

Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board (Te Poari Papa Atawhai o Tongariro/Taupo)

Annual Report 2009 - 2010

AUGUST 2010



Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board

Te Poari Papa Atawhai
o Tongariro/Taupo

Annual Report

1 July 2009 - 30 June 2010

Presented to the New Zealand Conservation Authority
pursuant to Section 60 of the Conservation Act 1987

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INTRODUCTION

Functions

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board is an independent advisory body, appointed by the Minister of Conservation. The Board has a number of statutory roles, which include:

- the development of the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) and the recommendation of this to the New Zealand Conservation Authority (NZCA) for approval
- advising the Department of Conservation and the NZCA on how conservation management strategies and plans will be put into practice
- monitoring the implementation of the CMS
- the approval of Conservation Management Plans
- the recommendation of National Park Management Plans to the NZCA for approval
- advising the Department of Conservation and NZCA on conservation matters, proposed changes to the status of land with national and international significance, and new walkways,
- liaising with the Fish and Game Council, and
- carrying out other powers delegated to them by the Minister of Conservation, the Conservation Act or any other Act.

Membership

The names, locations of the members of the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board, and attendance at meetings from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 were as follows:

Don Cameron	Ohakune	5
Sue Carson ¹	Rotorua	1
Sarah Gibb	Turangi	5
Maree Gurney	Marton	5
Rob Lester ²	Turangi	5
Peter Masters	Taupo	5
Garth Oakden	Turangi	3
Judy Reid ³	Wellington	1
Brian Robinson ³	Taupo	1
Tumu te Heuheu	Taumarunui	1
Alex Wilson	Rotorua	3
Che Wilson ¹	Whanganui	0

¹ Members who resigned during the reporting year

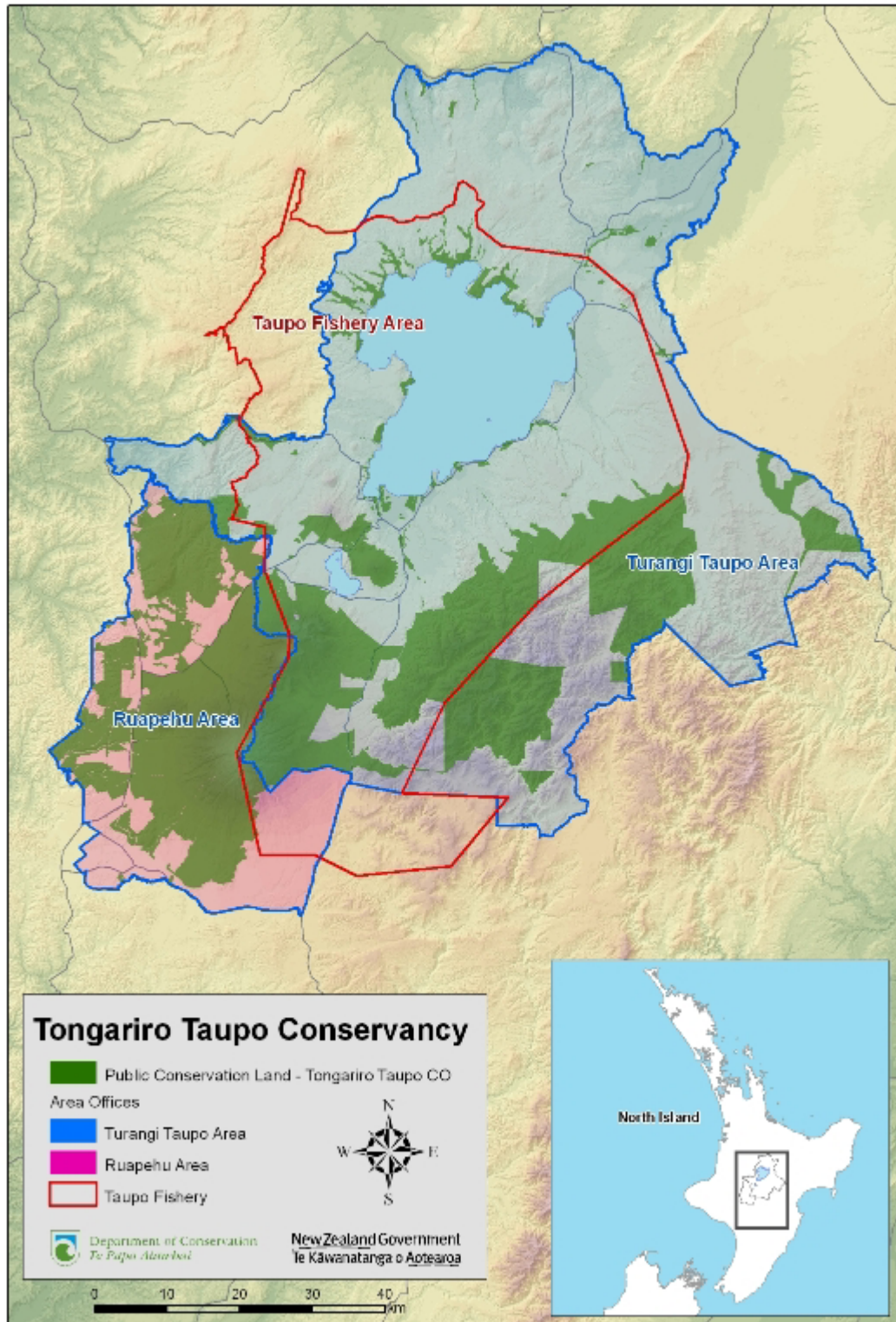
² Members who were newly appointed 1 September 2009

³ Members whose terms expired at 31 August 2009

At its December 2009 meeting, Sarah Gibb stepped down from the Chair with Peter Masters being duly elected as Chairperson.

Area of Responsibility

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy covers 780,000 hectares, of which approximately 217,000 hectares is administered by the Department of Conservation. It is also the area of responsibility for the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board (refer to the Map). The conservancy is unique in that it has no ocean coastline and includes the Lake Taupo sport fishery.



Map of Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board Area

The Conservancy is dominated by the volcanic landscape of Tongariro National Park, the beech forest and tussock ranges of Kaimanawa Forest Park and by New Zealand's largest lake, Lake Taupo. Tongariro, Erua and Rangataua Conservation Areas to the east and south of the national park, play a valuable part in terms of their ecological features and recreational opportunities.

Tangata whenua – Ngati Tuwharetoa, Ngati Rangi and Ngati Tahu Iwi – have long had a special relationship and history with the mountains, lakes, waterways and geothermal features of this area. Tongariro, New Zealand's first national park, grew from the Ngati Tuwharetoa gift of its mountains to the nation in 1887. The park received World Heritage status in 1988 for natural landscape values and in 1993 for its cultural landscape values, recognising the special significance of the mountains to Tuwharetoa and Wanganui iwi.

The Conservancy contains many rare, uncommon, vulnerable or threatened native plants, birds, communities and ecosystems. Managing these in light of weeds, predators, fires and other threats remains an ongoing challenge.

Lake Taupo and its tributaries provide opportunities for world-class fishing and numerous other forms of water recreation. Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy manages the sport fishery in partnership with Ngati Tuwharetoa, as prescribed by the Maori Land Amendment and Maori Land Claims Adjustment Act 1926.

The landscape of the area is unique in New Zealand and large numbers of national and international visitors come here for sightseeing and recreation. Tongariro National Park is the most visited national park in New Zealand and numbers are expected to rise further. In contrast, the surrounding mountain ranges retain a feeling of remoteness and isolation which is increasingly sought by recreationists – New Zealanders in particular.

A large number of issues occur on these lands which are of interest to the Board. These include:

- management of plant and animal species such as the blue duck (whio), kiwi (western North Island Brown), and 2-3 species of mistletoe.
- management of recreational facilities such as huts and tracks
- management of historic sites
- concession activities, including those relating to recreation and tourism, grazing, research, and leases.

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board has a responsibility to the people of the Tongariro/Taupo district, and the wider New Zealand population, to ensure these lands and the biodiversity which they contain are protected and enhanced.

Conservation Board Meetings

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board held five formal meetings, including two field inspections, during the reporting period.

21 August 2009

This meeting was held up at Whakapapa Village in the Fire Station. The Board had an update from Horizons on how things were progressing with the 'One Plan'. They also had a CMS monitoring report presentation on Visitor Information and Community Involvement.

9 October 2009

This meeting was held at the Parks Traveller's Lodge in National Park. The Board received two CMS monitoring presentations. The first was on Recreation Concessions including Skifields and the second was on Tongariro/Ruapehu. The Board had a lengthy discussion about the suggested amendments to the Tongariro National Park Management Plan. The Board reviewed the subcommittees at this meeting as well as deciding who would be on each subcommittee. The Board also reviewed the Board work programmed for 2009/10.

4 December 2009

This was a regular meeting held in Turangi. Many Board members had attended the Conservation Awards the night before. The Board received a CMS monitoring report presentation on Plateau Forests. The Board again discussed the suggested amendments to the Tongariro National Park Management Plan. Peter Masters was elected as the new Chairperson.



*Conservation Award 2009 winners
The Blue Duck Project Charitable Trust
L-R: Nick Singers, Wayne Smith, Garth Oakden (Conservation Board member), Paul Wilson
Photo: DOC*

28 February 2010

The Board met up at the offices of Ruapehu Alpine Lifts, Whakapapa, Mount Ruapehu and started the morning with a field inspection up to Knoll Ridge Café to look at the current building site. The Board received a CMS Monitoring report presentation on the Protection of Historic Resources.



*Site inspection of the new Knoll Ridge Café, Mount Ruapehu
Photo: Jo Hood*

28 May 2010

The Board met in Turangi at the National Trout Centre. During the lunch break the Board had a wonderful tour of the facilities at the Trout Centre, led by Board member Rob Lester. The Board received two CMS Monitoring presentations, the first was on Freshwater Fisheries (a) Indigenous, and (b) Sport; and the second was on the Control of Plant Pests.



*Conservation Board member Rob Lester, Jim Maniapoto, and Rangi Downs following the blessing ceremony for the start of construction of the Tongariro National Trout Centre Aquarium
Photo: Herwi Scheltus*

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS – CONSERVATION ACT

Conservation Management Strategy

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Management Strategy was approved in May 2002 and has a lifetime of ten years.

The Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board has nearly finished its second 3 year round of monitoring all the topics in the CMS. The new guidelines and templates appear to be working well.

The Board was briefed on seven of the 20 sections of the CMS. The sections covered were:

- **Visitor Information and Community Involvement**

Since the last report on this subject in 2006, the Board noted that progress had been made with regard to the Department's resourcing for community involvement and positive interaction with community and support initiatives, especially through improved public awareness programmes. The opportunities for volunteer involvement in conservation work have increased significantly in the last 3 years as a result of the Department's improved attitude to working with communities.



The Board commended the Conservancy for its successful submission to the government for the Ruapehu to Whanganui cycleway project that would create outcomes for conservation, economic development and community well being.

*Official opening of Ruapehu – Whanganui Cycle Trail
Photo: Dave Conley*

Several suggestions were made by the Board for future activities including continual active engagement with the community; further development of ways to engage young people with conservation; documenting the 'value' of volunteer hours; ensuring that training opportunities are available for staff development; and clear and consistent health and safety risk management.

- **Recreation Concessions including Ski fields**

The objective in managing recreation concessions is to "foster visitor enjoyment of land managed by the Department through authorising commercial recreation and tourism activities which are compatible with the natural and historic values of any area and which do not reduce the enjoyment of these values by other visitors". The Board agrees that the Department is achieving this objective and meeting implementation provisions to a high standard.

The Board highlighted two implementation provisions for continued work and improvement including the involvement of iwi in concession applications; and the ongoing monitoring of all recreation concessionaires, with emphasis on the 'conditions of operations are adhered to'.

Although meetings with concessionaires (both formal and informal) was adequate with regard to recreation concessions, the Board was concerned with follow-up of

non-compliance to licence agreements and feels some more formal monitoring guidelines and/or stronger incentives to comply are needed.

- **Tongariro/Ruapehu**

The initial report to the Board focused on the removal of sewage from Tongariro National Park. The Board commented that both the CMS and the Tongariro National Park Management Plan (TNPMP) are very clear on the requirements for the removal of sewage, and although not 100% compliant, it is well on the way with only a few sites yet to comply.

Departmental staff and all user groups were commended for investing time and money in the effluent systems and their installation, however the Board stressed the importance of ensuring full compliance by November 2011.

- **Plateau Forests**

This report centred on the 42 Traverse in the Tongariro Forest with input from Taupo 4WD Club. The Board commented that the Department had met their CMS obligations beyond expectations having achieved a win/win outcome with the 4WD club that fulfilled both recreation and conservation interests, and also led to cost savings on roading within the Kiwi area. The Board noted that this positive outcome was a direct result of the CMS concept of communities having input into the management of conservation land.

- **Protection of Historic Resources**

The Board determined that with regard to the CMS, the Department is meeting their objectives for the management of historic resources for the actively managed sites but it appears to be a struggle, reliant on funding and the partnerships with community groups for some sites. The Board also commented that the report highlighted the subjectivity regarding the categorisation of sites and that this issue needs to be addressed in the future.

Of further note however, the Board applauded the Department's work in engaging with community groups, in particular, to restore and maintain historic groups, and encouraged them to keep it up.

- **Freshwater Fisheries (a) Indigenous and (b) Sport**

(a) Indigenous: As evidenced through the report made to the Board, the indigenous freshwater fish in the Tongariro Taupo Conservancy are low both in numbers and diversity. It was noted that resourcing remains (and will continue to be) a limiting factor in protection and recognition although the new aquarium being build at the National Trout Centre will raise the public profile of indigenous fish and threats to freshwater ecosystems.

The report summarised that adequate protection and reporting of undesirable pest species is performed at present but may be a test for resources if or when discovered in the Conservancy.

The Board applauded efforts to date, and re-iterated the importance, for the Department to advocate for resource management where protection of freshwater systems in rural areas is needed.

(b) Taupo Sports Fishery: In its report to the Board, the Department set out a clear appraisal of the challenges and responses that the Department is grappling with. These include the fluctuating smelt population which is central to the health and numbers of trout; resourcing; and minimising operational costs. The Board is satisfied that the Department is adequately monitoring these challenges with sound assessments and planned responses.

The Board further commented that the current modus operandi of the Fishery Division is in need of a structural review.

- **Control of Plant Pests**

As summarised in the Board's response, the Department's responsibilities to control invasive weeds and obligations to protect important ecosystems, and threatened flora and fauna, from the effects of plant pests are identified through several acts of legislation. Locally, the Tongariro Taupo Conservancy also operates an Invasive Weed Strategy (2009) to prioritise weed control and the report to the board included success of the Heather Beetle; successful control of wildling pinus contorta; and other successes in controlling pampas grass, Old Man's Beard, and climbing spindle berry in specific areas.



*Heather in Tongariro National Park
Photo: Cathy Jones*

The Board recognise that the Department relies heavily on volunteer groups and local iwi within their areas of control, landowners, and the Regional and District Councils on the boundaries, to assist with the weed control programmes.

The Board noted that the Conservancy faces an increasing risk in the spread of new pest plants; that the existing programmes are giving an adequate measure of control for 'value of the area' basis; a species basis; or sometimes a non-ecological basis; future controls may need to include the wider community; and a recommendation to review the CMS should be given serious consideration.

Change of status or classification

There has been no progress on the addition of Rangataua Forest to the Tongariro National Park or the gazettal of Tongariro Forest as a conservation park. These areas are currently subject to a Treaty of Waitangi claim.

The gazettal of the proposed scenic reserve at Huka Falls is currently on hold due to outstanding Treaty issues.

Advice on Other Conservation Matters

The Board was consulted by or gave advice to the Department and NZCA on the following:

Concessions

The Board continued to give advice to the Department on a number of concession applications that were forwarded to the Board provided approval criteria mechanisms were met. The department continued to provide a summary of concessions currently being processed at Board meetings.

The concessions considered by the Board during this report period include the following:

Adventure South Ltd

This application was for a five year renewal to their guiding concession with the addition of the Tongariro Alpine Crossing. The Board subcommittee commented that they did not have any issues with this application.



*Summer Programme - walking the Tongariro Alpine Crossing
Photo – Jimmy Johnson*

Liaison with Fish and Game Council

An Eastern Fish and Game Council representative continues to be informed of the Board's work through agenda papers and minutes.

Powers of Boards

Conservation Advocacy

When appropriate the Board has become involved in advocating for conservation mainly through submissions on resource consents, or through regional and district plans.

The Boards Statutory Planning subcommittee identifies those consents with likely significant impacts on conservation values and then makes a decision on whether or not to include a submission.

The Department kept the Board regularly informed about planning issues through regular reports at Board meetings.

In order to formalise and clarify our involvement in this area under the Conservation Act the subcommittee created formal terms of reference that were adopted by the Board. It is clear that Boards have an advocacy function and, being less constrained by boundaries and management functions may communicate more widely and advocate for conservation more holistically.

Our submissions relate to conservation values on both public and private land such as the protection of: indigenous flora and fauna; landscape, cultural and historic values; water quality and environmental degradation. The sub-committee must, in consultation with the Conservator, identify the conservation outcomes being sought and whether they are of strategic importance for conservation goals within the area. Where there are financial implications in the advocacy process such as travel and time costs and liability from court cases the subcommittee must have full approval from the Board and the Conservator to determine if cost can be met before proceeding.

Current DOC policy on Board liability is not sufficiently developed to give a clear direction. This situation and budget constraints currently exclude the board from the Environment (and other) Court proceedings and supporting parties at such hearings beyond initial submissions.

Sub-Committees

At its October 2009 meeting, the Board revised membership of the following sub-committees as follows:

Recreation, Historic and Concessions

Pete Masters and Maree Gurney (facilitators); Rob Lester; Garth Oakden; Che Wilson

Volcanic Hazards

Rob Lester (facilitator); Sue Carson; Che Wilson; Alex Wilson; Pete Masters.

Management Planning and Policy

Garth Oakden (facilitator); Maree Gurney; Pete Masters.

Statutory Planning

Sarah Gibb; Don Cameron

CMS Monitoring

Sue Carson (facilitator); Sarah Gibb

Tangata Whenua

Che Wilson (facilitator); Rob Lester; Sue Carson; Alex Wilson.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE CONSERVATION ACT

Co-opting Members of the Board

No members were co-opted on to the Board this year.

BOARD FUNCTIONS UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

The Tongariro National Park Management Plan was signed off on 12 October 2006 and has a life of 10 years.

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER OTHER ACTS

Walkways Act 1990

No actions were taken by the Board under the New Zealand Walkways Act 1990.

Reserves Act 1977

The Board responded to all concession applications, where they involved reserves, in terms of the Reserves Act 1977.

LIAISON

All Board members receive the minutes of the New Zealand Conservation Authority meetings. Through the year contact has been maintained with NZCA liaison member Brian Stephenson.

Agendas and minutes from neighbouring conservation Boards are provided to individual liaison members who raise items of relevance and occasionally attend other Boards' meetings.

The Board continues to liaise with numerous organisations including:

Bike Taupo
 Eastern Regional Fish & Game Council;
 Environment Waikato
 Farm Environment Award Trust
 Federated Mountain Clubs
 Genesis
 Lakes and Waterways Action Group
 Lake Taupo Development Co
 Mighty River Power
 Ngati Hikairo ki Tongariro Trust
 Ngati Rangi Trust
 NZ Forest Managers
 Ohakune 2000
 Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society
 Ruapehu Alpine Lifts
 Ruapehu District Council
 Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association
 Taupo District Council
 Taupo-nui-a-Tia 2020
 Taupo-nui-a-Tia Management Board
 The Grand Chateau
 Tongariro National Trout Centre Trust
 Tongariro Natural History Society
 Tongariro River Advocates Inc.
 Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board

The Board's 2009/2010 Financial Year

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
Board Member Fees	6,400
Postage/Freight & Courier	0
Phones/toll/faxes	150
Domestic Travel – Other Cost	3,603
Office Supplies	78
Professional Fees	330
Printing and Publishing	603
Catering & Entertainment	1,331
Ex-Gratia / Koha	0
Computer Internet and Network Costs	757
Education Costs	672
Subscriptions	50
Total	\$13,974

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

For the last six months I have been extremely lucky to chair a Board that has been committed to the job. Although the Board has been operating with lower numbers than normal, I feel that we have worked well together and have achieved some very good outcomes.

The Board has been in a period of no major planning documents to be reviewed and has been able to focus on CMS monitoring. I have to admit that this is working far better than I ever thought that this process would, and I'm sure it is down to two things. One is that the previous Board set up a very good system that is easy to use and the second is that the Department staff have committed to the process.

I have recently attended the Chairperson's Conference and it highlighted to me the relationship between us and the Department staff. We are very lucky that we have such an open relationship with the staff, this is both at a management and field staff level. For this I wish to thank both Paul and Nic for their support and also to the Area Manager's for having an open door on the more day-to-day issues.

A big thank you to Jo for her role as our Support Officer, she has done a fantastic job in the last year keeping us both informed and arranging Board meetings. And finally, thank you to all the Board members who have both supported me in the role as Chair and who also spend many hours of their own time working on local matters within the Conservancy.



Pete Masters
Chairperson
August 2010

Adoption of Report

Moved: That the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Board adopt the Annual Report for 2009/2010, to be forwarded to the New Zealand Conservation Authority as required under section 6(0) of the Conservation Act 1987.

Carried 20 August 2010



Motuoapa and Te Mata Puna (South Taupo Wetlands)

Photo: Ian McNickel