

Department of Conservation

A Briefing to the New Minister of Conservation

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Welcome to the Department of Conservation

The Department of Conservation:

- Leads nature conservation in New Zealand;
- Contributes to social wellbeing by providing opportunities for recreation and leisure;
- Contributes to the New Zealand economy by providing the key resources for the tourism industry, ecosystem services from clean water, catchment and biodiversity protection, and New Zealand's image in the world as a nation endowed with "natural capital".

The Department's budget in 2005-2006 is \$280.8 million, of which nature conservation work takes up 47 per cent, followed by recreation (41 per cent) and managing historic sites on conservation land (2 per cent).

DOC employs around 1600 permanent staff as well as seasonal workers, and works with volunteers. It manages approximately 8 million ha of land and 1.3 million ha of marine reserves on behalf of all New Zealanders. The Crown's ownership of the foreshore and sea bed is vested in the Department.

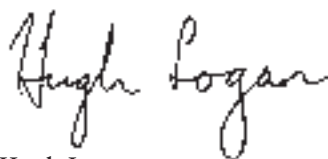
The Department's visitor infrastructure has an asset value of around \$400 million, and includes 12,900 km of walking tracks, 990 backcountry huts and 306 campsites.

The Department manages 889 concessions for tourism-related business activities on public conservation land. The total in any one year can reach 4000, many of them one-off activities ranging from filming permits to telecommunications installations. More than 90 per cent of applications for access arrangements for mineral exploration and mining on public conservation land are approved.

Native species management involves species recovery work, habitat maintenance, control of exotic animal pests and weeds on the mainland at targeted sites, and pest eradications on offshore island sanctuaries. The Department manages 27 marine reserves, of which eight are in Fiordland.

Involvement by the public in conservation management is increasing. There are 50 private "kiwi care" projects nationwide covering 45,000 ha of kiwi habitat. In 2004-2005 \$4.3 million worth of government grants were allocated to 254 projects for conserving native species biodiversity on private land. Opinion polls have shown consistently that around 75 per cent of New Zealanders surveyed have a favourable opinion of the Department and its work.

The following few pages serve as a brief introduction to some of the key issues at the governance level, and also to signal some of the more public or pressing issues that may come before you in the next few months. A separate document will be provided with more detail about the Department, and about the agencies and people you will be working with in your portfolio.



Hugh Logan

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF CONSERVATION

Strategic issues



This section outlines the key strategic issues the Department is currently addressing.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

The case for conservation has historically been built around the protection of New Zealand's unique landscapes, places and species as a good thing in itself, and something that provides the recreation opportunities that help define the New Zealand way of life. These shared values are important. They are necessary, but they are not sufficient to an understanding of why conservation is important.

New Zealand and international experience increasingly shows that conservation is critical to building the economy and providing good social services in the widest sense, such as recreation opportunities and natural experiences.

It is now much clearer that a healthy natural environment is necessary to the ecosystem services that fuel the economy and support society. They are critical to soil regeneration and stability; freshwater storage, filtration and flow; and the regeneration of habitats. Healthy marine and freshwater ecosystems support commercial and recreational fisheries. The state of these services has significant impacts on freshwater allocation and quality, erosion and flood control, climate regulation and the effects of climate change. They are the 'natural capital' that is critical to sustainable development and economic growth. The link with our primary industries is self-evident.

A healthy natural environment is also the asset on which New Zealand's growing tourism industry is built. International tourism is now our single largest foreign exchange earner. Tourism generally is a key contributor to a number of regional economies. Our research shows the Department's work is central to that economic growth.

The impact of recreation in healthy natural environments on mental and physical health is also increasingly recognised internationally. There is growing awareness that recreation is a major contributor to preventive health care in areas such as obesity and heart disease, where the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff comes at significant and increasing cost.

Similarly, the role that the natural environment plays in defining New Zealand's national identity is taking on a harder edge. The images that we reach for in marketing ourselves are derived from a pristine and cared-for environment. But international consumers no longer take claims such as 'clean and green' at face value. Consumers are exercising their responsibility by tracing claims back to the source to test for good environmental practices and social responsibility. That links to the Department's work, and highlights the connection between ecology and economy.

The Department is doing further work on the value of conservation land to local and regional economies. You can expect to see reports from us on this.

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP IN A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The Department recognises that it has a key role in ensuring that the ‘natural capital’ on the third of New Zealand that comprises public conservation land is resilient and managed appropriately. Within those lands, where resources permit, we practise world-class management with world-class results for species and environments. This is a significant contribution to sustainable development, but the ecosystems services work that the nation needs is not confined within the boundaries of public conservation land.

As the Department has engaged with sustainable development frameworks and policies across government, it has perceived a lack of coherence in advice to government about the third pillar of sustainable development – the environment. Responsibility for leading this work is not clear; this contrasts with the situation with the other two pillars of sustainable development (economic and social development). Stronger leadership in this wider area would enhance the Department’s ability to support sustainable development.

This is particularly evident in freshwater and marine work, where there are a great number of players, accountabilities for work are not linked, and agencies involved use quite differing principles and approaches.

In land-based biodiversity protection, the size of the Department’s role and the depth of our technical expertise leads to a more unified approach. The Biodiversity Strategy has helped in some ways to encourage more general coherence in terrestrial work. The relative success on land could be replicated in other areas, given greater direction and leadership.

In relation to the conservation and environment issues, in particular, the Department is examining its own approach to leadership and priority setting, as part of improving its work. You can expect to receive further briefings and information on the progress of this work.

IMPROVING THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

There is strong public support for protecting New Zealand’s special places and species, which has found expression in public and private investment in conservation. This was clarified and emphasised in the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy (NZBS) that identified priorities for halting the decline in biodiversity and subsequently led to the establishment of a cross-government work programme implementing NZBS priority actions, at an additional investment above baselines of \$187 million over five years from 2000/01. The Department receives the largest proportion of NZBS funding; in 2005/06 the Department spent just over \$33 million, and administered a further \$14 million for protection on private land.

The additional work and investment which the NZBS enabled has already led to a significant lift in knowledge about what is actually happening, as well as how to manage for biodiversity goals. Our technical knowledge is world-class and our knowledge and information systems are still improving. In the past five years the Department has produced internationally-recognised results on offshore islands, species recovery, and integrated pest management. This work and its community orientation has ignited the public’s imagination and stimulated an upsurge of public involvement in ecosystem recovery as well as higher public expectations than a decade ago.



The knowledge and experience gained in those five years, however, has led to the view that some of the Strategy's goals (such as the requirements to secure the full range of habitats and restore all indigenous species and subspecies across their natural range¹) are probably so resource intensive that they are unachievable in the Strategy's time span.

An independent review by Dr Wren Green and Dr Bruce Clarkson of the first five years' progress under the NZBS is near completion. Along with that report, the biodiversity agencies will provide you and other Ministers with a whole-of-government commentary on the review, including looking at options for NZBS related work over the next five years.

You will receive the Independent Reviewers' report and agency commentary shortly. Work on formulation of a coordinated, collaborative work programme for the next five years, and any related financial implications, will be reported to you in line with the upcoming Budget process.

PUBLIC ENJOYMENT

Until recently the Department has concentrated on the asset side of our public enjoyment role, as a result of the Cave Creek tragedy and the need to deal with run-down and under-funded facilities. There was a major injection of capital and operating funds in 2001, and common agreement with users and industry in 2004 on the nature and extent of the hut, track, and access system. Generally, relationships with traditional recreational users and the tourism industry are settled. There are debates with some user groups over game management and over public access to public conservation land and waterways.

The Department holds 12,000 historic sites and actively manages more than 600 sites in order to present key themes in New Zealand's historic heritage.²

The Department is well placed to play a more active role in promoting outdoor recreation. This could encompass reaching out to new recreational constituencies, a greater emphasis on promoting recreation, and combining enjoyment with interpretation of natural and historic values. Such work could underpin and promote concepts of national identity and New Zealanders' love of the natural environment and their heritage.

The Department will seek your guidance on the nature and extent of its involvement in recreation and historic heritage.

TREATY CLAIMS AND TREATY SETTLEMENTS

Public conservation land is, or has been, subject to Treaty claims and Treaty settlements nationwide. A number of area-specific large claims (such as Ngai Tahu) have been settled. These have entrenched formal Maori participation in conservation management. A very large number of claims remain to be settled. Treaty settlement activity is likely to increase significantly over the short to medium term. The Department is concerned about an emerging trend in settlements to regard the use of conservation land as a routine component of settlements, and the types of land sought are changing.

¹ The total number of species in New Zealand is unknown. Including all the animals, plants, mosses and other families of species, our best guess is about 90,000 species, of which about 84,000 are undescribed.

² Examples include Captain Cook's first landing site, pa sites, Governor Grey's Mansion House, and the North Head military complex.



Independent of claim settlements, there are other debates to be resolved with Maori, including issues of land ownership, co-management, and exclusive commercial use of public conservation assets. That said, there are many positive examples of productive cooperative work and mutual recognition of the plight of native species. The focus of the Department is to continue to work in productive relationships and on staff skills to work in a Maori world. The broader policy issues will require addressing through wider government processes.

You will be provided with further briefings on these issues.

COSTING CONSERVATION

A programme of work examining the cost of outputs in the Department is under way. It is a joint Department/Treasury process which examines whether the work the Department is paid for has been correctly priced. It has a strategic impact because of its scope, including:

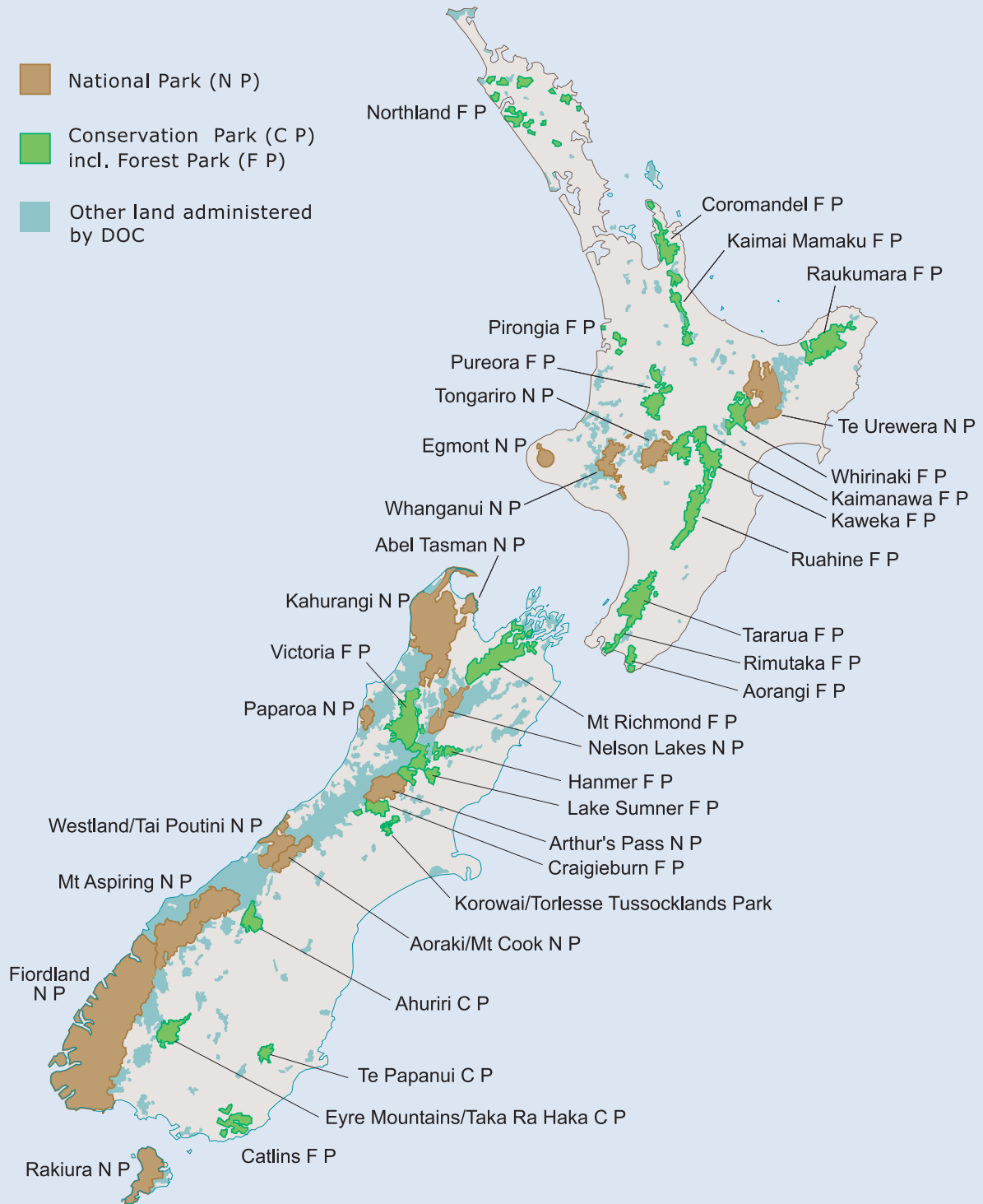
- a focus on getting value for money;
- making sure the systems are in place to judge the relative merits and costs of outputs;
and
- assessing the capability required to deliver agreed outputs.

The cost of outputs programme will be completed by October 2006.

You can expect regular updates throughout the programme.

Land administered by the Department of Conservation

- National Park (N P)
- Conservation Park (C P)
incl. Forest Park (F P)
- Other land administered
by DOC



Short- and medium-term issues



The following are issues expected to arise in the short term (the first three months of your appointment) or medium term (the first year) that *may require you to make decisions and/or make public comment, or which you may wish to note.*

TERRESTRIAL AND FRESHWATER BIODIVERSITY

Review of agency roles in freshwater

The Department and the Ministry of Fisheries are shortly to review agency roles and responsibilities in the freshwater environment, because of fragmented accountabilities and differing approaches of the two agencies in relation to freshwater. This will involve MAF Biosecurity, Maori fisheries interests and other freshwater stakeholders. *You will be presented with draft Cabinet papers on this issue by the end of 2005.* Specific aspects include the whitebait fishery, koura (freshwater crayfish), and other indigenous freshwater species, the protection of long-finned eels, and aquatic biosecurity issues.



Carbon credits and revegetation of public conservation land

The government's 'Permanent Forest Sink Initiative' is designed to enable landowners to earn carbon credits for actively establishing new forests (natural or exotic), which has happened since 31 December 1989. The Initiative, which is administered by MAF, could be used to enable large-scale native forest restoration of public conservation land by private investors in exchange for the carbon credits earned. Ministerial approval is required to enable the Department to participate in the Initiative. *You will be presented with a proposal for discussion and decision with the Convenor of the Ministerial Group on Climate Change, the Minister of Forestry and the Minister of Finance, by the end of October 2005.*



1080 reassessment

An application is expected to be lodged shortly with the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) for reassessment of the use of 1080 poison in possum control. The Department of Conservation and Animal Health Board, as applicants, have completed public consultation and are finalising detailed technical information. ERMA's review is expected to conclude in 2006.

The issue is likely to attract strong media interest and *you may be asked for comment.*

Conservation Law Enforcement and Other Matters Bill

The Bill is about law enforcement by Departmental staff and deals with powers, offences and penalties, and introduces an infringement fee and fine system. Other proposed amendments include the authorisation of aquatic life transfers into fresh water with better criteria for decision making. *The Bill will be ready for introduction to Parliament by the end of 2005.*

MARINE BIODIVERSITY

Oceans policy

The Oceans Policy initiative began in 1999. Its purpose is to establish an all-of-government framework for coordinating the management of New Zealand's marine environment from our shores to the edge of the Exclusive Economic Zone. It aims also to take account of land-based activities which affect the marine environment. The policy is framed on sustainable development principles and will seek to address growing demands for, access to, and use and protection of the marine environment and its resources. The project has been led by the Minister for the Environment and the work carried out by an interagency officials group convened by the Ministry for the Environment and closely involving the Department.

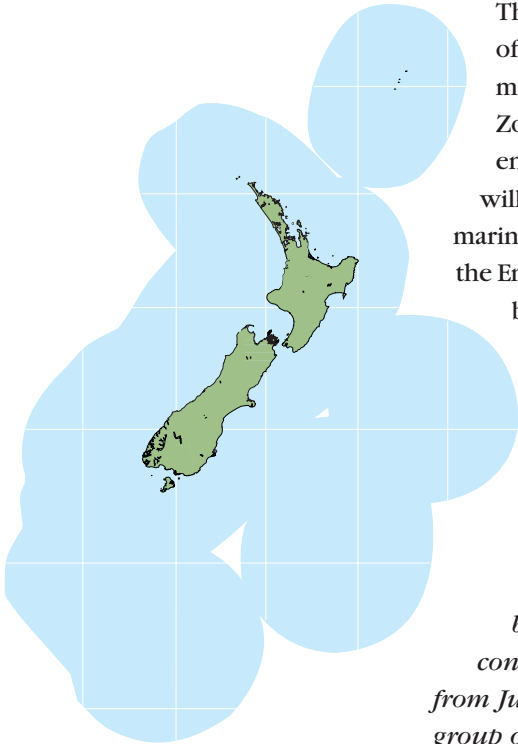
Considerable work and public consultation has been undertaken. A draft policy framework and options for further public consultation were to be considered by Cabinet in mid 2003, but the work was put on hold to allow for the foreshore and seabed issue to be resolved. In early 2005 work was reactivated and Cabinet agreed in July 2005 to an updated policy framework, timeframes for development of all key requirements of an oceans policy, and timeframes for further public engagement. *Cabinet has asked for a report back in December 2005 with detailed policy requirements, proposals for consultation on these in March-May 2006, and a process for policy finalisation from June-August 2006. The Minister of Conservation has been one of the ad hoc group of ministers overseeing the project.*

Marine protection – Marine Reserves Bill

The Marine Reserves Bill was introduced to Parliament in June 2002 and was considered by the Local Government and Environment Select Committee but not reported back prior to Parliament rising.

The Bill arises from a review of the current Marine Reserves Act 1971 and is one of the actions being taken to meet New Zealand's obligations under the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity. Its purpose is to conserve indigenous marine biodiversity, including more common ecosystem types as well as the outstanding and rare.

As with other unreported business, the Bill is held in the custody of the Clerk of the House until the new Parliament has the opportunity to identify the items that it wishes to reinstate. *You are responsible for the progress of this Bill through Parliament and will need to form a view on how to proceed.*



Marine protection – marine reserves

Six marine reserve proposals are close to final formal approval and establishment, which *you may wish to announce*. Of these, two have received all approvals (Horoirangi and Whangarei Harbour) and four others: Aotea (Great Barrier Island), Taputeranga (Wellington South Coast), Parininihi (New Plymouth) and Te Paepae Aotea (Volkner Rocks) have been approved by the Minister of Conservation and the concurrence of the Ministers of Fisheries and Transport sought.

Marine protection – marine protected areas strategy

The Marine Protected Areas Policy is a priority action towards achieving an outcome of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy: “protect a full range of natural marine habitats and ecosystems to effectively conserve marine biodiversity, using a range of appropriate mechanisms, including legal protection.” The project is led by the Department and the Ministry of Fisheries.

The policy brings together disparate processes for achieving marine protected areas into one inclusive planning process. It provides a scientific basis for achieving a representative range of marine protected areas, using a range of tools, including marine reserves and closures under the Fisheries Act. Work has been under way on the policy since 2001. In November 2004 it was released for consultation. Sixty-eight submissions were received from a wide range of interests.

The policy was subsequently amended and approved by joint Ministers of the previous government. It has been sent to Cabinet Office for Cabinet’s consideration. *This is unlikely to occur prior to the election and therefore will be a matter for your consideration.*

Species

You may be asked to comment on the following issues:

Success in implementing a national plan to reduce seabird by-catch in fisheries will rely on the industry developing codes of practice and complying with them. From the industry’s track record to date, more work is needed. Ministers of Conservation and Fisheries can either press for faster development of codes or consider regulation. At issue are endangered albatross and petrel species.

A population management plan for endangered New Zealand sea lions is expected to be completed for the 2006-2007 squid fishing season. Every year sea lions drown in trawl nets.

The Department and the Ministry of Fisheries are working on formal protection of great white sharks. Protection is being considered for whale sharks and deepwater nurse sharks in the review of the Wildlife Act.

The Department is currently leading a joint management process with the Ministry of Fisheries to address all threats to Hector’s and Maui’s dolphins. Environmental non-governmental organisations have been exerting pressure on the Department for a management plan for these subspecies.

High seas fisheries in the South Pacific

New Zealand, Australia and Chile have begun work on developing a regional fisheries management organisation in the region to conserve biodiversity and sustainably manage high seas fisheries. The Ministries of Fisheries and Foreign Affairs and Trade are the lead agencies, with the Department a partner. Negotiations are due to begin in February 2006. *You will be briefed on these negotiations.*





Seamount, NIWA

Bottom trawling

Conservation non-governmental organisations have been campaigning for a moratorium on bottom trawling because of alleged destruction of biodiversity, such as corals, on seamounts.

The Department's Conservation Services Programme, which is largely funded by fishers and investigates the impacts of commercial fishing on protected species and ways to avoid or mitigate them, has recently broadened its activities to include protected corals. *You may be asked for comment.*

Coastal responsibilities

The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement is being reviewed. The statement guides council plans under the RMA and your decisions in relation to restricted coastal activities. Remaining consultation is with Maori. When this is completed, *you will be presented with a revised draft and a report on the benefits and costs of any additional policies.*

For restricted coastal activities such as large reclamations, dredging and dredge disposal operations, coastal protection works and sewage discharges, and the vesting of reclaimed Crown foreshore and seabed, *several applications are likely to be forwarded to you for decision in the short term. You may also receive requests from councils for the approval of regional coastal plans and interim aquaculture management areas. Briefings will be provided.*

There are also new duties for you relating to customary rights, Crown ownership responsibilities, and statutory land management arising from provisions in the new foreshore and seabed legislation. *A briefing will be provided.*

BIOSECURITY

The new biosecurity organisation, Biosecurity New Zealand, is developing principles on how Crown agencies will contribute to regional pest management strategies. There is a fiscal risk to the Crown, and, potentially, to the Department, that *you may wish to note. A briefing will be provided.*

Koi carp

Koi carp were declared a noxious species under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations. The Chief Technical Officer for Biosecurity in the Department of Conservation (CTO) declared the species to be an unwanted organism under the Biosecurity Act in 2000, in an attempt to limit their spread and prevent their propagation and sale. Koi breed prolifically and destroy native fish habitat and food sources.

An application by New Zealand Waterways Restoration Ltd was received for an exemption from sections 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act to allow for the export of live koi carp to the United Kingdom. The application proposed catching up to 10,000 koi per month. The application was declined because of, among other things, the risk of fish escaping into new areas.

The legality of the CTO's decision is being challenged by the applicant. The applicant and the Crown propose to seek a declaration from the High Court.

You may be approached by the applicant about his wish to harvest koi. A briefing will be provided.



RECREATION AND TOURISM

Game animal management



Deer, of which there are seven species in New Zealand, as well as Himalayan thar, chamois and pigs are valued by many New Zealanders as game animals. These introduced species are also conservation pests, giving rise to active public debate on how these species should be managed.

Among current issues are proposed changes to deer farming fencing specifications and feral range, following 52 escapes from deer farms since 1996. *You will be presented with an analysis of submissions and recommendations by the end of 2005.* The proposals are expected to be finalised by March 2006.

The inclusion of deer repellent in 1080 poison baits for possum control operations is being promoted by recreational hunters. As an option on public conservation land, the method is currently available only for gazetted recreational hunting areas. The use of deer repellent will arise as an issue likely to attract media interest whenever 1080 operations are planned, and you may be asked for comment.

The Department is consulting the public on managing sambar deer, a species restricted to coastal areas of the Wanganui region. Recreational hunting groups want the managed hunting regime to continue, while commercial foresters want it ended, or freed up to reduce deer numbers.

Hokitika tree-top walk proposal

The Department's West Coast Conservancy is finalising a report on Air Walks NZ's proposal to build a tree-top walk at the Hokitika Gorge, which includes a 600 metre-long canopy walkway, visitor centre and car parks. Local public opposition has been strong but there are a range of views on whether it should be permitted.

Marginal strip access

As a result of legislative change in 1990, marginal strips are no longer defined by survey when land of the Crown is sold. Although the existence of a strip is annotated on the title, this change is now increasing the possibility of disputes over the existence and sites of marginal strips.

By way of example, the Department is involved in a dispute over marginal strips alongside the Fernburn Stream, which would form part of a proposed tramping track between Wanaka and Arrowtown (through Motatapu Station, Canadian country singer Shania Twain's property). The neighbouring farmer has erected deer fences across the marginal strips. The issue is likely to come to a head this summer when the Department builds the track along the marginal strip. *You may be asked for comment.* The issue of the definitions of marginal strips is being led by Land Information New Zealand.

TREATY SETTLEMENT ISSUES

Treaty settlement activity is likely to increase significantly over the short to medium term. All political parties are committed to resolving Treaty settlement claims within a defined period. This has implications for the Department in prioritising its resources.

Over the course of the history of settling Treaty grievances, the implementation of the policy on redress has been changing and *is now at a stage where decisions will need to be taken by you (in consultation with your Ministerial colleagues)*. The Department is concerned about the implementation of the current policy settings for conservation and conservation management.

Shortly to be drawn to your attention are the Te Arawa offer and Tuwharetoa negotiations. *You will be briefed on the issues.*

HIGH COUNTRY

Tenure review of pastoral leases has been controversial. There is likely to be an *ongoing need for public comment from you*, particularly on public access aspects. Tenure review is led by the Minister for Land Information. The Department is an adviser in that process, and assumes management responsibilities only once tenure reviews are completed.

Of the land in properties entering the Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) process, around 40 per cent is being transferred into conservation management, with the remaining 60 per cent freeholded.

The government has been reviewing whether to introduce market rents for pastoral leases, and the valuation methods used in tenure review, as part of obtaining a fair financial return for the Crown on its high country land assets. This work is being led by LINZ.

There is continuing strong debate about the level of protection provided by current covenanting mechanisms. In particular, secure public access is hard to achieve through current covenant systems.

Purchases by the government's Nature Heritage Fund have resulted in more high country land being set aside for conservation since 1998 than through tenure review. Included in these areas are valley-floor wetland communities and lower slope ecosystems not generally protected by tenure review.



MT RUAPEHU LAHAR

The issue of a lahar (volcanic mudflow) at Mt Ruapehu is likely to come to the fore in the short term as the Crater Lake level rises during spring thaw. A lahar might occur this coming summer at the very earliest, but, more likely, from autumn next year. The early warning system is ready and tested, as are the region's civil defence plans. *You may be asked for comment.*

HISTORIC HERITAGE



Maintenance and restoration of historic sites is limited by available funding and the challenges of restoring these sites. A number of sites are continuing to deteriorate. There is much work to be done in this area and on improving the visitor experience of heritage places. New Zealanders are not as well connected to historic heritage as other aspects of conservation, and public concern for the ongoing loss of heritage is low.

The Department is adding 12,000 protected sites into its visitor asset management system and is helping the New Zealand Archaeological Association to upgrade site records around the country. *You will be*

briefed on progress.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Economic assessments

Studies commissioned by the Department show that economic activities in relation to Abel Tasman National Park, the Queen Charlotte Track, and conservation lands on the West Coast channel millions of dollars into regional economies and create hundreds of jobs.

Further studies are planned for Fiordland and for Te Papanui Conservation Park (Otago), to quantify the economic dimension of public conservation lands. *You will have an opportunity to release these studies.*

Hydro-electricity development

You may be required to provide comment on the following issues, as they arise.

Trustpower has lodged a resource consent application with the Marlborough District Council to develop a hydro scheme on the Wairau River. The council is due to notify the application shortly for public consultation. Reduced water flows could affect a population of black-fronted tern, a threatened species.

The revised Dobson Dam proposal would involve revoking the status of about 30 ha of conservation land from the Card Creek Ecological Area, much less than earlier proposals. Trustpower has yet to lodge a formal application for the whole scheme. The issue of water extraction from the Arnold River would be important for recreationalists and kayakers.

On proposed Waitaki River water allocations, the Department provides input as part of the whole-of-government approach.

Fiordland National Park management plan

The Department has completed submissions and hearings analysis of the draft Fiordland National Park management plan, and the final draft text is near completion. It will be presented to the Southland Conservation Board in time for its October meeting. Once approved it will be forwarded to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for final approval.

Controversial aspects include:

- managing increasing visitor numbers at Milford Sound/Piopirotahi,
- managing aircraft access to the national park and, particularly, to the Milford airstrip by commercial and recreational aircraft; and
- a request by a Ngai Tahu and Skyline Enterprises for an amenity area in which a gondola could be sited to connect the Greenstone Valley with the Milford Road.

You may be approached by Ngai Tahu and Skyline Enterprises about this issue. As Minister of Conservation you comment on the park's management plan to the New Zealand Conservation Authority, which has legal responsibility for the final approval of the plan.

Mt Augusta coal mine/native land snail

Solid Energy has applied for a permit (on a without prejudice basis) under the Wildlife Act to translocate the only known population of a species of endangered native giant land snail. This will allow Solid Energy access to high-value coal. The success of the translocation is not guaranteed. The mine site is not on public conservation land. *The Department is processing the permit and will provide you with a briefing on the issue for your decision.*

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

World Heritage

New Zealand is represented by Ngati Tuwharetoa paramount chief Tumu te Heuheu on the World Heritage Committee for a four-year term ending in 2007. He was elected to represent the interests of the Pacific Island states (*of note for you in your relationships with these countries*).

New Zealand hosted a workshop of Pacific World Heritage States Parties at Tongariro National Park in October 2004 at which a "Pacific Action Plan, 2009" was developed.

New Zealand is currently appointed to a one-year term as rapporteur, working with Lithuania, which is the current chair and host country. This is important for New Zealand, which has offered to host the World Heritage Committee meeting in 2007.

New Zealand is currently consulting with the public on candidates for new World Heritage Sites to be submitted to the World Heritage Committee.

New Zealand currently has three World Heritage Sites: Tongariro National Park, Te Wahipounamu (South West New Zealand), and the New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands.





International Whaling Commission (IWC)

Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is the lead agency for the IWC, the Department leads the NZ delegation to meetings of the IWC Scientific Committee and is the principal source of scientific advice to the NZ Commissioner, the Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Palmer. New Zealand is widely regarded within the IWC as the most prominent and articulate advocate for the protection of whales.

For the past five years, the Minister of Conservation has led the NZ delegation to annual meetings of the IWC, which have a high public profile.

For more than 25 years, pro-conservation countries have held a majority of votes at the IWC. In 1982 they achieved a three-quarters majority of votes cast and brought a halt to commercial whaling, and in 1994 the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary was established by an overwhelming majority. Recently, Japan has embarked on an aggressive recruitment campaign (which some describe as vote buying), targeting developing countries and including five Pacific Island nations. At this year's meeting of the IWC, the pro-whaling bloc had a comfortable majority in theory, but was unable to deliver it effectively. There is little doubt that at next year's June meeting (St Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean), the pro-whaling bloc will be in the majority.

Key issues under consideration by officials include:

- the Revised Management Scheme, which would set the rules for commercial whaling, should it ever resume (a three-quarters majority will be required to lift the moratorium);
- special-permit whaling ("scientific whaling"); and
- amendments to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (which was negotiated in 1946) to bring it into line with modern international treaties and conventions.

You will receive a draft Cabinet paper that is currently being prepared jointly by MFAT and the Department, which will seek guidance on future activities.

Australian & New Zealand Ministers' meetings

Australian and New Zealand Ministers are members of councils formed by the Council of Australasian Governments in June 2001. The Minister of Conservation and/or the Minister for the Environment normally attend two of those councils: the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (and Environment Protection and Heritage Ministerial Council. The Department and the Ministry for the Environment support Ministers' participation in these meetings, which are held on consecutive days, twice a year, each following an officials' preparatory standing committee meeting. The meetings are hosted in turn by Australia's states and territories and New Zealand.

The next meetings of these councils are:

26-27 October 2005, Launceston, Tasmania

20-21 April 2006, New South Wales

19-20 October 2006, New Zealand

A briefing will be provided.

FORESHORE AND SEABED

With the passing of the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004, Crown ownership was confirmed, giving the Department and the *Minister of Conservation* larger roles.

The Department is supporting the Ministry of Justice in its negotiations with iwi for recognition and redress of territorial customary rights. To date the Ministry is negotiating with Ngati Porou, and Te Whanau-a-Apanui and is soon to sign terms of negotiations with Ngati Porou ki Hauraki.

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES

The Collective Agreement between the Department and the PSA is about to expire. The Cost of Outputs programme will have an impact on that process. The union is aware of the risk of collective bargaining when the outcome of the Cost of Output is unknown. The PSA is likely to lobby strongly for a significant increase in salary for Departmental employees. *You can expect approaches from the PSA on its goals in relation to this negotiation, soon after your appointment.*