

Rotoiti nature recovery project

An evaluation of advocacy

SCIENCE FOR CONSERVATION 160



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Te Papa Atawhai

Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project

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Bev James

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This was a morning that would soon grow very warm. At that early hour—about half-past six—one could already smell the honeydew. It is exuded by a tiny insect and sweats in transparent globules through a black, mossy parasite that covers the trunks of native beech trees in New Zealand. Chip-dry twigs snapped under my feet. Bellbirds, exactly named, absent-mindedly prolonging their dawn-song, tinkled in the darker reaches of the bush. From our hidden tents, the smell of woodsmoke and frying bacon drifted through the trees. Someone climbed down to the river for water and a bucket clanked pleasantly. I came to a halt and there at once was the voice of the river filling the air in everlasting colloquy with its own wet stones. It was then abruptly that I was flooded by happiness. In an agony of gratitude, I flung my arms around the nearest honeyed tree and hugged it. I was fourteen years old.

This quotation is from the autobiography of detective novelist Ngaio Marsh, conveying her experience of South Island honeydew forest in 1912 (Ngaio Marsh 1965: *Black Beech and Honeydew*. Collins, London).

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Abstract

The evaluation report examines selected advocacy initiatives associated with the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project. This formative evaluation seeks to identify: the role of advocacy in the project, the range of advocacy methods used, the nature and extent of community involvement in the project, the extent to which the project provides an education resource, and factors influencing the effectiveness of advocacy.

Forty-eight local residents, bach owners and farmers were asked what they thought about the project, and how they saw DOC's relationship with the community. In general, there was strong support for the project. Key findings are:

- Advocacy is essential to the overall success of the project and has raised public awareness of it.
- A wide range of advocacy methods and techniques are used.
- Community involvement in the project could be enhanced through more opportunities for hands-on involvement and for consultation.
- There are opportunities for increasing the use of the project as an education resource.

Keywords: advocacy, community involvement, educational resource, evaluation, focus groups, pest control, Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, Nelson Lakes National Park.

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1. Introduction

This evaluation report examines selected advocacy activities associated with the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, which started in 1996/97. The project is located in the Nelson Lakes National Park, near St Arnaud, and comes under the wing of the St Arnaud Area Office of the Department of Conservation (DOC).

The Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project aims to restore the forest ecosystem in 825 ha of mixed honeydew beech forest on the slopes of the St Arnaud Range bordering Lake Rotoiti and St Arnaud village. The project is a 'mainland island', one of several DOC initiatives to manage and restore specific areas of mainland New Zealand.¹

Advocacy is explicitly stated as one of the project's three main objectives:

- pest control, particularly wasps, rodents, stoats, feral cats and deer, to allow the recovery of indigenous ecosystems, including the honeydew cycle,
- re-introduction of indigenous species such as yellowhead, kiwi and kokako,
- advocacy for indigenous species conservation and long-term pest control.

As with other mainland island projects, the support and practical involvement of the community in this project is considered essential to its success. Advocacy is important in generating community engagement. Advocacy is also an important tool in creating and maintaining mainland islands as 'showcases' of ecosystem restoration and integrated conservation management (Saunders 1999:18). Consequently, finding out whether advocacy initiatives are successful in informing people about and engaging them in the project is a necessary part of monitoring the overall achievements of the project. Prior to this evaluation, advocacy associated with the project had not been formally assessed, although around \$85,000 has been spent on new track construction, interpretation panels and advocacy activities (such as newsletters and events) since the 1998/99 financial year.

The main users of this evaluation will be DOC staff involved with the project. However, the evaluation is also for those living in the St Arnaud area—residents, farmers and bach owners—and visitors. They are the ones potentially most affected by the project in both the short term and long term. In particular, those who contributed their views will be interested in the results of this evaluation. Although participants understood that this evaluation was not consultation, nevertheless several said they regarded it as an opportunity to 'have their say'. As later discussion will show, some consider that DOC is not 'getting it right' all of the time, and there are consequent expectations that the evaluation will prompt DOC to further consider some issues.

¹ Mainland 'islands' are manageable areas isolated by geographical features, fences or intensive management. The aim is to restore habitats in those areas through intensive management of introduced pests. See Department of Conservation (1998).

2. Evaluation approach and methods

This evaluation is a formative evaluation. It focuses on implementation and progress, rather than outcomes and outputs, although it does identify achievements to date. The evaluation seeks to identify what is working well, or not so well, and to recommend improvements that might be made to help meet objectives. The evaluation is not about assessing individual performance, nor is it concerned with assessing the effectiveness of conservation management and science activities. Information from the evaluation is intended to:

- provide baseline information for the future evaluation of advocacy, in particular the development of advocacy indicators and measures,
- provide information to sponsors on the worth of advocacy activities,
- contribute to planning future advocacy activities.

Advocacy efforts have not been evaluated directly against the advocacy objectives in the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project for the following reasons:

- The advocacy objectives and aims vary in their scope from broad objective statements, to a more specific focus in the aims. Five key areas of effort are apparent—increasing public access to the mainland island, increasing community involvement and ownership of the project, providing an educational resource, achieving a high profile for the project, and conveying the key message of pest control. These areas are considered in the evaluation analysis and conclusions.
- The advocacy objectives and aims are not expressed in a measurable way.
- The project identified the need to collect data on advocacy outcomes from the outset, but funding was not available then to establish baseline community attitudes about the project. In effect, this evaluation provides baseline information.

Furthermore, the project includes a range of advocacy initiatives, only a few of which have been considered in this evaluation. Therefore, this evaluation provides an assessment of the effectiveness of particular advocacy approaches.

The broad aim of the evaluation is to assist those involved in the project to make decisions about future advocacy activities. In particular, the evaluation seeks to identify:

- the role of advocacy in the project,
- the range of advocacy methods used,
- the nature and extent of community involvement in the project,
- the extent to which the project provides an education resource, and
- factors influencing the effectiveness of advocacy.

Because of the project's close proximity to a community, and its accessibility in a recreation area, the approach taken by this evaluation has been to look at advocacy in the context of:

- people's experiences of the project as part of their living environment and their historical association with the area, and
- the St Arnaud Area Office's relationship with local communities.

DOC has a high profile in the St Arnaud area. It is not only a major employer locally, but administers most of the land in the area. Many residents are vitally interested in what DOC does, and look at the project in the context of DOC's overall activities in the area, rather than as a 'stand alone' activity. Those people include farmers whose properties adjoin conservation land (not only the project site), and who have serious concerns about pest problems. They also include local business people whose income may be affected by decisions concerning the National Park. There are also those who have made a conscious decision to move to or own a bach in St Arnaud because of the lifestyle—the park and the natural environment and landscape, the outdoor activities such as tramping and skiing, and the advantages of a small community.

This community-based evaluation has focused on asking 48 local residents, bach owners and farmers what they think about the project, and how they see DOC's relationship with the community. The participants' views have also been sought on some specific advocacy initiatives—the Rotoiti Revive newsletter, interpretation displays, selected visitor services, and DOC's activities with Lake Rotoiti School and Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge.

It is inevitable that in focusing on the context in which the project operates, participants have also raised wider issues that they see as either affecting or being affected by the project. Other issues raised in the course of this evaluation have centred around:

- DOC activities outside of the project, and
- the activities of other local and central government agencies affecting the community.

In discussion of those issues, this report shows how they are linked to the project.

Appendix 1 describes the data sources used in the evaluation.

3. Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project and the St Arnaud community

This project is the most accessible mainland island project in New Zealand, being the only mainland island in a National Park, and being located very close to a community. The potential for visitors is high, as indicated by DOC data showing that around 100 000 people visit the lakeshore at the entrance to the project area every year.

The St Arnaud community is unusual in that it consists of a significant number of bach owners¹. They make up around 70% of households in the village, and although not permanent residents, many have very longstanding ties to the area—since the 1920s and 1930s. Three of the bach owners who participated in the evaluation have five generations' association with St Arnaud, and several of the others have at least two generations. Such bach owners identify strongly with the local area and see themselves as much part of the local community as do residents. Bach owners indicated that they value the following attributes of St Arnaud:

- The area's natural, unspoiled character
- The area's beauty and scenic qualities
- A feeling of the area's specialness or uniqueness
- A relaxed atmosphere, and a place of escape from the city or everyday pressures
- Outdoor activities
- A safe environment for children, a family place
- A feeling of nostalgia, that this is how New Zealand used to be.

Bach owners talked about why they come to St Arnaud:

We are into the fifth generation ... we have always holidayed in the mountains ... the grandchildren come here. It's an escape from the city, and provides a completely different way of life. It provides resilience and camaraderie. It's an inherited opportunity which I hope New Zealanders will always have.

It's an unspoiled place. We have been coming here 65 years for family holidays. As long as there's not too much development!

For some families, Rotoiti is the one common place. The lake has got a lot of memories.

The other key component of the local St Arnaud community is a small but growing number of permanent residents. They are an increasingly diverse group. Some have a very long association with the area, being descended from early pioneers, while others are newcomers. Tourist-based industries such as homestays and outdoor

¹ In the 1996 census the total number of dwellings in St Arnaud was 223. Of those, 51 were occupied, while the total number of unoccupied dwellings was 172. The large majority of unoccupied dwellings, 156, are defined as 'residents away'. It is most likely that these dwellings belong to bach owners living elsewhere.

guides are developing alongside small craft businesses, and there are a few freelance professionals running businesses from their homes. Farmers are also an important part of the community. Some have properties adjacent to the mainland island area, while others farm in the nearby Howard Valley and other areas.

Local residents talked about why they lived in St Arnaud:

We moved here because of the lifestyle, the skiing, the tramping, the boating. It's a good school and a small community.

There's a fair degree of local support for the Project. Many people live here by choice because of the environment.

Two local organisations of residents and ratepayers are active on community matters. The St Arnaud Community Association mainly represents bach owners, while the Rotoiti District Community Council is based on a ward system and represents residents in St Arnaud and the surrounding district. The St Arnaud Community Association in particular has taken an active interest in the project and has instigated wasp control in the St Arnaud village. Both associations circulate information about the project in their newsletters.

Another key group belonging to the area is tangata whenua. While tangata whenua do not have a visible presence in the St Arnaud area, they have long and enduring traditional associations. This evaluation has not included consideration of DOC's project advocacy in relation to tangata whenua, although some issues are outlined in Section 11.4.

4. Advocacy for the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project

4.1. THE PROJECT'S ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES AND AIMS

Advocacy is a large component of the project. One main objective, two secondary objectives and five aims are devoted to advocacy. These objectives and aims are detailed in Table 1.

They can be condensed into five key areas:

- To increase public access to the mainland island.
- To increase community involvement and ownership of the project.
- To provide an education resource.
- To achieve a high profile for the project.
- To convey the key message of pest control.

TABLE 1. ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES AND AIMS FOR THE ROTOITI NATURE RECOVERY PROJECT

M A I N O B J E C T I V E	S E C O N D A R Y O B J E C T I V E S	A I M S
To advocate for indigenous species conservation and long-term pest control, by providing an accessible example of a functioning honeydew beech forest ecosystem, so a large number of people can experience a beech forest in as near-to-pristine condition as possible.	Develop 'ownership' of the project by the people of St Arnaud and the wider Nelson and Marlborough communities.	Develop a high public profile for the project, enhancing opportunities for its key message to be put across.
	Use the project as an educational resource for local schools and colleges.	Develop and seek opportunities to express the key message that the conservation of indigenous species requires the control of pests. The use of poisons, shooting and traps are currently the only practical options for this control.
		Develop opportunities to involve the St Arnaud and wider community in the project.
		Extend the work of the project into the St Arnaud area through the involvement of its community.
		Develop opportunities for schools to contribute to the project and achieve education outcomes at the same time.

Staff also note the wider advocacy potential of the project. Firstly, if people hold positive opinions about what is being done with the mainland island, they may develop positive views about other DOC work. Secondly, staff can raise awareness of conservation issues through the mainland island work, such as the impacts of pests, ecosystem relationships, and the uniqueness of New Zealand flora and fauna.

The forest is easy for people to visit and has great interpretation potential. Advocacy is integral to the whole project. (Area Office staff member)

4.2 TARGET GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

While 'target groups' have not been explicitly defined in relation to particular advocacy activities, the project team has placed a clear emphasis on some groups over others. In particular, the objective of developing ownership of the project has prompted the emphasis on involving the St Arnaud community in the project, and also the wider Nelson and Marlborough communities (see Table 1).

The project team has identified the adult members of the St Arnaud community as its first priority for advocacy. Within this group, priority is on full-time residents first and then bach owners. Those with land bordering the project area are a particular focus. The project team considers these groups to be important because they are potentially the most affected by the project, and can influence the project through their support or opposition.

Four audiences make up the project team's second priority group:

- Students at Lake Rotoiti School are seen as an important audience for the project. This is based on assumptions about the potential for students to raise the environmental awareness of adults, and the need to educate children about the environment so that as adults they will protect and care for the environment.
- Nelson and Marlborough secondary schools who use Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge.
- The Nelson and Marlborough populations are key groups, as many bach owners and visitors to the National Park come from these areas.
- DOC staff in the St Arnaud Area Office, Conservancy Office and Head Office and the Minister of Conservation are also considered by the project team to be key audiences for advocacy. The project is one of the mainland island showcases and, as such, relies on the wider support of the Department for funding. At St Arnaud, the separation between DOC staff and those employed specifically on the project also means that relationships must be built between the project and other functional areas, such as pest management and advocacy.

Of lesser priority for advocacy are people from outside of the Nelson/Marlborough region, and overseas tourists.

4.3 THE RANGE OF ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Since the establishment of the project in 1996/97, staff report that there has been less focus on advocacy than on the pest control and indigenous species objectives. Advocacy activities have been developed in an ad hoc way, as most resources have been channelled into pest control and monitoring. However, in future the project intends to develop a more strategic approach to advocacy that will focus on:

- developing and maintaining a high profile for the project
- managing issues of concern to the public, such as pest control and the use of poisons
- education programmes with Lake Rotoiti School and Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge,
- visitor services and interpretation, and
- involvement of volunteers in the project.

Despite the project's emphasis on predator control and indigenous species objectives, since 1997 advocacy has grown to encompass a variety of approaches. The first efforts at informing and engaging locals and the wider public were made through big events highlighting the establishment and progress of the project. After the profile of the project was established, easily accessible tracks and interpretation were developed so that visitors could experience the project area first-hand. The "Revive Rotoiti" newsletter was established at the start of the project and has been

maintained. Activities with the local school have also been a consistent feature. The project co-ordinator has found that requests from groups for talks and guided walks have steadily increased, to the extent that it is now difficult to accommodate all requests. Up to the end of 1999, the advocacy activities have included:

- The project launch in February 1997 with guests including the Minister of Conservation, the Mayor of Tasman District, and Sir David Attenborough. A large crowd of between 400 and 500 people attended. Activities included children from Lake Rotoiti School reading their pledge and poems, poster displays and guided bush walks. TVNZ news, national radio and local media covered the event.
- In January 1998 the Minister of Conservation launched the Wasp Control Programme and DOC's Strategic Business Plan 1998–2002 at St Arnaud. Associates of the department attended the launch. Good coverage was obtained in print media and radio.
- The project's first anniversary was celebrated with an open day in April 1998. The first year's results were presented at this event, which commenced with speeches from the Minister of Conservation, the Mayor of Tasman District, and DOC staff involved in the project. Activities included displays showing the project's results, games for children with a conservation theme, guided walks by staff, and in the evening, a dance at the school hall. The day was well attended and it obtained good coverage in local media. Most of the participants in the afternoon's activities were from the wider Nelson/Marlborough region, with locals attending the dance.
- The 'Revive Rotoiti' newsletter has produced one issue in 1997, two in 1998 and two in 1999. Copies are sent to over 520 people and organisations including St Arnaud residents and bach owners, farmers, iwi, environmental groups, local government, conservation board, Federated Farmers, media and other DOC offices. Newsletters are also on display at the National Park Visitors Centre, and around 50 a month are taken.
- Over 15 talks have been given to a range of organisations including the St Arnaud Community Association, Forest and Bird branches, university and school students, recreational/outdoor clubs, and service clubs.
- Public meetings and talks, including DOC's community forums have been held in Nelson and Murchison.
- There have been guided walks around the project site for over 15 groups and organisations such as school groups, the Local Government Association, Japanese Girl Guides, Tasman and Marlborough Forest and Bird, tourists from a cruise liner berthed at Picton, and participants in the NZ Ecological Society Conference.
- Media liaison has included press releases and hosting a visit by journalists to the project site. Project advocacy has focused on contacting local newspapers, community newsletters and local radio. At first the key messages were the creation of a possum-free future, kaka breeding and stoat control, and undertaking the country's largest wasp control operation. These messages have been added to, with provision of information about the beech 'mast' and increasing rodent population, and visitor service developments. A UK team has filmed a kaka nest for a documentary. Magazine articles have also been written by visiting journalists.
- Activities with Lake Rotoiti School have included a competition to develop a slogan for the project—"Revive Rotoiti"; a survey of cats in St Arnaud, which

has been used to raise awareness of predation by cats and to identify pets when live trapping is undertaken; for the first anniversary of the project the production of a quilt, which hangs in the Visitor Centre; and monitoring the robins in St Arnaud village.

- Activities with 6th form biology students at Rotoiti Lodge have included forest description, honeydew monitoring and niche separation in streams.
- On-site interpretation and displays have been developed to promote the project. Two short walks have been developed, one of which is suitable for wheelchairs. The walks incorporate interpretation boards. A 'gateway' to the project area is planned.
- Visitor Centre displays have developed over the last two years. They include information on the project's aims and personnel, advice to the public on the poisoning programme, using a stuffed possum and a bait station, and presentation of the results of kaka research and NZ bush falcon research, displays by Lake Rotoiti School, a map of the walks in the project area, and details on what else is planned for the project.
- There has been some volunteer involvement and work-based training, although these opportunities are under-developed at present. The project has so far provided opportunities for four types of volunteers—overseas visitors able to spend periods of up to six months on the project; short periods of work-based training for tertiary students from universities, polytechnics and private training establishments; three short periods of work-based training for Conservation Corps students; and short-term volunteers, although this has been very limited. In 1999, locals and members of clubs were involved in two days of tree planting and restoration in an area of old track and gravel roadway near the entrance to the project.

An open day was held in February 2000, after the fieldwork for this evaluation was completed.

4.4 RESOURCES FOR ADVOCACY

An annual budget of around \$10,000 has been available for advocacy activities such as newsletters and events. In addition, \$45,000 for new track construction and \$30,000 for interpretation panels have contributed to advocacy.

The project does not have its own dedicated advocacy position. Instead, advocacy for the project is undertaken as part of one position in the Area Office, and must be undertaken in conjunction with other demands and priorities. Staff employed solely on the project also undertake advocacy as part of their work. In the 1999/2000 financial year 480 hours were budgeted for advocacy.¹

¹ Advocacy hours will rise to 922 hours in the 2000/2001 financial year, reflecting an increase in demand for activities such as walks and talks, a booklet on controlling cats and dogs, and promotion of wasp control.

4.5 ADVOCACY PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Advocacy data for the project is currently collected in five areas: number of media contacts; number of on-site events; number of meetings with associates and community; volunteer activities; and visitor programme events. The number of visits to the Visitor Information Centre is also collected, and a new underground track counter is being trialled on the Bellbird and Honeydew walks.

5. Awareness of and views about the project

5.1 AWARENESS OF THE PROJECT

All except one of the 48 participants in the evaluation had heard of the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project. The local resident who had not heard of the project could, however, name the Revive Rotoiti slogan unprompted. Three others (residents and bach owners) said that they had not heard much about the project, but they were aware of the newsletter and the interpretation displays.

The main understanding people have about the project is that it involves intensive pest control in a confined area. A few considered themselves to be knowledgeable about the project. Most of the participants were not only aware of the project, but had also thought about it prior to the evaluation. Some had thought about it quite deeply and identified a range of issues. Only two participants, local residents, expressed lack of interest in the project.

5.2 POSITIVE VIEWS

The Area Office has received letters in support of the project from members of Forest and Bird Society branches, visitors to St Arnaud and local residents. These include positive comments about the Revive Rotoiti newsletter, donations and offers of help. The very few written criticisms that have been received have raised issues about the placement of the display boards at the entrance to the project, roaming dogs, and the need for fencing the project area. Participants' comments about the project echoed these letters of support, and were overwhelmingly positive. The project was often described as 'a great concept', and 'a marvellous idea'.

I feel quite passionate about the project, it's crucial to New Zealanders. It's innovative and captures the real essence. There is a lot of fascinating information that could be used to capture people's imagination. The project has huge potential and is quite exciting ... as a nation we are losing birds every day ... we need to look at ways of trying to change disastrous ecology. (Bach owner)

The example is worthwhile to show people what it could be like, what the standard should be, what we should expect and aspire to in terms of conservation. (Bach owner)

The Project is well known in the village ... It is significant and should get priority. (Local resident)

Participants expressed broad support for the project, irrespective of how much they knew about its aims and details. Participants said they supported the project for the following reasons:

- The increase in bird life in St Arnaud, which is seen to enhance the special unspoiled character of the village environment.
- The tourism and economic benefits to the community as a result of people being able to visit an easily accessible natural area.
- The project is compatible with people choosing to live in St Arnaud for lifestyle and environmental reasons.
- The project will benefit threatened species.

Participants considered that the benefits of the project are very much about enhancing the quality of life in the community, not just about intrinsic conservation or ecological benefits.

Some people said they were initially sceptical, but now gave qualified support to the project. This change seems to have come about through increased exposure to information about the project, and seeing the tangible increase in bird life in the park and village.

The more I look at what they do, the more I think that in the long term, it's probably quite beneficial. (Farmer)

My thoughts were that there would be bugger all difference in 20 years, but I have been pleasantly surprised. (Bach owner)

5.3 RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT

Despite the many positive comments, there are serious concerns about some aspects of the project. One person was against the project as he considered it a waste of money, and criticised the focus of pest control on a relatively small area. Others, while not against the project, nevertheless voiced reservations. They raised issues about the project's long-term future, DOC's pest control activities, the promotion of DOC through the project, and the implications of the project for development in the area.

Several participants were concerned about the project's long-term viability, and the uncertainty of on-going funding. Their concern was that funding would be cut and the gains made would be wasted.

It's good to see it [the mainland island] happening, but it probably can never be maintained as an on-going thing. How do you carry it on in bigger areas? How do you use what you've learned from it? It comes down to how much money government's going to put in. (Local resident)

It's got to be a 20 year Project. Its success will create demand for other areas to be recovered. Utopia is unaffordable, but you've got to start somewhere, to show what's possible. (Bach owner)

Others questioned DOC's ability to maintain pest control in the project site at present levels, and whether the project was giving pest control appropriate priority. There was a perception that project staff spent too much time in the office on paperwork and on monitoring, rather than on pest control in the field. There were also general concerns about DOC's ability to control pests on public conservation land. Support for more money to be spent on pest control was not only voiced by farmers.

What they're doing on the mainland island project is part of a wider effort [of possum control] ... but part of the farmers' problem stems from the DOC estate. (Bach owner)

I appreciate what DOC is trying to do, but it's a waste of money to landscape the foreshore. They should spend more money on pest control. (Bach owner)

The mainland idea is great, but it would be nice if DOC looked after the whole of their estate ... local farmers ... there is a big push to eradicate possums. There is a perception that DOC is doing nothing except on a few sites. If we could work together it would be sensible ... a lot of farmers see the mainland island as wasted money and misdirected resources. (Farmer)

Tb is not in this area yet, but it's close ... the biggest problem is backing on to DOC estate and they haven't got the dollars for Tb control. They can't assist the farmer moneywise with pest control ... DOC should be preventing Tb from coming into the area. (Farmer)

Some participants were particularly anxious that not enough was being done to retain the Tb-free status of the area. Farmers were especially concerned about a lack of co-ordination between DOC, Tasman District Council and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to make the most of the project's potential benefits and research findings concerning pest control. However, the shortcomings in co-ordination were not considered to be the fault of DOC.

Participants also commented on what they saw as unnecessary expenditure on publicising the project, and DOC promoting itself through the project. Participants criticised what they perceived as 'excessive' expenditure on the newsletter, interpretation and 'flash' walkways, rather than increasing expenditure on pest control. Such comments revealed suspicion of a marketing approach being used to

'sell' conservation. This indicates that an approach that does not acknowledge community interest in being involved in conservation may not be well received. These criticisms have implications for how the idea of a mainland island 'showcase' is conveyed.

A strategic approach is required, like a 'friends of' type of approach. Get individuals to advocate to others.... Not throwing money at TV programmes ... DOC doesn't want to be seen as grandstanding and blowing huge sums of money, but it should be making alliances with groups who could be helping.
(Bach owner)

If DOC is doing the job they wouldn't need to publicise it because they would be involving the community ... if they weren't trying to sell themselves with the mainland island, they might have got the community helping with pest control.
(Bach owner)

Finally, a few participants viewed the tourism potential of the project as a two-edged sword. They were concerned that increased public interest in the project and more visitors to St Arnaud would result in infrastructure and subdivision development and consequently threaten the natural, peaceful environment that people love about the area.

6. Community involvement

The support of communities is integral to the mainland island concept, and is reflected in the project's advocacy objective to "develop ownership of the project by the people of St Arnaud and the wider Nelson and Marlborough communities". Having a good relationship with the community is a precondition for developing community involvement, and essential to its maintenance. Participants talked about DOC's relationship with the community as part of their discussion of community involvement. Some of the terms used, such as 'a love-hate relationship', showed the ambiguous nature of that relationship at times. Participants also referred to the need for DOC to be a 'good neighbour', and to 'ask, not tell people'.

This section looks at DOC's general relationship with the community, not specifically in reference to the project. Participants continually raised a number of issues that have influenced their views about DOC. These issues centre around two aspects. The first is the impact of DOC activities outside of the project area on individuals and communities. The second is DOC's responses to the activities of other central and local government agencies, particularly in relation to development.

Participants told of a range of incidents that have affected their views of DOC. These included the control of hunting activities, such as the opening up of some public conservation land for helicopter shooting of deer, and hunters shooting deer with fawns at foot. Examples were also given of what was seen as zealous behaviour

in the removal of non-native trees that had some historic value in the local farming community. A common concern was a perceived lack of pest control on public conservation land outside of the project area, a point dealt with in Section 5.3. Another set of negative comments focused on perceptions of DOC's environmental record, reflecting anxieties about development on the lake foreshore and park tracks. Some considered that DOC actions had damaged the environment.

Some bach owners thought that DOC could be more active in promoting conservation to other agencies and challenging development that is seen to threaten the St Arnaud environment. Three issues were repeatedly raised: proposals for new subdivisions in the St Arnaud area, the village sewerage scheme, and the District Council's decision not to produce a special plan for St Arnaud.

DOC has changed, it's more tourist oriented. It's taking a non-controversial stance on matters where it should be taking a more proactive position. (Bach owner)

We should be seeing DOC as the champion of wildlife. (Bach owner)

DOC could be more proactive in getting buffers between its estate and development. (Bach owner)

Plans can recognise that certain wilderness areas should be left alone, but we can't seem to recognise St Arnaud in a special way. The qualities in a place like St Arnaud are worth preserving. (Bach owner)

6.1 POSITIVE VIEWS

Most local residents said that the Area Office was doing a good job, and did not think that there was anything more staff should or could do. Some participants who were positive about DOC's relationship with the community contrasted it with what they had experienced elsewhere. For example, three farmers commented that there was not a 'them and us' situation at St Arnaud. They put it down to DOC staff offering to help, and taking the time to develop relationships. Almost all participants made very positive comments about individual staff, and even those who were critical of DOC as an organisation, were generally complimentary about staff efforts. Area Office staff are seen as approachable and willing to provide advice.

DOC has an excellent image in the community. (Local resident)

DOC does a good community service in Nelson with the community forum. (Bach owner)

DOC tries very hard to relate to the community. (Bach owner)

They talk to you, joke about the rugby or whatever, and then say that they noticed the ragwort, and by the way, they sprayed it. No way would they say 'get rid of your ragwort' just like that ... with DOC and farmers, they generally meet in the middle. In some other places, there are entrenched ideas on both sides. (Farmer)

6.2 NEGATIVE VIEWS

While some participants considered that DOC's relationship with the community is working well, several people, mostly bach owners, considered that DOC as an organisation has a long way to go in working with the community. Associated with this was a view that DOC is more comfortable working with wildlife than with people. Participants emphasised that two areas need attention. These are consultation, and providing opportunities for more 'hands on' involvement.

DOC is so busy controlling the public, it is not seeing if people have information to help them. They're not setting up ways of finding out ... in the past people knew the rangers. Everyone knew what everyone else was doing. If you want a result you engage the community, you don't engage consultants ... people are part of the environment and DOC need to talk to people who have done quite well in looking after the environment ... DOC could be a facilitator ... draw on the wisdom of people in the community. (Bach owner)

The best way of relaying information is personal ... DOC has a problem with its interface with people ... DOC has a long way to go in getting alongside people ... scientists are suddenly thrust into a community interface role ... without the training or understanding of where people are coming from ... DOC have a love-hate relationship with the community. It's important that they have community support. They have a statutory role to promote conservation, but conservation is easier to carry out without people. (Bach owner)

You've got to inspire people and get them involved. (Bach owner)

It's tunnel vision ... [DOC] can be obsessional, bureaucratic. It gets people's backs up. They tell the community what's going to happen, it's not asking the community ... it's a National Park, for people ... we need a bit more say ... DOC needs to have a bit more flexibility. (Local resident)

6.3 CONSULTATION

Everyone—local residents, farmers, and bach owners—expressed concerns about consultation. Some participants considered that although DOC has consulted in the past, it has not always fully listened to and taken account of local views. Nor did they feel that DOC is drawing on local skills and acknowledging people's knowledge of and care for the environment. DOC was characterised as an organisation that consulted, but did not necessarily listen to or act on suggestions given. One person considered that there is too much reliance on formal consultation methods, such as submissions, and would like to see more informal opportunities for conveying views. There was also a perception that DOC tends to seek the views of 'traditional' stakeholder groups, such as outdoor recreation and conservation organisations, and that a wider range of perspectives is not sought.

I don't agree with some of the changes on the foreshore, and feel powerless. (Bach owner)

[DOC] needs to talk to people who have done quite well in looking after the environment ... more damage has been done in the last 5 to 10 years than by generations of families. (Bach owner)

There is a perception that consultation over the carpark [at Kerr Bay] was not seen to be fair and taking account of the full range of views. (Local resident)

Central government policy makers should consult more widely ... they need a more representative balance of groups that they consult with. (Farmer)

6.4 'HANDS-ON' INVOLVEMENT

So far there has been little practical involvement of members of the public in the project, apart from one tree-planting day. However, there is interest among retired residents, some bach owners, and members of groups such as Forest and Bird, in working on the project.

I would be interested in assisting. I have been to Kapiti, and seen what a rehabilitated area is like. (Bach owner)

DOC potentially has huge public support. There is a lot of goodwill out there. (Bach owner)

I'd like to be involved. It gives people a sense of belonging. (Bach owner)

DOC's relying on a paper-based form of communication, rather than a personal approach ... Park staff need to know what people are thinking and translate it into action. ... visit every single household and find out what people are thinking and see if they can help. (Bach owner)

Get the community involved in tree planting, bird surveys and wasp control. (Local resident)

We have put our names down and have never been contacted. (Local resident)

One area where local residents and bach owners have already taken the initiative is on wasp control in the village. The St Arnaud Community Association has been able to undertake this work through funding from various sources including the former Trustbank, the Lotteries Board, the Tasman District Council and also donations from property owners and local businesses. Wasp control was started in the village, mainly by one man, in 1995, and grew to involve a keen group of property owners. In 1997 close on 600 nests were destroyed in the village and the following year 1100 nests were destroyed.

The Community Association's wasp control programme has a high profile locally. It has been active in advising local property owners about the programme, and helping them deal with wasp nests:

We destroy wasp nests on our own section. The wasps haven't been as bad as 10 years ago - you couldn't walk around without your shoes on. The control programme has worked. (Bach owner)

I'm aware of the wasp control. I know where to report and what to do. The Association is very active in going round and talking to house owners. (Local resident)

Yes, I've lined up to help with the wasp control in the village. (Bach owner)

Because most of the village is outside of public conservation land, DOC's role in wasp control in the village has been limited in the past. Several participants considered that DOC should actively support this initiative. While DOC staff are not responsible for killing nests on private properties in the village, they have put some time into killing nests around the village, provided technical assistance to residents and bach owners in monitoring and poisoning, and training to undertake the poisoning. Staff have also provided input into the Association's funding proposals. One participant reported that recently the Area Office has indicated that it wishes to work in conjunction with the Association to reduce wasp numbers.

Being a good neighbour requires you to cross the fence sometime, to understand, assist and encourage. It would be worth [DOC's] while to extend themselves in that direction. (Bach owner)

There is the impression that DOC is not interested in anything outside of the park boundary - DOC wasn't interested in residents' efforts at wasp control until the mainland island started. DOC could support wasp control around the village. (Bach owner)

Areas on the DOC estate not in the mainland area are a major source of [wasp] infestation. (Local resident)

Bach owners in particular suggested how DOC could increase community involvement:

- Establish a "Friends of the Project" group that could be actively involved in promoting and supporting the project.
- Make greater use of local residents and bach owners as volunteers.
- Forge alliances with other organisations to work towards common goals, e.g. Federated Farmers, conservation organisations.
- Make direct contact with residents and bach owners to discuss the project, e.g. by door knocking.

7. Information provision

Providing information to the public and organisations is an important prerequisite for achieving the project's advocacy objectives. The evaluation asked participants what they thought about the general provision of information on the project. Participants were also asked about their views on the newsletter, the main information dissemination vehicle associated with the project.

Most participants were positive about the amount and range of information on the project, and considered information to be readily available. Only a few thought that too much information was provided about the project. They considered that there was too much emphasis on 'telling people about DOC', instead of doing the job. But in general, participants wanted more rather than less information. Some acknowledged that DOC might find it difficult to communicate more widely, because of restricted resources and having to communicate with a transient population of visitors and bach owners.

They are doing a good job in informing people. It's in the school and in the community newsletter. DOC is bending over backwards. The whole DOC team is very community minded. (Farmer)

People know what's happening and if they wanted to find out more, it wouldn't be difficult to do. (Farmer)

You have to tell people what's going on, and it's pretty professionally done. (Bach owner)

7.1 INFORMATION GAPS

There appear to be some information gaps. Several people said that they were unclear about the purpose of the project, what is happening in terms of management of the rest of the park, and what might happen to the project in the long term. There was also interest in what exactly staff do on the project day to day, and interest in successes and results, even though these might be relatively minor. The Area Office has also received requests for practical advice on pest control, such as how to deal with wasp nests, and how to kill stoats.

I would like more information about what's happening. There is increasing interest in science and conservation. The challenge for DOC is to find ways of interpreting that information to people. (Bach owner)

If it works, what next? Will it be extended to other areas, or other parks? I haven't read anything about where it leads to. (Bach owner)

Some people in the community may not be aware of what's happening, especially those that haven't come here specifically to live near the park. (Local resident)

We had one of our children's birthday party at the visitor centre, and DOC staff gave a talk about the mainland island project. They were excellent with the kids. This sort of thing needs to be on-going. (Local resident)

Participants suggested that the flow of information could be increased by:

- using a web site
- supplementing the newsletter with 'updates' such as one-page fliers, perhaps every 2 months.
- giving evening talks at the Visitor Information Centre in the summer.
- reinstating summer programmes.
- guided walks of the project area, including 'behind the scenes' guided walks, with a focus on exploring and explaining some of the science and technical aspects of the project.

7.2 THE REVIVE ROTOITI NEWSLETTER

Most participants were familiar with the Revive Rotoiti newsletter and liked what they had seen of it. They described it as 'chatty', 'easy to understand' and 'a good communication medium'.

I read it thoroughly ... it is nice to receive facts and figures of what they've achieved. (Local resident)

We skim through it, it's very informative on what is going on, keeping people up with the play. (Local resident)

We are waiting for the next one ... friends in Richmond have asked when is the next one out. (Local resident)

It's one of the few newsletters I read right through. They've done well informing the public (Bach owner)

Although the newsletter is generally well received, there were some criticisms that:

- The newsletter helps to maintain awareness of the project, but it is mainly targeted to people who already know about the project.
- The newsletter is too infrequent.
- Information provided is too academic, it is not pitched to be accessible to lay people.
- Regular visitors to St Arnaud do not automatically get newsletters, although they may be interested in the project.
- The newsletter is costly to produce, and money would be better spent on the project itself.
- The newsletter is a vehicle for DOC to promote itself, which is unnecessary.

Two people were strongly of the view that the newsletter is a waste of money, and one said:

Money that should be spent on getting on with the job and dealing with pests. ... if DOC is doing the job, it doesn't need to publicise it, because it would be involving the community ...instead of the newsletter, DOC should conduct walks, and teach people how to control pests. (Bach owner)

8. Visitor services

This section presents participants' views on the display about the project in the Visitor Information Centre, the on-site interpretation panels, and the new short walks that lead into the mainland island area. While the Visitor Information Centre displays were generally well liked, there were strongly diverging views about both the on-site panels and the short walks.

8.1 THE VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE DISPLAYS

The numbers visiting the Visitor Information Centre have steadily risen. In earlier years, when counts were taken from the porch, which is open 24 hours, numbers rose from just over 60 000 visitors in 1992/93 to almost 74 000 in 1997/98. Recent figures, which are taken from a counter at the internal door and therefore exclude people who only come into the porch, also show a continuing rise.

The Centre includes an area devoted to displays about the project. The displays include information on the project's aims and personnel, advice to the public on the poisoning programme, presentation of the results of kaka research and NZ bush falcon research, displays by Lake Rotoiti School, a map of the walks in the project area, and details on what else is planned for the project. Most participants commented favourably on the displays about the project, although one person thought that the displays were 'contrived'.

I really enjoy the visitor centre. It's nice when displays change. It's a wonderful resource. (Bach owner)

The stuffed animals are marvellous. It's really worthwhile, you can see what they're really like. (Bach owner)

If we have overseas visitors we would make a point of taking them to see the displays. (Farmer)

Suggestions for improving the displays in the Visitor Information Centre about the project include:

- change the displays regularly;
- introduce more interactive displays;
- provide interpretation on the stuffed mustelids; and
- provide a video on the project.

8.2 ON-SITE INTERPRETATION

Four large panels providing information about the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, the forest ecosystem and the Bellbird and Honeydew walks are situated at the beginning of the project area at Kerr Bay. They have been in place since June 1999. Several participants had not seen the panels, either because they did not walk the

tracks in the park, or because they had not had a chance to see the relatively new panels. One person had seen the panels, but said their family had walked past without reading them.

Participants voiced opposing views about the interpretation panels, although more were in favour than against. Local residents were much more likely to be in favour of the panels than bach owners. Those who liked the panels appreciated having the information on-site, and described the panels as 'colourful', 'attractive' and 'not the usual DOC style'. A local tourism operator who provides guided walks on tracks in the park considered that the panels enhance visitors' experience. Three other local business people said that they told visitors about the short walks and displays. One was keen to have a display about the project in his hostel. He also had information on the project, including the newsletters, available for guests.

The panels are really good. I use it with the kids—stop and talk about it. (Local resident)

Won't it be nice when the rest [of the interpretation panels] are there too! Very good and informative. I hope people do stop to read them. It's got to be bright and eye-catching so people will stop, and brief and to the point, otherwise people won't stop to read it. I think they've got it just right. (Bach owner)

In general, participants considered the information contained on the panels and the artwork to be of high quality. It is the placement of the panels in the park that upsets people. The panels' placement at the entrance to the park is considered to both detract from the natural environment, and to alter the quality of experience visitors have. There were suggestions that interpretation panels were better placed at the Visitor Information Centre or elsewhere.

There were some specific comments about the presentation and content of the panels. These included:

- some of the lettering is too small for older people to read;
- the boards are too high for children to read; and
- none of the information is translated for overseas visitors.

The locals' focus group suggested that the panels could be supplemented with a pamphlet that would provide information on points of interest on the walk. A pamphlet would also provide visitors with a memento of their visit.

It's better to have real wilderness ... the boards are nice, but not in keeping with wilderness ... it's like going into Disneyworld. (Bach owner)

They are putting up too many signs. The display boards are helpful to visitors, but they don't need to be on site. The aim should be to preserve the naturalness. It's gone too far, the naturalness is being threatened. (Bach owner)

I haven't read the boards, I just rush past them to get into the bush. (Bach owner)

What's on the panels is interesting and well done, but I don't like the siting of it. (Bach owner)

It's a challenge to think creatively, rather than sticking big noticeboards there. You could display it at the Lodge, or shop, or information centre instead. Keep the natural environment like it is. (Bach owner)

We don't want Te Papa in the park. (Bach owner)

8.3 THE BELLBIRD AND HONEYDEW WALKS

The two short tracks at the beginning of the project, the Bellbird and Honeydew walks, are an important means of promoting the project as they encourage access to the mainland island. The shorter walk of 15 minutes is of wheelchair standard, and the longer track of 45 minutes is of high standard and easy grade.

Participants were divided in their opinions about these walks. Bach owners tended to think that the tracks are over-constructed and ruin the ambience of the area. Others, particularly local residents, considered that the walks are an important means of introducing people to the park and the project. Although some said they were initially against improving the standard of tracks, they now acknowledge the role of the walks in promoting the project. As one person said, 'it reaches out to everybody'.

There are contrasting views on the Bellbird and Honeydew tracks:

I would rather DOC increased awareness of pests, rather than spending money on tracks. (Bach owner)

There's a lot of money been spent on the foreshore and park entrance. I wish some of that money could be spent on huts. I love the interpretation information, but do the tracks need to be that high a standard? (Local resident)

If [the tracks] help to raise awareness and if they don't have adverse effects, then it's great—for day trippers. (Bach owner)

There is a fantastic standard of track, a wonderful concept for people who for whatever reason can't go far. (Local resident)

The public effect on the conservation estate is increasing. It's difficult to maintain pristine values. Keep people in confined areas. There's a lot of sense in that ... there is a conflict between nature recovery and public access. [DOC is] probably handling it reasonably well by having the short walks. (Bach owner)

8.4 THE KERR BAY FORESHORE

Participants raised a wide range of issues about the lake foreshore at Kerr Bay. They did not differentiate between these matters and the project. The following issues were raised:

- A preference that car access to the foreshore is maintained.
- A desire for a restriction on tour buses on the foreshore.
- Concern that the foreshore area is not 'over-landscaped'.

- The need for shade trees on the perimeter of the foreshore for parking under.
- A lack of rubbish bins on the foreshore, and no information to direct people to bins in the day shelter.
- Concern that boat launching may be confined to the jetty at the other end of Kerr Bay.
- A perception that there are too many signs, such as traffic signs and signs about the mainland island, that intrude on the lake view.

9. Involving schools

One of the project's advocacy objectives is to use the project as an educational resource for local schools and colleges, and one of its five aims is to develop opportunities for schools to contribute to the project and achieve education outcomes at the same time. As the project's main link is with the local primary school, Lake Rotoiti School, the evaluation included discussions with three teachers and nine senior students about activities concerning the mainland island. Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge also provides important advocacy opportunities with secondary schools in the Nelson and Marlborough regions, and one of its teachers participated in the evaluation.

9.1 LAKE ROTOITI SCHOOL

The nine senior students were keen to talk about the involvement of DOC staff with the school. The main activity the students discussed was the robin monitoring, although they also talked about making a wall hanging, and writing poems about the project.

The students had a high level of recall about the robin monitoring, which had been completed shortly before the evaluation. They reported on the reasons for monitoring the robins, how they found the robins and their nests, how the robins were banded, and how to tell male and female robins apart. The students most liked outdoor 'hands-on' activities. Everyone said that 'going out and doing stuff' was best. They liked feeding the robins, looking at the chicks and naming the robins. They also liked getting media coverage about their robin monitoring in the Nelson newspaper.

The students talked about what they had done:

We grew meal worms in the classroom, and had to find the robins by playing a tape ... we were shown how to band, but didn't try it ourselves.

I liked feeding the robins, and looking at the chicks and making friends with the robins and naming them.

The students were very clear about what they did not like. They tended to get bored by talks, especially if they are too long. Some did not enjoy the robin monitoring because they were in a group where nothing much happened. Report writing was not liked.

The students were interested in learning more about the project and made suggestions about information that could be provided to the school:

- Details about pest control, e.g. where trapping occurs; what traps are used.
- Demonstrations of the work DOC does in the project area.
- Information about other birds in the project area.
- Information about species that may be brought into the project area in the future.
- Information about other work that DOC does.

The students also made some suggestions about interpretation of the mainland island. These included:

- Guided walks to see robins.
- More use of interactive models in the visitor centre.
- Production of a video about the project.
- A worksheet listing things to look out for on walks—this would be like an educational version of the treasure hunt game.

Teachers at Lake Rotoiti School were complimentary about individual DOC staff who have been involved with the school. They have appreciated being invited by DOC to participate in the project, and acknowledge that DOC has expressed its appreciation to the school for its contribution to the project. The teachers considered that exposure to the project has increased students' understanding and awareness of conservation issues. In their view the school's activities have also raised awareness among parents. The teachers reported positive feedback from most parents who have been involved.

Local residents and farmers with children at the school said:

What they have done with the school with the robins is wonderful. Other schools wouldn't get the opportunity.

I would like the male DOC staff to do more with the school—as positive role models for boys.

It's great for the kids ... being able to recognise the robins, the kids enjoyed that. They talk about it at home.

But the teachers also emphasised that the school's involvement has meant extra work for teachers in linking the activities to the curriculum. They feel that some activities have benefited DOC more than they have benefited the school. The teachers identified specific ways that DOC could help them by:

- becoming familiar with the curriculum, and identifying how DOC activities can contribute to meeting the curriculum's requirements. The school is driven by the national curriculum. This means that information from DOC is much more likely to be used and appreciated if it is compatible with the curriculum and 'ready to use' in the classroom.

- providing a range of activities and topics that it can offer the school. The curriculum must be adequately covered, so the same activity cannot be done year after year.
- providing classroom resources. Schools are always on the lookout for teaching resources. Information from DOC is more likely to be used if it is in a form that can contribute to teaching, such as videos, articles and work sheets. The resources need to be easy to follow and relevant to the teaching environment. The teachers contrasted the dearth of resources provided by DOC with the extensive kits provided by organisations such as the National Heart Foundation and others involved in health promotion.
- providing information that is not technically difficult, and that is easy to use and adapt in the classroom.
- giving adequate notice of activities that DOC would like to do with the school. Teachers plan well ahead, usually a term and sometimes a year ahead.

The teachers' views of DOC's work with the school were mainly positive:

The kids have been told by DOC that their work is really appreciated.

The activities have definitely enhanced the pupils' attitudes. They have developed an understanding of human impacts. That's a plus.

[DOC staff member] is absolutely wonderful working with the kids.

9.2 THE ROTOITI OUTDOOR EDUCATION LODGE

The Lodge provides outdoor education for 4th and 6th formers from 13 Nelson and Marlborough schools a year. DOC has a close relationship with the Lodge and is in the process of transferring the ownership of the Lodge buildings to the education trust that runs the Lodge. The Area Office is keen to develop its relationship with the trust, with closer liaison between the two organisations.

The Lodge teacher who participated in the evaluation considered that DOC staff are very supportive of the Lodge. They are available for talks on request, and also provide practical help. Their educational involvement was considered essential for providing sound and up-to-date scientific and technical information to both teachers and students.

Currently the Lodge does not strongly focus on the mainland island and there is potential to increase the awareness and involvement of the Lodge with the project. The project co-ordinator considers there is significant potential to develop education programmes with the Lodge, and discussions have been held with Lodge staff on future educational activities. In particular the 6th form biology classes may be able to assist with some research. There is also potential for more Lodge use of the project for outdoor activities. Students walk through part of the project area, but do not use the Bellbird and Honeydew walks. The teacher at the Lodge indicates that groups will use those walks when all interpretation boards are in place.

There is a major opportunity for the Area Office to work with both the local school and the Lodge on activities that fit with the new environmental education

guidelines¹. The Lodge teacher considered that this is a significant document, which will provide a framework for the Lodge to align its activities with curriculum objectives. Use of the guidelines in developing activities to do with the mainland island will increase the educational relevance and credibility of those activities for students.

10. What works well

Participants were asked what DOC was doing well in informing and involving the public in the project. Some participants said a particular advocacy technique was effective, while others referred to more general approaches that were working well. While positive comments were made about the newsletter and the display panels, these were also criticised by a number of people. A few people also mentioned a specific television programme, or something they had seen on the internet, but there was not enough awareness of these for participants to consistently identify them as successful advocacy initiatives.

Two approaches clearly stood out as being seen to work well. These were contrasting approaches—the ‘big events’ such as the opening ceremony and the open day, on the one hand, and one-to-one communication between staff and individuals on the other. There was also strong support for pest control. Although pest control is not an advocacy tool, the results of pest control convey an important message about the project.

10.1 BIG EVENTS

Participants clearly associated the opening ceremony and open day with the project. All those participants who attended the opening were very positive about the value of such events, mentioning the useful information provided about the project, the opportunity for guided walks, the guest speakers, and the involvement of the Lake Rotoiti School.

I went to the opening ceremony and enjoyed it. It was very interesting. It was a coup getting David Attenborough—you wouldn't have got the people if it hadn't been for him. (Bach owner)

We came to the opening—the family came from Nelson, Auckland and Christchurch. (Bach owner)

It was a nice day out and a good way for DOC to talk to people about what's happening. (Local resident)

¹ Ministry of Education. 1999: *Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools*. The guidelines provide practical suggestions for planning environmental education programmes, and show how to link environmental education to different areas of the curriculum, such as science, technology, social studies, English, maths and Maori language.

The presence of celebrities, such as David Attenborough, at big events is important in endorsing the project and giving it a high profile. However, it was clear from participants' comments that they were not only interested in seeing celebrities. They were at least as interested in the opportunity the big events provide for finding out about the project and experiencing the mainland island first hand, and for socialising with family, friends and neighbours.

Area Office staff are also very supportive of the big events, and consider that they have raised the profile of the mainland island and help to reinforce its status as a relatively unique site. They also see such events as a way of highlighting the value of the project not only to the public, but also to DOC senior managers and the Minister of Conservation.

The Area Office would like the community to become more involved in organising an annual open day, although the level of community interest in doing this has not yet been gauged. There is certainly interest among some local residents and bach owners in having a more active role in the project, and therefore there may be interest in organising an event. However, this would not satisfy some individuals' desire to work on the project itself.¹

10.2 FACE-TO-FACE

Almost all participants had very favourable impressions of Area Office staff. The staff are well known to locals, and are seen to be approachable, knowledgeable and willing to provide assistance.

One staff member observed that local support has grown through day-to-day contact. This has been essential when providing information on pest control activities in the project area. This staff member also commented that locals were less likely than bach owners or visitors to go to the big events, or on guided walks, and therefore it was necessary to maintain one-to-one contact with them. Individual contact with staff working on the project appears to be the main way that some local residents and bach owners get information about the project.

Whenever there has been poisoning or trapping DOC have been brilliant at keeping us informed. (Farmer)

They are very visible in the village, you always see someone around working. (Local resident)

I get information [on the project] informally. (Local resident)

¹ Following receipt of the preliminary findings of the evaluation, the Area Office made a major effort to involve locals. Pupils of Lake Rotoiti School and their parents were closely involved in the preparation of a hangi and a ceremonial arch.

10.3 THE ADVOCACY BENEFITS FROM PEST CONTROL

While pest control is not an advocacy technique, it is an essential advocacy tool for the project. Pest control was mentioned as frequently, and as favourably, as the two advocacy approaches discussed above. Most participants specifically referred to the considerable conservation benefits they have observed since the project has started, such as an increase in bird life, decline in wasps, and increase in undergrowth. They have noticed positive effects from the project in the village as well as in the bush. If the results from the project had not been so obvious, then the project would be much more difficult to promote. In themselves, the positive effects of pest control raise awareness of and increase knowledge about what the project is seeking to achieve. However, these gains are not always self-evident, and do need to be made public.

I reckon there is more bird life than there has been. (Farmer)

Kaka is the most noticeable. They're quite common around the village now. That's directly attributed to the nature recovery. (Local resident)

The project has done a lot of good so far, although I don't fully know the aims of it. There's a vast improvement in the dawn chorus. (Local resident)

The bird life has been absolutely wonderful this year. It hasn't been better. We had weka this year around the cottage. (Bach owner)

I've noticed the mistletoe increasing. (Bach owner)

10.4 STAFF VIEWS ON WHAT IS WORKING WELL

Apart from the big events and face-to-face contact, DOC staff identified other advocacy activities that they thought were working well. These included:

- The establishment of the short walking tracks at the beginning of the project, which have enabled larger numbers of people to experience the project area.
- School involvement. This was seen as a way of getting conservation messages to young people.

While participants were positive about the school's involvement in the project, they were far less agreed on the advocacy benefits of the short tracks. The value of these walks in raising awareness of the project was acknowledged, but some participants also considered they detracted from the natural experience (see Section 8).

11. Issues and improvements

Participants were asked how DOC could improve its advocacy about the project. This generated a very wide range of responses. Some made specific suggestions such as ‘make a television programme on the mainland island’, ‘keep on with the newsletter’ and ‘start up the summer programme again’. Specific suggestions have been noted in previous sections.

Other suggestions were more general and not necessarily about advocacy. These suggestions focused on generating favourable conditions for conservation work and included: the need for more emphasis on appointing conservation advocates to the Conservation Board; a conservation tax on overseas visitors; a special plan for St Arnaud; and calls for DOC to strengthen its conservation advocacy role in communication with other agencies.

Two issues encapsulate the main concerns that arose in the evaluation: these are the need for DOC to increase community involvement, and concern about the future of the mainland island. A third issue is also included here because participants saw it as contentious—the matter of pets in the village. These issues signal areas that planning for mainland island advocacy should take into account.

11.1 INVOLVING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The strongest and most consistent message from participants was that DOC should involve the community more in the project. There is certainly interest in, and willingness to be involved. There is also a feeling of ‘ownership’ of the project in the sense that the project takes place on public land. But there nevertheless seems to be a desire for DOC to maintain overall management, and to show leadership with the project. However, this does not mean ignoring the community. Some considered that DOC has not consciously fostered a sense of community ownership of the project. Others felt that a sense of ownership cannot be artificially instilled, but will naturally arise when people are inspired by the project and given the opportunity for involvement.

Participants saw involvement as not only about getting information, but more importantly, about getting opportunities for hands-on involvement and participating in decisions that affect them. Staff also considered it essential to involve the local community, but perhaps saw involvement being achieved more through information provision and raising awareness of the project, rather than through the community’s active participation. As yet, staff have not placed a high priority on developing participation opportunities.

While not ruling out the development of opportunities for volunteers, staff raised some concerns about increasing the involvement of volunteers, beyond the use of skilled individuals able to spend extended periods of time on the project and through work-based training. Concerns were raised about health and safety issues, and the costs associated with organising volunteer programmes such as supervision, training and equipment. One staff member commented that the use of volunteers would be more for advocacy reasons, than because of the need for assistance.

Some participants were also aware that the use of volunteers could pose difficulties. One bach owner observed that it is not always easy for the public to be involved. Bach owners are only available at certain times, and some lack the required skills. There was also the view that there was responsibility on both sides - that individuals needed to take the initiative, and not leave it to DOC to provide opportunities for involvement.

11.2 THE LONG-TERM FUTURE AND FOCUS OF THE PROJECT

Participants' support and enthusiasm for the project is tempered with some concern about its future. Prior to their involvement in this evaluation, several participants had already thought about whether funding would continue, whether the project is actually a long-term solution for pest control, and whether recreational and restoration goals are compatible.

There is a conflict between encouraging people to tramp, and reviving the area ...why are we doing this? Biological diversity is the main reason. There's a conflict between that and having a showcase that people can visit. (Bach owner)

Some locals considered that the project now has a lower profile than before. They perceived that some of the momentum built up by the big events and the newsletter has dissipated. Those who understand the concept of a mainland island see the project as significant in national terms and consequently expect that information flows and advocacy initiatives will be maintained. This puts some pressure on DOC. There is a risk of over-exposure if every minor thing is reported, and of raised expectations if resources or priorities change. But on the other hand, if people perceive that little is happening, this could also undermine support for the project.

Some locals held the view that the project should not take precedence over the St Arnaud/Lake Rotoiti/National Park experience as a whole, and that the range of activities and experiences associated with the area, such as tramping, boating, skiing, tranquillity and scenic beauty, should come first in promotion. For them, the project comes under the umbrella of the total St Arnaud/Lake Rotoiti/National Park experience.

11.3 PETS IN THE VILLAGE

The issue of pets in the village is a contentious one, with participants differing in their views about whether there is a problem, and if so, how it should be handled. Some were particularly concerned about the impacts of roaming dogs in the project area. Others were concerned about cats, and there was both support for and opposition to the possibility of the village becoming a cat-free zone.

The Area Office appears to be very aware of the sensitivities surrounding pets, and has taken the approach of providing information to local residents, bach owners and holiday makers about the dangers cats in particular can pose to birds. Staff have also made efforts to ensure pet cats and dogs are not killed by pest control measures. One participant was particularly appreciative of the approach taken by DOC in this respect.

It's annoying when you see irresponsible dog owners when your dog is tied up at home. (Bach owner)

I would **not** like not to be able to bring the dog to the bach. But I'm quite happy not to have the dog in the park. (Bach owner)

The only concern that I have ... not enough hard talk is done to bach owners about bringing cats in. ... DOC has got to be stronger in that area. (Local resident)

There's no point in worrying about pets until they get the wild pests sorted out first. (Farmer)

11.4 STAFF VIEWS ON ISSUES AND IMPROVEMENTS

DOC staff also identified issues that they consider the project needs to address. These include: the balance between advocacy benefits and other project outcomes; relationships with iwi; co-ordination with government agencies; and resources for interpretation. These are outlined below.

Balance between advocacy benefits and other project outcomes

DOC staff see advocacy as central to the project, but they are also aware of the possible limitations advocacy may place on the project. For example, more experimental and risky work that may involve controversial techniques or result in setbacks to conservation gains may not find community acceptance. The project has already had to make decisions on whether protection of nest sites is a priority activity, or whether to use bird reproductivity as an indicator of the effectiveness of a particular pest control regime (Saunders 1999:57). Consideration of 'trade-offs' between advocacy benefits and other project outcomes may provide opportunities for informing and involving the community in a meaningful way.

Working with iwi

The evaluation has not focused on DOC's relationship with iwi, as this is a much wider issue than can be covered here. However, some issues have emerged, including:

- difficulties in clarifying which iwi have interests in and manawhenua over the area
- the potential for conflict between community interests and the statutory responsibilities of DOC to involve iwi
- the appropriate balance between nature interpretation and the interpretation of Maori history in the project area

While one participant specifically acknowledged Maori involvement in the opening ceremony, some participants' comments showed a misunderstanding of the significance of traditional Maori associations with the area, such as seasonal camps and trading routes. There was also a lack of understanding of the concept of manawhenua. Because Maori do not have a visible presence in St Arnaud, some

residents and bach owners have assumed the area has no significance for tangata whenua.

The project priority groups for advocacy do not include tangata whenua. This omission will need to be re-assessed as DOC gains more knowledge on the respective iwi interests in and manawhenua of the area, and as Treaty of Waitangi claims are resolved.

Co-ordination with local and central government agencies

The project team intends to increase interaction with the Tasman District Council, now that the Council has employed an environmental officer. Areas of common interest could include pest control, public education on environmental issues, and encouraging community involvement such as through landcare groups. The project team has attempted to take the initiative on developing a co-ordinated approach with local councils and the Ministry of Agriculture on possum and other pest control, but acknowledges that this has not yet been successful.

Resources for interpretation

The Area Office has identified that public demand for information and interpretation is growing. For example, there is a growing demand from groups for DOC to provide speakers on the project. The Area Office is looking at the possibility of introducing an interpretation position to focus on the mainland island, that could be shared with the Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge.

12. Conclusions

What, then can be said about the project's advocacy and its effectiveness? This section returns to the evaluation objectives:

- the role of advocacy in the project,
- the range of advocacy methods used,
- the nature and extent of community involvement in the project,
- the extent to which the project provides an education resource, and
- factors influencing the effectiveness of advocacy.

In considering those evaluation objectives, this discussion also refers to the five key advocacy objective areas identified in Section 4.1:

- To increase public access to the mainland island.
- To increase community involvement and ownership of the project.
- To provide an education resource.
- To achieve a high profile for the project.
- To convey the key message of pest control.

It must be remembered that the evaluation is limited, as advocacy is not evaluated directly against the advocacy objectives set out in the Rotoiti Nature Recovery

Project, and the focus is on a selected number of advocacy initiatives. Nevertheless, the evaluation indicates that advocacy activities are critical to the success of the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project, as apparent in the strong support participants voiced for the project.

12.1 ROLE OF ADVOCACY IN THE PROJECT

Advocacy is essential to the overall success of the project because:

- Information about the project is needed to inform and explain the difference the project will make to the environment, the rationale for the pest management regime, the public health and safety aspects concerning pest control, and the overall benefits expected from the project.
- How advocacy is conducted can affect not only the project, but also DOC's relationship with the community. While advocacy does not need to be low key—the open days show the success of high-profile events—care needs to be taken to show that advocacy costs are not unreasonable, and that DOC is not simply seeking publicity.
- Advocacy has a role in fostering good community relationships by providing opportunities for hands-on involvement and 'having a say'.

The evaluation indicates that public awareness of the project has been well raised through advocacy activities. There is a very high level of recognition of the project slogan, awareness of the newsletter, and identification of interpretation displays and information with the project. There is a wide general understanding of what the project is about, if not an appreciation of project objectives and operational details. The project has a high profile, although some participants consider that, compared to the early days, the project's profile has declined in the last year.

12.2 RANGE OF ADVOCACY METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The project has used a wide range of advocacy methods and techniques. This is a useful strategy as it enables different approaches to be used in different situations and for different groups. Over time it is likely to become apparent that some are more effective than others, and that there are opportunities to develop new approaches or enhance existing ones.

Two advocacy initiatives have worked particularly well, although they are very different in their audience focus and scale. These are, firstly, the 'big events', and secondly, face-to-face communication between DOC staff and members of the community. The big events work well because they capture people's imagination and bring the project alive. The big events also provide an environment for and an opportunity to extend face-to-face communication, through the guided walks and contact with DOC staff on the day.

Face-to-face communication works because it personalises the project for people, makes it relevant to their daily lives, and enables them to obtain information and to raise concerns in an informal and non-threatening environment. It is through interpersonal channels that individuals feel that they are able to express their views. They can also develop a better understanding of issues in informal discussion with

staff. Research indicates that interpersonal communication is much more likely to motivate individuals to act than general messages through the media (Pettigrew 1996:17).

Pest control is also an essential advocacy tool for the project. It was mentioned as frequently, and as favourably as the two advocacy approaches discussed above. Pest control is closely associated in people's minds with increased bird life and reduced wasp nuisance, both in the project area and in the village. It is apparent that advocacy for the project has successfully conveyed the key message of pest control, as outlined in one of the advocacy aims. Participants in the evaluation were very clear that the project involves intensive pest control in a confined area, and there was a considerable level of support for continuing with, and even expanding, pest control.

Participants did identify some information gaps in current advocacy. In particular, they were unclear about the purpose of the project, wanted to know about what was entailed in pest control, and about project successes and results. Participants also expressed concerns about specific advocacy activities, in particular:

- The newsletter—most participants were familiar with the Rotoiti Revive newsletter and liked it. But concerns were raised about whether it is targeted appropriately and the use of technical language. There is also a perception that it is costly to produce.
- Interpretation panels—favourable comments were made about the interpretation panels at the beginning of the Bellbird and Honeydew walks, particularly that they were of high quality. But the placement of the panels in the park is contentious.
- The Bellbird and Honeydew walks—participants were divided in their opinions about these walks. Some thought the walks are over-constructed and ruin the ambience of the area. Others considered that the walks enable more people to experience the park and the project. The project aim of increasing public access is being achieved through the short walks.

12.3 NATURE AND EXTENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROJECT

The project's advocacy objectives and aims focus on increasing community involvement in and ownership of the project. To some extent, advocacy is being effective in this respect. There is strong support for the Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project among the 48 people who participated in the evaluation. Very few participants were wholly negative about the project. The evaluation clearly shows that all groups value the project, although they may emphasise different things they value.

Bach owners tended to hold particularly strong views, whether positive or negative. They had high expectations that they would be consulted and informed about any changes to or plans for the National Park. They tended to assess the project in relation to their association with St Arnaud. They had clear ideas of what they value about St Arnaud, and what they want preserved. Bach owners and locals value the enhanced village environment as a result of greater bird numbers. Keen users of the National Park also value the increased bird life and lack of wasps.

Local residents also indicated that they valued potential economic benefits from the project. They said that more people were moving to the area because of its environmental attributes and special lifestyle. They were more likely than bach owners to emphasise the tourism potential associated with the project and the economic benefits for the village. Local residents were more likely to be uncritical in their support of the project and less likely to temper their support with reservations. They were also more likely to be neutral about the project.

Farmers held very strong views concerning the project's value for money, its long-term viability and its impact on pest control, but they were not necessarily unsupportive of it. They value the project's impact on pests and the technical, management and scientific information generated from the project's pest control initiatives. However, they also thought that information could be more effectively picked up and used by other agencies.

It must be acknowledged that participants were not always unequivocal in their support. They expressed a number of anxieties. Local residents, farmers and bach owners agreed on the need for:

- clarity about the long-term future and focus of the project
- continuing, and even increasing, resourcing of pest control
- more opportunities for hands-on involvement in the project
- more meaningful consultation that values the skills and knowledge of the community.

To fully achieve the project's aims for community involvement and ownership will require a continuing emphasis on building relationships with the key communities and groups. The close link between consultation, advocacy and relationship building has been noted in a review of DOC consultation practices. DOC's consultation and advocacy activities can help to establish and improve the relationship with the community, but if poorly done can equally jeopardise relationships (CRESA 1998:25).

12.4 AN EDUCATION RESOURCE

Providing an educational resource has been one of the project's main advocacy aims. Some achievements, such as raising awareness and bird monitoring, are apparent through staff efforts to develop working relationships with the local school and Lodge. However, for the project to provide educational resources more effectively, there needs to be closer alignment of DOC activities with curriculum and environmental education guidelines. The contribution that information from the project can make to classroom and teaching resources also needs to be considered.

12.5 IMPROVING EFFECTIVENESS

The success of individual advocacy methods or techniques depends on the overall context in which advocacy is conducted. The evaluation suggests that attention to the following areas could increase the effectiveness of advocacy:

Resourcing advocacy

- Raised awareness of the project and increasing demand for information, talks, and guided walks suggests that an interpretation position is required.

Consultation

- The establishment of a community reference group or ‘supporters’ for the project could be considered. The role of the group would be to provide advice and support to DOC. It would assist DOC in identifying how people want to be involved in the project, and how consultation should occur.
- Issues that will require consultation in the future include the proposal for a gateway to the project area, any proposals to restrict pets in the village, and issues concerning the future of the mainland island itself. There is already an expectation that there will be consultation over the future of the project, because of the objective of developing ‘ownership’ of it by the community, and its high profile. The evaluation has also raised awareness of the project, and possibly raised expectations about future consultation.

Hands-on involvement

- The use of local volunteers has been limited so far, but there is interest among retired residents, some bach owners, and members of groups such as Forest and Bird, in working on the project. Opportunities for short-term volunteer work on the project could be investigated.
- There are clear expectations within the community that DOC should have closer involvement with St Arnaud Community Association over wasp control.

Information dissemination

- The big events are successful and should continue. There is opportunity to involve members of the community in organising them.
- The newsletter works well, but only comes out six-monthly. It could be supplemented by ‘updates’—one-page fliers, perhaps every 2 months.
- Community forums are held elsewhere in the Conservancy. There may be sufficient interest in holding occasional community forums in St Arnaud to focus on the mainland island. This could assist in co-ordinating with the St Arnaud Community Association over wasp control.
- There is interest in ‘behind the scenes’ guided walks, with a focus on exploring and explaining some of the science and technical aspects of the project. This is a way of making technical and scientific information accessible and interesting.
- There is potential to use other venues in the village, such as accommodation and the shop, to promote the project.

- A major benefit of the mainland island is the technical, management and scientific knowledge generated. There are opportunities to transfer this knowledge to government agencies, local authorities, landowners, farmers and others, and at the same time use those opportunities for advocacy.
- Advocacy for the mainland island should emphasise the benefits of the project for enhancing the total St Arnaud/Lake Rotoiti/National Park experience.
- The advocacy benefits from pest control should not be underestimated. Those benefits need to be made known to the public, and clearly linked to the project.

Working with schools

- DOC can work more effectively with schools, by discussing opportunities for school involvement with the project with teachers before the end of term, or preferably a year before; and ensuring that information from DOC is compatible with the curriculum and 'ready to use' in the classroom.
- There is potential to increase the awareness and involvement of the Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge with the project, particularly the 6th form biology classes.
- There is a major opportunity to incorporate the *Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools* (Ministry of Education 1999) into activities with the local school and the Lodge.
- Parents' awareness of the project has been raised through the involvement of Lake Rotoiti School. Working with the school may provide further opportunities to convey conservation messages to parents and get them involved in the project.

Agency co-ordination

- There are opportunities for increased interaction with Tasman District Council, now that they have employed an environmental officer. Areas of common interest could include pest control, public education on environmental issues, and encouraging community involvement such as through landcare groups.

Advocacy objectives

- Advocacy objectives need to be developed that focus specifically on advocacy and are able to be evaluated. Consideration should also be given to developing some advocacy objectives that reflect community aspirations for the project.

13. References

- CRESA (Centre for Research, Evaluation and Social Assessment). 1998: *Community Consultation by the Department of Conservation. An independent review*. Department of Conservation, Wellington.
- Department of Conservation. 1998: *Rotoiti Nature Recovery Project. St Arnaud's Honeydew Beech Mainland Island Strategic Plan*. Department of Conservation, Wellington.
- Ministry of Education. 1999: *Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools*. Ministry of Education, Wellington.
- Pettigrew, J. 1996: Advancing public awareness. *Science for Conservation* 27.
- Saunders, A. 1999: *Mainland Islands - a review. Draft for discussion, January 1999*. Department of Conservation, Wellington.

Appendix 1

INFORMATION SOURCES

The evaluation has used the following information sources:

- Qualitative data were gathered from interviews and focus groups conducted with local residents, bach owners and farmers. A few regular visitors to the area were also included. This approach used semi-structured interview schedules and open-ended questions.
- Discussions with St Arnaud Area Office staff involved in the project.
- Departmental documents relating to the project, including reports and visitor survey data.

In all, 48 local residents, bach owners and farmers contributed their views to the evaluation. They are collectively referred to in the report as 'participants' and are made up of:

- Fifteen residents of the village, including people running a business or employed locally, retired residents and women with young children. Six participated as part of a focus group while the rest were interviewed individually. They are referred to as 'local residents' in the report.
- Six people involved in farming in the district, either as farmers or as partners of farmers. Three participated in a focus group, and three were interviewed separately. All are referred to as 'farmers' in the report.
- Fifteen bach owners. Most came from the Nelson and Marlborough areas, but there were also people from Wellington and Christchurch. Seven bach owners were involved in a focus group and the rest were interviewed separately. This category included a member of the Nelson/Marlborough Conservation Board and long-term visitors to St Arnaud who are friends or family members of bach owners. All are referred to as 'bach owners' in the report.
- Three teachers and nine senior students of Lake Rotoiti School participated in discussions about their involvement in project activities.

These sections of the population were chosen because they are key target groups for advocacy. It was also assumed that they would have differing perspectives on the project, depending on their experiences of the project and their association with the community.

Area Office staff organised the focus groups local residents, farmers and bach owners, and provided a list of other individuals to contact. People were also involved through the local playgroup, Lake Rotoiti School and Rotoiti Outdoor Education Lodge. Although some of the participants were well known to DOC staff, others were not. For example, bach owners were contacted for a focus group through a DOC staff member door knocking, and through a notice displayed at the local shop. As the evaluation progressed, some of the participants suggested others to contact, and this was done. All except three interviews were face-to-face - those three were phone interviews.

Interviews and focus groups were the preferred data collection methods because they were more cost effective, given the timeframe and budget, than surveys. These approaches also enabled the collection of more detailed information concerned

with meaning and understanding, e.g. why individuals hold a particular view; what issues and concerns they have and why. Face-to-face contact enabled ideas to be explored, and the focus groups sparked some lively discussion.

In the design stage it was found that an on-site survey to find out about visitors' experiences of the project, including some feedback on the display boards at the entrance to the project was not feasible within time and budget parameters. A visitor survey could be a complementary exercise to this one and provide useful information for advocacy performance indicators.

The questions used in the interviews and focus groups covered the following areas:

Locals, farmers and bach owners

- Whether people visited the project area and why
- Whether people knew about the project
- Views on the project
- Involvement in any project activities (e.g. open day; pest control)
- What prevents involvement in the project
- Views on the Revive Rotoiti newsletter
- Views on the display panels, interpretation and short walks
- Views on what DOC is doing to inform people about the project
- What advocacy is working well
- Suggestions for improving advocacy

Teachers

- Activities the school has done that relate to the project
- How those activities are incorporated into teaching
- How those activities have broadened educational opportunities
- Whether the activities have changed the students' behaviour, and in what ways
- Resources required to undertake those activities
- The involvement of parents and the wider community in those activities
- What activities have worked well and why
- Suggestions for improving those activities

Students

- Their involvement in the project
- What they liked about those activities and why
- What didn't they like about those activities and why
- What they learned from those activities
- Views on how DOC can involve the school more in the project

DOC staff

- Advocacy aims and objectives
- Main advocacy target groups
- Advocacy approaches used
- History of the advocacy programme—what changes have there been and why
- The level of awareness in the community about the project, and what could be done to improve their level of awareness
- Community responses
- What the community can contribute
- How effective DOC is in working with other local organisations and groups
- How many staff are involved in advocacy and what are their roles
- Resources and supports needed to carry out advocacy
- Systems for reporting on advocacy progress and achievement
- Use of volunteers
- What advocacy is working well and why
- Problems and issues—the areas for improvement