

TARANAKI WHANGANUI CONSERVATION BOARD

TE TAI HAU-Ā-URU



2015 – 2016 Annual Report

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
Pursuant to Section 6(O) of the Conservation Act 1987
Serviced by the Department of Conservation, Taupo office
PO Box 528 Taupo 3351

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1.0 CHAIR'S REPORT

Tena koe

He mihi teenei i runga i ngaa aahuatanga maha o te waa.

This year has been one of “growth and development” for the Board. The Board’s practice is to spend mornings in a training session followed by the Board meeting in the afternoon. This allows time for rigorous discussion, visiting speakers, presentations and open conversations with department staff. Board members have settled well into their roles and have spread their engagement and influence into many new communities.

The Board has supported the development of Project Mouna over the past year. Project Mouna is a ten year \$24 million transformational, large-scale ecological restoration venture between the NEXT Foundation, DOC, iwi, and the Taranaki community. It aims to establish the first predator free national park in New Zealand and re-introduce native species. It will push the boundaries of conservation to bring the 34,000 ha of national park encompassing Taranaki, Pouakai, Kaitake and extending 3km to the protected Ngā Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands back to life.

The Whanganui/South Taranaki area was ravaged by floods in July 2015 causing significant damage to public and private property. The Department played a vital role in providing support to the community during the floods and the post flood clean up phase. The conservation estate suffered heavy damage to tracks, huts and other infrastructure. Restoration of services has been a big job for staff and is nearing completion. We gratefully acknowledge and appreciate DOC staff for their commitment and effort during these times of crisis.

The Board and Department is regularly challenged and criticised for its support on the use of 1080. The Board holds a view that whilst 1080 is not a preferred method of pest control, it approves its use on a case by case basis. The Board held a public pest management workshop in Whanganui in December 2015. The workshop included presentations from Department Staff, Nga Whenua Rahui, Kia Whārite Biodiversity Project, Zero Invasive Pest (ZIP). The workshop was very helpful in raising awareness of the issues, challenges and developments occurring within the pest management space.

The region continues to confront the environmental pressures from the oil and gas and dairy industries and their impacts on land and waterways. The Board is also confronting new pressures including high intensity beekeeping and seabed mining. The Board is concerned about the ecological sustainability of beekeeping. It encourages the Department to seek arrangements that ensure concessionaires contribute back to environmental restoration and enhancement.

The Taranaki/Whanganui community has a strong position on opposing seabed mining. An application by Trans Tasman Resources Limited to the Environmental Protection Agency to mine the seabed off the Patea coast was opposed by the Board in 2013. The Board opposes their new 2016 application.

In summary, this year has been laced with a mix of natural disasters, conservation gains through local environmental initiatives and increased demand and pressure on natural resources. The Board is committed to monitoring and encouraging a conservation economy through responsible and sustainable practice.

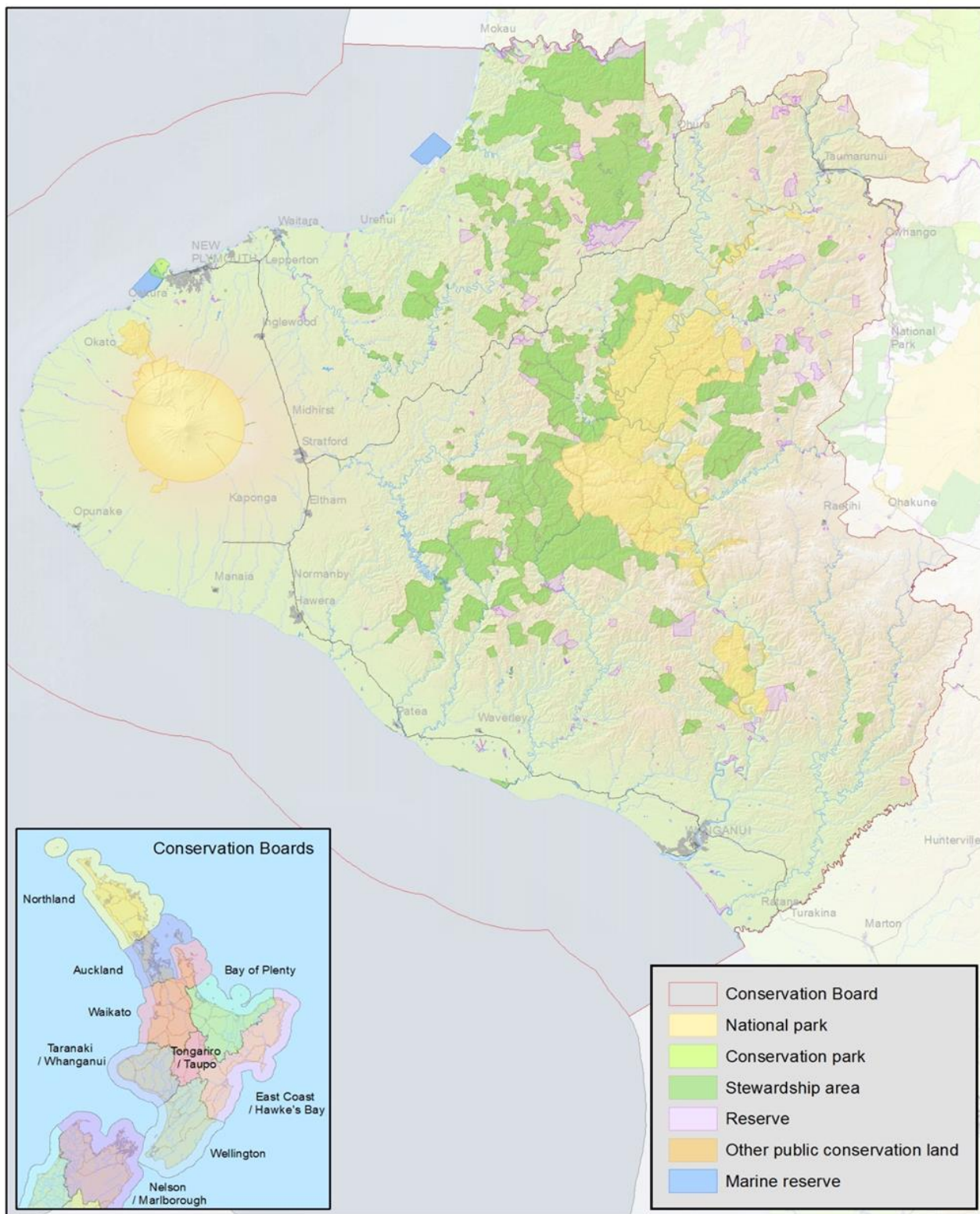
Noho ora mai

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne-Marie Broughton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Anne-Marie Broughton
Chair

2.0 THE BOARD'S AREA

Map of Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board Area



Taranaki / Whanganui Conservation Board

Until 1 February 2016 the Board's area of responsibility was within the Department's Central North Island regional boundary. With the implementation of a Departmental realignment on 1 February 2016, the Board's area now sits within two operational regions. The new Hauraki/Waikato/Taranaki region incorporates the Taranaki District while the Whanganui District remains within the Central North Island (CNI) region. This created new logistical challenges for the Board and Departmental Staff but I'm pleased to report that the new framework is now working satisfactorily.

Two national parks lie within the approximately 298,000 hectares of public conservation land administered by the Department within this Board's area. These landscapes contain volcanoes, wild and scenic rivers, huge tracts of forest, and rugged mountain ranges. These features are complimented by a dynamic coastline that provides for a great diversity of habitats for plants and animals. The Tapuae and Paranihi Marine Reserves and the long-established Nga Motu/Sugar Loaf Islands Protected Area lie along the northern and western coasts. The sheer size of the Mokai and Whanganui Rivers are just two examples of how rivers and their catchments influence the culture, economy and recreational uses that define the complexity of the management and advisory issues faced by the Board and the Department in their respective roles.

Numerous scenic, historic and recreational reserves throughout the districts require specific consideration as they provide current and future generations, as well as visitors, a unique snapshot into the richness of New Zealand's natural and historic journey recorded within the landscape.

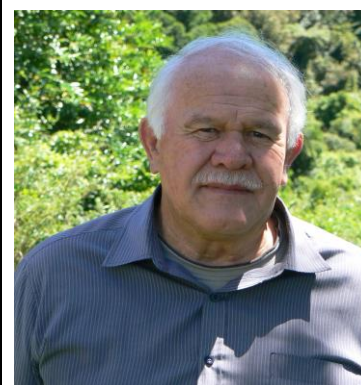
3.0 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD



Anne-Marie Broughton
Chairperson
1/9/2011 – current
Whanganui



Liana Poutu
Statutory Appointment for
Taranaki Maori Trust Board
Board Member, 1/07/2016 –
current
New Plymouth





Don Robinson
Board Member
1/07/2015 - current
Whanganui



Novena McGuckin,
Board Member 1/5/2014 – current
Whanganui

“Predator Free NZ 2050 and reducing the NZ's predator populations was highlighted for me in the Free Public Workshop 'Pest Management into the Future' held in Dec 2015. The public attendance, interested parties travelling from New Plymouth, collaboration with Horizons Council and staff participation in telling the story shows how this goal will be achieved to ensure that through the Whanganui River Native Forest the chorus and shrills of Brown Kiwi , Kākāriki, Pipiwharauroa- Kikitori will intensify as I and others travel the” journey.” By Novena McGuckin

		
<p>Sam Tamarapa Board Member 1/5/2014 - current Waitara</p>	<p>Dr Brendon "Tiwha" Puketapu Deputy Chair Statutory Appointment Whanganui River Maori Trust Board 6/12/2013 - current, Featherston</p>	<p>Vicky Dombroski Board Member 1/5/2014 - current Waitara</p>



“As an earthmoving contractor, majoring in forestry work, I have brought concerns about damage to the environment caused by forest extraction. Also, being a member on the Taranaki Whanganui Conservation Board, I take back ideas to the forest harvesters and managers to improve methods to fit in with the environment. This highlights my liaison roles with other conservation boards and federated farmers.” By Steve Fouhy

Steve Fouhy
Board Member - 1/5/2014 – current
Turakina

Meeting Attended	Board	Field trips	Liaison	Sub-com.	Other
Anne-Marie Broughton	4	2	2	1	2
Don Robinson	4	2		1	
Liana Poutu	5	2	1		
Novena McGuckin	4	2	1		
Sam Tamarapa	4	2	1		
Steve Fouhy	5	2	5		
Dr Brendon 'Tiwha' Puketapu	4	2			
Vicky Dombroski	4	1	1		1

4.0 BOARD FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Date of Meeting	Location	Fieldtrips/ other functions
14 August 2015	Egmont Visitor Centre	Fieldtrip cancelled due to poor weather condition
9 October 2015	Taumarunui (Combined meeting with Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board)	Combined Board Meeting held Ruapehu District Council Chambers
10 December 2015	David Lecture Theatre, Whanganui regional Museum	Free Public Workshop “Pest Management into the Future”
11 December 2015	Bushy Park Sanctuary (Whanganui District)	Fieldtrip into Bushy Park (an enclosed native species reserve)
17 March 2016	Whanganui East	
6 May 2016	New Plymouth/ Waitara	Fieldtrip to wetlands adjoining Waitara River

4.1 Board Meeting Highlights:

The October 2015 meeting of the Board was a combined meeting held with the Tongariro/Taupo in Taumarunui. A number of public attended to listen to a presentation on the proposed Turoa to Ohakune and Horopito Walking and Cycling Trail addition to the Mountains to Sea NZ Cycle trail. This included the statutory process that would be required to enable this activity under the Tongariro National Park Management plan. The Board’s noted the work required to address issues within a National Park Management Plan framework and that this shared learning is invaluable and helps build common conversations across regions.

At the March 2016 meeting the Board received a public submission regarding the Departments protocols for management of marine mammal stranding, seismic activity and the impacts on sea mammals, and the anticipated Trans Tasman Limited Sand Mining Application. The outcome of this presentation was the development of a marine mammal course designed by the Department staff to inform Iwi and community of the scope of scientific and cultural protocols for the management of marine mammal stranding.

At the May 2016 meeting the Board received three presentations focused on whitebait habitat and fishery management. The Board found the presentations helpful in defining how it might best advocate for the improvement of native fishery habitat and increasing public awareness.

4.2 Fieldtrips Highlights

The Board met with Associate Minister of Conservation Nicky Wagner as part of its December meeting which was held at Bushy Park Sanctuary. This provided the Board and Hon Nicky Wagner an opportunity to see first-hand a community collaboration with the Department to support the management of a native species sanctuary. The collaboration has resulted in the sounds of song birds increasing and flora and fauna biodiversity being supported by the predator proof fencing. It is now home to both hihi and saddleback, providing one of the few sites where they’ve been re-established back on the mainland. The site is also recognized as a hotspot for goldstripe gecko and other lizard species.

The Board also spoke at length with the Associate Minister about the potential impact of Treaty Settlements on Public Conservation Land (PCL) management and what the Board's role might look in the future.

The walkway and lecture amphitheatre by the wetland below the homestead proved a perfect site for a group photo.



Bushy Park
Photographer – Alexandra Walters (December 2016)

In May, a fieldtrip was made to see the contribution Manukorihi Intermediate students are making in collaboration with the Department Community Rangers in the restoration and maintenance of the Mangahinau Stream at Waitara. The Board learned how the students work has led to classroom research looking at the effects of the native plants on the whitebait population and compared the native versus exotic plants.



Waitara River stop bank – pathway to Mangahinau Stream
Photographer – Alexandra Walters (May 2016)

4.3 Special Events

The Board hosted a free public workshop in the Davis Lecture Theatre at the Whanganui Regional Museum on 10 December 2015 titled “Pest Management into the Future”. The informative evening offered presentations from four expert speakers who answered questions taken from the audience about pest management techniques, technologies and policies. This included presentations by Departmental staff on current pest control methods being used within in the Whanganui National Park as well as pest control measures used by the Department and Horizons Regional Council as part of the Kia Whārite Biodiversity Project. A third speaker, Jason Taiaroa of Ngā Whenua Rāhui, gave a humorous and passionate presentation on the work being undertaken with iwi partners which was of particular interest to the public present. The audience expressed their desire to see an increase in community engagement in pest control programme delivery. Jason also provided a regional summary of biodiversity management and monitoring on kawenata (legal covenants). To round off the evening, Phil Bell presented on the predator eradication trial project at Bottle Rock Peninsula, Marlborough Sounds and the Zero Invasive Predators project (ZIP).

With the Associate Minister’s encouragement, the Board aspires to plan and host more community functions on issues raised by the public, and will continue to actively promote and advocate for initiatives created by the Department to support people at place caring for their nature. The Board wishes to acknowledge the enormous energy Department staff provided in the delivery of this event.

4.4 Budget, Fees and Allowances

The Board’s budget for 2015/16 was \$18,000, expenses were \$18496.00. The overspend was due in part to expenses incurred during the previous financial year being processed this reporting year. The Board only had eight members during the financial year and anticipates financial challenges in the coming year when the Board is expected to return to nine members. Fees and allowances were paid in accordance with the Fees and Travelling Allowances Act 1951. Board members were paid a daily meeting fee of \$180 and the chairperson receives a daily meeting fee of \$240. Members may be reimbursed for actual and reasonable expenses incurred while engaged on Board business.

5.0 STATUTORY WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE BOARD

5.1 Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987

Section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987 states “This Act shall be so interpreted and administered as to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi”. As a board established under the Conservation Act 1987, section 4 applies to the Board in the discharge of its functions. During the year, the significant movement within the Treaty Settlement space has engaged the Board’s attention. With two statutory member appointments and other members with Iwi roles, the Board is well abreast of the treaty landscape and advises the Department of key tangata whenua issues when relevant.

5.2 Statutory Processes

a) Conservation Management Strategy

The Board continues to be mindful of the development of a framework for review of its CMS. During the year the Board concluded its schedule of monitoring of the current Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). Given the age of the document, pending Treaty Settlements and the trialling of a CMS fast track prototype, a decision was made to cease any further monitoring reports and focus on regional issues until a timeframe for a CMS review was finalised.

b) Concessions and Beehive permits

The Board in its role provide advice to the Department on a range of concession applications based on their complexity, duration and risks. Once the application is received and has undergone a preliminary assessment, it may be sent to Conservation Boards and tangata whenua for their comment. The Department maintains a list of triggers which are used to guide consultation with Conservation Boards.

Processing staff combine feedback received from Conservation Boards, tangata whenua and District Offices with analysis of legislation and policy to produce a report and contract. These documents are reviewed with the applicants prior to final sign off, and some negotiations regarding terms and fees may be undertaken.

The Board has wrestled with the process around beehives during the year. Staff have worked with the Board to provide clarity around the processes and the timeline of events. The Board has pursued a vigorous request for continued transparency in this particular process. The concerns raised has led the Board to consider what are the triggers it would wish to establish for inclusion of the Board in these processes and how it can advise the Department in relation to processing policies.

c) Provision of Advice on change of land status

The Board at the request of the Minister for Conservation participated in a process used nationally during 2015-2016 to identify stewardship land parcels which due to their scientific, historical, recreational or natural values, would benefit from a higher level of protective status.

d) Statutory Board representation

Tapuae Marine Reserve Advisory Committee

In February 2010 the Minister of Conservation approved the establishment of an advisory committee for Tapuae Marine Reserve under section 56 of the Conservation Act 1987 Sam Tamarapa provides Board representation. This Board did not meet during the reporting period.

Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

In accordance with the Ngati Tama Claim Settlement Act 2003, the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was established under the Act to advise on the management of Whitecliffs and other nearby conservation areas, including Parininihi Marine Reserve. JAC committee members include representatives from Ngati Tama, the Department of Conservation and the Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board.



Waitara Kaimona Survey group members surveying along Waitara Coast.
Photographer: Vicky Dombroski and Waitara Alive (Feb 2016)

Following the gazettal of Parininihi Marine Reserve in September 2006, the JAC was delegated the Board's power to approve, review or amend any conservation management plans for the reserve, in accordance with section 6N (2) (b) of the Conservation Act 1987. In its August 2007 meeting, the Board resolved that the JAC be the governing body for the Parininihi Marine Reserve (a preferred choice of Ngati Tama), rather than establishing a separate marine reserve committee.

This committee has met sporadically since 2007, board member Sam Tamarapa was appointed as the Taranaki Whanganui Board Representative on 15 August 2014. This committee did not meet during the reporting year.

6.0 COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE BOARD

Whio Release

Board member Vicky Dombroski attended the launch of *Wild for Taranaki* and the release of whio into the Waiongana Stream in Egmont National Park along with Minister Barry, MP Jonathan Young, CEO of Te Atiawa and Stratford School Children



Right: Whio Release – Waiongana Stream, Egmont National Park
Photographer – Vicky Dombroski (26 February.2016)

Waitara Curious Minds project

During the year, the Board endorsed this project with a view to adding weight and credibility to their funding application.

The group was successful with their MBIE funding application and undertook a collaborative Waitara Kaimoana Survey project 2016 with Waitara Alive and Otaraua Hapū. This resulted in a very successful engagement with the wider Waitara Community and interesting results, including some improvements in unexpected areas, when compared with a similar survey undertaken back in 2001.

7.0 ADVOCACY

Board members play an important role in advocating for their various communities of interest and the board welcomes individual and group presentations from communities at board meetings.

A highlight this year was hearing from the Waitara whitebaiting community and Tainui Whitebait Association member. The state of the whitebait fishery is topic of concern for many NZ Conservation Boards. Marie Casford detailed the Tainui Whitebait (Mokau River) Association's observations of the key challenges and risk to the fish stocks within New Zealand waterways. Marie highlighted the loss of intergenerational fish species balanced with high juvenile fish rates, low intermediate and mature fish stock numbers. She shared the key risks identified were erosion at river mouths and of river banks, wasp eating inanga eggs, commercial value of whitebait fishery, escalating value of whitebait stands inclusive of group buying behaviour, and significant weather events.

John Niwa from the Waitara community detailed the change in historical shore management in communities for stand placement. He emphasised this change has raised concerns within the Community, Iwi and Council.

The Board developed 5 point to advocate for within their role:

- Advocating for collaborative funding of bank planting.
- Advocate for the continuation of waterway perimeter fencing.

- Advocate for regulation of stand construction and ownership where habitat is being impacted and creating access monopolies.
- Advocate for funding for pest management including insects, specifically wasps and rats.
- Continued support for compliance officer system and community support.

8.o LIAISON WORK

NZCA

The Chair attended the September Conservation Board Chairs Conference in Wellington. This annual event is a chance for Board Chairs to share their regions areas of focus and experiences with national issues. The NZCA liaison - Jo Breese attended the Board's March meeting, and subsequently assisted the Board in developing an agenda for the NZCA meeting and Fieldtrip in October 2016 in New Plymouth. All Board members receive the minutes of NZCA meetings

Fish and Game Council

Alan Stancliff of Fish and Game New Zealand presented an overview of their submission to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management.

Sam Tamarapa continues to attend hui on the national state of the Piharau native fish population and related habitat and species diseases. He provides updates on research being undertaken to discover the causes for the fish decline.

Steve Fouhy attends Federated Farmer meetings to keep abreast of the conservation issues and initiatives within the agriculture sector. Steve also attends the Wellington Conservation Board meetings to build rapport and observe the rapid prototyping of the CMS process.

Novena McGuckin became the liaison to the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board. She attended the March Board meeting and fieldtrip.

Board members liaised with a number of individuals, groups and organisations throughout the reporting period. This liaison is a very important way of providing an interface with the community. Board members were given the opportunity to report back at each board meeting.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Board acknowledges the huge contribution that community groups make to conservation. This year the Board has had the opportunity to engage with the following groups and we acknowledge and thank them for their work in our communities:

- Bushy Park Sanctuary Trust
- Te Ripo Kokohuia - Tanea Tangaroa
- Te Ranga Tupua
- South Taranaki Reef Life Curious Minds Project
- Waitara Curious Minds Project
- Wild for Taranaki
- Project Mouna – Devon McLean and Jan Hania
- Waitara whitebaiting community - John Niwa
- Tainui Whitebait Association – Marie Casford

We are thankful to be served by a team of dedicated and talented Department of Conservation staff. These staff not only work diligently for the protection, restoration and development of our natural environment but are also first responders in emergencies. We commend and thank staff for their tireless efforts in growing conservation and particularly acknowledge their support in the wake of the 2016 Whanganui/Waitotara floods.