

WEST COAST *TAI POUTINI*

CONSERVATION BOARD

Annual Report 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013



West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board Members
and Department of Conservation Staff heading into Box Canyon Cave, Karamea

November Field Trip 2012 Franz Josef



Franz Josef Glacier valley



Okarito Forest, Franz Josef

May Field Trip 2013 Karamea

Oparara Valley Trust Interpretation Shelter



Entering the Oparara Arch Karamea

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

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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. The 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 *tokoeka*, 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 Reserves – 116	79362 ha
Historic Reserves – 19	12658 ha

Recreation Reserve – 92	402 ha
Ecological Areas – 47	152326 ha
Amenity Areas – 17	9428 ha
Stewardship Areas	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 2012 to 30 June 2013 are shown below. The Board was pleased to welcome co-opted member Paula Sheridan (Okarito). There were no new members appointed in 2012.

Clare Backes	Hokitika	5
Stewart Robertson	Greymouth	5
Jane Jones	Westport	3
Doug Baker*	Greymouth	5
Terry Scott	Oxford	4
Kori Hutana	Hokitika	2
Mike Legge	Charleston	5
Kim Thomas	Westport	5
Paula Sheridan#	Okarito	3

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

Member co-opted to Board 21 September 2012.

Overall attendance by members has been high. Some members also represented the Board at other meetings, i.e. NZ Conservation Authority visit 10/11 April, meeting with Minister of Conservation 21 May. Two members are at present on the panel for the Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review and attended Hearing and associated meetings.

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 between Board meetings.

6 July 2012 Hokitika

At this meeting various Departmental staff discussed with the Board, the issue of the increasing difficulty of accessing the terminal face of both Fox and Franz Josef glaciers. The Board agreed that the Department should initiate a process to

amend the provisions of the Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park Management Plan to explore access options in the glacier valleys, due to changing circumstances (glacier retreat). On 11 August the Director General notified his intention to undertake a partial review of the Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park Management Plan, to address the issue of access to the glacier valleys. Comments closed on 10 September 2012.

The Department gave a presentation on the mapping of values at Denniston, and the zonation software used for analysis, based on distribution maps of conservation values.

Forest & Bird and the Buller Conservation Group asked for Board support in having the Mokihinui catchment added to the national park. The Board passed a resolution

“That the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board request the New Zealand Conservation Authority to act under section 8 of the National Parks Act and request the Director-General to investigate and report on a proposal to place the following into a National Park, or add to the existing Kahurangi National Park:

1. The whole of the Mokihinui Catchment within conservation land and any other surrounding conservation lands that would contribute to the purpose of section 6 of the Act (e.g. Lyell-Mokihinui Walkway and Mountainbike Track).
2. Negotiate for the inclusion of riverbeds currently administered by Land Information New Zealand where they adjoin conservation land that is proposed for the park, including Mokihinui catchment.”

21 September 2012 - Hokitika

A CMS workshop was held 20 September to set in place a way of moving forward for better reporting. The Year Two 2012 report prepared by DOC for the Board was presented but incomplete.

The Board meeting was held on the following day. The Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review was a main topic for discussion. S Robertson gave an overview of the report on initial suggestions from members of the public. On 5th December the draft Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review would be publicly notified for public submissions, closing on 20 February 2013.

Westpower gave a presentation on the proposals for a hydro scheme at Waitaha. Westpower indicated they will inform the Board on future progress.

The Department’s Integration Co-ordinator spoke on the National Heritage Management System and its implementation.

29/30 November 2012 – Franz Josef

On the first day Board members walked up to the Franz Josef valley to view the glacier, and were accompanied by local DOC staff. In the afternoon they visited the Okarito Forest in search of kiwi.

At the meeting the following day, Board resolved to request the NZCA to direct the Department to investigate placing of the Denniston Plateau into an ecological area as defined by the Conservation Act under Section 4.

An update on the Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review process was received. DOC Manager, Planning and Permissions, National Office Marie Long was in attendance and spoke on the planning process. Ngai Tahu Tourism presented details of their interest in applying for a new concession to provide specialised vehicular access in the Franz Josef glacier.

Fox Glacier Guiding showed their interest in the Plan partial review and gave an update on the present situation in the Fox glacier valley.

15 February 2013 - Hokitika

The election of officers was held with Stewart Robertson elected Chairperson and Mike Legge elected as Deputy Chairperson.

Kate Brooking, DOC RMA National Planning Officer attended the meeting and gave an update on the Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review. The Board voiced their concerns with the wording in the draft plan. K Brooking advised of the proposed hearing dates and said the panel would consist of two Departmental staff and two Board members which would be selected at a later date.

A member of the public spoke at the public forum. They expressed concerns over mining in the Awatuna area, and asked for the Board to give their support that no mining in this area should proceed.

2-3 May 2013 - Karamea

The Board travelled to Karamea and visited the Karamea Estuary Enhancement Programme, a project which the local community worked together the DOC in developing a walk along the estuary. They also visited the Oparara Basin, the Oparara Valley Trust interpretation shelter, Oparara Arch and local caves.

Having been on the hearing panel for the Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review, S Robertson and M Legge were given authority to continue work with the Department on the wording of the Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review.

The Department updated the Board on the restructuring and Management of Change process.

During the public forum of the meeting, a member of public asked the Board to investigate what was happening with the Otamahana Estuary channelisation.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS - CONSERVATION ACT

Section 4-- This Act shall so be interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

The West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Management Strategy has been approved pursuant to this section.

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

Section 6M (1) (a) To recommend the approval by the Conservation Authority of conservation management strategies, and the review and amendment of such strategies, under the relevant enactments:

The West Coast CMS became operative in April 2010 and in the past year the Board has not recommended any changes to the Authority.

Section 6M (1) (b) To approve conservation management plans, and the review and amendment of such plans, under the relevant enactments:

The Board made no such approvals in the past year.

Section 6M (1) (c) To advise the Conservation Authority and the Director-General on the implementation of conservation management strategies and conservation management plans for areas within the jurisdiction of the Board:

The Board received the annual CMS implementation monitoring report from the department in September 2012.

The report was presented addressing milestones in the following key management themes;

partnership with tangata whenua

relationships with people and organisations

identification and assessment of conservation values

protection of conservation values from adverse effects, including cumulative effects of authorised uses

recreational use and enjoyment of public conservation lands.

This format for departmental reporting was seen as informative and functional. Work is continuing towards a reporting template which can be used effectively within the changed management structure of the Department.

The Board recognises that in addition to the annual Departmental report, much of its perception of CMS implementation results from the routine interaction with the Department. The Conservator reports at each meeting are particularly useful in this regard.

The Board can report that the West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Management Strategy is being implemented effectively.

The CMS is a complex management tool which is held in the highest regard by the Board. The Board takes every opportunity to remind local authorities of its statutory significance and what it means in terms of the will of the community.

There are at present some tensions associated with the CMS implementation.

The CMS has a 10-year vision yet shorter term departmental statements of intent and financial imperatives appear to disregard the CMS.

These tensions result in some decisions which in this Board's opinion are inconsistent with CMS policies.

Some decisions relating to bach concessions are minor examples of this.

More significantly, in May the Minister excluded Board consultation on the access arrangement for the Escarpment Mine at Denniston. This was entirely inconsistent with our CMS policies.

Lastly, on the matter of CMS implementation and its reporting, the restructuring of the Department has to date not addressed how it will integrate with CMS's and their territorial areas of responsibility management.

Section 6M (1) (d) To advise the Conservation Authority or the Director-General— (i) On any proposed change of status or classification of any area of national or international importance;

The Board provided advice on proposed additions to National Parks (see later reference relating to the National Parks Act).

A recommendation was also made to the NZCA that an area of the Denniston Plateau be given reserve status.

At present, the Board is attending multi-party talks, with the objective of establishing consensus on identifying such a potential reserve.

Section 6M(1) (d) To advise the Conservation Authority or the Director-General (ii) On any other conservation matter relating to any area within the jurisdiction of the Board

Land exchanges and disposals

The Board provided comment on land disposals and exchange of public conservation land using a set of Board-approved guidelines for assessing the information on these applications. Some of the applications considered by the Board during the year included:

Disposal Keereweer, Reefton

This application was for public disposal of public conservation land in Bridge Street, Reefton. The land in question was part of a private garden and had no real conservation values, therefore the Board agreed to the disposal.

Revocation of Specially Protected Area and Disposal Application, Garvey Creek Farm Limited, Reefton

Based on the information provided, the Board supported the proposal to revoke the protected status of the land because it does not hold the conservation values appropriate to such protection. The Board also supported the proposed disposal of the land subject to obtaining a fair market price for its sale and with appropriate fencing conditions to be negotiated.

Road widening of southern approaches to Fox River Bridge

This project entails OPUS realigning SH6 to the east so that visibility is improved when approaching the bridge from the south. The realignment will require the highway to encroach into the Westland National Park by a maximum of 10m for approximately 150m before joining back up with the existing highway. The Board agreed to provide preliminary support for this application.

Proposed Exchange of Land, Okarito

In December 2011 the Department asked the Board advice on an exchange of land in Okarito. The landowner wanted to exchange their land for four crown sections. The Board didn't think this was a fair exchange. The Department has been working with the landowner and they are now asking for an exchange of two crown sections. Board have asked for further information.

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 requested draft determination reports for

comment which provided more information on which to base considered advice. Due to stringent timeframes these reports were not always able to be provided. Regular reports on concessions continued to be provided by the Department for Board meetings. The Board continues to work with Permissions staff on streamlining consultation trigger mechanisms and other processes to benefit both parties.

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

T A Dibben – Bach Application

This bach is the permanent residence for this applicant. The Board advised that if the concession is granted, it should only be on condition that the bus is removed and the whole area is cleaned up. The disposal of greywater and the other wastes should be clarified before granting the concession.

Character Holdings – Bach Application

The Board agreed with the granting of the lease and licence, but did not agree that it should be granted for a term of 30 years. Board felt the term should be limited to 15 years and the concession was not transferrable to another party. Board also agreed there should be no extensions allowed to the bach. This concession was publicly notified, the Board made a submission and was heard at the hearing.

White Heron Sanctuary Tours – Limited Supply Concession

The Board believed this concession should be granted. The activity will enhance the visitor experience with minimal impacts on the natural environment. This application was publicly notified and submissions close on 7.9.13.

Inchbonnie Hydro Scheme – Easement

The Board were first asked for advice on this concession in September 2011. The applicant was required to provide more information and withdrew the application. They have now re-applied for an easement, providing new information on flow. As a result of the revised application the Board supported the application which has the potential to increase generating power on the West Coast with minimal environmental impact.

Concession to upgrade and use Whareatea Road, Denniston Plateau as a haul road - Buller Coal Limited

The Board initially submitted against the granting of a resource consent for Buller Coal to be able to mine of coal and spoke to their submission in June 2011. The Board were concerned with the proposed destruction of the unique sandstone pavement environment and its associated ecosystems, and the

impossibility of rehabilitation. Therefore they do not agree to the granting of a concession to use as Whareatea Road as a haul road.

Subsequently an intention to grant an easement by Buller Coal Limited was publicly notified with submissions closing 16.08.13.

The various activities on Denniston Plateau have been discussed at every meeting this year. The Board met with the Minister of Conservation prior to his announcement in May 2013 granting an access arrangement for the Escarpment Mine Proposal on the Denniston Plateau. Board members were disappointed they were not provided a copy of the report from the Department prior to the Minister's announcement.

A total of four such applications have been granted by the Department this year, made up of three new applications and one re-issue. The Board made comment on three of these applications, one was not received for comment and one of which they advised should not be granted.

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:

Buller Coal Limited Access Arrangement 3rd Variation Exploration Permit 40-628 and Mining Permit 51 279 for Escarpment/Mt Rochfort Drilling
(Because of the sensitivity of the area the Board is seeking to gain a higher level of protection for the Denniston Plateau – see reference to multi-party talks on Page 8). They did not agree with the granting of the variation on this access arrangement, as they did not believe there should be mineral exploration in this area. Any exploration for future mining in the area may not be compatible with the protection of the area. The Denniston Plateau is the only part of the Buller coal plateau that can be protected to try and restore the full ecosystem.

Cascade Access Arrangement 3th Variation Mining Permit 41 455

This is an application seeking a variation to their existing access arrangement over public conservation land. The Board is seeking to gain a higher level of protection for the Denniston Plateau, and did not agree with the granting of the variation as it did not believe there should be mineral exploration in this area.

Buller Coal Limited Access Arrangement

EP 40 628 and EP 51 078 North Buller Exploration Drilling

The Board felt that all drilling programmes within the Radcliffe and Ngakawau Areas should be excluded from the access arrangement. They didn't believe the

correct conclusions were drawn from the report's analysis of the effects of this proposal.

Escarpment Mine Access Arrangement

The Board was advised by the Department that it would be consulted on this access arrangement. However the departmental report on the access arrangement has never been presented to the Board.

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.

Heaphy Track – the construction of a new 32 bunk Heaphy hut was completed along with a new 140m suspension bridge over the Heaphy River was completed November 2012. A bid for funding to bring the track up to Great Walks standards is being review. The mountain bike trial is in its final year.

Planning is underway for the 1.2km extension of the Hokitika Gorge track on the true left of the Hokitika River. The proposal includes a 70m suspension bridge at the upper end of the gorge which will provide a loop track. Funding has yet to be finalised.

Construction work on the new car park, public toilets and associated waste water disposal system at Lake Matheson is almost completed.

A new staff hut has been built at Welcome Flat. Work has started on alterations to the Welcome Flat Hut to address the issue of poor natural light, inefficient heating and the 'barn like' sleeping area upstairs. The hut will be closed to the public until this has been completed.

Ship Creek – car park has been upgraded of provide more parking. Work was also carried out to replace venting, linings and fitting of new toilet facilities.

A new toilet at Otto's Corner at Lake Mapourika was also completed.

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, whio protection, some plant species and predator control.

Section 6M Functions of Boards (1) – (f) To liaise with any Fish and Game Council on matters within the jurisdiction of the Board:

The two organisations exchanged copies of minutes and agendas and issues of interest were noted at Board meetings.

Section 6M Functions of Boards (1) – (g) To exercise such powers and functions as may be delegated to it by the Minister under this Act or any other Act.

The Board was not delegated any such powers or functions.

Section 6N Powers of Boards

- (1) Every 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) of this section, each Board may
 - (a) Advocate its interests at any public forum or in any statutory planning process; and
 - (b) Appoint committees of members and other suitable persons, and delegate to them functions and powers.

Pursuant to the above and in accordance with our CMS, 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 become involved.

The Board was consulted by Buller District Council on a variation to the conditions of the Cypress Mine. The Board withheld approval based on perceived conservation losses.

A hearing on the Lake Kaniere Development Project was attended where a Board submission was heard.

Submissions were made on Resource Management Reform Bill and Resource Management Reform 2013 – A discussion paper.

The Department kept the Board informed about planning issues through regular reports at Board meetings.

Some of the more significant planning matters in which the Board has continued involvement or has maintained a watching brief are listed below:

Kaniere Forks Hydro Scheme
 Birchfield Ross Mining
 1 Regional and 3 District Long Term Plans
 Regional Land and Water Plan
 Mount William North Mining Project
 Lake Kaniere Development Proposal
 Grey District Council SNA planning
 HDL Hydro Scheme at Stockton

Other Conservation Issues

The Board made Submissions on the following:
 Draft Conservation Services Programme Annual Plan 2013/14
 Proposed Freshwater Reform 2013 and Beyond
 Review of Maui Dolphin Threat Management Plan
 Marine Reserves: Application for 5 sites on West Coast

Board member Dr M Legge provided information papers to Board members on Sodium Nitrite and information relating to anticoagulant pest control agents.

DOC Restructuring

The Board has major concerns over the role Boards, their conservancies and CMS's will play in the future under the new structure. The absence of considerations of conservancies and CMS's in the early planning of the restructuring may create difficulties in enacting current legislation.

Appointment of Committees

The following committees were elected 15 February 2013.

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Membership</u>
Concessions	Clare Backes (Chairperson up to 3 May 2013), Michael Legge (Chair from 3 May 2013), Doug Baker, Jane Jones, Terry Scott, Kim Thomas, Stewart Robertson (ex officio)
Planning	Stewart Robertson (Chairperson), Jane Jones, Kim Thomas, and Clare Backes

Special Interest Topics

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

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER CONSERVATION ACT

Co-opting Members of the Board

Paula Sheridan was co-opted on to the Board at the 21 September 2012 meeting.

BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT 1980

Section 7 (1) and (2) Constitution of other national parks and addition of land to national parks

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. A formal submission is yet to be completed to transfer these parcels of land to national park and Board have requested the NZCA to followup so process can be formalised.

Section 47 Procedure for preparing and reviewing management plans

The Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review has been a major topic at Board meetings throughout the year. Stewart Robertson and Mike Legge were on the hearing panel which involved two days of submitters addressing the panel and speaking to their submission. They attended several meetings around this topic which is ongoing.

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 is 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 at several meetings this year with members of the public present at most meetings. Issues raised by the members of the public included

- a request for the Board via NZCA to ask DOC to do a Section 8 analysis on the Mokihinui catchment to edge of conservation land to be considered for inclusion into Kahurangi National Park
- concern for the kahikatea forest in the Mokihinui
- Westland National Park Management Plan Partial Review
- Mining in the Awatuna area
- Otumahana Estuary channelisation
- Oparara Valley Trust agreement with Department of Conservation

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 after meetings is seen as an important element of public relations

Other Boards and the NZCA

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

Terry Scott attended the Canterbury *Aoraki* Conservation Board meeting on 7 September 2012.

Although NZCA liaison person Dr Gerry McSweeney was unable to attend Board meetings in 2013, he is in regular contact with the Board Chair.

The Board welcomed a visit by the NZ Conservation Authority in April 2013. Three Board members accompanied NZCA on their field trip to the Franz Josef, with two members attending the working dinner meeting that followed. The next day a full NZCA meeting was held in Hokitika and Board members in attendance were encouraged the Authority agreed to write to the Director General about the proposed DOC changes.

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 and other conservation groups to celebrate national events. This gives members a chance to interact with other groups and to learn more about the Department's work.

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.

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR – STEWART ROBERTSON

In February of this year I was elected as Chair, taking over from Dr. Clare Backes. Clare led the Board for two years during which her calm demeanour and organising skills steered us through some challenging issues. Prominent amongst these being the future status of valuable stewardship land in the Conservancy.

Clare has plans for overseas travel in the coming year which led to her decision to not apply for another term of Board service. Our membership number was low last year and we co-opted Paula Sheridan to serve on the Board as a person with community involvement in the Franz Josef area.

At present, four members have technically finished their current terms of service; Doug Baker, Dr. Clare Backes, Jane Jones and myself. Doug and Clare are remaining in service with the expectation of timely ministerial replacements. Jane and I have applied to serve for another term.

I consider myself fortunate in working with a Board whose members are active in their communities and committed to putting the time in to meet the expectations of the public they serve.

This is an extremely busy Board, committing considerable time between meetings to meet its responsibilities.

Our relationship with the Department staff is mutually healthy and respectful. At present we can only feel that their loyalty and commitment have been unduly stressed through recent restructuring and budget cuts. We are fortunate to have Mary-Anne Thorpe as our Board Support Officer. Her support has not wavered in these times of employment uncertainty.

Currently, the Board is looking at ways to use current I.T. options to reduce paperwork and facilitate information flow relating to meetings.

Looking ahead there are some significant issues before the Board.

The Board is involved in multiparty talks relating to reserving an area of land on the Buller Coal Plateaux. The whole issue of mining up there has been in the public eye for some time. There appears to be some support for a reserve at all levels, and a consensus by Christmas is being aimed at.

I could not leave this topic without saying how annoyed the Board was in being left out of the access arrangement process for the Escarpment Mine. The ministerial haste to make a decision precluded agreed community input as required in our CMS.

Our CMS has been our 'bible' for providing advice and opinion. Every chance is taken to educate those who require this on its statutory significance and how it represents the will of our communities on conservation management.

On occasions our view of CMS policies differs from that of the department. Typically we may consider that decisions and conditions relating to bach concessions are 'soft'.

Similarly our views on access arrangements often require more rigorous conditions to be put in place. It remains a concern of the Board that such differences of CMS interpretation may persist.

With respect to CMS reporting, we have no clear picture of how the new DOC management structure will feed the Board appropriate information.

Whilst the CMS looks ahead over a 10 year period, the Board considers that the shorter term management priorities of the Department can pull attention away from the CMS.

Statements of Intent, pressure for partnerships, reduced funding and restructuring do not appear to have been aligned with the 10-year view.

In many ways lack of funding has put the Department in difficult positions where to decide to follow CMS policies means bringing in less money.

Which brings me to the current issue of stewardship land and how to protect those areas of high conservation value. This year we asked for land acquired by the Natural Heritage Fund to be added to national parks. This is on hold due to other priorities being met. From the Board's perspective, this is a staffing and funding issue.

On a much larger scale, there is a serious need to re-classify valuable stewardship land (ref. Dr. Jan Wright, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's recent report). This too will be a major funding issue and the political support for this will need to be created.

The current partial review of the Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park Management Plan is approaching the stage for Board approval and for it to be passed to the Conservation Authority. The Board is being kept apprised of progress.

Lastly - the great unknown for Boards is where will we fit in the new DOC world? My view is that we know what the public wants. The CMS's articulate this and the new structure should fit around CMS's rather than the other way round.

The Minister has declared an intention to seek advice from a group of experienced Board members before making a decision. I encourage these Board members to put the public will foremost in their minds.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stewart Robertson
Chairperson

West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy


 West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservation Board Boundary


 West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy Boundary


Public Conservation Land

 National Park


 Wilderness Area / Ecological Area / Amenity Area

 Conservation Park


 Wildlife Management Area / Wildlife Refuge / Wildlife Sanctuary

 Stewardship Area / Marginal Strip

 Reserve

 National Reserve

 Covenant

 Treaty Settlement Area

 Walkways

