



**Northland Conservation Board**  
*Te Runanga Papa Atawhai O Te Taitokerau*

# *Annual Report*



*Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga*

*2011/12*



## Chairperson's Foreword

Ka Mihi Atu kia Koutou e te Tangata tuturu o te Taitokerau. Mihi koutou e nga Ahikaroa, mihi te tohu mana e nga Kaitiaki, e mihi e mihi e mihi. No reira tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.

Greetings to the many people of Northland. To those especially left at home to keep the fires burning strong, and to guard what's important, I greet you and the Mana left to you.

I have had the privilege of Chairing the Conservation Board for Taitokerau Northland for less than a year, I thank Board Members for this support. Northland holds its own in natural and Historic character, and is evolving as time passes.

We should be proud to be part of this region, We have access to both marine areas and forest environments providing an important economic and recreational base for many. It also warms the soul of Maori, a strong relationship is present for those individuals privileged to carry the deep Tapu of the unseen world and its relationship to our landscapes in Taitokerau. May you always guide us.

I have been pre-occupied getting my head around our duties and our direction, Thanks to the commitment of our members we have developed a Strategic Plan that encompasses our role. We will always be reviewing our plan, to keep us in good stead and up to-date.

The review of the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) has been a highlight, and is moving along according to the time frames set. Thanks must be given to the Department of Conservation (DOC) staff heavily involved and our Board Members.



Press releases from the Board have highlighted some issues and some improvements here in Taitokerau. Part of our role is to advocate for the Environment. This role can sometimes cause uneasiness. It's my intention to comment widely on issues and any other topics pertaining to our Environment.

I also want to highlight our need to follow-up and follow-through with any releases that have an impact that is worthy.

Myself and Tracey Andrew-Smith are the newest members to the Board joining in 2011, We had the privilege of meeting the out-going Chairman Kevin Evans. Kevin served the Board well - an extremely passionate conservationist. Kevin has been co-opted to the Board for advice during the review of the Conservation Management Strategy.

All 10 members of our Board have worked hard between their private lives and this Civil duty to the Public and the Environment. I compliment you all on your commitment and support. I would also like to acknowledge the support the Department has given to us through Jeannie Hogarth, Board Support Officer and Chris Jenkins for his outstanding leadership as Conservator for Tai Tokerau.

Looking forward;

1. Following through with the attention needed for the development of the Conservation Management Strategy.
2. Sustaining our Strategic Plan
3. And supporting the Kauri National Park proposal.

These three topics will hold us together and keep our work in perspective.

Na Mihi nui Kia Koutou

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mita Whare Harris', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Mita Whare Harris  
**CHAIRPERSON**

## Introduction

The Northland Conservation Board is one of thirteen<sup>[13]</sup> bodies appointed nationwide by the Minister of Conservation under s.6P of the Conservation Act 1987.

The functions of the Board are outlined in s.6M and the powers that enable the Board to carry out those functions are under s.6N of the Act.

The role of the Conservation Boards as laid out in the Conservation Act 1987, is as follows:

- to recommend the approval of conservation management strategies
- to approve conservation management plans
- to advise on how conservation management strategies and plans will be put into practice
- to advise on proposed changes to the status of land areas of national and international significance
- to advise on proposals for new walkways
- to liaise with Fish and Game Councils on conservation matters
- to carry out other powers delegated to them by the Conservation Minister, the Conservation Act or any other Act.

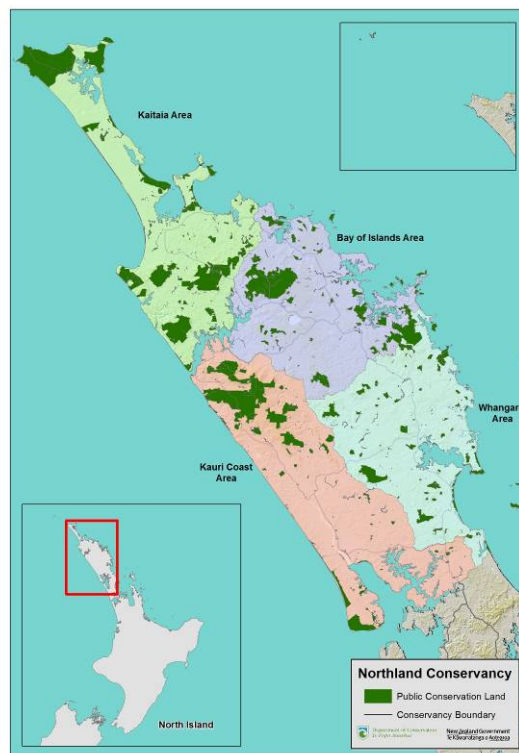
Section 6O of the Conservation Act requires that every Conservation Board provide the New Zealand Conservation Authority with an annual report as soon as practicable after 30 June each year. In recognition of this requirement, the Northland Conservation Board submits its Annual Report for consideration.

## The Board's Area

The Northland Conservation Board's area of responsibility covers the same boundaries as the Department of Conservation's Northland Conservancy.

Northland is a long narrow peninsula, the features setting it apart from the rest of the country being its subtropical climate and 1,700km of indented and very scenic coastline. The Region covers a land area of 1.25 million hectares, supporting a population of just over 150,000.

Northland's economy is based on pastoral farming, forestry and horticulture, with well over half the region's land area devoted to beef and sheep farming. Northland is a popular holiday destination, making tourism a significant industry.



**In ecological terms** Northland is notable as home to two high profile species - the Kauri and the Kiwi. One of the most magnificent trees in the world, the Kauri, was prolific in the north but much of the region's Kauri forest is now gone. A number of relatively large Kauri dominated tracts do remain, principally the Waipoua/Mataraua/Waima ecosystem and the Puketi/Omahuta/Maungataniwha complex but other individual forests as well.

Kiwi too are an important ingredient that makes Northland special, but the North Island Brown is under threat and special effort is required to maintain several large viable populations in the region.

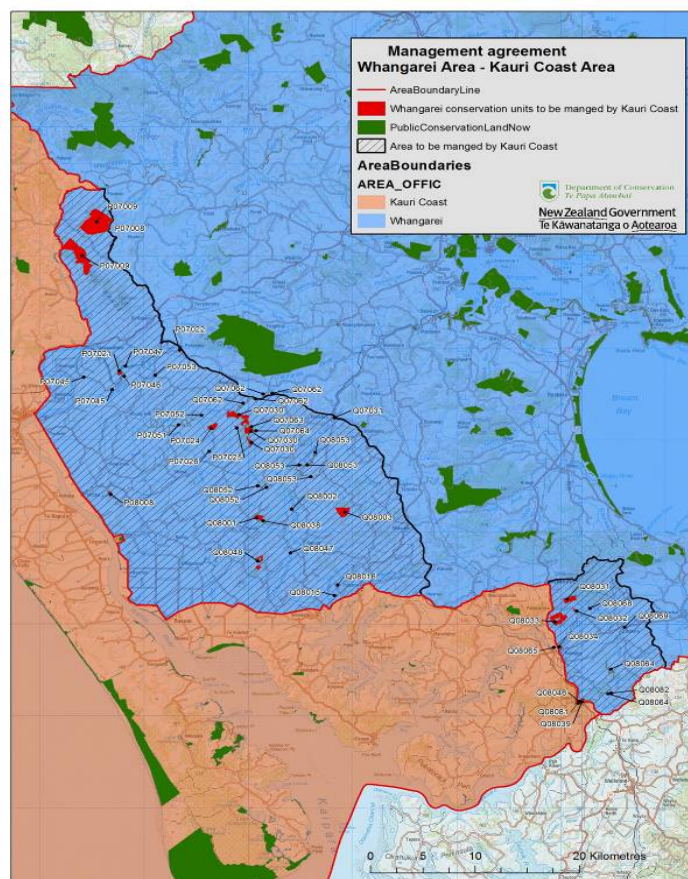
Notable are the harbours, headlands, islands and reserves of Northland's eastern seaboard, the islands that provide offshore sanctuary to the very best of New Zealand's natural treasures and the wild and rugged yet beautiful west coast.

However, Northland also has the dubious distinction of being the region with more native plants and animals at risk than anywhere else in the country. The arrival of new pests which is not an uncommon occurrence, pose great risks to our native biota.

**In terms of history and culture**, Northland was the cradle of both the Maori and European settlement of New Zealand. For both cultures the North has a long, fascinating and sometimes turbulent past and the region's historic sites and buildings still reflect this history.

The majority of historic places are of Maori origin, with many holding a deep spiritual significance amongst the region's Iwi. On Crown administered land alone almost 3,000 historic places have been recorded. The sites include fortified pa, traces of ancient gardens, coastal midden and sculptured, terraced hillsides. Around Kerikeri and Waitangi there are a number of significant historic buildings relating to early European settlement in the area.

The Conservancy is split into four Areas – Kaitaia, Bay of Islands, Kauri Coast (including Trounson Kauri Park Mainland Island) and Whangarei. Each Area has its own Area Manager.



Revised Area Boundaries Whangarei & Kauri Coast 2010



## Membership

There were 10 appointment Members and 2 Co-opted Members of the Northland Conservation Board in 2011/12 –

Mita Harris was appointed in 2011 and elected Chairperson of the Board at its meeting held on 17 November 2011. Mita resides in the Bay of Islands and is currently working for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Previously he worked in Community Relations with the Department of Conservation in the Bay of Islands for 14 years.

The other Members of the Board were

- Ian McGill, elected Deputy Chairperson -Bay of Islands
- Judi Gilbert, Whangarei
- William Goodfellow, Bay of Islands
- Helene Leaf, Hokianga
- Peter O'Hara, Mangawhai
- Hori Parata, Whangrei
- Richard Robbins, Kaitaia
- Tracey Andrews-Smtih – newly appointed in 2011.
- Robert Willoughby, Russell

Tracey and Mita were the only new appointments to the Board in 2011 each for an initial three year term. Judi Gilbert was reappointed for a further three year term.



**Mita Harris and Tracey Andrews-Smith new Board Members 2010/11**  
[Photograph taken at Te Paki September 2011]

The Board farewelled longstanding Member, Kevin Evans after 11 years on the Board [the last 4 years as Chairperson]. The Board appreciated Kevin's willingness to remain as a Co-opted Member to assist the Board in reviewing the Conservation Management Strategy of which he had played a major role over the years.



**Kevin Evans, retiring Board Chairperson and Member**

Kevin was farewelled by the Board at the Board's 25 September 2011 meeting in Kaitiāia. Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland made the presentation to Kevin highlighting Kevin's significant contribution over to the Board and conservation. Kevin's passion for conservation and the environment and biodiversity in particular, was never in doubt and his ability to speak out on issues "from the heart" was one of his strengths.

Kevin Evans will be remembered with great affection by Board Members past and present not the least for his passionate commitment to Pateke/Brown Teal and how he never let a single chance [or Board Meeting] go by without championing this species. As an authorised Pateke/Brown Teal Captive Breeder Kevin is well placed to ensure that this particular species will never be neglected nor allowed to disappear.

The Board thanked Kevin for all his efforts and wished him well for the future.

#### Co-opted Members

- Kevin Evans, Ruawai
- Jeroen Jongejans, Whangarei



## Conservation Board Meetings

The Northland Conservation Board held four[4] meetings during the reporting period. The venue for Board meetings is chosen to ensure as wide a coverage as possible is made of the region and to enable members of the public throughout Northland to have access to the Board.

1	23 September 2011	-	Kaitaia Area Office, Kaitaia
2	18 November 2011	-	Bay of Islands Area Office, Kerikeri
3	17 February 2012	-	Northland Conservancy Office, Whangarei
4	04 May 2012	-	The Kauri Museum, Matakoho

### Members Attendance

▪ Judi Gilbert	Whangarei	4 from 4
▪ William Goodfellow	Bay of Islands	3 from 4
▪ Mita Harris	Bay of Islands	4 from 4
▪ Helene Leaf	Hokianga	3 from 4
▪ Ian McGill	Bay of Islands	3 from 4
▪ Peter O'Hara	Mangawhai	4 from 4
▪ Hori Parata	Whangarei	1 from 4
▪ Richard Robbins	Kaitaia	4 from 4
▪ Tracey Andrews-Smith	Kaitaia	4 from 4
▪ Robert Willoughby	Russell	2 from 4

### 2011/12 Year in Review

It can be said that the 2011/12 year was the beginning of a new era for the Board. A significant shift in focus was made with the appointment of Mita Harris as Board Chairperson with recreation, tourism and community engagement a major component of his vision for the Board.

In 2011 the Board maximised opportunities to raise its profile with post Board meeting Press Releases a highlight. The mix of skills on the Board was highlighted and Board Member Peter O'Hara with his significant background in journalism and the media proved a winner in getting the best coverage for the Board on a wide number of issues. He is also undertaking to complete the Board's Communication Strategy.

The need to "walk the talk" in terms of the the Board's Goals and Objectives was highlighted with a review of each Goal and Objective becoming a core Agenda item for Board meetings together with inviting key contributors relating to each Goal and Objective to give presentations. Vince Kerr, Marine Technical Support Officer, Northland Conservancy was the first off the blocks providing excellent background and suggested ways forward for marine protection in Northland.

Biodiversity was given a boost with the Chair highlighting the ongoing poaching of Kukupa and need for the Board to step in and advocate against this continued attack on a depleting species. Progressive as this move was it drew attention to a previous campaign for the protection of Kukupa promoted by the Board back in 1993 and lead by none other than Kaumatua Kevin Prime [then a Member of the Board] whose vision was to see Kukupa replace Possum as the major pest in Northland!! The Board has invited Kevin to spearhead this new campaign scheduled to take place in February 2013 and is pleased to note that Kevin has agreed to assist the Board and will be speaking on the issue at the August 2012 Board meeting.

The Board is also adopting an Outcomes Statement for the future direction of the Board. This is currently being finalised and will be continually assessed and updated to meet the Board's mandate and be a proactive statement on the Board's direction and commitment for the future.

Relationship building with the Department, Organisations, Agencies and the community in general were a major focus for the Board in 2011/12. The Board noted with concern the potential impact and loss of skilled staff with the implementation of the Department of Conservation's Shared Services Review. While applauding the Department's Vision with working with the community as a major commitment, the loss of key skilled personnel was seen as a potential retrograde step in achieving the required outcome. The Board will watch and follow with interest the progress the Department is making in streamlining the organisation and moving towards its Vision that "New Zealand is the Greatest Living Space on Earth".

Progress with the establishment of a Kauri National Park in Northland is also being followed with great interest. This proposal harks back to 1991 and the Board is pleased to see that it is still being pursued in 2011/12.

A major and significant highlight in 2011/12 was the purchase by the Crown of the Ngunguru Sandspit. Successive Boards had long supported the protection of this site and the final outcome was a significant gain for conservation. The Board congratulated and acknowledged Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland, on the part he had played, personally, in achieving this excellent result, together with the community of Ngunguru and, in particular, the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society. The final outcome was a major achievement and just reward for all the work that had gone on over many, many years to ensure the future protection of the Sandspit.

The Public Forum section at meetings continued to provide a wide range of interesting issues being presented to the Board – most memorably in 2011/12 being presentations from the Puketi Forest Trust based in Whangarei and the Bay of Islands Coastal Watchdog Group.

The Board continues to be in awe of the enthusiasm, commitment and passion of members of the community volunteering to ensure the protection and enhancement of species and habitat throughout Northland. This is an inspiration and provides the Board with added impetus to engage and support these groups and individuals wherever possible.

The Board can look back on 2011/12 with pride and with a sense of achievement, especially in acknowledging that much of the progress being made will not only move the current Board forward but will lay sound, measurable and movable foundations for conservation gains that future Boards can follow and add to.

2011/12 was *A very Good Year*.

## **Conservation Management Strategy Implementation and Monitoring Field Inspections 2010/11**

The Board appreciated the opportunity provided by staff of the Department of Conservation to engage the Board in site inspections and opportunities to meet representatives of groups and members of the public at key sites within the Conservancy.

### **Site Inspection –**

On a typical Far North brilliantly fine day in September 2011, the Board was taken on a site visit lead by Jon Maxwell, Area Manager, Kaitiaki and his Team, to Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga, Tapotupotu Beach and Rarawa Beach.



**Jon Maxwell, Area Manager, Kaitaia explaining the significance of the artwork within the Portal to Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga**

Jon Maxwell outlined the significant changes that had taken place at Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga and advised that the site was now of world class standard and reflected the spiritual, cultural and scenic qualities of this iconic site.



**Board Members Ian McGill, Judi Gilbert and Richard Robbins - Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga**



The Board acknowledged the excellent work undertaken by the Department with particular reference to work at Tapotupotu Beach. The new boardwalk was amazing and added great value to an already brilliant site. The work and thought that had gone into the construction of the boardwalk to ensure it blended in with the landscape was a master

stroke

**Board Members on new bridge at Tapotupotu**

The Board met with representatives of the Rarawa Beach Coast Care Group and noted and acknowledged the significant contribution the Group was making to the site and, in particular, the protection being provided to the shorebirds nesting on the beach.



**Rarawa Beach Coast Care Group and Northland Regional Council representatives outlining the work being undertaken at Rarawa Beach**





**Rarawa Beach Nesting Area**



**Rarawa Beach Nesting Area**



The site visits continued to add value to the Board's appreciation and understanding of the work being undertaken by the Department and communities.



**Board Members, Department of Conservation Staff and Wayne Petera at Lookout Point Te Rerenga  
Wairua/Cape Reinga**

Of major note was the excellent relationships being established and the way the Department and the community was working together and the outstanding progress being made. This was a really important point to note and one that the Board saw as a major step forward.

The Board notes with great sadness that in November 2011 William Macrae, Ranger Recreation Planning, Kaitaia and John [Prickles] De Ritter, lost their lives in a tragic helicopter crash while rescuing members of the Kaitaita Community stranded on a beach in the Far North to escape a major fire. William had played a major role in the Board's site visit and the news of his untimely passing it was a tragic loss to the Department and the community. The Board expressed its condolences and support to William's family and the Department.

## Treaty of Waitangi

### ▪ Treaty Settlements

The Board acknowledges the efforts of Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland and his Team to build positive relationships with all the Iwi in the North. This work will be of great benefit when Treaty Claims have been settled and the work of the Department in Northland adapts to the implications of the implementation of the Settlements.

The Board noted that future Treaty Settlements, particularly the Te Hiku Settlement in the Far North, would see a major shift in the management of conservation land and the establishment of a specific Conservation Board, separate from the Northland Conservation Board, to undertake the same mandate in the Far North.

## Board Functions Under Section 6M of the Conservation Act

6M1 The functions of each Board shall be

*(c) To advise the Conservation Authority and the Director-General on the implementation of Conservation Management Strategies and Conservation Management Plans for areas within the jurisdiction of the Board.*

### Conservation Management Strategy Review

Piet Nieuwland continued to provide the Board with updates on the review of the Conservation Management Strategy. The Board proactively engaged with the Department on the review, establishing a Conservation Management Strategy Working Group to go through the Places phase of the document prior to it being released for public consultation and submission in late September 2012.

The Board appreciated the work being undertaken and acknowledged the need to ensure consistency amongst Conservancies in producing the document. However the length of time being taken to complete the Review was of concern and it was hoped that the final document would prove worth the wait and be a meaningful one that the community would benefit from in terms of understanding the rationale behind the Strategy and the ability of the community to engage and contribute.

The Conservation Management Strategy is a major piece of work and is the top priority in terms of the Board's mandate. The Board looks forward to viewing and ultimately approving the final document.

### Marine Protection

The Board drew attention to the need to adequately include marine protection in the Conservation Management Strategy. The Board did not consider adequate measures were being taken to include areas of marine conservation within the Places concept and asked the Department to take this into consideration to ensure it was adequately covered in the final draft document before it was released to the public.

**(d) To advise the Conservation Authority and the Director-General –**

*(ii) On any other conservation matter relating to any area within the jurisdiction of the Board:*

**Natural Heritage****Kauri National Park for Northland**

In June 2012 the Board received a copy of the Department of Conservation's Report to the New Zealand Conservation Authority regarding the establishment of a Kauri National Park in Northland based on the Forests of Waipoua.

The Government's directive for the establishment of a Kauri National Park in Northland was supported by the Board.

When the over riding National Parks Act was developed by the then Government under very different conditions and attitudes that we know today. The criteria for the establishment of a National Park as outlined in the *Act* makes no provision for co-governance – a key component crucial to Te Roroa for the establishment of a National Park as outlined in the current proposal. The Board acknowledged that the criteria within the *Act* provides challenges in terms of the new proposal.

The Board noted that the issue of expanding the National Park to include other Iwi rohe in Northland had not been ruled out and as Treaty Claims were settled the issue of including areas within each Settlement becoming part of a National Park for Northland could be considered.

The New Zealand Conservation Authority has established a Committee, lead by Yvonne Sharp, to investigate the proposal on behalf of the Authority, including visiting the site and engaging with Te Roroa and others in late July 2012. Mita Harris, Chairperson, has been invited to join the group during the course of the visit.

**Ngunguru Sandspit**

As noted earlier, the Board was delighted at the purchase by the Crown of the Ngunguru Sandspit. This land would become a designated Reserve, once Gazetted, and the Department and community are to work together to develop a management plan for the site for the future.

Board Member, Judi Gilbert [also a founding Member of the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society] was ecstatic at the result. She and her fellow Members are to be congratulated on their tireless efforts to achieve this positive outcome. Just reward for their stoicism and persistence over many frustrating years.

The Board looks forward to receiving updates on progress and will continue to provide whatever support it can.

**Protected Natural Area Programme**

The Board congratulated Chris Jenkins and his Team on the completion of all the Protected Natural Area Reports for Northland. These Reports were significant documents and well received by Regional and District Councils as well as Members of the public. Wendy Holland of Northland Conservancy Office was the co-ordinator of all these Reports and is to be congratulated on completing a major process that will long be utilised and appreciated.

## Threats and Responses

### Use of 1080

The Board was pleased to note the success of the Waipoua 1080 poison aerial operation. Of particular note was the buy in and support from the community and Iwi, particularly Te Roroa in relation to this operation. This was a marked contrast to previous similar operations. The Board acknowledged that the use of 1080 was still controversial but accepted that 1080 is the “best available” option at the moment.

### Fire

Outbreaks of fire continued to plague the Far North in 2011/12 with the previously noted tragic loss of William Macrae and John De Ritter while assisting in fire fighting duties in November. What added to the tragedy was that the fire was a result of arson there totally avoidable and resulting in the loss of two major contributors to the Department and the Community, not to mention to their families.

Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland, continued to provide the Board with updates on the work of the newly appointed Enlarged Rural Fire District which was already having significant beneficial impacts for the Department.

### Kauri Dieback [Phytophthora taxon Agathis [PTA]

The appointment of a Liaison Officer, based in Northland to co-ordinate the response to the potential adverse impacts of PTA was acknowledged by the Board as a major step forward.

Research and investigations on PTA were continuing with good progress being made on establishing where the disease might have originated. PTA was still a major threat but there was now “light at the end of the tunnel”.

## LIAISON

### Department of Conservation

The commitment, passion, dedication and enthusiasm of the public is only matched by that of Department of Conservation staff throughout Northland. The inspired and proactive leadership provided by Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland played no small part in the ability of the Conservancy to live within its budget yet achieve major gains for conservation. This has become even more challenging in the current global economic climate where the ever diminishing allocation to the Department presents not a few challenges!

The Board recognised the emphasis on involving the community to achieve the objectives of the Vision – the Department cannot achieve conservation gains alone – however, with the community all things were possible. The Board looked forward to be part of achieving the Vision.

In recognising the need to move forward and the rationale behind the current Review, the Board also notes the affect this has on already over committed staff. It hopes that in implementing the Review care is taken to ensure that key experienced and skilled staff are not lost to conservation at the expense of achieving a balanced budget.

The Board continues to acknowledge the genuine care and concern of staff to do the best they can with the resources available is commendable. The dedication and commitment of staff is unquestionable and the Board recognises how fortunate the Department as a whole is in recruiting and maintaining staff of this calibre. The constant changes within the Department do affect all staff and it is under this constant “change” umbrella staff continue to produce quality results.

The leadership of Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland, has a major bearing on the conservation achievements within the region. His commitment and personal contribution to achieving positive outcomes is significant, particularly in the area of relationship building between key agencies and Iwi. The Board acknowledges the positive achievements Chris Jenkins and his Team have, and continue to make, in the region, as well as the good relationship between the Department and the Board.

In acknowledging the ever changing face of the Department and the emphasis on engaging with communities in a meaningful and measurable way, the Board also acknowledges the role it can play in assisting the Department. The Board is best placed to be an excellent conduit between the Department and the community and is fully committed to undertaking this role to best advantage and outcomes for conservation in Northland.

## **New Zealand Conservation Authority**

The Board appreciated the ongoing support and advice provided by Yvonne Sharp, New Zealand Conservation Authority Member and the Authority’s Northland representative at Board meetings. This personal link to the Authority is a key factor in ensuring that issues facing the Authority are acknowledged and appreciated by the Board and, most significantly to the Board, the confidence it has in Yvonne to effectively and honestly provide feedback to the Authority on issues facing the Board. Without this personal cooperation and dialogue it would be extremely difficult to adequately convey those issues of specific concern to Northland to an audience hundreds of miles away.

The significance of Yvonne’s appointment to lead the Committee reviewing the Kauri National Park proposal cannot be underestimated. Yvonne’s local knowledge and background will play a major role in how the proposal is viewed by the Authority. Her credibility within Northland [having been a previous Mayor of the Far North] will also play a major part in her meetings with the Iwi and communities involved in the Kauri National Park proposal.

The Board appreciates the Authority enabling Yvonne to participate in Board activities and meetings and hopes that this will continue for a very long time.

The Board records its sincere appreciation to Yvonne for her commitment and contribution during the year and looks forward to continuing this mutually beneficial relationship in the future. She is a friend indeed.

## **Board Chairpersons Meeting**

Mita Harris attended the Conservation Board Chairpersons Meeting organised by the New Zealand Conservation Authority in May 2012.



## **Fish and Game Council Northland**

The Board was pleased to welcome Rudi Hoetjes, Manager, Fish and Game Northland, to its Board meeting held in Whangarei. Richard Robbins took over from Ian Faulkner to represent the Board at meetings of the Fish and Game Council Northland and provided excellent feedback on issues being discussed by the Council.

This liaison is very important to the Board and it is hoped to extend and strengthen this in the future.

## **Public Forum**

The Public Forum segment within each Board Meeting Agenda, continues to be a highlight at meetings. The diverse discussions that are held at this time have proved to be enlightening and, at times, entertaining. Again, the passion, commitment and enthusiasm of individuals [whether they be representing their own interests or those of a group etc] is outstanding. Wherever possible the Board has picked up on the issues raised and supported the work that was being done.

The Board acknowledges the valuable contribution these individuals make and will continue to honour this commitment and provide whatever support and assistance it can. It also appreciates the opportunity to hear issues of major concern and conflict and wherever possible has offered its support to assist in achieving resolutions and positive outcomes.

Particular mention must be made to the regular attendance at meetings [outside of his normal location] by Rongo Bentson representing Te Runanga o Te Rarawa. Rongo's presence is always appreciated as is the feedback he provides and issues he raises. Long may his attendance continue because it really is appreciated.

It was also good to note the presence of past Board Member Ian Faulkner at the Kerikeri meeting of the Board. Being able to catch up with "old friends" is always a pleasure and to make the effort to do this at Board meetings is of particular note.

The Board appreciated the public attendance at meetings in all the various locations. The local contribution added value and colour to proceedings and on each occasion the Board was provided with advice of new conservation initiatives being undertaken and progress with existing programmes. It was pleasing to note the good relationship between the Department and local communities in all four Areas where the Board held its meetings.

## **CONSERVATION LAND USE**

### **CONCESSIONS**

During the 2011/12 year the Board was provided with information on the Department's Concessions Review and received regular updates on concession applications at each Board meeting.

The Board awaits the outcome from the implementation of the Department's Shared Services which will see a shift from local administration of concessions to the Shared Services Hub in Hamilton. The need to meet the requirement under the Conservation Act to engage Conservation Boards to review major concession application has not changed. How this will be undertaken in the new Shared Services process is awaited with interest.

## STATUTORY PLANNING

### Regional Policy Statement for Northland

The Board made a submission on the first Draft of a new Regional Policy Statement for Northland. Vibeke Wright, Policy Division Member, Northland Regional Council, attended a Board Meeting in Whangarei in February 2012 to provide the Board with an update on progress. The Board's submission was acknowledged and, in particular, the Board's major concern regarding Genetic Modification/Genetic Engineering. This was also noted to have attracted the largest group of submissions on the Draft. It was pleasing to be advised that the Council Committee assessing the submissions concentrated on the "quality" of each submission not on the number of submissions received.

The Board looked forward to making a further submission on the final document once it has been released for public consultation and comment later in 2012.

### New Zealand Game Animal Council

In 2009 the Board made a submission opposing the establishment of a New Zealand Game Animal Council and advocated that any funding that was to be channelled to the establishment of such a Council should more appropriately be allocated to the Department of Conservation to increase its resources for its wild animal management programmes.

In 2011 the Board noted with concern the decision by the Government to proceed to establish a New Zealand Game Animal Council and made a further submission to the Select Committee.

The Board continues to oppose the establishment of this Council and supported the submission made by the New Zealand Conservation Authority to this effect.

### Mining

The Board is building up a strong "tool kit" of information on the impacts of mining in general and, in particular, impacts for conservation and the environment. It acknowledges the current role of the Department in respect to mining applications i.e. the Department's only role is to assess applications for access to sites on/across land administered by the Department. Mining is covered by the Crown Minerals Act

Mita Harris, Board Chairperson is taking a lead on this issue and has drawn attention to mining as one having serious conservation impacts in Northland. The Board acknowledges the importance of taking a proactive approach to the issue but, more importantly, to undertake fulsome research and seek information from a wide range of sources to ensure the Board is best placed when the time is right to engage in discussions and debate on the issue.

The Board will undertake a fact finding investigation in 2012/13 that will include visiting Conservancies where mining has already been established/addressed and will meet with Members of the relevant Conservation Boards.

The Board considers mining as a major threat to conservation and the environment and will take very measure to ensure it is able to influence the outcome of any applications for mining in Northland to ensure that every aspect of conservation and the environment is fully protected.

On a positive note the Board saw undertaking of a magnetic survey in Northland undertaken by the Ministry of Economic Development, supported by the Far North District Council and Northland Regional Council as extremely useful and would provide a large amount of potentially valuable data for the Department [e.g. soils data].

## Recreation & Tourism

### Tracks and walkways

The Board noted progress being made on the upgrade of various tracks and walks within the region together with the Northland sector of the Te Araroa Trail.

- **Far North Multi-Day Walk**

The Board was pleased to note that the final stages of the Far North Multi-Day Walk were almost completed. The Board intends to complete the full walk as part of its site visit in the Far North in March 2013. This will also include an overnight stay at one of the newly formed campgrounds on the Walk.

- **Freedom Camping**

The Board was provided with a presentation on the implication of the implementation of the Freedom Camping Act and the legal requirement for the Department to consult with the Conservation Board that had jurisdiction over each site.

Lynnell Greer, Technical Support Officer, Recreation and Planning provided a comprehensive presentation to the Board on the issue and outlined the list of Reserves within Northland where freedom camping was proposed to be prohibited.

Tracey Andrews-Smith and Robert Willoughby joined forces with Lynnell Greer to assess the schedule and provided a report back to the Board that enabled the Board to endorse the recommendations presented. The Board noted that the schedule was not a definitive list and that there would be an opportunity to address any future recommendations for prohibited areas as they may arise from time to time.

## Promotion

### Loder Cup

- The Board did not put forward a nominee for the 2011 Loder Cup.

### Northland Conservancy Conservation Awards

- In 2011 the Board confirmed its promotion of a **Board Supreme Award** from successful nominees at the next Northland Conservancy Conservation Awards expected to be held in 2012.

### Weedbusters Awards

- The Board continued to support and be represented at the Northland Weedbusters Awards.

Both the Conservation and Weedbusters Awards were seen as major opportunities to acknowledge the significant contribution of volunteers engaged in a wide range of conservation projects throughout Northland.

## **Environmental Defence Society 2010 Conference, Auckland**

Tracey Andrews-Smith and Hori Parata will represent the Board at the 2012 Environmental Defence Society Conference to be held in Auckland on 6/7 August 2012.

## **Communication**

### **Press Releases**

The Board continued to provide post Board meeting Press Releases in 2011/12 as well as pre Christmas holiday and addressing issues of significance to the Board e.g. Protection of Kukupu and Mining

### **Goals & Objectives – Outcomes Strategy**

The Board's Goals and Objectives were reinstated as a core Agenda item for Board meetings. The focus was also significantly enhanced by the addition of the development of the Board's Outcomes Statement and the need to ensure and assess the effectiveness of the Board.

Mita Harris, Chairperson has proactively initiated opportunities to meet with his counterparts in Regional and District Councils and other organisations and agencies to draw attention to the mandate of the Board and establish sound relationships and ways of working in a cooperative manner to achieve significant gains for conservation in Northland.

The Board acknowledges the significant effort of the Board Chairperson and fully supports and endorses the actions being taken that will set a firm foundation for future Boards.

### **Department of Conservation Website [[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)]**

The Board continues to use the Department's website to promote issues and provide access by the public to Agenda, Minutes, Annual Reports and other documentation. The Board acknowledges the importance of utilising this ever growing technology and will continue to look for innovated ways to promote conservation and the environment through this medium in the future.

The Board also acknowledges the need to retain its autonomy and ability to speak out on issues independent of the Department. To this end the Board intends to expand its use of technology and the social media to full effect during 20/12/13 and beyond.



**View from new bridge at Tapotupotu**

## Conclusion

The Board has moved significantly in 2011/12 to become a proactive and vibrant group of conservation and environmentally committed people working together in a collegiate manner. The dynamics of the Board have shifted to an inclusive and outcomes driven body that it hopes will provide a seamless transition of progress as Board Membership changes and the needs of conservation within Northland change too.

The effectiveness of Conservation Board's has never before been so challenged as it is now and the ability of the Board to acknowledge this and set in place processes and strategies to address these in a positive manner is commendable.

The calibre of the current Board is crucial to its success as is the comradarie, willingness to work together as a cohesive team and in harmony with one another. The Northland Conservation Board is a well oiled machine and is only successful because of the sum of its members.

However, the Board cannot work alone and the cooperation and the support provided by Chris Jenkins, Conservator Northland and his Team of committed, passionate and enthusiastic staff is acknowledged and appreciated.

2011/12 was a good year for the Board and has set the scene for 2012/13. This Board is ready and willing to take up the challenges ahead and prepare the way for future Boards to build on the conservation gains being achieved.



Mita Harris  
BOARD CHAIRPERSON



View of Te Werahi Beach, Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga