

SCIENCE & RESEARCH SERIES NO.81

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CONSERVATION II:

**A report on a conference to involve women in the wider
community in conservation**

by

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Published by
Head Office,
Department of Conservation,
P O Box 10-420,
Wellington,
New Zealand

ISSN 0113-3713
ISBN 0-478-01654-9

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Cataloguing-in-Publication data

O'Brien, Margaret.
Women's involvement in conservation II : a report on a conference to involve women in the wider community in conservation / by Margaret O'Brien, Lyn Jowett, Peggy Duncan. Wellington, N.Z. : Dept. of Conservation, 1995.

1 v. ; 30 cm. (Science & Research series, 0113-3713 ; no. 81.)
ISBN 0778016549

1. Women in conservation of natural resources--New Zealand. 2. Women conservationists--New Zealand. I. Jowett, Lyn. II. Duncan, Peggy. III. New Zealand. Dept. of Conservation. IV. Title. V. Series: Science & research series ; no. 81.

333.72088042 20NZ
zbn95-007855

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The conference was organised by Lyn Jowett, Equal Education Consultant, in collaboration with the women of the Waikato Conservancy. Lyn Jowett and Peggy Duncan, Post-graduate student at Victoria University provided an initial report for the Waikato Conservancy on the organisation and proceedings of the conference. Margaret O'Brien from the Science & Research Division of the Department of Conservation took responsibility for this final report with valuable contributions from Lyn Jowett and Peggy Duncan, and helpful feedback from Mary Cresswell (editor) and the women of the Waikato Conservancy.

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**WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CONSERVATION II:
A report on a conference to involve women from the wider community in
conservation**

by
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ABSTRACT

A conference was held in Hamilton in November 1993, involving over 100 women from the Waikato Conservancy of the Department of Conservation (DOC) and from the wider Waikato community. The purpose was to establish a network which would both build on the skills and expertise of the women and involve the department and women from the wider community more effectively in conservation. The conference was extremely successful in terms of providing the Waikato women with a starting point for further involvement in conservation, and for identifying a wide variety of useful skills available within the wider community but not at the moment used by the department. The process by which the conference was planned and conducted fell far short of ideal. This was partly because of the limited time available for planning and for handling the conference itself. This could be overcome in the future through (i) improved communication between Head Office and conservancy and within the conservancy, and (ii) acknowledgement within the department that time is a resource that needs to be allocated to the development of processes like networking as well as the development of products. Now that a richer link between DOC and women from the wider community has been initiated, there is an urgent need to maintain this relationship (through follow-up) and to look towards establishing new links along similar lines in other parts of the department. The conference should not be viewed as a one-off event but as part of a wider and more long-term programme of working with associates and conservation allies.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on **A Conference for Women: Working Together for Conservation *Kia mahi tahi mo Te Papa Atawhai*** held in Hamilton 2 November, 1993. The conference involved women from the Waikato Conservancy of the Department of Conservation and from the wider Waikato community.

The conference contributed to the Department of Conservation's research project on "Women's Involvement in Conservation", which was motivated by the need to understand and promote women's role in the work of conservation. From the first, planning envisaged a collaborative approach. Collaboration and consensus were to characterise the planning as well as the actual process of the conference itself, so that women who went to the conference were able not only to acknowledge and use women's expertise at all levels but also to learn from everyone's contribution. We hoped that this would give the Waikato women involved the opportunity to explore a process that could involve the department and the community more effectively in conservation.

2. THE NEED FOR INVOLVEMENT

Q. Why was there such an emphasis on involvement?

It was a response to the results of the October 1992 Heylen Survey of departmental staff and the supporting feedback from the Women's Advisory Group questionnaire. The findings, discussed in several conservancies, made it clear that women believe:

(i) The department needs to **involve** the public more in conservation.

Women strongly advocated that the public in general, and women in the community in particular, should be educated and involved in conservation, believing this to be the most important activity with which the department should be involved. Overall, however, less than 40 percent of staff believed this to be an area where DOC performs well.

(ii) Women staff would like to be more **involved** with the public.

Though women staff are more likely than men to be office bound, they see involvement with the public as one of the most enjoyable aspects of their work and wish to increase it.

(iii) Women staff would like to be more **involved** within the department and particularly in management.

With regard to their own career paths, DOC women were concerned about their low representation in management - only 6 percent of women, compared with 21 percent of men, are in managerial positions. They also believe there should be improved communication and information-sharing within DOC, recognition for their contributions rather than their status, opportunities to extend their skills, and stronger horizontal networking among women, legitimated by DOC. **In essence, the whole concept of involvement seemed fundamental to the women working more effectively in conservation.**

Q. How did the idea of a conference arise?

Initially the research project included a "within" department component and an "outside" department component. If DOC were to actively involve women in the community in conservation, then it needed to provide good models in female staff who are already working effectively in conservation. In the "within" component, we needed to assess the situation for women within the department to see whether staff were working as effectively as they wished.

The second stage or "outside" DOC component of the work was initially to interview a large sample of women in the community to understand their awareness of, and activity in, conservation and the main barriers to their participation. However, the results of the first stage made us think again. Was it really appropriate to go out into the

community and interview women individually? Could we not use the research project to involve them more effectively in the work of conservation and with the women in the department - and thereby take more cognisance of the results and expressed needs of the women staff in the first stage of the project?

To develop an alternative structure for the second stage we called a small meeting in March of the women who had initiated the research (from the DOC Public Awareness Unit) and the women who were to carry out the second stage. This is where Lyn Jowett, an equal education consultant in Wellington, became involved as an organiser. Christine Dann from Christchurch was also invited, as she had already carried out interviews with women from the wider community involved in conservation. It was at this meeting that a decision was made to try and set up workshops that would involve both community and departmental women. Conservancy involvement was to be sought: As they had contact with the communities and because there were few if any already existing channels for linking with women in the community, conservancies seems to be the appropriate places in which to start.

The aim was to have residential workshops (of two days each) organised in three volunteer conservancies. We hoped that 10 women staff from each conservancy would share their interests in conservation with up to fifty women invited from the community. Day 1 could be a conservation issues day, and Day 2 could be a process day looking at what conservation activities community members wanted to be involved in, barriers to their participation and what could be done to overcome these obstacles. To reduce the load on the conservancies funding was to be sought and Lyn would be brought in to help organise the residential workshops.

Q. What were the advantages of this type of approach?

Firstly, it was expected that bringing a group of women together would provide a more "powerful" experience for the women involved and improve the networking between DOC conservancies and their communities. It was hoped, in fact, that the involvement would "empower" women - linking into their sense of "self-efficacy".¹ This belief that what you do will have an effect - this confidence you have in yourself - is central to conservation activity and is stimulated by success.

In the process of organising a conference for women in their conservancy, DOC women were able to use a range of skills and knowledge outside their designated jobs. Given the opportunity to work successfully with other women, sharing their ideas and thoughts about their work and the organisation, and extending their networks both within the Department and in the community, it was expected that the sense of self-efficacy - the sense of "empowerment" - of DOC women would rise, and this in turn would provide good modelling for others. Even if a DOC woman was not directly involved in the process of organising the conference, her attendance as a participant was likely to have a positive effect.

¹See p.2 in the report of the first stage of the research: O'Brien, M. 1995. Women's involvement in conservation: A focus on DOC staff.

Secondly, this approach had the advantage of extending the use of the action-research method used in the first stage of the project. Action research is based on the idea that those concerned become involved in the process of doing, then reflect on and analyse the learning that has occurred. We had learnt in the first stage that women wanted to be more involved in the department and the community. The action proposed was for DOC women in one or more conservancies to organise and run a workshop on conservation for women in the local community, following this up with an analysis of the experience.

This paper reports on this analysis and the learning that has occurred so far. It also identifies issues that need to be considered for future similar conferences.

Q. So, Waikato was one of the conservancies to volunteer to take part in the second stage of the research project?

Yes, but both Nelson-Marlborough and the West Coast also showed interest. A message was sent out to all the conservancies through their women's network representatives. But we had very little time to discuss the issue with the conservancies directly as:

- (i) the research project had to be changed to accommodate the new directions and be given the "go-ahead" by the Science & Research Division of DOC, and
- (ii) the conservancies needed to know whether they would be involved so that the information could be included in their business plans.

The planning was rushed, so we were quite pleased when three conservancies indicated that they would be interested in being involved. Unfortunately, we didn't receive quite as much funding as originally requested so the West Coast dropped out because it would have been the most expensive to organise. Nelson-Marlborough dropped out later - partly because of over-commitment and partly because they had difficulty finding anyone to liaise with Lyn. There was concern expressed by individual women about the negative reaction that could be received from management if staff were to be involved in this type of study, and even a suggestion that the workshop should be organized by someone outside the department who would have better contact with women in the wider community.

3. COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

Q. Did the Waikato Conservancy encounter any difficulties?

The foremost was an apparent **breakdown in communication**. This occurred either between "Head Office"² and the conservancy or within the conservancy itself, partly due to the "rushed" planning procedure. When Marg and Lyn arrived at the Waikato Conservancy to begin arranging a conference with the women, there appeared to be little support for it or knowledge about the reasons for them being there. The women staff appeared to have little time or energy to devote to a conference. The conference was seen as an extra commitment irrelevant to the "real" work of the conservancy, and there was a strong sense that no one felt any power to own the project.

Q. How did such a breakdown occur?

In essence, the breakdown of communication centred around the conservancy having "volunteered" to be involved in the project. More time should have been spent working through the initial contact with the conservancy, and all that this involved.

"Head Office" staff understood that staff had communicated with one another, that the project had been included in the business **plan**³ and that staff were keen to be involved in the second phase of the project - that is, they were highly motivated. This was not the perception of the women in the conservancy, who did not realise that the next stage had been decided upon. For conservancy staff the "volunteering" had been on an "in principle" basis and little discussion had, in fact, taken place. The project had not been included in the business **plan**⁴. As a result, there was a lot of confusion within the conservancy about the purpose of the workshop, the roles of the women in the conservancy, how and why "Head Office" was involved, and the processes for setting it up.

In particular, the breakdown of communication was accompanied by **a sense of disempowerment in the conservancy**, with staff believing that "Head Office" had imposed its ideas on the conservancy and that they had no say in the decisions. This was absolutely the opposite of what had been intended and had serious repercussions for both the role of the staff and the role of Lyn as organiser.

²Note that while "Head Office" was referred to, it was the Science & Research Division that was actually initiating the work here. For many of the conservancies Science & Research and Head Office are not distinguished, being both based in Wellington. For this reason the term "Head Office" is used to cover both although Science & Research Division would be the more correct term.

³Normally, a Business Planned project would be assigned a project leader (by a second tier manager), hours would be budgeted and performance measures developed.

⁴Although this was not mentioned at the time.

Q. Do you think the women staff were really unclear about this whole process?

Yes. Because "Head Office" believed the conservancy to be motivated, only a brief framework was provided for guiding the conference organisation. We thought the conservancy women would flesh out the task to meet their own needs and style. However, it seemed the women in the conservancy were anticipating more structure, e.g., being allocated the tasks that women needed to undertake and boundary conditions for organising the conference.

As the women staff were unused to working with Head Office staff within a consultative and collaborative context, they seemed unclear about what they could and could not make decisions about and who would have the final say. They also seemed unclear about decision making processes in which everybody's involvement is valued equally. However, they were very clear about the focus of the conference, what workshops they wanted, and which key women to invite.

This confusion over roles and tasks put the organiser in a difficult situation. She saw that without structure the group could flounder unproductively and staff would quickly feel that they were wasting their time. They would spend too much time trying to figure out what they were supposed to do, rather than actually carrying out the task.

The organiser felt it was not appropriate for her to act as an outside facilitator to decide on the structure; while she had facilitation skills, she had been hired as an organiser only. Taking over as a facilitator as well would not only feed into the group's expectation that management, and those associated with them, could impose their wishes but would disempower the women in other ways as well. Afterwards, Lyn regretted that she hadn't outlined her various possible roles and suggested that the women make an informed choice of where they felt she was most needed.

Q. But weren't the conservancy women told that an outside facilitator would do all the work for them?

They were told that Lyn was to take on most of the administrative and organisational workload. This was when "Head Office" thought the conservancy women were "raring to go". It had been expected by "Head Office" that Lyn would do very little "facilitation" of the group because they would all be enthusiastic and would know what to do. In the event, Lyn took on a challenging task, and was involved in far more facilitation and organisation than originally intended so that the staff feeling of being imposed upon could be overcome.

To begin with, it came as a surprise to Lyn that the conservancy women had no idea what the first meeting was all about. At this point, her role as organiser-or-facilitator could have been looked at again, but this opportunity was lost. In fact, that question alone could have required the time used for the entire meeting, along with an exploration of ground rules (to make the staff members feel secure) and of the department's limits and expectations. In a perfect world, this could have started weeks

beforehand: Crucial to the success of a project such as this is a clearly articulated beginning, followed by good modelling.

Q. Given this situation, how did the conservancy proceed?

We think with some difficulty. Within the means used to organise the conference, we had no chance to establish a contract, clear goals, or any processes for dealing with conflict. One woman had been designated as assistant to the organiser, but this was itself not the result of a consultative process. The organiser then approached individually various women who had not wanted to have anything to do with the conference, and four of them actually participated as helpers in the organising or as helpers and participants on the day. The personal approach was an attempt to regain lost confidence of conservancy women who felt that this was yet another project in which they would not be taken seriously. It was also a way that the organiser could cope with a lot of the misplaced anger about having someone come in from "Head Office" to "tell us what to do."

Difficulties were accentuated in that, apart from a small consistent core, the group meeting to organise the workshop kept changing, and because people were free to come and go, it felt like confusion to some people on the team. As one staff member reported "...there was conflict and confusion between us from the outset... the younger conservancy women wanted a conference whereas the older conservancy women preferred the idea of a residential workshop (apart from a couple who did not like the idea of staying away from home overnight). I suspect, but do not know, that this difference between younger and older women is because the younger women were more interested in sharing knowledge, ideas and experience, whereas the older women were more interested in the idea of forming relationships. I think the conservancy women opted for the idea of a conference because the younger women seemed to have more energy, commitment and enthusiasm and the older women were prepared to give way."

As a result, staff rallied on and made the decision to have a one-day conference rather than a two-day workshop. This was intended to beat the work commitment problem while at the same time reaching - it was hoped - up to 80 community women. Top management endorsed the project to the extent of encouraging that the conference be held on one day of work time, rather than expecting staff to give up time on a weekend, but management's absence from meetings gave a clear signal as to the project's level of **importance**⁵.

⁵Note there are four women managers in Waikato but these all withheld from taking a leadership role in the organisation of the conference although this was not made explicit to staff.

4. SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Q. How did the conference eventually take shape?

The focus which emerged among women staff looked outward to women in the community, rather than inward to their own positions and roles within the conservancy. The Hamilton Conservancy women said what they thought the women from the wider community wanted from DOC and they were particularly concerned that the day had to be very practical. They wanted to share their knowledge with the community so that women would leave with practical information that would help them be active in conservation. To some extent they were concerned that they also receive ideas from the community about how the department could extend its conservation work. While both conservancy and community women gave keynote addresses, they also ran several workshops focusing on practical issues, for example, "Ideas on using native plants in the garden" (The final programme and the workshop agenda are in the appendix material.)

Q. How did the conservancy women make contact with the women in the community?

Initially there was a lot of concern about how to do this and whether or not existing women's networks would reach a broad band of women in the community. In particular, the group were aware that they lacked the skills to contact women in the Maori community. Letters of invitation were sent to women's organisations, educational institutions and individual women known to DOC staff. Several advertisements were placed in newspapers, and the conservancy kaupapa atawhai manager, Buddy Te Whare, played a very important part in making links with Maori women.

5. CHANGE ACHIEVED THROUGH INVOLVEMENT

Q. With all the initial problems, how successful was the conference?

Overall, this conference was a resounding success both for women within the Department and those in the community. The one-day conference attracted far more women than was originally anticipated. Over 100 women registered and over 90 attended. Apart from reaching so many, there were clear indications in the evaluations that the conference was a success.

Women were given a chance at the end of the conference to contribute "last comments" on the day as well as responding to the more formal evaluation sheet.⁶ Unfortunately, only half of the conference attendees answered the evaluation. Many women had requested that they leave earlier so that families could be picked up from school. For others, it is possible that this "paper" response was seen as unnecessary or culturally inappropriate, particularly as there had been the opportunity to verbally contribute to the "last comments" of the day.

The evaluations indicated that women in the community welcomed the opportunity to be involved, made good contact with DOC women and with other women interested in the same issues as themselves. They were interested in continuing with these contacts, exploring the wider scope of the department's work in conservation, and receiving DOC support for their individual initiatives. The final gift of a native tree to each participant was also greatly appreciated.

Q. How did the conference initiate change for community women?

It raised awareness about conservation. In response to "How has this conference influenced your interest in conservation issues?" women replied:

"I have become much more aware of conservation issues",
"... made me conscious that I have something to contribute",
"...raised my awareness about other women motivated by the same subjects,"
"It has sown the seed of interest and knowledge, by listening and talking to other people with an interest in conservation",
"...made me aware of all people involved and interested in conservation",
"...made me aware that I need to do more and talk less."

It raised motivation to work in conservation:

"It reinforced my resolve to work harder",
"Revitalised! new ideas and perspectives to go away and think about",
"Inspired - activated inner strength and energy to act on ideas... INSPIRATION",
"...inspired me to be more active",

⁶ Copy of the evaluation sheet is in the appendix material.

"It has motivated me to be more involved - in promotion of education and publicity".

It reaffirmed values:

"...confirmed how I felt before and reinforced the issues I have always thought about",

"It has confirmed my belief that women have the power and ability to bring about changes in EVERYONE'S attitude to the environment and to each other",

"It has reinforced my beliefs. Inspiration to listen!!"

It facilitated **contacts**:

"It's been wonderful listening to what women are doing out in the world",

"It gave me contact with some people doing some of the things I want to do",

"...opened up avenues for connecting with others... helped find more direction".

Women also gained **knowledge**:

"I learnt how plants were propagated - [about] the planting of trees along the river gullies which I see will bring back the birds".

Q. How did women from the wider community want to become more involved in conservation?

The women were also asked how they planned to become involved in conservation issues after the conference. Most had some sort of political action as their basis for continued involvement, from the very personal at home and with the family, to the wider community of schools and other educational institutions, to organised groups such as Forest and Bird, via such institutions as local bodies and the Department of Conservation.

"To begin with - with my own family about valuing the environment around us

- in Kohanga Reo - within our own family "get-together",

"Become more involved with Forest and Bird, write submissions",

"To try to recycle as much as possible",

"To further my work with youth as Education Outreach Co-ordinator for Mana Tangata - Strength to the People - Greenpeace",

"I would be happy to get more involvement in the community and Department of Conservation issues".

Some women had very clear ideas about how they would proceed:

"...to learn how to write and begin writing submissions",

"...having my children start monitoring our farm environment, river and bush",

"Visit the Green shop, visit the ratepayer meetings, watch for more issues about making submissions on",

"Get in touch with these people and put plans for reforestation in action",
"Practice it through my job as landscape architect".

Others wanted more direction:

"Unsure at this stage - need to think through HOW",
"Unsure at this point other than checking public notices in newspapers for proposals that may effect the environment",
"This is what I hoped to discover but I did not find anything that filled my needs and abilities (and timetable)".

To facilitate those who commented that they were still unsure, future conference organisers could check at the end of the day for those women who might want to give the question further consideration or for those who might like extra help in determining how, and in what, conservation activities they could be involved.

Overall, given that motivating practical action was one of the main goals staff had for the conference, these comments indicate that, on the whole, the conference was very successful. Women in the wider community valued being part of a network for several reasons: They can now share with DOC women and each other their personal expertise and knowledge relating to environmental issues. Through the DOC contact they can receive others' new knowledge and then work alongside DOC to use these skills and this shared knowledge. DOC and women from the wider community can jointly support each other in keeping up their energy, their knowledge and their expertise.

Q. What unique contribution did the wider community women bring to the conference?

At the end of the day there was a far greater sense of "presence" in the room. In particular, the presence of Maori women from the community was seen and felt as a great gift of expertise and knowledge. The contribution of the women centred around supporting the values of listening and sharing, of participating, and of providing support and acknowledgement of the experience of other women. It was about learning from others - using the resources we (as women) already have in our communities. It was about being energized and empowered through the modelling and sharing of others - the feeling that through contact with one another we could all make changes. It was about gaining strength to make the decisions about where we really want to go and about trusting in the values we share and working towards them.

Q. Were women from the wider community concerned about what held them back from conservation work? ... what barriers stopped them from getting on with the job?

We had expected barriers to be discussed, but this did not eventuate. We had even anticipated that some groups of women would not be able to come, but we attracted

women from all age groups reasonably **successfully**⁷. On the whole, the women were too concerned about learning how they could work more effectively in conservation to concentrate on discussing barriers. Some may have lacked confidence, others knowledge, but in both cases the networking with other women proved effective.

In actual fact, many women were more concerned about the Department of Conservation's inability to work effectively within the community and inability to draw on community expertise. In the small forums (e.g., "Conservation education for children" and "How can DOC be more accountable?") one of the central themes was that - **the department needs to share information with a wider network and use more effectively the energy and wisdom already in the community.**

"You're missing the boat completely with the normal population... Why do you work only on the conservation estate... Why not field days off the estate?",

"We need more and more emphasis on education... education can be done through schools",

"Get into school committees, Boards of Trustees and work with them directly to educate the children and the community",

"Institutions need to utilise people who are being trained - utilise them in local communities... ",

"Use existing local groups - use their meetings to hear of local issues" and "DOC needs to teach the teachers".

Q. Was the issue of networking addressed specifically?

Yes. As we have mentioned, the community contacts made were important. Within the formal evaluation we also asked women whether they would like to become part of a women's conservation network. Almost all those who responded in the evaluation said "Yes": Women wanted to contribute their knowledge of the environment and conservation, as well as receive new knowledge. Comments included:

"Yes, I have worked on and studied major ecological systems. I'm interested in sustainable land use with emphasis on plant ecology",

"Yes, as a scientist and environmental educator",

"Yes, to be called for short specific tasks, career information in the area of conservation".

The above comments illustrate the amount of expertise within the community which could be used by DOC in a community network. Some women specifically wanted to share their expertise; others wanted further information on everything from land-based sources of marine pollution, toxics in the home, organic farming, design with native

⁷ Of the 30 women who responded to the "age-group" question in the formal evaluation, 1 was under 20, 6 were in the 21-30 age group, 7 in the 31-40 age group, 9 in the 41-50 age group, 5 in the 51-60 age group and 2 were over 61.

plants, heritage, archaeological and historic sites and use native plants for medicinal purposes.

Q. What about the staff women? How did they feel about the conference?

Staff felt positive that the conservancy's networking had proved effective. When asked how they found out about the conference, women from the wider community had mentioned contacts with the department - talking to friends in/or connected with DOC, receiving a personal invitation from DOC and knowing women in DOC. The newspaper advertising proved another effective way to let women in the community know about the workshop, as did sending information to various groups which interested women were likely to be working in or attending. The conservancy's networking contributed to the success of the programme, and in some cases staff members realised that they already had networking skills they had not recognised previously.

Through organising, running and participating in the conference, DOC women learnt more about working with the community and with each other and about networking generally. The women were affirmed by such a successful response. In answer to what were the positive aspects of the conference, the women commented:

"women getting to know each other",
"making contacts",
"women participating",
"networking among women, talking to one another",
"the different group of women not usually seen in DOC",
"people communicated really well".

DOC women were also concerned to use the energy that had been stimulated by the networking and involvement with the community, and to encourage a process which has already begun:

"We need to build on women who want to be involved",
"The snowball effect is important - when will the next [workshop] be?".

Women felt pleased their efforts had also prompted women from the community to offer their knowledge and skills about conservation issues. They were also pleased and grateful for the added dimension received by contact with the Maori community, this contact seen by DOC women as an extremely positive aspect of the conference. Although DOC women's aims were generally oriented towards tasks and expertise, the spiritual and emotional appreciation of working together was a significant element of their evaluations. There was strong acknowledgement of what one Maori woman shared:

"Much of what has been said today was part of a prayer".

Others commented that they had:

"... enjoyed the atmosphere",

and appreciated "...an all woman conference - not experienced before and it was great" and "the presence of Maori women".

One of the more unexpected effects was that the collaborative approach required to get the conference up and running had given some women the opportunity to cross the boundaries and network with all women in DOC. For some, this reduced the disempowering inherent in the hierarchical structure of the department. The conservancy women invited and modelled participation in an active way by running and helping to run workshops and sessions. The practical sessions had on the whole worked very smoothly and the women who had presented workshops, or who had been involved in other aspects of the conference, were pleased that their efforts had been really appreciated by the women who had attended.

6. THE NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Q. What improvements in the process would the women from the wider community like to have seen?

Time was a central concern. One day was not enough. Comments included:

"Has only just opened doors, would need a week",
"...not so much issues: TIME!",...
"...need 3 days - [this was] just a good start",
"Many things were covered - we just needed more time!",
"Would have liked to have longer to go to all workshops",
"I think there is a need for a regular get together of women in conservation to share and discuss issues of relevant concern."

More practical hands-on information was also wanted:

"[We need] organised action, general feelings and concerns are too easily let drift",
"...writing submissions - this is sometimes frightening to those new to it",
"...somewhat disappointed with the recycling (workshop) - too much city emphasis - though probably difficult to widen it too much",
"Expected more discussion of practical issues, like pest control".

Q. What improvements would the staff have liked to see?

The conservancy women recognised and acknowledged that they needed to take a more active part in dealing with the minutiae of the conference rather than leaving the work to one or two people. They needed to attend to practical details such as having equipment ready and working for workshops and take a more active part in conference hospitality, like doing a waiata together, or greeting and saying farewell to conference participants.

They learnt that some workshops worked better than others, particularly those that had an active and involving component in them. For example, the "Design with Native Plants" workshop introduced propagation techniques, and the "Neighbourhood Biology" workshop showed that women had to focus on how they felt, and what they wanted to do, in their own **communities**.⁸

They learnt that they had to give **more time** for community discussion in any future gathering so that the huge amount of energy that developed could be fully used. They learnt that to do this they would need to improve on their own networking skills and know more about how to facilitate groups, how to listen, how to manage conflict and how to use conflict creatively.

⁸ See the appendices for the detailed workshop information.

Q. The need for "more time" seems to be coming up over and over again. How important is "time" to the improvements to be made?

Having enough time is crucial to the improvements to be made. In any interaction with the community there needs to be time for discussion, and time for the process, the networking, to contribute its own effects. Time is a resource. The conservancy - and the Department - need to clarify just how this resource is to be spent, what values will be supported in this spending, and what message it will be giving to the community as a result of this decision.

In this conference, we probably could have **given time to discuss the meaning of conservation** and to look at what that means in terms of the values we support. The initial format of the conference concentrated heavily on the department passing on information to the community, and this precluded any debate about values central to conservation. While many of the hands-on workshops were about the transfer of our "conservation message" there was less emphasis by the conservancy on what values that message actually entailed. This aspect was introduced in large part by the guest speakers that the conservancy brought in, particularly those who shared their personal stories about how they got involved in conservation. This generated considerable energy and it was clear that **people needed to share far more** at this point. Women became really involved, only to be moved on to some other topic or workshop. While the women coped, it was one of the major frustrations of the day.

Unfortunately, the more content- rather than process-oriented approach could reinforce a community's perception of the department as experts in conservation who tell women in the community what to do, rather than a department prepared to listen to women's views and what they see as the barriers to conservation. Given the time to acquire the appropriate group skills, women staff could have identified, focused on and used the energy of the women in the community. The women from the wider community were energised for change, were seeking direction, leadership and interactive networking, and this conference could have been an ideal opportunity for DOC to use their energy and expertise. But without time for adequate background preparation and training, such opportunity will continue to be lost.

The department could also make more use of its own resources. In 1989 DOC published a pamphlet on Women in Conservation, which states: "This brochure is intended to encourage, inform, and inspire women to become involved in conservation - to be involved in major decisions about our natural and historic heritage... Many women in conservation believe [conservation] has a special link with the priorities of most women." This brochure was displayed on a table at the back of the conference room, available for women to take a copy, but no one drew attention to it or passed out copies. An update of information, and discussion of how DOC had advertised widely at the beginning of the year to encourage women onto the seventeen Conservation Boards (where they could be actively involved in conservation), and the results of this advertising, would have been valuable for the women from the wider community. If more time had been available for the planning process, this departmental information resource may have been better used during the conference.

Q. This brings us to the process leading up to the conference. What improvements could have been made there?

Again the need for "**more time**" is important, and here it's worth pointing out that the plea of "not enough time" can actually be an excuse for "not enough communication." In hindsight it would have been better for "Head Office" to sit down and discuss with the conservancy women the most appropriate way to deal with the first phase of the research. One staff member felt that what happened was a good example of what is going on in DOC all the time. Because of planning deadlines and over-stretched staff time and resources, staff struggle to get worthwhile activities to happen, but because there is insufficient time to do the planning and liaison thoroughly even when the wish is to be democratic, things go wrong. An exercise like this conference needs better briefing, more sessions, better modelling, better conflict resolution processes, proper contracts, clearer goals (i.e., allocation of time in the business plan) ... but this all adds up to more time and more resources, which is what DOC does not have.

Participatory styles of management are known to be more time consuming at the beginning. There were time constraints but the long-term benefits of such a process far outweigh any additional time spent at the outset. (See the appendices for how the planning process could have been developed.)

Within the conservancy it needs to be recognised that meetings by women are valid, that they have legitimacy, and that women are working when they attend these meetings - they should not be viewed as a waste of time or as women gossiping together. The place of the meeting is also important. Women need to be able to discuss and debate openly, without interruption. Other people can answer the phone and take messages.

Good facilitation skills will give women the opportunity to talk uninterrupted and be given the time and space to deal with the issues that are of value and of importance. A good facilitator will enable the group to set ground rules appropriate for the group. These will cover such aspects of sharing time, letting women speak without interruption, taking care to value each woman's contribution, encouraging each woman to speak and allowing women the right to pass if they do not wish to contribute. Good ground rules go a long way towards developing trust and openness in groups and ensuring confidentiality. Since conflict management is integral to group process, good facilitation will acknowledge that conflict often occurs in groups and can be managed constructively.

7. THE FUTURE

So much of what we have discussed points to the need for more time, more sharing, more networking. This is true whether we look at the organisation leading up to the conference, the actual conference itself or the period after the conference in which vital follow-up must occur.

Many of the problems experienced with the organisational process for this conference strike at the heart of the way things are done in DOC, the distance between "Head Office" and conservancy, the "them" and "us", the issue of who does what and the missing gap of nobody doing anything. Time has to be given for the meshing process as either a separate event (to develop strategies to overcome this problem in principle) or as a timetabled event and part of every project. The next step is to consider how this vital process of working, or networking is to be incorporated into the working lives of staff, either through job descriptions or conservancy business plans.

Without networking women will remain separate because the tasks they do and the structure of the organisation precludes them working together. With networking, and by working as a group, women can encourage, validate and add to their own and other women's conservation ideas and efforts. Successful initiatives have now been taken to involve both Maori and non-Maori women in the wider community. These need to be built upon using the rich fabric of inter-relationships and the "give and take" that come with networking.

What will happen next? We will have to answer the following questions:

How can we best use the knowledge and skills of women in the wider community?

How can we best use the knowledge and skills of DOC staff women?

Now that one network containing both DOC women and women from the wider community has been enriched, what further action can DOC take to develop this and to keep the relationship strong?

How can DOC best support this networking in the future?

Can this networking be recognised by the department as setting up and maintaining an important two-way relationship with the wider community?

Can the DOC establishment accept that the issues raised at this conference are not exclusively "women's issues" - and that the responsibility for following up these questions rests on the department as a whole?

A CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

**Working Together for Conservation
Kia mahi tahi mo Te Papa Atawhai**

**Hamilton Gardens Pavilion
2 November 1993**

MORNING SESSION

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 8.00 - 8.30 am | Registration |
| 08.45 am | Powhiri
Welcome - Stella Penny, Regional Conservator,
Waikato Conservancy |
| 09.00 am | Introductions |
| 09.10 am | Key Note Speaker - Mary Gardner, Freelance
Biologist TITLE: A SENSE OF PLACE |
| 10.00 am | Morning Tea |
| 10.30 am | Workshops -
WORKING TOGETHER FOR CONSERVATION
(see over) |
| 12.00 pm | Lunch |

AFTERNOON SESSION

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1.00 pm | Personal Stories - Women share their stories on
how they got invilved in conservation issues. |
| 2.00 pm | Themes Forum |
| 2.45 pm | Workshops |
| 3.30 pm | Afternoon Tea |
| 3.45 pm | Where do we go from here? |
| 4.30 pm | Conclusion |

**ORGANISED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
SEPTEMBER 1993**

WORKSHOPS

<p>10.30 am to 11.15 am</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Biology: What you can do</p> <p>Mary Gardner</p> <p>A "hands on" workkshop about making that environmental difference in your neighbourhood.</p> <p>Find out about the skills, the strategies, the science needed.</p>	<p>Design with Native Plants</p> <p>Jan Simmons Colleen Preist</p> <p>Ideas on using native plants in the garden - design, textures, colour.</p> <p>Suggestions on what to plant where.</p>	<p>Conservation Now and in the Future</p> <p>Mairi Jorgensen Judy van Rossem</p> <p>This workshop aims to show how people can be involved in helping to protect conservation land.</p>	<p>Heritage: Archaeological and Historic Sites</p> <p>Cathryn Barr</p> <p>Workshop participants will explore:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is Heritage? 2. Current legislation and protective measures. 	<p>How to make your opinion count</p> <p>Fiona Edwards</p> <p>Learn from an expert</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Submission writing 2. using the media 3. Lobbying
<p>11.15 am to 12.00 pm</p>	<p>See where your own special talents fit in</p>	<p>Propagation techniques. We will visit the nursery at Hamilton Gardens.</p>	<p>Conservation Now and in the Future</p> <p>Mairi Jorgensen Judy van Rossem</p> <p>(see above)</p>	<p>Interest groups involved in Conservation:</p> <p>Pam Bovill Bev Woolley Trish Shaw Sue Edmonds</p> <p>Learn how to get involved in outdoor and conservation related activities</p>	<p>Recycling</p> <p>Robyn Russell</p> <p>Learn about the options for recycling waste and unwanted articles</p>
<p>LUNCH</p>					
<p>2.45 pm to 3.30 pm</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Biology: What you can do</p> <p>Mary Gardner</p> <p>(see above)</p>	<p>Using Native Plants for medicinal purposes</p> <p>Tuti Aranui</p>	<p>Recycling</p> <p>Robyn Russell</p> <p>(see above)</p>	<p>Interesting Groups Involved in Conservation</p> <p>(see above)</p>	<p>Trees in the Rural Landscape</p> <p>Bunny Mortimer</p> <p>Do's and don'ts for planting New Zealand's trees in the countryside</p>

APPENDIX 3

WORKSHOPS

TOPIC: RECYCLING

Resource Person: Robyn Russell

Brief Description: This workshop aims to inform women of the options for recycling waste and unwanted articles.

TOPIC: NEIGHBOURHOOD BIOLOGY: WHAT CAN YOU DO

Resource Person: Mary Gardner

Brief Description: Join us in a "hands on" workshop about making that environmental difference in your neighbourhood. Find out about the skills, the strategies the science needed. See where your own special talents fit in. I use a mix of games, fantasy and discussions in a lively group setting to help every interested participant see for themselves what can be done.

TOPIC: CONSERVATION NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Resource People: Mairi Jorgensen and Judy van Rossum

Brief Description: This workshop aims to indicate how the CMS can provide guidance for conservation by the community in the future. It will also illustrate the provisions in the CMS which provide guidance for community involvement and indicate how conservation or community groups can use this to good effect.

TOPIC: HERITAGE (E.G. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC SITES)

Resource Person: Cathryn Barr

Brief Description: This workshop aims to share an idea of heritage in New Zealand; provide participants with a basic understanding of protective legislation and measures and provide information on what individuals can do to assist in recording and managing sites.

Workshop participants will explore: 1. What is heritage. 2. Current legislation and protective measures. 3. Participants will be given a demonstration of surveying and recording techniques.

TOPIC: WRITING SUBMISSIONS

Resource Person: Fiona Edwards

Brief Description: This workshop aims to teach people how to write an effective submission.

TOPIC : INTEREST GROUPS INVOLVED IN CONSERVATION

Resource People: Pam Bovill, Bev Woolky, Trish Shaw, Judy Van Rossem

Brief Description: To inform women of the opportunities around to get involved with others in outdoor and conservation related activities e.g. Forest and Bird, Ornithological Society, Mountain Safety, Tramping, Speleological Society (caving), W.O.N.Z. (Women in the Outdoors).

TOPIC: DESIGN WITH NATIVE PLANTS

Resource People: Colleen Priest, Landscape Architect, with assistance from Jan Simmons, Department of Conservation

Brief Description: This workshop aims to provide greater awareness of the use of native plants in the home garden and wider landscape. Subjects covered to include: design principles, colour and texture, plant material and ecological factors.

APPENDIX 4

A CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN

Working Together for Conservation
Kia mahi tahi mo Te Papa Atawhai

YOUR FINAL COMMENTS

1. **How has this conference influenced your interest in conservation issues?**

2. **How do you plan to become involved in conservation issues after today?**

3. **How did you find out about this conference?**

4. **Are there any issues that you feel have not been adequately covered at this conference?**

5. **Would you like to become part of a network of women interested in conservation? If so, state areas of interest:**

NAME: _____

CONTACT ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO. _____

ORGANISATION: _____ (if applicable)

AGE GROUP: 15-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71+

Thank you for your personal contribution

APPENDIX 5

NEIGHBOURHOOD BIOLOGY

studying life in your communities

Your community is exactly where creatures all live together.

Work on topics local people want can develop in a variety of ways. You needn't wait for some institution to come to do it nor for some crisis to force you or some agency into action. You can include natural features of your neighbourhood in everyday life: people's ongoing interest is the strongest ally any natural feature can have. The following are some ideas, some clues, some lead-ins which together or singly could act as a catalyst, a springboard.

adopt-a-scientist:	for local guided walks, for advising school projects, for passing on information from own field of work (many workers have wide interests outside of their job descriptions)
pick a place:	for monitoring, as arena for discussion of immediate neighbourhood by locals, the checkpoint for local councils, other agencies, for actions as result of monitoring
choose a creature:	in assessing its habitat range in your neighbourhood, its needs could be considered (example: owls in urban areas, migratory birds on water bodies and adjacent lands)
CAS network:	be part of a regular self-organising discussion - a group of 6-8 people, fortnightly meetings at members' homes for intellectual exchange, news sharing, support (CAS stands for centre for Autopoietical (Self-organising) Studies: term from science, coined to define "life")
target an age group:	involve kids or teens or families or singles or new graduates in science/art about your neighbourhood
rally a flank of local businesses:	there will be some feature which is important to their work which they would be glad to be seen supporting with either cash, goods, publicity, membership for logo privileges.

