Aggregating public submissions on Conservation Management Strategies

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Abstract

Conservancies of the Department of Conservation (DOC) had sought public submissions to their regional Draft Conservation Management Strategies in mid 1995. Most conservancies used database software to summarise and analyse these submissions. A major objective of the project described in this report was to aggregate these databases and to analyse the results, to look for conservation issues of nation-wide concern. The other main objective was to develop systems to make this process easier in the future.

Nine of thirteen conservancies provided data. Differences in database formats were surmountable, but there were also very wide differences in the amount and form of the content that had been recorded. These limited the analysis of the data.

No confident identification can be made of national conservation concerns, although some tentative conclusions might offer future lines of investigation.

The associated database is designed to allow further experimentation with the data, if desired. It is likely that more useful information could be gleaned from the database, especially by reviewing the keywords of all entries. However there are over 12 000 entries.

The value of future data would be improved by using a consistent thesaurus of keywords across conservancies. The research described in this report could contribute to the development of this thesaurus.

1. Introduction

1.1 THE PROJECT

The project set out to discover whether there were conservation issues that were a common concern amongst New Zealanders as a whole, or alternatively, whether there were identifiable regional differences in conservation concerns. DOC conservancies had sought public submissions to their regional Draft Conservation Management Strategies (CMS), and most conservancies had used database software to summarise these into `comments' or `main points'. These databases therefore represented a potentially accessible source of information about regional concerns, as long as useful and comparable information could be extracted from some widely different database formats. This project would be the first attempt to aggregate this information on a national basis.

1.2 OUTPUTS

The project had three planned outputs:

1. A consolidated database, aggregating the various different databases from the conservancies into one and providing the basis for a similar exercise in the future.

The database (CMS-NZ.mdb) is in Access97 format and is available from the author, with a detailed contract report. See appendix 2 of that report for instructions on installing the file, and appendix 3 for instructions on using the database.

The main fields of the database are:

- the comments or extracts noting issues of concern (about 15,000 of them),
- keywords (about 1500), and
- categories (about 60) to which each keyword is allocated.

The database presents the aggregated information, filtered by Conservancy, Keyword, or Category. It also allows the user to easily add or change keywords, to change the category that a keyword is allocated to, and to change the list of available keywords and available categories. This allows exploration about what issues are important in which conservancies.

2. A full-text searching and analysis system, envisaged as using a demo or single-user version of a search engine like Nud*ist, Isys, or AltaVista.

This objective proved to be unworkable in the way planned, mainly because a high proportion of the text comprised abbreviations, spelling errors, and other non-standard usages (the databases were never intended for public scrutiny).

However, the supplied database allows full-text searches, using the built-in facilities of Access. The occurrences of any word or phrase can be searched for in the whole database or in a filtered sub-set.

3. A detailed contract report, providing an analysis of the data and seeking any insights on the national scale that might lie within it.

The report also describes the methodology and notes some of the problems and issues that arose. This should help the process should an update be envisaged at a later time.

2. Results

2.1 DATA

Nine of the thirteen conservancies provided data in electronic form.

The data varied widely in depth of detail. Some conservancies used their database to record detailed extracts from the submissions, whereas others recorded only the briefest of reference notes. Some used keywords, most did not. (Where they did not, I based the keywords on the chapter headings that the extracts had been allocated to in the CMS report by that conservancy.) The extracts or reference notes are referred to variously as 'comments', 'concerns "notes' or 'issues'. In the database they are recorded in the Issues field.

2.2 WORD USE

I analysed the word frequency in the comments. A significant problem was the large number of abbreviations (which differed by conservancy), and spelling errors. In addition, many conservation concepts are best expressed as a phrase rather than as a word.

The results of this word count can be explored in the WordCount.xls spreadsheet. The first two pages are attached as appendix 6 to the full report.

2.3 KEYWORDS

Because the keywords, where used, reflected what DOC staff at the time took to be the main issue of concern, their analysis by conservancy should provide useful information. However not all conservancies used keywords, and where they were used they differed amongst conservancies.

Also, both the structure of the databases used by the conservancies, and the method I used to generate keywords where the conservancies had not used them, usually led to only one keyword being applied to a comment. In many cases two or more would have been more appropriate. Thus many comments that should apply to more than one area of concern have tended to be defined too narrowly.

I took a very conservative policy towards changing the keywords that had been allocated by DOC staff, even when the meanings were fairly obviously synonymous. This led to a large number of keywords being created (about 1500), so I allocated them to 60 categories. (Both the keywords and the categories can be changed in the database, and it would be desirable to develop a better list of each.)

The results can be explored with the database. An analysis of the results is in the spreadsheet CategAnalysis.xls, supplied with the full report.

2.4 LIMITATIONS TO THE DATA

- Only nine of thirteen conservancies were represented.
- There were widely varying levels of detail in the databases some conservancies included long summaries or extracts, others just had references.
- To some extent each conservancy had its own 'vocabulary', especially abbreviations, and typographic errors were common. So issues which were common across conservancies may not have been adequately brought together.
- Keywords allocated by DOC staff (one keyword per comment) may not have covered all the concerns represented in a comment - the issue might demand multiple keywords to reflect all the concerns arising in the submission.
- Generation of keywords from chapter headings may not have properly reflected the concerns represented in a comment.
- The results may be sensitive to the particular choices of keyword categories and category groups in the database. These lists are not the only ways of categorising the keywords, and are unlikely to be optimal.

3. Interpretation

For the above reasons, the results need to be treated with caution. In terms of the question "What do New Zealanders generally think about conservation issues?", no confident statements can be made.

The results do raise some intriguing questions, however. 'Issues, goals, and priorities' was a high-frequency category, although this is partly because it was a bit of a catch-all that could accommodate a wide range of more specific concerns.

The only other category that stands out is 'Commercial use'. This was high for Nelson, Southland, Waikato, and the West Coast, but quite low for the Bay of Plenty, Northland, and Wellington.

The data seem to show a tendency for concerns that affect people directly to rate higher than more 'altruistic' concerns, and for 'concrete' concerns to rate higher than those which are more abstract. However neither of these is clear-

cut, and they could just be the results of the particular choice of categories. (See the full report for a more detailed analysis.)

In looking at the keyword categories, some natural groupings seem to emerge. The Category Groups tables in the spreadsheet allocate the 60 categories into 11 broad groups to provide a broad-brush overview.

Figure 1 shows the percentage frequency of these 11 `groups of categories', across the country and overall. Note that this table is two levels of abstraction away from the original data, and some of its apparent message will be artifacts of categorising decisions.

4. Conclusions

So, how green are New Zealanders? This project has not provided sufficiently strong data for us to be able to answer that question. The full-text analysis is flawed because of the many potential synonyms (including abbreviations and spelling errors) for any word. The keywords in the database are a fragile basis of analysis because most of them, being derived from chapter headings, are not necessarily a good representation of the meaning of the comment. The other limitations in the data, as noted above, all reduce the level of confidence we can have in the results.

Nevertheless, part of the rationale for the project was to test the methodology and to make the process easier next time. The database provides a starting point for doing the same exercise again, and some changes could be considered to make the data more easily aggregated in the future. These changes are noted in the Recommendations section of the report.

5. Recommendations

The information obtained by this exercise has some big gaps and several potential biases. Better information will demand improvements in the initial data capture process.

The main objectives are therefore to capture useful data in the first place, to maximise consistency, and to minimise ad hoc processing of the data.

5.1 ENCOURAGE ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS

Over time, it will be increasingly acceptable for DOC to ask for an electronic copy of submissions as well as hard copy. This would make the whole process easier if the conservancies continued to use conventional databases to

help analyse the submissions, and would make the process very much easier if they moved to text analysis software. If all the submissions were on disk, then aggregating the process nationally could be done very effectively using software such as QSR Nud*ist4 or Nvivo. Electronic submissions would allow significantly more efficient processing of the main ideas.

5.2 RETAIN THE ORIGINAL SUBMISSIONS

For this project, scanning in the text of all typewritten submissions would have been technically possible but extremely expensive. However, the results would then have depended purely on the quality of the analysis, not on data limitations.

Scanning technology is improving rapidly. Perhaps at some future time it would be feasible to scan and analyse all submissions.

Even if this were some years away, it could provide data for longitudinal studies. It would be a pity if this source of information were lost because the submissions had been discarded.

5.3 RETAIN THE ANALYSIS FILES

The CMS submission analyses represent much work and a valuable information resource. The cost of archiving a few megabytes is trivial, while the cost of redoing them would be impracticably high. I recommend that, as a policy, conservancies archive any data that could conceivably be useful in the future, and that careful thought be given before deleting costly information.

5.4 STANDARDISE ABBREVIATIONS

A full-text index of all the words used in CMS analyses could be informative, but is less so than it could be because of the variety of abbreviations and formatting used. Simple things like whether or not to use a period after an abbreviation, and whether or not to capitalise, make a significant difference. Also, different abbreviations are used for common words and concepts (e.g. DOC, DoC, and D.O.C.).

Given the pressure to do the main task - production of the CMS document - it may be difficult to achieve total DOC-wide standardisation. However, in many cases the choice of an abbreviation is completely arbitrary, and it would be as easy to use the standard one as to invent a new one. I recommend the development of a standard list of common abbreviations.

5.5 USE KEYWORDS

When DOC staff first read the submissions, they take a view about the issues raised. Keywords allocated at this point would be useful when later writing the CMS document, as well as for other purposes such as a consolidation exercise like this one.

I recommend that, as much as possible, notes about issues should have keywords allocated to them.

5.6 HAVE A STANDARD LIST OF KEYWORD CATEGORIES

The keywords may vary with different conservancies, because of specific local issues and concerns. Keyword *categories*, however, can be more consistent, and this may not require much more than agreeing on a standard terminology. The list of categories used in the database should be seen is a starting point only, used to get the database operational. It needs refinement by DOC staff.

5.7 PROVIDE FOR MULTIPLE KEYWORDS

The existing Access database used by many regions has a Keywords field - a single column - in the main table. This tends to discourage the use of more than one keyword for a particular entry, and makes keyword searching more complicated if more than one keyword is entered.

It is preferable to allow any arbitrary number of keywords to be allocated to one "Issue" entry (i.e. a comment or note). Thus an issue relating to coastal ecosystems should be keyworded under both "Coastal" and "Ecosystems", so it would be picked up in a search for either.

This requires the keywords to be in a separate, linked, 'keywords' table rather than being entered into a column in the main table. The database supplied with this report is designed in this way. However, if conservancies prefer to use the Access database they have used in the past, I recommend that this change be made to it (the change is reasonably straightforward).

	Bay	Cant	Nels	Nort	Otag	Sout	Waik	Well	West	ALL
Management			5			11	13	15	1	
Facilities for people	- 12	- 11		- 15	11				7	
Habitats	7	11	12	8		7	13	- 13		12
Inhabitants	- 8	12		13	11	12	7	11	8	11
Human impact	10	7		. 12	5	7	14	6	13	9
Commerce	5	7	. 14	3	- 5	11		3	13	8
Cultural	S 14	- 6	4	15	- 6	1	9	6	5	
Information		4	- 8	6	5	1	7	6	8	7
Stewardship	2	7	5	6	8	2	0	2	7	. 5
Systems	1	4	0	5	5	13	2	1	4	4
Impact of technology	1	4	6	1	2	4	3	6	4	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Colour 1 (between)		5	8							
Colour 2 (between)		- 8	15							
Colour 3 (greater than)										

Figure 1. Percentage frequency of Category Groups.

Appendix 1: Available files

- CMS-NZ.mdb (MS Access 97 database).
- WordCount.xls (Excel 97 spreadsheet, word count of Issues field.)
- CategAnalysis.xls (Excel 97 spreadsheet, analysis of Keywords and Categories fields.)
- HowGreen.doc (The full report in MSWord.)
- HowGreenShort.doc (This report in MSWord.)

Appendix 2: Groups, Categories, and Keywords

This shows all the Keywords and Categories in the database, and the Groups in the analysis spreadsheet, listed as a hierarchy. The portion headed 'No Group/ No Category' comprises keywords which have not been allocated to a category or group. This source of this appendix is the report **GroupsCategoriesKeywordsExport**, in the database. Longer keyword phrases are truncated to save space.

Group

Category

[No Group]

[No Category]
Activities
Activity vs Setting
age and rec
Ageing of NZ

Ageing pop Ageing population Air Amenity values Appropriateness Aranui Archives

Areas vs Places
ASCV
ASCVs and Representative Samples

Assessment
Associates
Bio control, publicity

Biota Buffers Central Change

Change Choice of Place Names

Clarity
Climate
Climatically
Co
Cons Support
Conservation Estate
Conservation park
conservation park investigations
Conservation parks

Conservation parks
Consistency
Control
Control measures
Control programme
CPL
CRC Role, & others
Creation of New Transport Links

Crown land
Departmental Facilities

DOCU Educational institutions Effects Effects/revenue

EIA/AEE's Duplication and CMS/RMA

EIAs etc Environmental Care Code Environmental Protection Equal Opportunities and Staff

Exclusive Use
Extensions
FAV
FMC submission
Forty Special Places
Front Country with Facilities

Forty Special Places
Front Country with Facilities
Fuels
Full Inventory
Functions

Geographic Zones - Text
GEOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW (Vol I)
Habitat manipulation

Info exchange between DOC and SDC Information Management, survey and

Integrated Management Integrative management Intellectual property rights International Significance International Market Interp, rec facilities

Introduction to Geographical Overview ISSUES, signs

Kai Tahu
Kaka - Methods
Kaka - Results
Kaka issues/threats
Kaka issues/Threats
Kaka, Issues/Threats
Kaka, species ranking
Kaupapa - Vision
Kaupapa Atawhai
Kaupapa Atawhai Strategy
Kereru

Key Visitor Attractions LAC Landcorp, Epi centre

Landings
Limits of Acceptable Change
Link areas
Linkages

Local botanical expertise Long term plans Mahinga kai

Mohua

Maintaining a Range of Opportunities Marginal Strips Explanation Marquee Stewardship Memorandum of Understanding Methods

Mole cricket
MORV
MTB Tracks
Natural quiet
Natural resources
Navigation aids
Network of reserves
Network Utilities
Night Sky
Non Commercial sites
Non-statutory plans
Notes
Numbers
OGP and CMP
On-site Interpretation
Open Space Covenants

Other Uses
Overview
Park Addition Stewardship
Patterns of Protection
Physical and Biological
Physical description
PLACE OBJECTIVES AND
Plus general Place sections
PNA ACCESS
PNA definition

PNA definition
PNA programme
PNA surveys
PNAP
PNAP in Otago
Pollution
PR in APNP
Prevention
Private & Public
Programmes

Protected Area Network PRR

RAP
RAP definition
RAPs
Rationale
Rationale for Restrictions
Reclassification

Radios

References Remnant plains' plants Reserves Resource and estate use

Resource Use
Resources
Resourcing
Responsibilities
RESR
Restoration

Restoration funding Restoration maps Restrictions Results Sought Review RHA RHA, WARs

RHAs
Rock art
Rock drawings
Roles, 'background'
Rooks

ROS ROS classes Runanga & CRC Rural-back country drive in

Rural-back cour Salt Marsh Sanctuary SIG Significance

Social & Economic Well Being

Social implications Southern Special Places

Sports fish and game bird management STA

STA Staffing Stewardship

Survey, wildlife/green corridors

Table
Tables General
Taiapure
Taiapure maataitai
Te Runanga O Rapaki
Te Taumutu Runanga
Teachers

Teachers
Telecommunication Facilities
Telecommunications
Telecommunications IMP
Threats
Thrill Seekers

Thrill Seekers
Toanga
Town Belt
UCL
Umbrella
UNCED
Update
Upgrading

Use

Use generally
Uses Not Otherwise or Fully Provided For
Uses of Areas Managed by the Department

Using Rapaki knowledge Vandalism

Verbal assurances by staff WAC Staff Water Based Activities WCO

Wildlife Encounters World Heritage Site

Commerce

Commercial use

Comm Accomm
Comm EEL Fishing Access
commercial
Commercial Accomodation
Commercial and Other Uses
Commercial Concessions
Commercial Enterprise

Commercial fishing
Commercial Freshwater Fishing
Commercial hunting
Commercial Operations

Commercial Recreation
Commercial Recreation and Tourism

Commercial Sites

Commercial Sphagnum Harvesting Commercial Structures and Public Works

Commercial Structures and Public Commercial Use of Land Commercial Use of Land Commercial use/cultural use Commercial v rec fish and game Commercial vs rec hunting Communication and Liaison

Communication and Liason Concession Application Criteria Concessions

Concessions - Rapaki

Concessions and Commercial Activities Easements Easements and Other Uses

Easements and Other Uses
Eel Fishery
Eel Fishing
Electricity generation
Farming
Filming
Filming & Sphagnum
Forestry

Forestry Forests Amendment Act 1993 Grazing

Grazing Concessions 396 Grazing licence/lease Grazing Licences

Grazing Licences
Grazing Licences and leases
Guiding
Hydro

Hydro power Hydro-electirc Power Development Hydro-Electric Generation

Hydro-Electric Generation Leases Leases, Licences & Concessions (other than

Limits of Effects of Concession Activities

Recreation Planning Nature tourism Facilities Huts Non Recreational Use Goal Facilities, and safe access Recreation remote ecological areas Maori Maori & European History Facilities, safety Non-rec uses Recreation roads consultation Other Leases, Licences and Concessions Maori cultural interpretation Facility Recreation strategy Maori Culture/History Facility planning Pastoral leases Recreation use Recreation Use of Areas Pastoral lessees Maori history Facility removal Private & Commecial Activities, Structures Maori issues Recreation, camping, Huts and tracks Recreation, buts, tracks Maori Site Biking vs walking tracks Private or Commercial Uses of Areas Maori terms Recreation, structures Bunk space in huts Managed Private profit vs amateur club Maori Tradition and History Recreational Opportunities Recreational Planning Department facilities, buts, historic Maori, con act Ngai Tahu Private Property Rights Recreational Characteristics and Great Walks Ngai Tahu Claim - Taumutu 1 Production forestry Opportunities Hut and track maintenance Recreation & Tourism Concessions Ngai Tahu Claim - Taumutu 2 Recreational facilities Hut fees Hut removal Recreation and tourism Ngai Tahu perspective Recreational opportunities Recreation and tourism concessions Recreational Opportunities, Waimakariri Ngai Tahu policies Huts Ngai Tahu, Imps Resolution of Treaty Claims Recreational Opportunity Identification & Recreational Planning ROS Recreation and Tourism Development Huts and access Recreation vs tourism Huts and tracks RESOLUTION OF TREATY OF Runanga with a Treaty relationship Recreation/tourism Recreational uses Huts as interp sites Recreation/Tourism Concessions Recreational Values Huts fees Huts Te Waihora Threats, commercial eel fishing Sites of importance to iwi Tramping Opportunities Tourism Sites of Significance to Iwi Roads, Fencing Huts, Dundas Ridge Hut Utilities & Easements Tangata whenua Huts Field Hut Fencing Tangata Whenua and Conservation Utilities and easements issues Fencing, primary priorities Huts, Ohau Shelter Taumutu consultation Concessions Fencing/roads Highway Management Issues & Responses The Role of Tangata Whenua in Con Applying for a Concession Applying for a Concessions Improving Commitment to High Profile Traditional harvest Maintenance and Upgrading Highways, Roadside Opportuntiies & Traditional Harvesting Appying for a Concession Relocation of Monument Hut Visitor Traditional Maori Uses Policy - Roadside Facilities Tourism/tracks Tenure review Tenure review - con parks (T & MC)
Tenure review - recreation Track Identification Roadside facilities etc Roadside recreational activities. Treaty / people Track management Treaty claims Term of Licence Track use Treaty of Waitangi
Treaty of Waitangi & Kai Tahu ki Otag
Treaty parntership, runanga
Treaty Partnership Fees & Rentals Tracks **Habitats** Tracks and huts Appropriate rentals Tracks by Priority - Dunedin Cave & karst Landuse Changes Tracks Safety Market Rent Cave and Karst Cave and Karst Landscapes Treaty Partnership - Kaitorete Spit Walking opportunities WalkingTracks / Paths Market rental Treaty Principles Cave Karst Caves and Karst Market rentals Walkway Birdlings P Rentals Whale bone Walkway constraints Whale bone/nature tourism Rentals Walkway definition Rentals/clubs Coasts Walkway near Timaru Money Walkways Facilities for people Funding Coastal Walkways Access
Walkways, bike trail, consultation Coastal and marine Money Access Coastal and Marine Ecosystems Coastal and Marine Protection Revenue Access Wilkin Track Revenue Generation Access - 4WD; RHA Recreation Coastal Erosion Access - APNP ages Access - Hunters & Dogs Assessment of recreation opportunities Assessment of a climbing opps
Enhancing Recreation Opportunities via Coastal estuaries Cultural Coastal estuaries and Wainono Lagoon. Access - Implementation 1 Coastal Geological Features Historic Access info Imp 2 Coastal Islands Actively Managed Historic Places Access Managemen Enhancing Recreation Opportunities via etc. Coastal limit to places Archaeological Archaeological Expertise Access Safety Horse Riding Coastal Plants Access to Recreation Opportunities Ice skating Coastal Recreation and Tourism Archaeological Resources Access to the Coast Introduction, Recreation and Use. Coastal Waters Archaeology of Maori Cultural and Historic Access vs values Opportunities coastal wetland reserves Access, Disabilities Opportunities for Disabled People Coasts and Estuaries Cultural and Historical Feature Access, tenure review Opportunities for Domestic and Overseas Estuary Access, Walkways and Walking Cultural and Historical Features Sand dunes Early/Archaic Sites Opportunities Outdoor rec Forest and bush Bicycle Access Heritage Rec and age Heritage conservation Current situation - access Rec and age, APNP
Rec and age/fitness - table 9 Forest Forest and bush Heritage Conservation, Mt Cook Public access Public Access & Impacts Forest Parks Historic Rec and non-rec opps Forests and Shrublands Historic and Cultural Values nublic access, table 5 Rec and use Public Enjoynent & Appreciation Mountainlands & beech forest Historic conservation Rec and use, walkways Historic Features Public safety Native forest Rec Opps Rec opps, Waimak Rec access Historic places Shrublands Rec and access Rec strategy Freshwater & Wetlands Rec and access, Mt Cook & Twizel Historic Resources Assessment and Rec use Historic Resources Conservation on Lands Recreation Access Aquatic flow levels
Avon-Heathcote Estuary, wetlands, Rec use - constraints historic resources, protection and planning Historic resources/soil conservation Recreation and Access Rec/tourism Recreation/Access Rec/wild animal/wilderness freshwater Historic/cultural Recreational access Recreation Restrictions on Access & Recreational Use Historical Protection - Rapaki Runanga Recreation Planning Freshwater History Roadend/Roadside Services Recreation Planning ROS Freshwater Ecosystems Management of Historic Resources Roadends Recreation / Tourism Freshwater fish Moa Hunter Sites
Moving Historic Buildings etc
New Zealand Archaeological Association Roads, Access and Utilities Freshwater Fish and Fisheries Recreation and Conservation Groups Unnecessary legal access Freshwater Fish Species Recreation and tourism Use and acc Freshwater fisheries Recreation and Use Protection of Historic Resources Generally Camping, Picnicking Freshwater habitat Recreation Facilities Recreation Fostering Freshwater/Te Waihora Maori constraints, Treaty of Waitangi Camping and Picnic Areas Recreation in Mt Cook Freshwater/Wetland Ecosystems and Camping facilities Recreation Information Lakes Consultation with iwi Lakes and wetlands Camping/back country recreation Recreation Monitoring Consultation with Iwi and the Conservation Lakes European History Minimum flow Campsites Recreation Obj and Imp Cultural use Picnic areas Recreation objective Recreation objectives Minimum flows Giving Effects to Principles of the Treaty of Facilities Project River Recovery Recreation objectives and impl

Recreation Off Land Administered by the

Recreation Opportunities Recreation Planning

Riparian management

Riparian protection

Iwi perspectives

Manawhenua Interests

Manawhenua

Facilities

Facilities Mt Thomas Mt Grey

Facilities Currently Managed by Otago