term of office expired on 30 June and there was one new member appointed, Michael Richardson and Te Ngaehe Wanikau was reappointed as the Ngāti Tūwharetoa representative. Mike Britton was reappointed to the Board as Chair.

The following table lists the membership of the Board between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023:

Board Member	Area	Term start	Term end
Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu	Tūwharetoa	1998	Life Member
Mike Britton	Wellington	July 2014	31 July 2023

Georgina (Honey) Winter	Raetihi	July 2018	30 June 2024
Hinemoa Wanikau	Tūrangi	July 2018	30 June 2024
Te Ngaehe Wanikau	Tūrangi (Ngāti Tūwharetoa Representative)	July 2019	30 Jun 2025
Dave Milner	Masterton (Ngāti Rangi Representative)	July 2020	31 July 2023
Karen Grimwade	Ohakune	July 2020	31 July 2023
Clint Green	Tūrangi	July 2021	30 June 2024
Kylie Simpson	Atiamuri	July 2021	30 June 2024
Michael Richardson	Taupō	August 2022	30 June 2025
Aiden Gilbert (Co-opted Member)	Uenuku Representative	July 2021	30 June 2024
Graham Bell (Co-opted Member)	Ngāti Hāua Representative	July 2021	30 June 2024

4.1 Members profiles

Mike Britton, Chair: Mr Britton is Chief Executive of the Environmental Law Initiative Trust. He has experience in drafting National Park and Conservation Acts, creating management plans, policy development and acting in committees. He has previously been involved in managerial and director roles within the Fish and Game Council and Forest and Bird Protection Society. His outdoor recreation interests are tramping, walking, restoration, and fishing.

Georgina (Honey) Winter, Deputy Chair, Raetihi: Mrs Winter is an independent Business and Project Management Consultant. She is the Chair of Ruapehu Health Ltd (General Practice) Board of Directors and holds qualifications in Māori and Administration, Mātauranga Māori, and Business Management. Mrs Winter is passionate about the wellbeing of her community, her marae and iwi. Conservation and addressing climate change ranks high on her list of priorities. She enjoys gardening and spending time with her family.

Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu, Statutory Position: Sir Tumu is Paramount Chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa and is a direct descendant of Horonuku Te Heuheu who in 1887, as Paramount Chief of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, *tukua* the mountains of Tongariro to the people of New Zealand. He is Chairperson of Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board, Lake Taupō Forest Trust, and Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust.

He sits on many national boards as either chair or a member. In the 2004/2005 honours list he was made a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, as New

Zealand's delegate to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee he was elected Chairperson in 2006.

Hinemoa Wanikau: Mrs Wanikau works in administration management/governance servicing for Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa, the Post Settlement Governance Entity. She has extensive experience and acumen in business administration and management, environmental planning, and review of policies and processes between hapū and government authorities. She has an interest in geothermal activity and water quality.

Te Ngaehe Wanikau, Statutory Appointment & Board Member: Mr Wanikau is a nominee of Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa. He has experience in environmental policy, planning and analysis, and consultation with local governments and authorities. His particular interest is in providing a cultural perspective to conservation board deliberations. His outdoor recreation interests are fishing and food gathering.

Dave Milner, Statutory Appointment & Board Member: Mr Milner is a Ngāti Rangī nominee. He has excellent engagement with hapū/iwi and hapori whānui, and skills in influencing engagement for kaitiaki and hapū/iwi in policy. He has deep understanding, and respect for, Mātauranga Māori.

Karen Grimwade, Board Member: Karen is a researcher and writer, with a special interest in local history. She has previously worked for the Department of Conservation in Tongariro in various roles. She has a degree in History and a Masters in Cultural Heritage Management. Karen is a member of the Project Tongariro executive committee and puts conservation at the head of her list of interests. She is a long time Ruapehu skier, a regular tramper, an aspirational gardener, and member of the Ohakune Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Clint Green, Board Member: Clint (of Ngā Wairiki and Ngāti Apa) is a former teacher and tourism operator providing close relationships with the local community. He is familiar with the conservation estate in the boards' rohe, having spent much of his life enjoying outdoor recreation activities in the Tongariro National Park and Kaimanawa Forest Park.

Kylie Simpson, Board Member: Kylie works for the Central North Island Sika Foundation Whio Recovery Project. She has a Diploma in Environmental Management, is a keen hunter, and has been involved in practical conservation initiatives. Ms Simpson was nominated by Game Animal Council member and Sika Foundation President, John Cook.

Michael Richardson, Board Member: Michael offers a background in geotechnical and structural engineering, with extensive experience in wastewater and stormwater including stability and issue assessments on Public Conservation Land. He is well connected with the local community being involved with a number of conservation groups including Greening Taupo, Kiwis for Kiwi, Forest and Bird, and as a volunteer on many Taupō-based Predator Free Projects. Mr Richardson is also well connected in the Alpine/Skiing community, being involved in the management of the Alpine Club Hut.

Graham Bell, Co-Opted Member, Ngāti Hāua Trust: Graham (of Ngāti Hāua) has a background in law, attending Sacramento State University (1986) and Waikato University (1991) being admitted to the BAR in 1996. He is the chairperson of whānau land under a Ngā Whenua Rāhui covenant since 2001 as well as being a Whanganui River Māori Trust Board Trustee for 14 years working on the Whanganui Awa Claim, which has made the awa a legal entity in its own right. Graham also has experience working for the Department as a Field Centre Manager in Taumarunui for 3 years. Graham retired in 2021 after serving 20 years working with Te Puni Kokiri/Ministry of Māori Development. He is pleased to represent Ngāti Hāua iwi on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board and is presently attending as a co-opted member.

Graham enjoys mountain & road bike riding, spending time on the whānau land in Tangarakau, and spending time with whānau & friends.

Aiden Gilbert, Co-Opted Member, Uenuku Charitable Trust: Aiden is the Chair of Uenuku Charitable Trust. The Trust consists of fifteen trustees who represent the interests of their people. The Trust was set up to promote, develop and sustain equality and equity amongst Uenuku.

5. MEETINGS AND FIELDTRIPS

The Board held six meetings during the reporting period. Venues for the meetings vary each year to ensure a wide coverage and enable members of the public in the district to attend meetings and access the Board.

Meeting date	Location/Venue
21 July 2022	Tūrangi, DOC Office
22 September 2022	Te Pae Tata, Ohakune
24 November 2022	Tūrangi, DOC Office
9 February 2023	Taupō, DOC Office
23 March 2023	Tūrangi, DOC Office
25 May 2023	National Park, The Park Hotel
27 July 2023	Taupō, DOC Office

5.1 Agendas

The Board hosted and heard from numerous speakers at its meetings, including:

22 Sep 22 – Ruapehu District Council

Vini Dutra (Exec Mgr. Infrastructure) and Andrea Nicol (Manager Land Transport) met with the board and discussed the Ruapehu District Council’s Public Transport Strategy for Mt Ruapehu.

22 Sep 22 – Transport Concessions Operators on Mt Ruapehu

A group of Transport Concessionaires met with the board to give their views on the council’s Public Transport Strategy, volume constraints and concession planning.

24 Nov 22 – Te Heke Ngahuru Update

The Board heard from Tahinganui Hina (Strategic Māori Relationship Mgr. DOC) on behalf of the Project Manager, Ngā Tāngata Tiaki and was updated on Te Heke Ngaruru – The Strategy to improve the Health and Wellbeing of the Whanganui River.

Department staff also attended throughout the year.

Regional and District staff attend all board meetings including the Regional Director Operations, Statutory Manager and Operations Managers. In addition, other Department personnel attended and presented on a range of topics including:

- 23 Mar 23 – Tongariro Alpine Crossing Sustainability Project Team

An update was provided from the project team on the progress to date of this project and the timeline for the project into the future.

- 24 Nov 23 – CMS Partial review re: Mountain Biking

The Management Planning Team outlined the details of the project and heard about current issues concerning the board in their role.

The agendas and minutes from all Board meetings can be found on the Board’s webpage.

5.2 Field trips and site inspections

Field trips are an excellent opportunity for Board members to become more aware of conservation issues within their region.

On 8th February 2023, the board flew via helicopter into the Kaimanawa Forest to investigate the devastation of beech die-back and the effects deer are having on the forest. This trip was guided by the SIKa foundation who are currently trying to manage deer to provide a better herd and forest. The aim is to get the forest back to what it used to be.

The field trip initiated the board to write a letter to the minister explaining their concern that no study is being done on the beech die-back in the area and that more funding is needed for the SIKa Foundation to continue the great work they are doing in managing deer numbers.

5.3 Members’ attendance 2020/21

Board Member	Meetings (total #)	Fieldtrips (total #)
Te Ariki Sir Tumu Te Heuheu	-	-
Mike Britton	5	1
Georgina (Honey) Winter	6	-
Hinemoa Wanikau	5	-
Te Ngaehe Wanikau	4	-
Dave Milner	4	-
Karen Grimwade	5	1
Kylie Simpson	5	1
Clint Green	4	1
Michael Richardson	5	1
Aidan Gilbert	3	1
Graham Bell	1	-

6. MAHI

6.1 Board Committees

The Conservation Act 1987 enables the Board to establish committees to carry out functions or tasks delegated by the Board. Committees that were active during the reporting period, and members involved in those committees included:

CMS Subcommittee:

The purpose of the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board CMS Subcommittee is to advise the Department on conservation management processes including CMS review, CMS Monitoring, NMP, FPMP and business planning as required by the Conservation Act 1987. This function is not able to be carried out as legislated for in the Conservation Act, as the CMS and NPMP and FPMP are so out of date they are no longer functioning as intended. Although, they are a precious information resource and still highly valued as archival documents.

DOC is underfunded in planning functions and is short of planning staff and neither have been prioritised. All work towards a new CMS is overshadowed by that reality.

We are advised by DOC Head Office that our CMS is scheduled for review in 2026 - this is likely to be deferred and so we continue to proceed to advocate for a faster review.

The Catalyst Group was contracted to try and build on the work the CMS committee had done in identifying how the CMS could progress. The CMS issues document written by Karen Grimwade attempted to do that, and it is kept updated as issues change and evolve. The Catalyst Group have produced a scope of works.

Te Ngāehe Wanikau is working to get together with all the iwi groups who are represented on the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board to reach agreement to proceed with the creation of a new and relevant CMS. Once we have achieved that agreement the subcommittee will organise a workshop - perhaps with the Whanganui Taranaki Conservation Board members if it suits them.

Karen Grimwade continues to keep an evolving document tracking the issues and options that impact on the TTCB rohe and operations within the rohe. It is hoped that this list might act as a resource for when the board/planners start work proper on the CMS.

We continue to attempt to submit to the legislation reviews and again stress our frustration at the short timeframes that are allocated to public submission. The TTCB submitted on the Wildlife Act Review and the Conservation Management Planning Review (CMAP). It is noted with some frustration that we have heard no more of the CMAP process despite enquiry and nearly a year going by.

As previously, we continue to focus our submissions on prioritising our taonga first and foremost, protection and preservation, and then appropriate use. We emphasise maintaining the importance of clear and relevant planning principles,

inclusion of Treaty principles and the importance of public input and involvement in how conservation works. We also advocate for clear aims and clear language to be used in planning documents and legislation.

We were also active in writing to the Minister about issues we felt strongly required her attention; Underfunding of the TTCB in relation to the Minister's Expectations, Continuation of JFN in support of Ngāti Rangi, and support for JFN funding for the Sika Foundation to continue the work controlling ungulates in Kaimanawa Forest Park. Also, a letter to other Conservation Boards regarding the concern over the exclusion of NZCA and Board regarding the treatment of Stewardship Land.

Subcommittee - Karen Grimwade, Dave Milner, Mike Britton, Honey Winter

6.2 Special events

Karen Grimwade attended several Mahi Aroha events in January 2023 as part of her role with Project Tongariro (who co-organise Mahi Aroha events with DOC) but also as a Conservation Board member.

6.3 Training for members

An induction was held with Michael Richardson upon his appointment to the board alongside the Statutory Manager for DOC and the Board Chair. This offered the opportunity to bring Michael up to speed on current work the board is undertaking.

7. STATUTORY ACTIVITY

7.1 Annual Work Plan

After receiving its Letter of Expectation from the Minister of Conservation, the Board sets out its work plan for the upcoming year. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the full Board Annual Work Programme.

7.2 Tongariro Taupō Conservation Management Strategy (CMS)

The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board (TTCB) is unable to monitor the Tongariro Taupō CMS as was intended in the Conservation Act 1987, as the CMS is unfortunately fundamentally out of date. As stated in previous annual reports, the under-resourcing of DOC in planning functions and planning staff has been a long-articulated frustration.

The TTCB now has representatives from four iwi from around the maunga on the Board and are therefore in a much better position to be working alongside iwi and hapū to progress the CMS. This will be reported upon further in the Chair's report.

Currently the CMS Sub-committee is working towards gaining formal agreement from the iwi represented on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board to begin work on a current and fit-for-purpose CMS. If we gain this approval, we intend to begin work – even if DOC planners are not scheduled to assist us.

The Board receives updates on work plans and business plans from CNI DOC staff and takes an active interest in all matters – in particular regarding matters of public interest. Currently the Board is trying to stay updated on the socio-economic crisis in Tongariro

National Park with the liquidation of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts and the abandonment of the concession to operate The Chateau Tongariro Hotel.

Also, an active interest in the wave of legislative and planning reviews currently going on – attempting to submit on reviews, even if in general terms that state our priority aim to protect and preserve our taonga and use clear and prescient language to communicate these aims. The list of submissions and communications is included under the CMS report and likely to be covered in the Chair’s report also.

7.3 Tongariro National Park - National Park Management Plan (NPMP)

The Tongariro National Park Management Plan (NPMP) is out of date. It is no longer able to function as a current document. In a similar situation to our CMS, it is a source of continuing frustration to the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board – and DOC staff must operate with outdated guiding documents.

8. ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

All Board members have responsibility for liaising with other groups when opportunities arise, and some members have specific roles in liaison. The Board appointed various members to liaise with other groups and agencies:

8.1 Board and Authority liaisons

The Board holds a liaison relationship with neighbouring conservation boards. Liaison roles for the reporting year were held by:

- Dave Milner – Liaison to Wellington Conservation Board
- Karen Grimwade – Liaison to Waikato Conservation Board
- Honey Winter – Whanganui Taranaki Conservation Board
- Kylie Simpson – Bay of Plenty Conservation Board

The Authority has a liaison member with the Board to facilitate communication. The Authority liaison attends Board meetings, and reports to the full Authority on matters raised. Tak Mutu was the Authority’s liaison for the reporting year.

8.2 Advice to the Department

The Board provided advice to the Department on the following issues:

- Tongariro National Park Concession Protocols.
- Tongariro Alpine Crossing Visitor Management Framework.
- CMS Review Process.
- CMS Partial Review on Mountain Biking.
- Kaimanawa Forest Park Management – Proposed temporary hut that Sika Foundation Proposed. Also advocating for continued JFN funding to continue the essential work to control ungulates in KFP.
- Outcome reporting for biodiversity measures/actions within the rohe.

8.3 Submissions

The Board advocated its interests during the reporting period through several submissions, available to read on its webpage:

- Apr 2023 – Proposed Speed Limit Changes, Tongariro National Park.
- Wildlife Act Review and CMAP.

8.4 Community advocacy and involvement

The Board believes that working with conservation organisations and members of the public is very important. Meetings were held in different parts of the Tongariro Taupō region and opportunities for the public to attend Board meetings were advertised.

Members of the public attended the Public Forum at several of the year's meetings and a range of issues were raised. The Board appreciated their input and efforts made to attend the meetings and responded by letter with a response to questions asked or concerns raised.

Public forum issues raised were:

- Peter Zimmer – 1080 Operation in Tongariro Forest
- Sam Clarkson – Skotel Lease
- Ivan Pemberton – Kaimanawa Forest Park & 4WD damage at Rangitaiki
- Pete Masters & Rowan Sapsford – Bike Taupō
- Helen Leahy – Ngāti Rangi & Ruapehu Worx – JFN Project
- Sam Clarkson & Richard Neeson – Save Mt Ruapehu Reporting Group

The Board has a practice of inviting representatives from community organisations to present at meetings. Speakers this year have represented:

- Sika Foundation – The board undertook a field trip into the Kaimanawa Forest Park alongside the Sika Foundation to learn of the impacts that high deer numbers are having on the park.

These were predominantly voluntary groups carrying out huge amounts of conservation work within the community. The Board recognises and appreciates volunteers and thanks them for the work done in this area.

8.5 Community visibility

The Board maintains a presence on the Department's website, and via the quarterly Conservation Board Newsletter.

8.6 Iwi liaison and advocacy

There are representatives of all four iwi with interests in the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board rohe on the board, and each board meeting offers the opportunity for the iwi representatives to update their fellow members on current topics of interest or areas of concern.

9. FEES AND ALLOWANCES

Fees and allowances are paid in accordance with the Fees and Travelling Allowances Act 1951. The chairperson receives a daily meeting fee of \$330, and other Authority members receive a daily meeting fee of \$250.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Board wish to acknowledge and thank the outstanding contribution made by Mike Britton over the past 9 years (3 terms) of service to the board. He has been an exemplary leader and Chair of our board. He was essential in the culmination of having representatives of all four iwi on the board by both appointment and co-option of iwi members. Mike's time on the board came to an end at the end of the 22/23 year. Mike will be sadly missed, and the board wishes him well and hope he will be available to advise the board in the future as the need arises and as the CMS review is progressed.

The Board also wishes to record the great support it has had from the DOC team in the Tongariro Taupō region led by Damian Coutts, the Regional Operations Director. Alongside him always going the extra step has been Karen Rainbow, the Regional Statutory Manager, and Board Support Officer Rena Nicholson. Operations Managers, Dave Lumley, George Taylor and Dave Conley have been regular attendees at meetings and their advice is much appreciated.

We have also appreciated the involvement of Tak Mutu, our liaison member from the New Zealand Conservation Authority who has been a regular participant in our meetings and the regular participation of Erin Green, (BOP Liaison) and John Maneer, East Coast/Hawkes Bay Liaison.



Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board Work Programme

1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023

Work Programme overview

This Work Programme has been developed in response to the Letter of Expectation from the Minister of Conservation dated 19 July 2022. It is structured in three parts, namely:

- Part A: Planned Board activities aimed at meeting the regional Work Programme contained in the letter:
 - review/development/monitoring of statutory management plans including Conservation Management Strategies (CMS)
 - advice relating to stewardship land
 - other statutory functions for the Board
 - advocacy.

- Part B: Planned Board activities aimed at general expectations contained in the letter:
 - working with the Department of Conservation (the Department)
 - taking account of the Ministerial priorities for the Department as contained in the Department's Four-year Plan
 - working with adjoining conservation boards and the New Zealand Conservation Authority (the Authority)
 - understanding the Board's contribution to giving effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - general engagement with the community, including raising the profile of the Board.

- Part C: Risks/issues from the Board's perspective, and opportunities for conservation growth that are not covered above.

Status indicator

Colour	Indicates
	Completed
	Started and is ongoing
	Not started yet

PART A: REGIONAL WORK PROGRAMME

1 Te Tiriti relationships with iwi

1.1 Board objective:

The Board will develop and enhance relations with our four main iwi.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	Continue the development of the working relationship with mana whenua.		Appointment/secondment of local iwi to the board to represent all main iwi from around Ruapehu. Co-Chair system instituted
B	Explore and understand the new settlement instruments across the rohe.		This is an ongoing process that continues as settlements continue. The most recent iwi to sign their settlement was Te Korowai o Wainuiārua

2 Review / development of statutory management plans including Conservation Management Strategies (CMS)

2.1 Board objective:

The Board will provide advice to the Department, the NZCA and the Minister of Conservation on the implementation of a new and updated Conservation Management Strategy.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	To continue to seek funding and resources from the Department to fulfil our statutory role as guardians of the CMS.		We persist with this frustrating process. While we were able to procure a modest amount of funding to have a report done on options for our CMS – we still await serious funding and commitment from DOC Head Office (planning) for the process to seriously begin.
B	To work with the Catalyst Group to bring together all parties who are working on progressing the CMS to formulate shared principles and value.		A workshop is planned for this to make a start on how to proceed, but we must be realistic as to what can be achieved drawing all parties together with no funding to do so – at this point.

2.2 Board objective:

In consultation with iwi partners the board will begin reviewing some key issues and new policy requirements or gaps in advance of beginning the formal review of the CMS.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress Commentary
A	To work with iwi representatives on the Board and local iwi on the principles required to undertake a review of a new CMS.		Awaiting serious support and funding from the Department. We have to be realistic as to what can be achieved with little commitment to funding or planner support from DOC Head Office.

3 Biodiversity

3.1 Board objective:

To provide an overview and advice to the Department on the implementation of Te Mana o te Taiao the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	To support the community and the Department where necessary in conversations about predator control actions.		We continue to support predator control operations, in particular, we are very supportive to the trapping programmes being undertaken via Jobs for Nature funding. And we continue to support the application of largescale1080 drops until a viable alternative becomes available.
B	To monitor management of deer populations by the Department and hunter groups.		Deer populations in the Tongariro Taupō rohe are much larger than is ideal. The Kaimanawa Forest Park (KFP) in particular, suffers under the burden of large deer numbers. Although the Sika Foundation is working with the local DOC team to try to reduce deer numbers – this is a difficult exercise in the more remote areas of the KFP. The beech forest canopy is in danger of collapse – the reason being uncertain but likely drought. But the imminent concern is that the devastation wrecked upon the understory by deer means this collapse could be a catastrophe for biodiversity in KFP.
C	To encourage the reporting on the wider biodiversity measures across the rohe.		The TT Conservation Board is always keen to receive information about biodiversity measures employed by DOC. The board is not resourced to actively promote, and advocate biodiversity measures itself – other than individual members working within their own communities to promote conservation work – which most members do when they can.

3.2 Board objective:

To understand the pressures and impacts of ungulate throughout the Tongariro Taupō rohe as required by the Minister of Conservation's letter of expectation.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	To ensure regular contact with community, including Sika Foundation		A Sika Foundation member is also a representative on the Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board. Sika Foundation are regular attendees at Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board Meetings and the board is kept up to date on their work via these attendees.
B	To do a field trip into the Kaimanawa Forest Park to see the worst of the damage by ungulates at place.		A Field Trip into the Kaimanawa Forest Park was arranged in February. Several members of the Conservation Board attended. We were able to see firsthand the state of the forest canopy and the lack of undergrowth arising to replace it. A visit to the 'enclosure plot' vividly illustrated how this forest understory SHOULD look. This trip was well worthwhile, informative and educational, but also disturbing and sad to

			see the damage being done by an overly large deer population.
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4 Visitor and tourist management and facilities

4.1 Board objective:

The Board will gain an overview of the impact of visitors on conservation land and natural taonga within the Board's rohe.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	To request information from the Department on the provision, use and maintenance of facilities on PCL.		Discussions continue at our regular hui.

4.2 Board objective:

The Board will promote new policies which allow enjoyment of national park/world heritage area by the community while controlling impact.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	To consult with the Department and other stakeholders to work towards a cap on the number of visitors using the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.		The Tongariro Taupō Conservation Board has remained informed of DOCs progress to plan and implement a system to 'cap' numbers on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing to attempt to mitigate the pressure of again increasing visitor numbers. Although numbers reduced due to the Government Covid Lockdowns and the exclusion of tourists, they are now increasing again. We remain informed about the latest plan to introduce a booking system – and despite some reservations as to how it will operate – we support the concept behind the idea. We continue to monitor the situation as DOC staff advise us of the latest plan in place.

PART B: GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

5 Working with the Department

5.1 Board objective:

The Board will provide advice to the Department on any concessions or issues they require consideration from the Board.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
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A	Advocate on behalf of the community and the Department to enable the Department to fulfil their roles and obligations in the Tongariro Taupo region.		<p>The Conservation Board continually seeks to support local DOC staff and encourages the DOC staff we interact with to fulfil their roles and obligations within the rohe. As always, we feel the Vote Conservation is not adequate for the tasks and responsibilities DOC has to manage – and our rohe in particular is always under immense visitor pressure, and due to location, more than normal pest and weed incursions. This is not reflected in provision of budgets allocated.</p> <p>This year has been particularly difficult; as a result of Government Covid Lockdowns and the consequential economic climate, Ruapehu Alpine Lifts has gone into receivership and then liquidation – resulting in complex and concerning consequences and likely impacts. Also, Chateau Tongariro has had its lease abandoned. Both could mean huge costs economically, environmentally, and socially to the region. DOC bears the brunt of much of the resultant extra work, and we hope this is taken into account when budget time comes along.</p> <p>And as always (and rather repetitively) – we would like a firm commitment from DOC nationally to seriously updating our planning; management plans and CMS for the communities we represent.</p>
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5.2 Board objective:

The Board will advocate for the environment locally and nationally.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress commentary
A	To work to advocate for the environment and conservation locally and nationally		<p>The Board continually advocates for conservation planning – our main goal being the update of local and national planning to be carried out as required by legislation.</p> <p>We have submitted on legislation reviews, planning process on the DOC CMAP document in the hope of advocating for this to happen.</p> <p>Also, the Board advocates via the NZCA for work to start in a serious manner on the Tongariro Taupō CMS. To no avail so far.</p> <p>We also support the Jobs for Nature Funding (JNF) and have written to the Minister in support of continued JNF funding to be kept in some form in our region.</p>

6 Working with adjoining conservation boards and the Authority

6.1 Board objective

The Board will appoint members to liaison roles.

Planned Board activities, success measures and key milestones.

	Action	Status	Progress Commentary
A	To attend neighbouring conservation boards and encourage regular contact.		We are regularly connected to our neighbouring boards. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Waikato Conservation Board – Karen Grimwade• Taranaki Whanganui – Honey Winter• Wellington – Dave Milner
B	Invite representatives from other boards to attend TTCB meetings.		WCB member Wayne has been invited to attend our meetings and has attended one. We have regular online visitors from BOP and Hawke's Bay.
C	Participate in conservation board chair hui.		Mike Britton attended the last Conservation Chair's meeting.

PART C: RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

10 Risks from the Board's perspective

A	Biodiversity continues to decline in quality. The repair of biodiversity and creating an environment in which it can thrive needs to be prioritised. As pests and weeds continue to be a risk to native biodiversity, we are seemingly losing the battle on many fronts. The excessive deer numbers being an example – in particular the damage being done in the Kaimanawa Forest Park.
B	Degradation of Physical Conservation Assets: Conservation assets are being neglected and not maintained. Examples: Whakapapa Village. Some backcountry huts and tracks, The Chateau Tongariro.
C	Tourism trumping conservation. As visitors return after being excluded by Government Covid Lockdowns, it is important tourism & recreation (although critical) does not take priority over caring for the environment.
D	Climate Change: The impacts of climate change are beginning to be felt in the CNI – it might be a good time for some research into the impacts and about how we might mitigate the impacts as a conservation community.

11 Opportunities for conservation growth

A	Prioritising the Natural World. As stated in last year's report, the same situation applies; The Government has the opportunity to frame the conservation estate as a potential gain for the government – rather than a drain. If 'investment' in conservation was considered a positive, rather than allowing conservation assets, including biodiversity to deteriorate over time – as they certainly are. Prioritising Conservation and the Natural World could be a point-of-Difference for NZ/Aotearoa.
B	Co-Governance. Including local iwi in a meaningful and authentic manner in the management of conservation lands and assets. The TT Conservation Board has tried to begin this process with the co-chair process. It could be built upon and advanced.
C	Building on the new appreciation for Nature. As the globe becomes overpopulated and people seek quiet and peace – we have the chance to provide people with positive interactions with amazing nature. Quiet magical places can be a tonic for tourists, and we have them (for now) in abundance.
D	Recreation Opportunities. Creation of recreation opportunities in appropriate places that allow a sense of adventure and achievement for tourists. Developing these on conservation land where appropriate – not National Parks necessarily – and building on opportunities for iwi and other locals to work and gain benefits for local communities. Jobs for Nature projects being mostly good examples of growth opportunities in recreation.
E	Culture and Heritage. Build on the amazing heritage we have in the Central North Island. Talk to iwi about the creation of cultural experiences for visitors run by iwi. Identify and interpret sites of historical interest/significance and explain them to visitors. This adds a layer of richness and understanding to the story we are telling visitors. We already tell the biodiversity and geological stories – but less of the cultural and heritage stories on site.



This report is presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required by the Conservation Act 1987 and distributed to interested parties. Members of the public are welcome to attend conservation board meetings.

If you would like more information on the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board please see the website www.conservationboards.org.nz or contact the Statutory Manager for Central North Island, at the Department of Conservation in e-mail krainbow@doc.govt.nz

