

**OTAGO
CONSERVATION
BOARD**

2007/2008 ANNUAL REPORT

Otago Conservation Board Annual Report for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008

*Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
pursuant to Section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987*

Photograph : Front Cover

Members of the Otago Conservation Board and associated Department of Conservation staff on a bridge which forms part of the Motatapu Track in The Stack Conservation Area near Wanaka.

[Photograph by Gilbert van Reenen]

Photograph : Back Cover

Highland Creek Hut beside Highland Creek, on the section of the Motatapu Track which crosses part of Motatapu Station. This is one of two 12-bunk huts built by Soho Property Limited and gifted to the Crown for use by trampers who tackle this challenging route.

[Photograph by Jeff Connell]

MOTATAPU TRACK

This demanding 30-kilometre, three-day tramp was officially opened by the Prime Minister in March 2008. It links Wanaka to the Arrow River valley by enabling people to walk between the Fern Burn car park (12 km west of Wanaka) and Macetown across parts of Motatapu and Mt Soho Stations. The track and its associated facilities were built by Soho Property Limited and gifted to the Crown as a condition of the company's purchase of the Motatapu and Mt Soho Station leases in 2004. As well as providing public access to a challenging and beautiful part of the Otago high country, the track forms a section of Te Araroa ('The Long Pathway') - a project being promoted by the Te Araroa Trust to establish a public walking trail between Bluff and Cape Reinga.

**Conservation House, 77 Lower Stuart Street
Box 5244
DUNEDIN**

ISSN 1176-6646

OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD

2007-2008 ANNUAL REPORT

This report has been prepared for the New Zealand Conservation Authority pursuant to section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987. Copies of the report have been circulated to individuals and organizations with an interest in the board's activities.

1 INTRODUCTION TO BOARD MEMBERS

From 1 July 2007 to 31 August 2008, the members of the board were as follows: (The official board term expiry dates which applied during that period and the number of full board meetings attended between 1 July 2007 and 31 August 2007 are shown in the final two columns.)

Hoani S Langsbury (Chair)	Otakou	31 August 2007	1
Ross Allan	Dunedin	31 August 2007	1
Edna McAtamney	Kyeburn	31 August 2009	0
Chas Morris	Wanaka	31 August 2008	1
Garry H Nixon	Alexandra	31 August 2007	1
Bruce J Parker	Ngapara	31 August 2009	1
Andrew Penniket	Wanaka	31 August 2009	1
Mark J Planner	Cromwell	31 August 2008	1
Iris Scott	Glenorchy	31 August 2007	1
Dr Abigail M Smith	Dunedin	31 August 2008	1
Chas F Tanner	Purakanui	31 August 2008	1
Jim E Williams	Dunedin	31 August 2009	1

The present members of the Otago Conservation Board were appointed by the Minister of Conservation for terms commencing on 1 September 2007 and ending on the dates listed below. The number of full board meetings attended between 1 September 2007 and 30 June 2008 is given in the final column.

Hoani S Langsbury (Chair)	Otakou	31 August 2007	3
Ross Allan	Dunedin	31 August 2007	4
Edna McAtamney	Kyeburn	31 August 2009	3
Chas Morris	Wanaka	31 August 2008	4
Garry H Nixon	Alexandra	31 August 2007	3
Bruce J Parker	Ngapara	31 August 2009	4
Andrew Penniket	Wanaka	31 August 2009	4
Mark J Planner	Cromwell	31 August 2008	4
Iris Scott	Glenorchy	31 August 2007	3
Dr Abigail M Smith	Dunedin	31 August 2008	3
Chas F Tanner	Purakanui	31 August 2008	3
Jim E Williams	Dunedin	31 August 2009	2

2 INTRODUCTION TO BOARD DISTRICT

The boundaries of the board's area of jurisdiction correspond roughly with those of the Otago Conservancy of the Department of Conservation (see map inside front cover). However, both Mount Aspiring National Park and the Catlins Conservation Park (which comprises the major inland portion of the Catlins Coastal Rainforest Park) are wholly within the board's district, even though parts of these parks are managed by the West Coast and Southland Conservancies of the department, respectively. This was done to ensure a single approach with regard to policy and planning for these parks.

The marine boundary is the Twelve Mile Limit in relation to marine reserve issues and the Exclusive Economic Zone in relation to marine mammal issues.

Significant protected areas within the board's area of jurisdiction include:

- **Mount Aspiring National Park**
355,531 ha (192,855 ha in the Otago Conservancy, 162,676 ha in the West Coast Conservancy)
- **Catlins Coastal Rainforest Park**
This is a collective name for the Catlins Conservation Park of 50,693 ha (32,933 ha in the Otago Conservancy, 17,760 ha in the Southland Conservancy) and numerous reserves and conservation areas which are located along or near the Catlins coast.
- **Te Papanui Conservation Park**
This park comprises 20,591 ha of tussock grassland, wetlands, shrubland and silver beech forest remnants on the Lammermoor and Lammerlaw Ranges northwest of Lake Mahinerangi near Lawrence.
- **Proposed Hawea Conservation Park**
The Proposed Hawea Conservation Park was publicly notified in March 2008. If it is established, it will include about 105,000 ha of public conservation land around Lake Hawea and the Hunter River, as well as areas on the McKerrow Range near Makarora. Large areas in the proposed park are covered with native beech forest and shrublands.
- **Proposed Oteake Conservation Park**
The Proposed Oteake Conservation Park was publicly notified in May 2008. The current proposal covers about 65,000 ha of public conservation land on the St Bathans, Hawkdun, Ida, Ewe and St Marys Ranges to the north of Ranfurly. The vegetation of this proposed park is dominated by tussock grasslands.
- **Otago Central Rail Trail**
A very popular recreational facility for walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders, which follows the route of the former Otago Central Branch railway line for 150 kilometres between Clyde and Middlemarch.
- **Otago Goldfields Park**
A collection of 21 historic sites (e.g. Arrowtown Chinese Settlement, Gabriels Gully, St Bathans, Bendigo) which have links with the gold rushes of the 1800s.
- **Remarkables Conservation Area**
Incorporating one of New Zealand's best known scenic landmarks.

- **Wakatipu Recreational Hunting Area**
Comprising forested areas in the Greenstone and Caples River valleys.
- **Reserves and marginal strips along the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers**
The scene of numerous popular recreational activities which cater primarily for tourists (e.g. rafting, jetboating, bungee jumping, giant swing etc).

3 CONSERVATION BOARD MEETINGS

The following board meetings were held in the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008:

- **Full board Meetings**

13 July 2007	Portobello (Dunedin)
21 September 2007	Oamaru
30 November 2007	Glenorchy
7 March 2008	Wanaka
9 May 2008	Alexandra

- **Public Forums**

The board set aside an hour for a public forum during each of the five board meetings listed above. Up to 21 members of the public attended each of these sessions and many of those shared their comments and views on local conservation issues with the board.

- **Field Inspections**

13 July 2007	New Zealand Marine Studies Centre, Portobello
21-22 September 2007	Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony, Bushy Beach Scenic Reserve, Moeraki Boulders/Kaihinaki Reserves, Orokonui Nature Reserve
1 December 2007	Routeburn Road End and Chinamans Bluff (Mount Aspiring National Park), Whakaari Conservation Area (ex Wyuna Station)
8 March 2008	Motatapu Track (Fern Burn Marginal Strip, The Stack Conservation Area)
10 May 2008	Otago Rural Fire Centre, Aldinga Conservation Area, Mitchells Cottage Historic Reserve

In addition to participating in formal inspections, individual members occasionally take up the Otago Conservator's standing invitation to accompany departmental staff into the field.

- **Planning Committee Meetings** None held
- **Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan Review Working Party Meetings** Several held as required during the year
- **Scientific Advisory Group Meeting** None held

4 BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE CONSERVATION ACT 1987

Section 6M(1)(a) Approval of Conservation Management Strategies

The board was not involved in any actions associated with the approval of conservation management strategies during the reporting period.

Section 6M(1)(b) Conservation Management Plans

No work was done on any conservation management plans during the reporting period. However, the board is pleased to note that management planning for the **Taiaroa Head Reserves**, the **Nugget Point Reserve**, the **Otago Goldfields Park**, and **new conservation parks** will be addressed during the preparation of the next Otago CMS.

Section 6M(1)(c) Advice on Implementation of Conservation Management Strategies and Plans

a Otago CMS

The board and the Otago Conservator have agreed on an annual process for the provision of board advice on the implementation of the Otago CMS, which is compatible with the relevant standard operating procedure. A report on the Otago Conservancy's achievements relating to the following 19 topics was discussed during the board meeting held on 21 September 2007:

- 1 High country tenure review**
- 2 Protection of coastal and marine ecosystems**
- 3 Protection of forest on SILNA Land in the Catlins**
- 4 Protection of vegetation and other values on land not administered by DOC**
- 5 Statutory planning (Regional and District Plans)**
- 6 Animal pest control**
- 7 Plant pest control**
- 8 Weed inventory**
- 9 Historic heritage fabric (i.e. structures, earthworks) on land administered by DOC**
- 10 Research**
- 11 Monitoring the general condition of the vegetation on land administered by DOC**
- 12 Species protection (skinks, mohua, saltpan plants, freshwater fish)**
- 13 Concessions**
- 14 DOC participation in section 18 Crown Pastoral Land Act applications**
- 15 Implementation of Ngāi Tahu Deed of Settlement**
- 16 Recreation management (commercial and non-commercial)**
- 17 Vehicle Access in the High Country**
- 18 Public relations and conservation awareness programme**
- 19 Special Places (significant achievements or disappointments not reported elsewhere)**

In addition to this, board members are asked to review specified sections of the CMS between board meetings, and are given the opportunity to comment on the implementation associated with these sections at each meeting. Generally speaking, the board is pleased with the conservancy's achievements in relation to the relevant key objectives in the Otago CMS e.g.,

- the public notification of the **Proposed Hawea Conservation Park** and the **Proposed Oteake Conservation Park** following high country tenure review outcomes and other land transactions over the past decade or so;
- significant progress with other forms of implementation associated with the **tenure review of pastoral leases** by Land Information New Zealand under the Crown Pastoral Land Act 1998 - including the preparation of publicity brochures and the placement of signs and interpretation panels which draw the attention of the public to new areas of public conservation land (e.g. the **Whakaari Conservation Area** near Glenorchy, which was officially opened by the Minister of Conservation on 17 January 2008; and areas that were formerly part of **Glen Dene, Cattle Flat** and **Sandy Point** Stations);
- successful efforts by the department and the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust to purchase and protect key areas of coastal land around **Long Point** in the Catlins;
- the ongoing success of **Operation Ark** in the Lower Dart/Caples and the Catlins, with significant measurable benefits to threatened mohua/yellowhead populations in areas where intensive predator control is carried out;
- the successful transfer of **South Island robins** from the Dart Valley to red beech forest in the West Matukituki Valley;
- the continuing successful management, in partnership with Kāi Tahu, of **buff weka** populations on Te Peka Karara (Stevensons Island), Mou Waho (Harwich Island) and Mou Tapu (Crescent Island) in Lake Wanaka; and Wāwāhi Waka (Pigeon Island) and Mātau (Pig Island) in Lake Wakatipu;
- the survival of 9 **albatross/toroa chicks** at the Taiaroa Head Nature Reserve (including Toroa, the colony's 500th albatross chick hatched), and the successful radio-tracking of Toroa and one other chick as they flew across the Pacific Ocean and spent several months near the coast of Chile;
- the ongoing maintenance and promotion of the **Otago Central Rail Trail** in co-operation with the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust and local communities;
- the restoration and maintenance of historic structures, including the restoration and stabilisation work carried out on the **St Bathans Hall** and the **Lindis Pass Hotel**;
- effective **goat, pig, thar, possum, rabbit and predator control** at key sites and as required by the Regional Pest Management Strategy;
- more successful **wilding conifer control** in co-operation with landowners and other organizations (e.g. on the Remarkables), as well as work to control other weeds such as gorse, broom and Spanish heath;
- successful maintenance of the predator-proof fence around 22 hectares of **Grand and Otago Skink** habitat and the completion of a second enclosure fence on Redbank ridge near Macraes Flat;
- further **monitoring of concession activity** throughout Otago during the busy summer season, showing concessionaires that the department is serious about concession-related compliance, as well as raising the department's profile among visitors in general;

- the success of **community conservation events**, including two **Conservation Award evenings** during **Conservation Week**, **Sea Week** and several **Volunteer Projects**.

Some concerns raised by the board included:

- disappointingly slow progress with the implementation of the **Marine Protected Areas Policy**, which requires close co-operation between the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Fisheries;
- the lack of departmental resources available to check the current status of **jewelled gecko** populations in Otago, despite several indications that they are declining.

b Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS

The board has also reached an agreement with the Southland Conservator regarding regular departmental reports on the implementation of those parts of the Mainland Southland/West Otago CMS which relate to areas of the Catlins Conservation Park in the Southland Conservancy. The board appreciates the work which was carried out by the Southland Conservancy in these areas and does not have any particular concerns.

c Draft West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS

The board has an interest in this draft CMS document because it covers those parts of Mount Aspiring National Park which are administered by the DOC West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancy. Accordingly, the focus of the board's submission on the document was the importance of consistency between the Draft West Coast *Te Tai o Poutini* CMS and the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan.

Section 6M(1)(d)(i) Advice on Proposed Changes of Status or Classification

The board was very pleased that the **Proposed Hawea Conservation Park** and the **Proposed Oteake Conservation Park** were both publicly notified during the reporting period. The extent of the latter proposed park was enhanced considerably by the Crown's purchase of Twinburn Station in early 2008. Even though the board had previously expressed its support for the establishment of both proposed parks, it took the opportunity to follow this up with written submissions on the proposals. The formation of these parks would implement parts of the Otago CMS, as well as contributing to the Government's goal of creating more high country conservation parks in the South Island.

Section 6M(1)(d)(ii) Advice on Conservation Matters

The board was consulted by or gave advice to the conservation authority and the department on a number of topics, including the following:

- six concession applications (viz. Routeburn Falls Hut - Routeburn Walk Ltd, Glenorchy Heli-biking - Gordon Watson, DKDnz.com Ltd - Dan Kelly, Heliventures Ltd, Proposal for Small Powerhouse on Teviot River - Pioneer Generation Ltd, Proposal for Small Powerhouse and Water Race on Dingle Burn Marginal Strip - Dingleburn Station);
- Marine Protected Areas - Draft Classification and Protection Standard;
- Draft Species Management Plan (SMP) and Draft Population Management Plan (PMP) for NZ Sea Lions;
- Draft Hector's and Maui's Dolphin Threat Management Plan;

- Wild Animal Management discussion document;
- Improving Regulation of Environmental Effects in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone;
- Managing and Controlling the Risk to the Marine Environment from Ballast Water Discharges;
- Domestic Trade in Whale Bone and Management of Whale Strandings;
- Proposed Transfer of Lowland Longjaw Galaxias;
- the Guidelines on Significant Inherent Values used in connection with tenure review;
- the Covenant over Bendigo Station;
- proposed disposal of part Camp Creek Conservation Area;
- proposed land exchange involving the former Tapanui Fire Depot and land on Catlins Cone;
- Public Access through the Whatatōrere Historic Reserve;
- 2008 Loder Cup Award;
- annual Coastal Otago and Inland Otago Conservation Awards for notable conservation achievements in Otago.

Section 6M(1)(f) Liaison with Fish and Game Councils

R Allan and B Parker represented the board at some meetings of Fish and Game Otago and Fish and Game Central South Island, respectively. Otherwise, informal liaison was maintained with both organizations.

Section 4 Giving Effect to the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi

In accordance with a previous agreement, the board has relied on the department to carry out Section 4 consultation in connection with the significant conservation issues raised at board meetings. It is not aware of any substantive issues for which the department has not already undertaken Section 4 consultation, and it has asked the department to confirm this explicitly in reports on new agenda items.

5 POWERS OF BOARD UNDER SECTION 6N CONSERVATION ACT 1987

Section 6N(2)(a) and 6N(3) Advocacy and Statutory Planning Processes

The board formally advocated its views by lodging or following up on written submissions on the following documents and issues, among others:

- Notice of Preliminary Proposal for the tenure review of the Soldiers Syndicate pastoral occupation licence;
- Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2008
- Central Otago District Rural Review Landscape Assessment;
- Central Otago District Plan Change 1 : McArthur Ridge Resource Area;
- Consultation on Database fields for Reporting to the Authority after an Aerial 1080 Application.

Litigation associated with **Project Hayes** (Proposed Lammermoor Wind Farm) and the **Proposed Mahinerangi Wind Farm** advanced to the appeal stage during the reporting period.

With regard to **Project Hayes**, the board became a section 274 party to appeals by the Maniototo Environmental Society Incorporated and Upland Landscape Protection in order to gain legal clarification of the rules in the Central Otago District Plan which pertain to land over 900 metres. In the board's view, areas above 900 metres in altitude (including

much of the land directly affected by **Project Hayes**) are the least modified, the most valuable, and the most sensitive landscapes in the Central Otago District.

An Environment Court Consent Order (RMA 518/00) altered the Central Otago District Plan in recognition of these values following several years of negotiation involving the board and the department. As a result, the same rules relating to the protection of outstanding landscapes were applied to all land over 900 metres. However, the council's decision on **Project Hayes** showed that its view regarding the application of these rules differed from that of the board. Some clarification of the matter by the Environment Court would be helpful, because large areas of Central Otago above 900 metres could potentially be affected by future developments along the lines of **Project Hayes**.

The board decided not to appeal the Clutha District Council's decision on the **Proposed Mahinerangi Wind Farm**, partly because it did not consider that the precedent it established would threaten significant landscape values in the Clutha District in the way that the precedent of **Project Hayes** would in Central Otago.

Despite its submissions opposing **Project Hayes** and the **Proposed Mahinerangi Wind Farm**, the board supports in principle wind farms and other sustainable energy generation systems, providing the adverse visual and environmental effects associated with them can be reduced to a satisfactory extent. In the board's view, a national energy strategy should be produced before decisions are made on major developments – a strategy which determines appropriate energy types; locations of demand; transmission impacts and constraints; and prioritised sitings of generation systems to minimise effects on visual and amenity values. It is very difficult for territorial local authorities to make decisions which have nationally-important implications in the absence of an overarching national policy on wind farm location priorities.

Use of 4WD Vehicles and Trail bikes in the Backcountry

In response to growing concern about the impacts that off-road vehicles (i.e. 4WD vehicles, motorcycles, trailbikes etc) are having on some areas of public conservation land, the board convened 'Wheels in the Back Country – A Forum on Off-Road Vehicle Use in Otago' in Dunedin on 18 August 2007. The objectives of the forum were to gather information on off-road vehicle activity in Otago, and to seek assistance with the development of strategies to manage off-road vehicle use. About 80 people from throughout the lower South Island listened to a range of speakers and shared their views on the topic. Much useful information relating to the management of off-road vehicle activity was gathered from this forum and from a similarly-themed meeting convened by the Central Otago Recreational Users Forum (CORUF) on 7 November 2007.

Sewage disposal at Moeraki

Following a field trip to the Moeraki Boulders/Kaihinaki in September 2007, the board contacted the Otago Regional Council and the Waitaki District Council to communicate its concerns about the discharge from the Moeraki Sewage Scheme. The discharge, which does not currently comply with the conditions of the relevant resource consent, flows into the south branch of Waiwherowhero Creek. After entering an estuary near the sea, the creek

often spills across the beach between the Moeraki Boulders Car Park Recreation Reserve and the Moeraki Boulders Scenic Reserve. Thousands of visitors a year, including young children, cross the overflow to see the Moeraki Boulders/Kaihinaki, unaware that the water could pose a health risk to them. The board believes that this is unacceptable for a major tourist site, so it will continue to advocate that prompt action be taken to improve the situation.

Section 6N(2)(b) Board Committees

The following committees or working groups have continued to function as the need arises:

- **Planning Committee**

R Allan (Convenor), B Parker, A Smith, C Tanner, J Williams, H Langsbury (ex officio)

The Planning Committee studies planning documents and other planning matters relating to the board's jurisdiction and formulates detailed recommendations for ratification by the full board. It also co-ordinates board responses to proposals, papers or issues between meetings of the full board.

- **Scientific Advisory Group**

A Smith (Convenor), R Allan (Convenor), H Langsbury (ex officio), and the following 13 specialists:

Dr Barbara Barratt	entomologist
Dr Carolyn Burns	limnologist
Dr Alison Cree	herpetologist
Dr Cecile de Klein	soil scientist
Dr Kath Dickinson	plant ecologist
Dr Jill Hamel	archaeologist
Dr John Jillett	marine biologist
Dr Peter Johnson	botanist
Dr Alan Mark	plant ecologist
Dr Jan Mosedale	tourism specialist
Mr Brian Patrick	entomologist
Prof Hamish Spencer	ornithologist, conchologist
Dr Ian Turnbull	geologist

The Scientific Advisory Group is not a board committee, but a panel of advisers who can supply the board with specialised information and make recommendations for consideration by the board. The board appreciates the willingness of these experts to provide input on topical conservation issues. All board members are invited to attend meetings of the Scientific Advisory Group.

6 BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

Section 30(a) Review of National Park Management Plans

The board is pleased to report that the department is continuing to make steady progress with the review of the **Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan**. Following extensive consultation with board members, Kāi Tahu and a range of interest groups during the reporting period, the department proposes to release a draft park management plan for public comment in late 2008.

Section 30(b) Priorities for National Park Management Plan Implementation

The department's achievements in implementing objectives and policy statements in the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan during the reporting period have been impressive. They include:

- the construction of a new **Routeburn Road End Shelter**, which was officially opened by the Minister of Conservation on 17 January 2008 (pages 45-46, 8.3.2);
- ongoing monitoring and predator control in the **Haast Tokoeka (Kiwi) Sanctuary** (much of which is located on the Haast Range in Mount Aspiring National Park) and the continuing efforts to translocate healthy chicks into the sanctuary under the Operation Nest Egg (ONE) programme (page 51, 8.7);
- effective **thar** and **goat control** operations (pages 53-55, 8.9);
- completion of the **Haast Pass Lookout Track** in Mount Aspiring National Park - a significant new walking opportunity along the Haast Pass Highway (State Highway 6) between Makarora and Haast (page 32, 6.7.3; pages 67-69, 8.18);
- an appropriate emphasis on monitoring and public safety after a **new lake** was created by a massive slip **in the Young Valley** some time in September 2007 (pages 67-69, 8.18);
- the formation of the **Routeburn Nature Walk** - a short loop track which replaces the recreational opportunity previously offered by the decommissioned Double Barrel Track - and the upgrading of the popular **Rob Roy** and **West Matukituki Tracks** (pages 67-69, 8.18)
- the department's implementation of the Minister's decision to **waive hut fees** for those under 18 years of age who walk the **Routeburn Track** (and other Great Walks in New Zealand) (pages 69-72, 8.19, 8.20).

Sections 46-47 Amendment and Review of Management Plans

In early 2006, **Milford Dart Ltd** presented a proposal for shortening the distance and travelling time of the road trip between Queenstown and Milford Sound. If implemented, the proposal would have involved the construction of a tunnel through the Humboldt Mountains from the Hollyford valley in Fiordland National Park to the Routeburn valley in Mount Aspiring National Park, as well as a short road through part of the Routeburn valley in the latter park. The Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan did not allow for the construction of a new road in the park, so the board agreed with the view of the Director-General of Conservation that a proposed amendment to the plan should be publicly notified.

Following public notification, the receipt of submissions, hearings of submissions, and careful consideration of all of the relevant legislation, policies, and points raised by submitters, the board recommended to the **New Zealand Conservation Authority** that the proposed amendment should be approved, so that the public could have the opportunity to examine the whole proposal thoroughly during a subsequent concession application process.

The authority disagreed with the board's views on this issue, however, and at a meeting held on 12-13 December 2007, it declined the board's recommendation that the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan should be amended. Among other things, the authority did "not consider that it [was] appropriate to defer to the concessions process to determine whether the road should proceed", but that management planning decisions should be made in the context of a management planning process. As a result of the authority's decision, the proposal cannot proceed if it requires the construction of a new road in Mount Aspiring National Park.

A separate proposal by **Milford Sound Link Rail**, to construct an underground rail tunnel from the Routeburn Road to the Hollyford Valley, does not involve any activities or the construction of any roads or structures on the surface of Mount Aspiring National Park. Because it does not require the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan to be amended, it will be considered further by the board and the Department of Conservation during the associated concession application process.

7 BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE NEW ZEALAND WALKWAYS ACT 1990

In 2005, the board requested the Director-General of Conservation under section 8 of the New Zealand Walkways Act 1990, to investigate the establishment of a public walkway linking Macetown and the Motatapu Road near Lake Wanaka. Soho Property Limited had agreed to construct the walkway and its associated facilities and gift them to the Crown as a condition of the company's purchase of the Motatapu and Mt Soho Station leases in 2004.

The new **Motatapu Track**, a challenging 30-kilometre, three-day tramp, was officially opened by the Prime Minister in March 2008. As well as crossing mountainous country in Motatapu and Mt Soho Stations, the track follows the Fern Burn marginal strip and passes through a stand of native beech forest in The Stack Conservation Area near Wanaka. The track will form part of **Te Araroa** ('The Long Pathway') - a proposed walking trail from the north of the North Island to the south of the South Island.

No actions were taken under sections 6, 8, 25(1)(b) or 29(1) of the Act during the reporting period.

If the **Walking Access Bill 2008** is passed in its present form, the proposed **New Zealand Walking Access Commission (Te Ara o Papatuanuku)** will assume all of the statutory responsibilities relating to New Zealand Walkways which are currently held by conservation boards. The board views this as a positive development for landowners and recreationists, as it should lead to a clearer identification and awareness of legal public walking opportunities which are not on land managed by the Department of Conservation.

The board supports the numerous community and local government initiatives in Otago which aim to provide more walking opportunities that can be used by members of the public.

8 LIAISON

Other Conservation Boards

C Morris, A Penniket and B Parker have continued to liaise with the West Coast Tai Poutini, Southland and Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Boards, respectively.

New Zealand Conservation Authority

Robyn Jebson, the NZCA member from Queenstown, attended the board meeting held at Wanaka on 7 March 2008. As well as receiving the minutes of NZCA meetings and the NZCA annual report, the board finds that the authority chairperson's written summaries of the meetings are very helpful for keeping the board in touch with the authority's views and actions on a range of issues.

Takata Whenua

H Langsbury, who is affiliated to Te Rūnanga Ōtākou, and J Williams, who is affiliated to Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki, were appointed on the nomination of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (Section 6P(7B), Conservation Act 1987 refers). The Kaupapa Atawhai Manager, Matapura Ellison, assists the board to liaise with all of the Kāi Tahu papatipu rūnaka in its area of jurisdiction (i.e. Ōtākou, Moeraki, Huirapa, Makaawhio, Hokonui, Awarua, Waihopai and Oraka Aparima) as required, and helps to keep the board updated on conservation issues of interest to takata whenua.

Local Government

The board continues to work to improve its ongoing communication with the Otago Regional Council, Queenstown Lakes District Council, Central Otago District Council, Clutha District Council, Dunedin City Council, and Waitaki District Council, since all of those councils have significant responsibilities for the protection of conservation values outside public conservation lands.

Peter Chin, Mayor of Dunedin City, attended part of the board meeting held at the NZ Marine Studies Centre, Portobello on 13 July 2007.

In return, some board members have met representatives of the councils between formal board meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest.

The board was very pleased to learn of the Dunedin City Council's far-sighted decision to purchase of a large block of land at Harbour Cone on the Otago Peninsula. Although most of the area has been farmed for a long time, parts of it contain high conservation values and it offers numerous potential opportunities for various forms of public recreation.

Local Communities

The board held a public forum in connection with each of its five formal board meetings during the reporting period. The public forums at Wanaka and Alexandra in 2008 were attended by 21 and 11 members of the public, respectively, as a result of some local conservation issues which were of considerable public interest. The board receives valuable community feedback on local conservation issues from those who do turn up to these forums, and it will continue the practice. Most board members regularly liaise with members of the public on conservation-related issues in the course of their professional work or as a result of personal interests.

Media

Reporters representing the Otago Daily Times and/or the Southland Times attended several meetings during the year, and the board received generally good coverage.

Conservation and Other Interest Groups

The board is fortunate to have members who already participate actively in organisations such as Federated Farmers, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) and several others.

9 GENERAL

Some significant items considered by the board during the reporting period but not covered fully in the earlier sections of the report include:

Control of Overflights

Many people who enter public conservation land value highly the 'natural quiet' they can experience there, in addition to the scenery and other visible conservation values. Many other people favour widespread aircraft access to enable people of all ages and physical abilities to enjoy visits to national parks and conservation areas. The Department of Conservation (DOC) seeks to balance these conflicting preferences by controlling the locations where aircraft are permitted to land through management planning documents (e.g. the Mount Aspiring National Park Management Plan), so that a broad range of experiences are available within most large areas of public conservation land. All members of the public have the opportunity to make submissions on these documents.

DOC has no statutory control of aircraft overflights however, and these can detract from the experience of 'natural quiet' as much as landings do, especially in designated wilderness areas. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has previously resisted suggestions that DOC should have more say in the control of flights over public conservation land, but the board believes that the time has come to find a workable compromise. Not surprisingly, other conservation board chairpersons expressed support for this view at the Conservation Board Chairpersons Conference held on 29 February-1 March 2008, since the same issue arises regularly throughout the country. The board understands that the New Zealand Conservation Authority is going to follow up on the matter by advocating for a Memorandum of Understanding between DOC and the CAA on aircraft overflights involving public conservation land.

Community Contributions to Conservation

The board is pleased that there are now so many local organizations, councils, community groups and enthusiastic individuals throughout Otago involving themselves in conservation projects that it is difficult to list them all without inadvertently omitting some. Concern for the environment and conservation is becoming an essential part of the social and economic fabric of the region.

Reducing the Board's Carbon Footprint

Following the example of the Department of Conservation, the board started taking steps to reduce its carbon footprint during the year. Board members and the Board Support Officer have been circulating hyperlinks and electronic versions of some of the papers which used to be photocopied and posted, in an effort to cut down on the large amount of paper used in board work. Board members planted a tree at Wanaka on 7 March 2008 and two more at Clyde on 10 May 2008 to partially offset the carbon-based fuel used in transporting those involved in board meetings. Whenever it is practical, the board proposes to plant a native tree at each future board meeting.

10 CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

It has been another challenging year for the Otago Conservation Board. The members of the board have met these challenges well, bringing their collective wisdom to bear when required. The governance of conservation in Otago is in good hands and this is reflected through the hard work and dedication of the current Board members.

We have maintained a focus around planning and the Resource Management Act with our continued involvement in the Project Hayes wind farm appeals. In this regard, our concerns relate to the protection of Otago's outstanding landscapes and the lack of a comprehensive national energy strategy. We have been frustrated by the absence of an acknowledgement of the intended protection provided by the 900 metre rule in the Central Otago District Plan.

Over the last 12 months, the community has been well represented by the members of the board. Individual board members have worked to prepare submissions on a diverse range of national and regional policies and strategies that relate to the terrestrial environment. These include the Central Otago District Rural Review Landscape Assessment and proposed amendments to the Game Animals Schedule.

The board has continued to be frustrated with the speed of advancement in the area of marine protection. However, in the absence of any progress with marine reserves on the Otago coast, we have provided submissions and input on the Proposed New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, Managing and Controlling the Risk to the Marine Environment from Ballast Water Discharges, and the Population Management Plan for the New Zealand Sea Lion, to name a few.

I take this opportunity to thank all members of the board and its committees for their contributions to the decision making process. This contribution is recognized both for the commitment shown and the contribution made to the outcomes of the board. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the departmental staff who have helped with organizing field trips and generally assisting the board to make sound decisions.

In closing, I would like us all to note the new recreational opportunities that are provided through tenure review and the direct purchase of properties. The board continues to advocate for a suite of recreational opportunities to meet the needs of the community in areas such as the Proposed Oteake and Hawea Conservation Parks.



Hoani Langsbury
Chairperson

31 July 2008

7 March 2008 : Otago Conservation Board members preparing to plant a tree outside the DOC Wanaka Area Office to offset the board's carbon footprint. Front (L to R): Hoani Langsbury, Jim Williams, Abby Smith; Back (L to R): Bruce Parker, Andrew Penniket, Edna McAtamney, Chas Morris, Chas Tanner, Mark Planner, Ross Allan (Photo: Matthew Haggart - Otago Daily Times)

10 May 2008 : Dr Grant Norbury showing board members and associated staff members of the DOC Otago Conservancy where the Central Otago Ecological Trust hopes to establish a sanctuary for Otago skinks in the Aldinga Conservation Area near Alexandra. (Photo: Mark Clark)

