

WEST COAST *TAI POUTINI* CONSERVATION BOARD

Annual Report 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012



West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board Members
and Department of Conservation Staff

Front Cover: West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board Members and Department of Conservation staff. Back: M Thorpe (DOC), K Hutana, S Robertson, C Hickford (DOC)
Front: D Baker, M Legge, C Backes, J Jones, K Thomas, Absent: T Scott, W Inwood, M Fekkes

FIELD TRIP – 3 MAY 2012 – DENNISTON PLATEAU



Photographer Kim Thomas, Board Member



Photographer Jane Jones, Board Member

**WEST COAST *TAI POUTINI*
CONSERVATION BOARD**

ANNUAL REPORT
1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
Pursuant to Section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987

ISSN 1172-918X (Print)
ISSN 1179-2647 (Online)

Serviced by Department of Conservation
Private Bag 701
HOKITIKA

INTRODUCTION

This report is presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority pursuant to section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987. Copies of the report have been circulated to individuals and organizations with an interest in the Board's activities.

Members of the public are welcome to attend Conservation Board meetings. If you would like more information on the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board please see the website www.conservationboards.org.nz or contact the Board Support Officer at the Department of Conservation in Hokitika, phone (03) 756 9154.

Functions

The West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board is an independent advisory body for public conservation land while the Department of Conservation is the day-to-day manager. The Board has a number of statutory roles under various Acts including:

- the recommendation of a West Coast Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) for approval,
- advising the Department of Conservation and the NZCA 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,
- the recommendation of National Park Management Plans to the NZCA for approval,
- advising the Department of Conservation and NZCA on conservation matters, and proposed changes to the status of land of national and international significance,
- liaising with the Fish and Game Council on conservation matters, and
- carrying out other powers delegated by the Minister of Conservation, the Conservation Act or any other Act.

Area of Responsibility

The area of responsibility for the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board is the West Coast from north of Karamea south to Big Bay (refer to the map at the end of the report). This area corresponds to that of the West Coast Conservancy, South Island, except for Kahurangi National Park (which is the responsibility of the Nelson Marlborough Conservation Board), Arthur's Pass National Park (Canterbury *Aoraki* Conservation Board) and Mt Aspiring National Park (Otago

Conservation Board). The area also extends out to the twelve-nautical mile limit with respect to coastal and marine issues, and out to the 200 nautical mile limit with respect to marine mammal issues.

Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park and Paparoa National Park lie completely within the Board's jurisdiction. The overlap of the Nelson Marlborough, Canterbury *Aoraki* and Otago Conservation Boards with the West Coast Conservancy necessitates close co-operation with those Boards and at times the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board advocates for cross-boundary issues. The Board's area also shares common boundaries with the Southland Conservation Board.

Approximately twenty-five percent of all public conservation land in New Zealand lies within the West Coast Conservancy. A large number of issues which are of interest to the Board include:

- ecosystem management and management of plant and animal species such as mistletoe, Westland petrel/*taiko*, white heron/*kotuku*, blue duck/*whio*, rowi (formerly Okarito brown kiwi), Haast *tokoeke*, great spotted kiwi/*roa*, mohua and Powelliphanta species;
- management of recreational facilities;
- management of historic sites;
- concession activities, including those relating to recreation and tourism activities, grazing, industrial use, baches, filming, gravel extraction, and;
- mining and access arrangements and
- marine protection.

The West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board has a responsibility to the people of the West Coast, and the wider New Zealand population, to ensure these lands and waters, and the biodiversity which they contain, are protected and enhanced.

The total area of the West Coast Conservancy comprises 1,914,000 ha. Of this total approximately 83% (1,611,000 ha) is contained within the boundary of the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board's area of jurisdiction.

Features of the Area

Paparoa National Park	38822 ha
Westland <i>Tai Poutini</i> National Park	131600 ha
Victoria Conservation Park	198384 ha
Scenic Reserve – 116	79362 ha
Historic Reserves – 19	12658 ha
Recreation Reserve – 92	402 ha
Ecological Areas – 47	152326 ha
Amenity Areas – 17	9428 ha
Stewardship Area	849238 ha
Wilderness Areas – 3	111619 ha

N.B. These are the areas the Department administers. For example, most Historic Reserves and Recreation Reserves are either controlled and managed by or vested with local authorities or an incorporated society.

Membership

The names, locations of the members of the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board and attendance at meetings from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 are shown below. The Board was pleased to welcome new members Mike Legge (Buller-*Kawatiri*), Marcel Fekkes (Franz Josef *Waiiau*) and welcome back Kim Thomas (Buller-*Kawatiri*), and Terry Scott (Oxford) at its September 2011 meeting.

Clare Backes	Hokitika	5
Stewart Robertson	Greymouth	5
Jane Jones	Westport	5
Doug Baker*	Greymouth	5
Terry Scott*	Oxford	5
Warren Inwood**	Inangahua	4
Kori Hutana	Hokitika	5
Mike Legge#	Charleston	4
Marcel Fekkes#	Franz Josef	3
Kim Thomas#	Westport	4
Hamish Macbeth^	Karamea	2
Richard Nichol^	Westport	1

* Members whose term expired at 31 August 2012 but were extended to 2013

Members newly appointed or reappointed 1 September 2011

^ Departing members

“Resigned members

At times some members were not always able to attend the planned field inspections but overall attendance by members has been high.

Conservation Board Meetings

During the reporting period the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board held five formal meetings, and two field inspections. Members have used email extensively to consider and discuss advice, submissions and other issues in between Board meetings.

8 July 2011

This meeting was held in Hokitika. The Board discussed the Old Ghost Road project, which was being undertaken by Mokihinui-Lyell Backcountry Trust, as part of the cycleway being developed throughout New Zealand. The West Coast Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) Monitoring Report was discussed, and the adoption of the new reporting template. It was decided that the annual CMS reporting system was required to be simple, concise and to focus on milestones that are linked to the CMS outcomes.

A presentation by Forest and Bird on a proposal to change the land status of a large area of the Denniston Plateau was heard. Forest and Bird were proposing that the area to be protected as a reserve and included in Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act.

Chris Tonkin from the Walking Access Commission gave a presentation on the Commission which was set up to retain and/or improve walking access to the outdoors.

23 September 2011 - Hokitika

Hamish Macbeth and Richard Nichol were farewelled, and newly appointed members Mike Legge (Buller *Kawatiri*) and Marcel Fekkes (Franz Josef *Waiiau*) were welcomed. Kim Thomas and Terry Scott were reappointed for a further term. DOC Botanist Jane Marshall gave a presentation of representativeness on how the land was classified, what typifies the region and how it is catalogued. Six members of the public attended the public forum expressing their concerns over 1080 operations and recent kea deaths. Two DOC staff were present and gave an overview of the departments predator control operations. They were also able to directly respond to questions raised in the public forum.

The Board were informed that the Minister had announced that five new marine reserves are to be established on the West Coast.

1-2 December 2011 - Hokitika

On the first day Board members were accompanied by Trustpower staff on a visit to Lake Kaniere. Trustpower had applied for resource consents for upgrading work and re consenting of the Mckays Creek and Kaniere Forks hydro electric scheme. Local Lake Kaniere residents then gave the Board a presentation giving their point of view.

The Board travelled to Ross to visit and meet with the owner and the resource consent consultant for Birchfield Ross Mining Ltd. This is a large scale mining operation on private land and while it does not occur on DOC land, has effects on the conservation values of the area. The visit raised issues about QEII covenants, which the Board later sought clarification on from the QEII National Trust.

At the following day's meeting there were two members of the public in attendance. One spoke about their concern over 1080, and the second speaker from the New Zealand Deer Stalkers Association, spoke on the proposed Game Animal Council Bill and heli-hunting operations.

A presentation by DOC Scientist Josh Kemp on his research on kea and the use of 1080 was very well received.

The first Annual CMS monitoring report was delivered. This was a report on all aspects of CMS monitoring, whereas in the previous year there had been 3 separate reports on CMS monitoring. The Board was impressed with the thoroughness of the report.

17 February 2012 - Hokitika

The election of officers was held with Clare Backes re-elected Chairperson and Stewart Robertson re-elected as Deputy Chairperson. NZCA member Dr Gerry McSweeney was welcomed to the meeting. DOC Planning/Mining Manager Jo Stratford gave an overview of mining explorations on the Denniston Plateau. It was noted that a future field trip to the area would be beneficial so the Board could become more familiar with the area and surrounds. The Board triggers on access arrangements and concessions, which the Department uses to determine whether to ask the Board for advice, were discussed and it was decided that these trigger mechanisms needed to be updated.

3-4 May 2012 - Buller *Kawatiri*

The Board travelled to inspect the Denniston Plateau. They met with Buller Coal Limited and were able to get a better appreciation of what the coal company proposed in terms of exploration and mining. The Board also visited the Granity wetland complex and DOC Rangers gave an account of the biodiversity issues they were faced with and what protection measures had been developed over the years.

The following day Forest and Bird gave a presentation on the Denniston Plateau and reaffirmed its previous case for the area to be protected as a reserve and included in Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act.

Two members of the public spoke at the public forum. The first member spoke on sodium nitrite as an alternative to 1080. The second speaker again addressed the Board and reiterated concern for the use of 1080, the timing of 1080 operations and the results on birdlife, and kea in particular.

A motion was moved "That the Board support a higher level of protection for Denniston Plateau and surrounds, that it be recognised for its unique properties, and accorded protection under Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act." . It was passed unanimously.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS - CONSERVATION ACT

Conservation Management Strategies

A meeting to discuss CMS reporting was held in June 2012. It was reconfirmed the Department would report annually, and the Board could adjust the milestones from year to year if necessary. The first annual years' reporting provided a good starting point. The Board liked the reporting format which clearly identified issues that would be worked on next year and those that were completed. If a milestone was identified as not being achieved, staff would then give an explanation of why this was the case. Two gaps were identified i.e. marine place and concessions compliance, and aspects of both of these would be included in the 2012 reporting.

Section 4

The Board continued to receive reports from the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy Pou Kura Taiao. These reports provide a summary of key *Kaupapa Atawhai* issues and events.

Change of status or classification

The Board continued to receive proposals for the exchange or disposal of public conservation land throughout the year and provided advice to changes of land status of national park and reserve classifications. It often recommended that land exchanges proceed, when there was an obvious conservation gain. It provided comment on disposals of public conservation land using a set of guidelines for assessing the information on these applications developed by the Board. Some of the applications considered by the Board during the year included:

Antonios Valley, Mawheraiti – proposal to Revoke and Dispose

The original application (2006) was for an exchange of 55 ha of freehold land for approximately 35 ha of public conservation land. In 2007 the Department had discovered the land had been extensively modified, without permission by the applicant, in anticipation of the original exchange being approved. In 2011 the Department decided it was not appropriate to continue with the exchange. With the revocation process in place requiring a gazette notice for its completion, it was decided to consider a disposal by way of tender. The Board believed that the exchange would have resulted in a better conservation gain for the conservancy rather than selling the land. If the exchange of land was not an option, then the Board felt the best option would be to offer a grazing licence on this land.

Dunbier - Ross

This application was for a proposed exchange of 30 ha of stewardship land at Ross for a freehold area of 22 ha. The Board did not support the exchange of the public conservation land for the freehold land. The Board did not think that the Department had shown that there was a gain for conservation in the proposed exchange.

Revocation and Disposal - Brown Creek Road

The Board was asked for its advice on the purchase of approximately 5 ha of public conservation land situated beside Brown Creek Road, Inanaghua by the current concessionaire. The Board supported the revocation of the status of specially protected area of the modified pasture, and asked the Department to explore all other possibilities for increasing the amount of protected forested corridor, before it made a recommendation.

Advice on Other Conservation Matters

The Board was consulted by or gave advice to the Department and NZCA on the following:

Concessions

The Board provided advice to the Department on the concession applications that met the concession trigger mechanisms. The Department continued to provide fortnightly summaries of concessions received. This summary allowed the Board to be aware of concession applications that would be sent to the Board in the future and also allowed it to signal to the Department any application that it would like to see. The Board received draft determination reports for comment which provided more information on which to base considered advice. Regular reports on concessions continued to be provided by the Department for Board meetings. The Board has been working with concessions staff on amending the consultation trigger mechanisms process to benefit both parties.

The Board has provided advice on a range of concessions. Some of the more topical ones are included below:

Hokitika Tree Top Walk - Lake Mahinapua

This application by Canopy 01 was to seek a concession for an elevated walk on public conservation land near Lake Mahinapua. The Board felt this concession should be granted, with conditions for minimising the environmental impact. The Board believed this tree top walk would provide a good tourist facility and help educate people about the value of the forest. This concession was granted by the Department.

Provision Security – on Stockton and Denniston Plateaus

This company holds a 5 year permit to conduct security of Solid Energy New Zealand mining operations across public conservation land on Stockton and Denniston Plateaux. They requested that security guards on foot be allowed to film people. The Department issued a concession for foot patrolling and approaching people, but declined the use of any filming/camera equipment by guards on patrol. Provision Security also applied for a concession for vehicle patrols and foot patrols to be allowed to traverse areas on the Denniston Plateau which Buller Coal has applied to mine as well as the use of fixed cameras to monitor assets of the mining company.

The Board advised the Department that a concession should not be granted for foot and vehicle security patrols on public conservation land that is open to the public, as this would detract from the public's legitimate enjoyment of the area. This application was subsequently withdrawn by the company.

Franz Josef Glacier Guides (FJGG) – extra flights

This concession application was a result of the current glacier retreat which is causing issues for both guided and freedom walkers. Access for guided operations will become extremely difficult once the ice bridge on the lower glacier collapses, and this application was to enable guided operations to continue by using helicopter access on to the glacier.

The Board advised that if extra helicopter flights were agreed to by the Department, they should be for a limited time only. Flights should only be

allowed once current foot access has become unsafe, and be stopped as soon as a permanent bridge can be built. The Department has not made a decision to date.

D P Munro - Bach Application

The Board did not agree with the granting of this concession for a bach on public conservation land at Cascade. The Board felt the granting of a bach licence would not be consistent with objectives and policies from the West Coast Conservation Management Strategy (CMS), Section 3.7.1 Accommodation and Related Facilities. Rubbish was scattered around the site and the bach was locked and not available for public use. The bach had existed since at least 1984 but the Board considered that it was not historic. The New Zealand Forest Service had initially drawn up a licence for an industrial site dwelling for use as a base for commercial eeling and whitebaiting. The document was partially signed but no payment had been made. This application was approved by the Department.

Nine bach applications have been granted by the Department this year, with the Board commenting on six, two of which they advised should not be granted. There is one application pending which the Board also commented on and agreed with (subject to conditions), but was not active until end of July 2012.

Access Arrangements

The Board also provides advice on access arrangements applied for under the Crown Minerals Act 1991. As these concern access to public conservation land the applications needed to be considered under the Conservation Act 1987 and therefore the Board is consulted. The applications on which the Board provided advice included:

Rockies Mining, Millerton

The Board had previously commented on an access arrangement for the same company, and had concerns regarding water quality issues, previous non-compliance, poor record in rehabilitation, and lack of attention to detail regarding acid mine drainage. The latest application had many of the same issues. The Board advised the Department that the concession application did not contain enough detail about the mitigation or remediation of effects of the activity. The Board was not satisfied that these details could be left until the ponds were in use. The Board also felt that the compensation charges were too low.

Oceana Gold – Reefton

The Board was supplied with a significant amount of information on this application, regarding the increase in total pit area from 60ha to 81ha; increase in total waste rock stack, embankment and waste rock in-fill area from 75ha to 109ha; construct 3 new access roads - total area approx 1ha.

The Board advised that allowing further open cast mining in this area would not be managing the land such that its natural resources are protected. This variation of 55ha effectively takes the mine footprint to approx 200ha. In the early 2000's the Minister of Conservation declined an access arrangement for a mining proposal in the same area for a disturbance of 200ha. The conservation values have not changed since then, and so logically this application should also be declined. The Conservation Board strongly advised that this access arrangement should not be granted.

Visitor Assets

The development of visitor assets continued to interest the Board. Much work was carried out over the West Coast Conservancy. This was received by regular reporting on progress with capital projects at its two monthly meetings. It was noted that the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy, in conjunction with the New Zealand Transport Authority won the Best Cycle Facility Project award for the Franz and Fox Glacier valley shared use cycle paths. The Denniston Heritage Charitable Trust, which DOC is a part of, won the Trustpower National Award and the Excellence in Parks Award from a total of 26 regions for the Denniston project. Some of the other projects successfully completed were the Ship Creek site upgrade; 3 Mile Bridge replacement at Okarito; upgrading parts of the Heaphy Track and the Swanburn suspension bridge construction.

Species and Other Issues

The Board received regular species updates in the Conservator's Report which is presented at every meeting, including information on Powelliphanta snails, freshwater fish and inanga, bats, kiwi species, marine mammals, mohua, kea, whoio protection, some plant species and predator control.

Liaison with Fish and Game Councils

Two members of the Board shared attendance at Fish and Game Council meetings. The two organisations exchanged copies of minutes and agendas and issues of interest were noted at Board meetings.

Powers of Boards

The Board used its powers to advocate for conservation both on and off public conservation land and for both local and national conservation issues. It also maintained two committees and a series of topic leaders.

Conservation Advocacy

The Board is on the mailing list of all West Coast local authorities and received copies of some notified resource consent applications, proposed changes to or reviews of district plans, Long Term Council Community Plans and reports on other regional issues or programmes. It used its resource consent trigger mechanisms to identify those matters likely to have significant impacts on conservation values and to decide whether or not to make a submission.

The Board was involved with seven resource consent applications, three mining, one hydro scheme and three land use matters. The Department kept the Board informed about planning issues through regular reports at Board meetings.

Some of the more significant resource consents and planning matters in which the Board was involved are listed below:

Trustpower Ltd

The Board was invited to comment on the resource consent applications by Trustpower for re consenting, enhancement, operation and maintenance of Mckays Creek and Kaniere Forks Hydro Electric Power. The Board made a neutral submission and spoke to it at its hearing. The Board spoke about the likely effects of the scheme on lake water levels and aquatic ecosystems.

Birchfield Ross Mining Limited

The Board were notified by the Westland District Council of an application for a resource consent by Birchfield Ross Mining Limited on land on the east and west of State Highway 6 at Donaghues, south of Ross for mining activities. The Board made a neutral submission and spoke to it at the hearing. In its submission the Board raised issues relating to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, historical values and landscape amenity.

Blacktopp Mining Limited

The Board were notified by the Westland District Council of an application for a resource consent by Blacktopp Mining Limited on land on Stafford Loop Road for the purposes of alluvial mining. The Board made a neutral submission and spoke to it at the hearing. In the submission concerns were expressed relating to landscape, aquatic ecology and historical values.

Lake Kaniere Development Limited

Westland District Council notified the Board of a resource consent from Lake Kaniere Development Limited for a subdivision at Hans Bay, Lake Kaniere. The Board made a neutral submission and spoke to it at its hearing. The Board's submission included comments on landscape, visual amenity and tourism potential.

The Board took the opportunity to make submissions on the West Coast Regional Council, Buller District Council, Grey District Council and Westland District Council Long Term Plans 2012-22.

Other Conservation Issues

Aerial Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH)

The Board discussed this topic at most meetings throughout the year. It had previously submitted on aerially assisted trophy hunting on public conservation land and also on aerial access in wilderness areas.

In February 2012 Hon Peter Dunn, the Associate Minister of Conservation made a decision on the 16 long term aerially assisted trophy hunting applications. His decision was to issue two year permits, subject to conditions, for the activity on specific areas of public conservation land, excluding wilderness areas. Part of the decision was to publicly notify the intention to grant concessions for AATH activity for the Hooker/Landsborough, Adams and Olivine Wilderness Areas. The Board made and spoke to their submission on AATH.

The Board did not believe that AATH should be allowed on public conservation land on the West Coast, including in National Park areas and Wilderness areas, as it is inconsistent with the policies for wilderness areas in the CMS (which was approved in 2010).

Game Animal Council Bill

The Board does not agree with the establishment of the proposed Game Animal Council, as outlined in this bill. The Board considered the Minister of Conservation already has the power to control wild animals on public conservation land using the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 (WACA). This bill replaced the Noxious Animals Act, where introduced wild animals including those now considered game animals were defined as noxious.

The proposed Game Animal Council Bill seeks to change the status of some pest animals to that of a resource. The proposed Game Animal Council does not have to consider the conservation values of the land that the animals roam; which clashes with the Wild Animal Control Act.

The WACA gives the Minister of Conservation the ability to undertake all of the proposed functions of the proposed Council and to form committees to ensure concerted action; the Minister does not need another Game Animal Council to be formally registered.

The Board believes that this bill will affect and diminish the Department's control of what happens on public conservation land. Hunting is already considered and catered for by the Conservation Act and the Wild Animal Control Act. The Board believes that the establishment of a Game Animal Council will result in poorer outcomes for conservation and for this reason disagrees with the establishment of the Game Animal Council.

Freedom Camping

A paper was presented to the Board on Freedom Camping. This paper was to update and inform the Board on the Department's position for managing freedom camping.

Freedom camping had not been a problem in the past but the increase in tourist activity and visitors renting or purchasing camping vehicles has resulted in unacceptable pressure at some sites and in some communities.

The Freedom Camping Act gives local authorities and the Department an enforcement tool to determine where people can or cannot freedom camp and issue infringement notices for inappropriate camping behaviour.

The Freedom Camping Act 2011 became law on 29th August 2011. It has the default position that freedom camping is permitted on any conservation land unless it is restricted or prohibited.

To continue enforcement of any freedom camping restrictions and prohibitions at any sites after 31st March 2012, the Department was required to Gazette a “Freedom Camping Notice” after consultation with the Conservation Board.

Any restrictions or prohibitions must be consistent with conservation legislation, including the West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS and the National Park Bylaws.

Board members thought it was a good idea overall. The restricted and prohibited areas for freedom camping were appropriate, and the Board were pleased to see that responsible freedom camping was allowed on other areas of public conservation land.

Appointment of Committees

The following committees were elected 17 February 2012.

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Concessions	Clare Backes (Chairperson), Doug Baker, Marcel Fekkes, Warren Inwood, Jane Jones, Terry Scott, and Kim Thomas
Planning	Stewart Robertson (Chairperson), Jane Jones, Kim Thomas and Clare Backes (ex officio)

Special Interest Topics

Historic Heritage and Appreciation	Jane Jones and Kim Thomas
Science and Biodiversity	Warren Inwood and Doug Baker
Tangata Whenua Liaison	Terry Scott

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER CONSERVATION ACT

Co-opting Members of the Board

No members were co-opted on to the Board this year.

BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Implementation of National Park Plans

Punakaiki Road Taking

This was a proposal between the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and the Department to explore options to complete the legalisation of state highway in the Punakaiki Pancake Rocks area. The Department considered that the road taking and land rationalisation proposals would benefit conservation and provide additional opportunities to investigate further visitor developments in this location. The Board was in support of the proposals and understood that this process was to regularise the current situation with regard to the highway and car parking areas.

Exclusion of Land from National Park

The Department consulted the Board on a proposal to exclude an area of land from Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park and asked the Board to recommend to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for approval. The application from Opus was requesting land removal required to facilitate the raising of the bailey bridge across the Waiho River at Franz Josef, including alterations to the bridge approaches and road alignment for the purposes of maintaining route security on State Highway 6 (SH6). The Board agreed with this application.

Nature Heritage Fund (NHF) acquisitions for addition to National Park

The Board supported the addition of four blocks of land to the respective adjoining national parks, i.e. land at the mouth of the Waiho River to Westland National Park; S & R Hunt, Landsborough River to Mt Aspiring National Park; Three River holdings, Landsborough River to Mt Aspiring National Park; J Cowan, Dancing Creek, Haast Valley to Mt Aspiring National Park; P & J Jeffries, Oweka, Inangahua Junction to Paparoa National Park.

LIAISON

General Comment on Liaison

The Board considers that contact by members of the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board with the community is very important. The webpage has been used to good advantage with contact details for members, meeting agendas, confirmed minutes and the Conservator's Report from each meeting being provided. The Board's annual report and the West Coast Conservation Management Strategy can also be accessed on this site.

Board members also have contact with a broad range of people, community groups and organisations. Several Board members maintain contact with conservation groups, recreation groups, the tourist industry, and agricultural organisations. Board members either attend meetings or receive minutes and agendas and report back to Board meetings about any concerns of interest to the Board.

There has been a representative from the Board at the Stockton Environmental Consultative Group meetings, and one Board member has regular contact with the executive of the local Federated Farmers, which keeps the Board informed of relevant issues.

Public forums continue to be offered at each Board meeting with half an hour being set aside for members of the community to raise conservation issues with the Board. Public forums were used by the public this year with members of the public present at all meetings. Issues raised by the members of the public included the use of 1080, heli-hunting and endeavours to save the Denniston plateau from coal mining.

The media on the West Coast were sent copies of the Board agendas and meeting papers, and were welcome to attend all Board meetings. A press release from the Board was prepared after meetings as and when required.

Other Boards and the NZCA

Liaison with neighbouring Boards was maintained principally through the exchange of minutes and agendas.

The Board welcomed a visit from Sue Brown from the Nelson Marlborough Conservation Board to the May 2012 meeting in Westport.

Dr Gerry McSweeney was the newly appointed NZCA liaison person for the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board. He has attended two meetings. The Board was pleased to see a local West Coast resident appointed to the NZCA and to have him as a liaison person.

Community

The West Coast is a region of small communities. Board members are often well known in their local communities and have regular contact with members of the public. Where possible the Board tries to meet with local community groups while on field inspections.

Board members are invited to join in activities organised by the Department to celebrate national events. This gives members a chance to interact with other groups and to learn more about the Department's work. Advance notice is required if board members are to attend some of these events.

Local Government

The Board appreciates the opportunities to meet with representatives of the four local Councils as there are a number of regional issues in which it is interested. The Board has had regular contact with all territorial authorities through its concerns about outstanding natural features and landscapes, significant natural areas, proposed reviews of district plans and getting involved in consultation over the councils' Long Term Council Community Plans

Iwi

The Board is working to further develop its relationship with the Papatipu Runanga on the West Coast and Te Runanga o Ngāi Tahu. Two members of the Board are nominated by Ngāi Tahu, as required under the Ngāi Tahu Settlement Act 1998. They provide input on iwi issues and a Maori perspective to other issues. A regular report from the Pou Kura Taio is provided for each meeting. No Board members attended *Pukenga Atawhai* training during the past year.

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR – CLARE BACKES

It has been a very interesting year for the Conservation Board. There have been a number of changes in the Board membership whilst the Conservancy has undergone a radical change in its structure. There have been a few contentious issues which have concerned the Board during the year.

The Board has submitted to the local Conservancy and the National Office on the issue of AATH, especially when it is to be allowed in wilderness areas. The Board does not think this activity should be considered as wild animal recovery, but should rather be dealt with as a tourism concession for recreational hunting. The New Zealand Deer Stalkers have spoken to the Board extensively on this issue, and Board and the Association are of like mind.

The Board also believes that the proposed Game Animal Council will not result in a gain for conservation, and is worried about the potential effects of allowing these introduced animals, which are actually a pest, to be managed from a hunting perspective rather than from a conservation perspective.

Another issue that concerns the Board is that of the vast amount of stewardship land on the West Coast that does not have a high protection status. The Board would like to see some of this land categorised so it gains a higher level of protection. At its February meeting, the Board passed a resolution specifically about the Denniston Plateau, recognising its unique status, as the last remaining example of Buller coalfield vegetation and landscape and is seeking greater protection for the area.

In May the Board welcomed the decision by Meridian Energy to withdraw the Mokihinui hydro project from the Environment Court. We had strongly opposed this hydro project along with the Department and many environmental groups. The Board is considering how it can promote greater protection for the whole of the Mokihinui catchment.

The West Coast CMS has now been in place for 2 years and the Board uses it extensively to guide their advice to the Department and to submit on issues to the local councils.

The Board has disagreed with the Departments interpretation of some policies in the CMS, especially those relating to baches - whether they should be allowed to remain on public conservation land, and whether they should be available for public use. The Board understands that the Department is trying to find a resolution to these potentially divisive issues on the Coast.

There have been some excellent presentations by various Departmental staff throughout the year at Board meetings, giving the Board members a much greater understanding of some conservation issues.

Members of the public have attended most of our meetings, and spoken to us on a range of subjects. This diverse range of views has added value to our deliberations. Regular press releases have informed the public on various conservation issues concerning the Board.

I went to the Board Chairs conference in Wellington. This was a great opportunity for networking with other Board chairs and to meet some NZCA members. It was very interesting to hear about some of the challenges faced by other Boards and to share some of our experiences with them. It was noticeable that one of our main challenges on the West Coast – how to deal with the increasing amount of mining, for gold and coal, on public conservation land - is not a problem in other areas of the country.

There have been a number of changes to the Board this year. We have lost a number of experienced Board members in the last year. Hamish MacBeth finished his nine-years on the Board having spent 3 years as chair, steering the Board through the writing of the West Coast CMS. Richard Nichol finished his term on the Board; Richard was a specialist in ecology. Warren Inwood, another former chair, who helped the Board finalise the CMS, chose to resign earlier this year, having been on the Board for nine years. His farming and geology knowledge will be missed. Marcel Fekkes joined the Board with a background in tourism and is based in South Westland, but unfortunately had to resign. Mike Legge also joined the Board this year and has brought a wide breadth of knowledge and experience from conservation organisations and science discipline. Gerry McSweeney, the NZCA member on the West Coast, has attended some of our meetings, and has given us valuable advice on some issues.

Mary-Anne Thorpe has taken over the Board Support Officer's position and has proved extremely capable, and has made a significant improvement in some of our systems.

Lastly the Board is obviously aware that the Conservancy staff have undergone a significant change in staffing levels and reporting lines in the last year. Some very good specialist staff has been lost which is highly unfortunate. The Board recognises that the remaining staff are working positively for conservation, with more limited resources, and the Board acknowledges the professionalism of the

Departmental staff. We can only hope that the new structures in the Department will offer real gains for conservation. Time will tell.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Backes', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Dr Clare Backes
Chairperson

West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy

