



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

In-Confidence

Department of Conservation Status Report

Week beginning: 25 January 2021

Seen by Hon Kiritapu Allan
Minister of Conservation

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

1 Standing and Priority Items

1.1 Jobs for Nature

- We sent you a CRRF (COVID Rapid Response Fund) report on 18 January, providing you with an update on the Jobs for Nature funding streams (actuals vs forecast). This will also be provided to the Minister of Finance on 29 January as requested by him via Treasury.
- We submitted ministerial briefing 20-B-0002 on 19 January as an update on the next round of projects for your consideration and feedback. In total, the projects in the briefing equal a total of \$44.64M and create at least 704.8 FTEs if they are approved. Sixteen of these projects are over the \$1million threshold, for your consideration and feedback.
- DOC staff from the regions will be present in the “Dragon’s Den” meeting scheduled for 26 January, to answer any questions you may have in relation to these 16 projects.
- We are planning for the next round of fortnightly assessments to occur in the first two weeks of February. This will align with the next Reference Group meeting, and we will be seeking your feedback on those incoming projects early in the second week of February.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- The financial expenditure analysis is being finalised and will be available for discussion at the 10 February Status meeting.
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Media and Communications

Video series

- The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) is progressing an interagency collaboration on a short video series (six-eight x two-minute videos) that will highlight Jobs for Nature projects and the impact they have had on the employees and their communities. Filming has commenced and the first video is expected to be released at the end of January.
- We have met with the Health Promotion Agency and are working on a collaborative video series (five x 60-90-second videos) that will profile individuals who have gained nature-based employment through the Jobs for Nature programme. These videos will follow individuals from around the country as they benefit from the programme and contribute to our natural environment.
- This series will complement the videos currently being created by MfE (which will highlight the impact projects are having on communities and the environment). MfE’s videos feature a range of partners (including DOC) working in collaboration to deliver large Jobs for Nature projects.

Jobs for Nature brand

- Our Brand and Campaigns team has led the development of an All of Government brand for the Jobs for Nature programme. This brand was approved by the Secretariat (which owns the overall look and feel) pre-Christmas, and over the coming weeks and months, you will start to see this brand being used on templates, social media posts, videos, signature lines, and other collateral.
- This will help to give the programme a consistent and connected look and feel across government.

Media releases

1.2 RMA Advocacy Update

DOC's recent RMA work is as follows:

Submissions

Offspring Travel Ltd, Fiordland

- Offspring Travel Ltd currently undertakes guided kayak tours in Doubtful Sound/Patea. This consent application is to allow it to increase the size of the support vessel, increase the number of clients per tour and the number of tours per annum, and extend the area covered to include Thomson Sound/Te Awa-O-Tū.
- We have lodged a submission opposing the application, with the key issues being to protect biodiversity (including bottlenose dolphins), protect natural character, and ensure consistency with the NZ Coastal Policy Statement, Southland Murihiku CMS, the Fiordland NP Plan, and the operator's concession.

Central Otago Queenstown Trail Network Trust

- Central Otago Queenstown Trail Network Trust has lodged an application for a cycle trail along the Kawarau River gorge between Nevis Bluff and Bannockburn.
- The application lacked an assessment of the indigenous biodiversity that could be adversely affected by the construction of the trail. Because of the lack of information, a submission was lodged in December 2020 opposing the application.
- The submission also identified land managed by DOC along the proposed trail route. At present the Otago Conservation Management Strategy does not allow for this trail on this land. An amendment to the Otago Conservation Management Strategy has been notified to allow for the trail.

Queenstown Trails Trust

- Queenstown Trails Trust has lodged an application for a cycle trail from Tuckers Beach, on the Shotover River to Millbrook, Arrowtown.
- The application encompassed an assessment of the indigenous biodiversity, including wetlands, but failed to map the extent of boardwalk to protect these wetlands.
- The application also proposed using a heritage mining tunnel on land managed by DOC. The application, however, lacked information on protection of the heritage fabric.
- Because of the lack of information regarding historic effects and mapping of the extent of the boardwalk, DOC lodged a submission opposing the application.
- Our submission also identified land managed by DOC along the proposed trail route. At present, the Otago Conservation Management Strategy does not allow for this trail on some of the land managed by DOC. An amendment to the Otago Conservation Management Strategy has been notified to allow this cycle trail. Submissions on this proposed amendment closed in December 2020.

Other

Proposed Marlborough Environment Plan Variations – Marine Farming and Finfish Farming

- Marlborough District Council has recently notified these variations to the Proposed Marlborough Environment Plan. In general, the variations reflect the findings of the Marlborough Aquaculture Review Working group, which DOC was part of.
- Staff are now reviewing the variations and expect to lodge a submission in support. Submissions close on 23 February 2021.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Proactively Released

2 Updates

2.1 Mauriora Motutapu Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- On 15 December 2020, an MOU was signed between Ngāi Tai ki Tamaki, Mott Macdonald New Zealand and DOC regarding a collaboration to restore Motutapu Island in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.
- Mott MacDonald New Zealand is part of the Mott MacDonald Global group and is a specialist engineering, advisory and sustainability consultancy.
- Through the MOU, the parties have committed to collaborate to:
 - Restore the mauri of Motutapu for Ngāi Tai, the Auckland community and New Zealanders as a whole
 - Develop a shared Ngāi Tai and DOC vision for the island that documents aspirations for fulfilling Ngāi Tai kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga responsibilities. The working title for this vision is “Mauriora Motutapu”
 - Accelerate the ecological restoration of Motutapu, including reforestation.
- Mott Macdonald New Zealand has agreed to invest time and resources, and at least ██████████ over the next three - five years. This investment will assist in revegetating/reforesting between 75 – 100ha on Motutapu, developing the Mauriora Motutapu Vision document and supporting carbon neutralist aspirations for Mott Mac Donald Group.
- A more formal agreement around this investment will be arranged by Mott Macdonald New Zealand and Ngāi Tai by 30 June.

Contact: ██████████
██████████

2.2 Auckland: stoat incursion on pest-free Motutapu and Rangitoto islands, Hauraki Gulf

- All mammalian predators were eradicated from Motutapu and Rangitoto in 2009. Since that time, several Norway rats and stoats have reached the islands and been caught.
- In December 2020, a stoat was detected on Motutapu Island in the Hauraki Gulf. The initial evidence was the death of two endangered shore plovers, with clear DNA and post-mortem signs that a stoat was responsible. A third plover has since been killed.
- We are mounting an incursion response under a Co-ordinated Incident Management Structure, and an intensified trapping regime is now in place. We are also preparing for the possible use of other control methods, such as toxin, if necessary.
- DOC and Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki are undertaking the response, with additional support received from Kiwis for kiwi. A technical advisory group is helping to guide the response.
- A search by mustelid detection dogs between 11-15 January identified signs of stoat presence across wide areas of both Motutapu and adjacent Rangitoto.
- This new incursion follows a previous detection and response in May 2020, that culminated in a stoat being trapped in September. Following the trapping of that stoat, mustelid detector dogs failed to find further evidence of stoats on either Motutapu or Rangitoto.

Contact: ██████████

2.3 Lower North Island: great white shark - Mahia Peninsula

- On 9 January a four-metre mature male white pointer shark was caught in a gill net set at Taylors Bay, Mahia Peninsula. The net had been left overnight and when checked in the morning the shark was found wrapped in the 20-metre net.
- The fisherman dragged the net closer to the shore and released the shark, which was quite passive but still alive. The fisherman tried to contact the “fisheries guys” without success. He was unaware of the status of some sharks as protected species. The fisherman left the shark to recover in the shallows from mid-morning until early evening when a local off-duty policeman phoned the DOC ranger living in Mahia. The ranger and policeman towed the shark out to sea and flushed sea water through its gills until it showed signs of recovery. It was released and slowly swam off and it has not been seen since.
- There are many species of shark found in East Coast waters. From when records began in the late 1800s, there have been no recorded shark attacks in the Gisborne area.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.4 Lower North Island: Chatham Island Oystercatchers - crisis point

- Chatham Island oystercatchers are nationally critical, with a 2019 census giving a population estimate of 350 adults. Despite intensive cat and weka control at key sites on the Chatham Islands we have achieved poor breeding success in the last few years.
- This season was looking promising, with 51 eggs recorded from 25 managed breeding pairs on the main Chatham Island by 16 December 2020; however, from these, only approximately 14 chicks were recorded leaving the nest successfully and we currently have only three surviving chicks.
- While several of the failed eggs were infertile, most were predated, and some were taken by high seas. The cause of chick mortality is harder to prove, but we suspect that at least 10 of the chicks that were seen to have left the nest were predated by cats or harriers.
- The impact of harriers as predators is emerging as a bigger threat than previously thought. Harriers have been caught on camera taking eggs from nests over the last two seasons. While one trap has caught several harriers in the same location this season, banding records prove that individual birds move over large areas (basically the whole of Chatham Island) and new harriers are constantly moving through the oystercatcher breeding areas.
- Current management is not providing enough protection to the Chatham Island oystercatcher, and without further intervention there is a risk of population decline, and, in the worst-case scenario, extinction of this species. Further harrier traps are being commissioned in the interim to reduce pressure from these predators.
- A crisis meeting has been called with the Chatham Islands Advisory Group following the breeding season (in March).

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.5 Banks Peninsula: new infringements system working well in marine reserves

- DOC Mahaanui staff have done 16 vessel patrols, 12 days of land surveillance and 4 days of boat ramp education since Labour Weekend (our summer season to date). We have spent 219 staff hours on the water in that time.
- 17 infringement fines and 1 warning letter have been issued so far, all to people from Christchurch or the wider Canterbury region.
- Over the Christmas/New Year period, 9 days of covert surveillance in the Akaroa Marine Reserve were undertaken, with 505 vessels visiting the reserve over that time (an estimated 3703 people).
- Of the 505 vessels that entered the reserve, over half either interacted with wildlife (overwhelmingly, with dolphins) and/or were sight-seeing in the reserve, which appears to have become a popular destination.
- 3 of the 505 vessels were seen engaging in fishing in the reserve - a rate of offending of 0.6 % over those 9 days.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.6 Tai Poutini Western South Island: release of whio

- On 15 January, 10 juvenile whio were released into the Central Southern Alps security site. Central Southern Alps is one of eight whio security sites around Aotearoa and consists of five valleys with intensive stoat trapping in place.
- The juvenile whio are the offspring of three captive pairs held at Orana Wildlife Park, Willowbank Wildlife Reserve and Queenstown Kiwi Birdlife Park. Ducklings are reared at Peacock Springs (Isaac Wildlife and Conservation Trust) before release.
- Through the Genesis sponsorship, each of the security sites aim to protect 50 whio pairs.
- We will carry out a second release in February/March into the Arthur's Pass area.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.7 Eastern South Island, Western South Island and Southern South Island: Tahr Programme

- DOC's planned Himalayan tahr control operations within the tahr management units are complete for the 2020/21 financial year. From mid-July to early November 2020, we aerially controlled 7481 tahr on public conservation land (PCL) to protect alpine eco-systems from the impacts of high tahr densities.
- The details of this control have been made available on the DOC website and stakeholders have been informed that they can find the information there. The information includes both maps showing where tahr were controlled as part of the Tahr Control Operational Plan for 2020/21 and, to help hunters, mapped sightings of identifiable male tahr located outside of the National Parks' Management Unit.
- Tahr control outside the feral range will continue in the 2020/21 financial year to prevent tahr from establishing beyond the defined feral range. This work has strong stakeholder support.
- A Research and Monitoring plan for 2020/21 is in development, informed by the Research and Monitoring Strategy developed in the second half of 2020, and

by ongoing engagement with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and stakeholders. The plan includes fixed-wing monitoring of tahr populations on Crown Pastoral Leases, re-measurement of historic tahr vegetation monitoring plots and aerial tahr monitoring.

- There are 133,000ha of non-PCL inside the tahr management units and there is currently limited data on tahr abundance across this tenure. Fixed-wing surveys of tahr populations on Crown Pastoral Leasehold land have now been completed and are currently being analysed to provide information on tahr abundance on these lands.
- A meeting of the Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) was held on 15 December 2020. Topics for this meeting included the results of 2020 tahr control operations, the potential structure and content of the Tahr Control Operational Plan for 2021/22, the Research and Monitoring Plan for 2020/21 and a refresh of the TPILG's terms of reference. At this meeting DOC also signalled that control outside of the feral range would need to be ongoing, and that the new Tahr Control Operational Plan for 2021/22 would need to include continued tahr control within the National Parks' Management Unit.
- TPILG members have been asked by DOC to provide feedback by 31 January on the topics covered at the TPILG meeting in December. Following that feedback, a draft Tahr Control Operational Plan for 2021/22 will be developed and discussed at a TPILG meeting on 16 March.
- TPILG membership includes Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, stakeholders from the hunting sector and environmental groups. DOC is working closely on the tahr programme with Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.
- We will provide you with a briefing on the tahr programme in early February.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2.8 Southern South Island: New Year flood event - Waikaia River

- On 2 January, the Waikaia River flooded for the second time in 11 months, with flood water levels the highest ever recorded for the Waikaia River.
- The DOC-managed campsite at Piano Flat on the banks of the upper Waikaia was flooded, and infrastructure at this site suffered varying degrees of damage.
- The camping ground, swing bridge and two DOC managed walking tracks near the Piano Flat camping ground, (Waikaia River Track and Titan Rocks Route) were closed while site inspections were carried out.
- Site inspections confirmed significant damage to the swing bridge and several damaged trees and significant erosion were identified on the tracks, all of which posed an ongoing risk to the public.
- The camping ground facilities have been repaired and are now open to the public. The swing bridge and walking tracks will remain closed to the public until repaired.
- DOC's Murihiku District will work to identify long-term sustainable options for the infrastructure at Piano Flat/Waikaia, given an increase of frequency of flood events in the area.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2.9 South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation Commission Meeting – Revision to Bottom Fishing Measure

- The ninth annual South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) Commission meeting will be held virtually from 21 January to 3 February.
- The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is the State Party representative for New Zealand to the Convention on the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fishery Resources in the South Pacific Ocean. Along with MPI, the delegation consists of DOC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Te Ohu Kaimoana, and Westfleet Seafoods.
- [REDACTED]
- DOC's primary interests in the SPRFMO Convention are to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of conservation management measures and to ensure that the objectives of the SPRFMO Convention and implementation of relevant United Nations General Assembly Resolutions are achieved. These objectives include the prevention of significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems, such as slow-growing corals that are at risk of significant damage from bottom trawling.
- New Zealand is a major bottom fishing nation. Proposals to revise the bottom fishing measure were submitted by New Zealand, Australia, and the European Union (EU). In addition, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and the EU have been in discussions ahead of the Commission to work through some of the differences between the proposals in order to achieve a single revised bottom fishing measure by the end of the Commission.
- DOC has been supporting discussions through the provision of scientific and technical advice to the New Zealand delegation to facilitate optimum conservation outcomes.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.10 Global Biodiversity Goals

- Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity are currently involved in a formal process to negotiate a new set of global biodiversity goals and targets for the next decade.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade leads on the overall negotiations and DOC's International Team is fully engaged in this process. Together we are working towards the adoption of a new set of global targets for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, consistent with the objectives of the Convention.
- Multiple large campaigns by environmental NGOs are under way globally to push for a 30% protected areas target, covering both terrestrial and marine areas by 2030 ('30 by 30'). The target would be able to be met from both national jurisdictions as well as the high seas, including formally protected areas as well as other area-based conservation measures, and be a collective rather than a national level target. Indigenous people's concerns and interests, including customary take, would be addressed as a cross-cutting issue through a standalone target. (Reference to our earlier advice on 18 January 21-B-0013.)
- Some countries are now also actively supporting these campaigns, including through the recently launched 'High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People', led by France, Costa Rica and the UK. New Zealand has been criticised in the

media for being absent from this 30 by 30 coalition. [REDACTED]

- New Zealand has advocated for a new target that achieves improved biodiversity outcomes, through the inclusion of strong qualitative components, such as ecological representativeness and effective management.
- DOC's International Team would like to meet with you to discuss this agreement and others, together with how you would like to engage with them.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.11 Whenua Māori Rating Bill

- The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) is the lead agency for the Whenua Māori Rating Bill. Te Papa Atawhai is providing DIA with support and advice on this Bill.
- This Bill will likely be moving to the Committee of the Whole House and Third Reading stages in February.
- At the same time, DIA will be seeking approval for a technical Supplementary Order Paper (SOP) to ensure local authorities can implement a Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata provision (and some other provisions) from 1 July 2021.
- The Bill has two purposes: firstly, to support owners of Māori freehold land (Māori land) to engage with, use, develop and live on their land; secondly, to modernise some aspects of the Local Government (Rating) Act 2002 that are inconsistent with today's expectations of Māori/Crown relationships.
- The Bill implements five proposals to support the development of, and provision for housing on, Māori land. These are:
 - an ability for a local authority chief executive to write off rates arrears
 - provision of a statutory rates remission process for Māori land under development
 - making unused Māori land non-rateable
 - treating multiple blocks of Māori land that are used together as one for rating purposes
 - allowing individual houses on Māori land to be rated separately from other houses and land uses on the block.
- The Bill also provides for land that is subject to a Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata to be classified as non-rateable, which is of particular relevance to the Ngā Whenua Rāhui Fund. Making unused Māori land non-rateable aims to remove rates arrears as a significant barrier to engagement and use of Māori land, and prevent arrears from building up in the future.
- Ngā Whenua Rāhui is a Ministerial Fund, and Te Kaupapa is "to preserve and protect remaining indigenous biodiversity on privately owned Māori land that represents the full range of indigenous biodiversity originally present in the landscape". Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata apply long-term protection to Māori land and are made under section 27A of the Conservation Act 1987 and section 77A of the Reserves Act 1977. These kawenata cover approximately 15 per cent of all Māori land.
- Making provision for Ngā Whenua Rāhui kawenata land to be non-rateable recognises the public benefits it provides and the significance of the issue to Māori landowners.
- The Te Papa Atawhai, Ngā Whenua Rāhui unit will be supporting and working closely with land trusts as this bill and SOP progress.

Contacts: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2.12 Planning, Permissions and Land – NZCA management planning report

- The New Zealand Conservation Authority sent you and the Director-General of Conservation a report, dated 16 December 2020, addressing the Authority's perception of, and recommendations for, urgent review of the statutory management planning process.
- The Authority made three recommendations:
 - that Te Papa Atawhai appraise why it is behind in updating statutory documents
 - that an external review be undertaken
 - that any conservation legislative reform should include management planning processes.
- Te Papa Atawhai has been working on several projects related to the issues and recommendations identified in the Authority's report, including a system-level review.
- We are meeting with the Authority's Management Planning Committee on 4 February to discuss further clarification of the report's recommendations, and the actions we are currently taking.
- You will receive a briefing by mid-February about Te Papa Atawhai's statutory planning documents and processes, which will address some of the matters raised by the Authority. We will be seeking a meeting with you to discuss the briefing.
- Ongoing liaison with the Authority will likely be required to address its concerns.
- Officials are available to meet with you should you require further details on this matter.

Contact: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2.13 COVID-19 impact on visitor patterns across Aotearoa

- COVID-19 has had a significant impact on visitor patterns across Aotearoa. It is likely that over the 20/21 summer there will be more New Zealanders getting out into nature than ever before.
- It's been fantastic to see this interest from New Zealanders, which has resulted in a number of DOC-managed places being busier than they have ever been, especially during weekends and holidays.
- However, this interest in the outdoors has been mainly focused within three hours' drive of major population areas, and in coastal places. A number of places (especially in the South Island) are, therefore, seeing a significant decline in visitors compared to pre-COVID-19. This includes South Westland, Te Anau, Aoraki and Queenstown.
- DOC, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (including the Provincial Development Unit), and the Ministry of Social Development share concerns around the economic situation in these areas, particularly Franz Josef, Fox Glacier and Te Anau.

- We have provided you a memo (21-B-0023) that outlines recent data, information and insights on how New Zealanders are engaging with the outdoors.

Contact: [REDACTED]

2.14 New Zealand-wide Good to Grow Partnership with the Department of Corrections

- We have been working in partnership with the Department of Corrections (Corrections) on the Good to Grow programme since 2015.
- The Good to Grow programme aims to create opportunities for people under the care of Corrections to connect with and restore nature, grow skills, and make a meaningful contribution to Aotearoa.
- Good to Grow projects include planting, weeding and wetland restoration work undertaken by offenders on community sentence. Inside correctional facilities, prisoners have produced native seedlings for conservation projects and manufactured predator trap boxes and species translocation boxes.
- In the last year, over 2,900 individuals participated in the programme, contributing over 44,000 hours to conservation work.
- The Good to Grow partnership agreement between DOC and Corrections expired last year.
- The Chief Executives of both departments have agreed to meet early in the year to sign the refreshed Memorandum of Understanding that will renew our partnership through until 2026.
- You have indicated you would like to attend the signing event at Rimutaka Prison, where there will be the opportunity to view native seedlings being grown for a wetland restoration project on Onoke Spit, Wairarapa. Other conservation products made in prisons for Good to Grow programmes will be on display, such as Takehē translocation boxes, 'weta motels' and trap tunnels.
- We are working with your office to identify a suitable date for you to attend this event. The Minister of Corrections has also been invited to attend, and your office is liaising with his office to identify a suitable date.

Contact: [REDACTED]

3 Director-General Engagements

January

28 January

Visit to Wainuiomata Catchment with Hon Grant Robertson, Wainuiomata Catchment

February

01 February

Visit to Capital Kiwi, Terawhiti Station

03-05 February

Waitangi events including Te Ruapekapeka and Ahurea Blessing/Opening Ceremony, Kerikeri

12 February

Dinner with WWFD CEO and Board, (tbc Mana)

16 February

Te Urewera Board hui, Taneatua

17 February

Meeting with Te Papa CEO, Board and Leadership team, Te Papa

18 February

DOC Annual Review, Select Committee, Parliament

18-19 February

Public Service Leadership Team Retreat, Brackenridge Wairarapa

18-19 February

NZ Conservation Authority, DOC Wellington

24 February

Te Kopuka na Te Awa Tupua, Whanganui/virtual hui

March

16 March

Ngā Tangata Tiaki o Whanganui, Whanganui

4 Addendum

This section includes content that is sensitive or is being considered by the Minister of Conservation or other Ministers. This information is not being released proactively.

Subject headings of content in this section are:

- Otago Conservation Management Strategy (Otago CMS) - partial review update
- Ngāi Tahu Treaty of Waitangi settlement: Greenpark Huts, Canterbury

Events, Announcements & Media Opportunities

None this week

Proactively Released