

WAIKATO CONSERVATION BOARD TE PAPA ATAWHAI O TE ROHE O TAINUI

MINUTES OF THE 118th MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD AT WAIKATO CONSERVANCY OFFICE, 73 ROSTREVOR STREET, HAMILTON, ON 17 FEBRUARY 2011, COMMENCING AT 10.00AM

1 PRESENT

Arthur Hinds (chairperson), Dell Hood, David Taipari, Brian Whittington, Alison Henry, Lois Livingston, Pip Wallace, Mark Brough and Wyne Johns.

2 IN ATTENDANCE

Greg Martin (Waikato Conservator), Basil Morrison (NZ Conservation Authority) and Des Williams (Board Servicing Officer).

3 APOLOGIES

Resolved: That an apology from Liz Wedderburn, Richard Waiwai and Rachel Kelleher be received. (Hood / Henry).

4 WELCOME

David offered a karakia for a successful meeting and Arthur declared the meeting open with a welcome to all members, especially to newly-appointed Mark Brough, the first King Country resident on the Board for several years.

5 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

Resolved: that the agenda, as circulated, be confirmed, subject to confirmation that several items of interest (Maungatautari, Cathedral Cove, National Cycleway, New Chums Beach would be covered in Greg's report. (Taipari / Whittington)

6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the 117th meeting, held at Hamilton on 9 December 2010, be confirmed, subject to minor amendment (New Zealand, rather than the Department, is to be the greatest living space on earth!). (Taipari / Hood)

7 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

National Cycleway – Greg said he would be reporting on the Central North Island Rail Trail later in the meeting. In relation to the Hauraki Trail (proposed) and Alison's comment at the December meeting that (according to rumour) DOC would be a major funding contributor, Greg said he had received a report from Andrew Baucke (Tauranga Area Manager) indicating that communication with Hauraki District Council had been less than satisfactory. HDC has now signed an agreement with Ministry of Tourism. Existing funding will cover the Thames to Paeroa and Waihi leg, and the Paeroa to Te Aroha leg.

Assets on DOC land (bridges etc) between Paeroa and Waihi had been valued at \$1.1 million. There was no expectation that DOC would fund those assets, though DOC is (Andrew said) looking at

what, if any of those assets DOC might be able to contribute to. Greg assumed the assets were bridges that had previously been removed and would have to be put back in if the cycleway is to proceed.

Alison said her concern was that all funding agencies had been asked to contribute \$500,000 on the basis that DOC was making a similar contribution and she'd had some doubts about whether that was a "given". David added that the original grant had been \$4million to his knowledge but that was also dependent on funding from the other agencies "coming through".

Some legs of the Hauraki District proposal were looking a bit shaky and may not have been well thought out to begin with. Mark asked why DOC was contributing to it and Greg said that at least part of the land was managed by the department, though most to his knowledge was owned by Ontrack (Railways) and leased to adjoining landowners. Greg said he would need to meet with Hauraki DC to bring himself up-to-date with the plans.

8 CORRESPONDENCE

Outwards correspondence:

- 1629 Email to Dr Tim Haggitt re monitoring at Te Whanganui-A-Hei (Cathedral Cove) Marine Reserve.
- 1630 Email from Rachel to members re Clearwater Hydro proposal.

Inwards items received:

- 3563 Auckland Conservation Board re Aquaculture proposals.
- 3564 NZCA re new Board appointees.
- 3565 Summary of Public Awareness activities.

Resolved: That the inwards correspondence be received and the outwards be approved. (Johns / Taipari)

9 MEETING PROGRAMME 2011

Meeting dates 2011: 19 May 2011 at Hamilton; 1 / 2 September 2011 at Pureora (or Waitomo); 8 December at Hamilton. Mark asked whether the Board had any involvement with the proposed dam on the Mokau River – he suggested that might be an area of interest for an inspection during the Pureora meeting.

Board Strategy review: Mark to provide liaison with Taranaki/Whanganui Conservation Board and Ballance Farm Environment Awards committee; Arthur Hinds to provide liaison with Queen Elizabeth II National Trust.

10 AQUACULTURE PANEL

Arthur reported on his meeting (8 February) with Hon Sir Doug Kidd and Justine Inns of the Aquaculture Ministerial Advisory Committee to discuss the fish farming proposals for the Firth of Thames / Tikapa Moana. (The third member of the panel, Mark Farnsworth, had concurrently met with Environment Waikato.) The discussion had been very informal and Arthur had based his questions on the two-page advertorial that had been published in the Hauraki Herald a week or so prior, some of it very good and some a little vague.

His main concerns had been about the fish feed used for the caged fish, with a ratio of 1.5kg required for each kg of fish, and the likelihood that the provision of feed would be depleting fish

stocks elsewhere in the world (coast of South America), though the feed was also supplemented with vegetable protein. The Ministry of Fisheries Aquaculture Unit had produced a factsheet explaining the use of feed, with most of it presently coming from Australia and also from Chile. There are currently no commercial fish feed producers in New Zealand. Dell questioned whether there had been any research on the likelihood of the caged fish eating feed made from pests such as koi carp, or whether they were known to eat freshwater fish. (No information on these issues at the meeting.)

Economic benefits of the proposal may also be overplayed, Arthur suggested. The “farm” is to be located out in the Gulf half way towards Auckland, so why would you bring the fish to Coromandel for processing when there is currently no wharf or suitable facilities for processing, and not likely to be for 10 years. This aspect may have been over-emphasized by local politicians! Arthur suggested that improvements to roading on the Thames coast may also be expected, though this too could meet with local opposition.

The use of anti-biotics in treating injured fish could also be a major issue. Environmental impacts could be more of a concern on land at the processing plant rather than at sea, with the cages located 13km off-shore. Justine Inns had mentioned her discussion with Toko Renata (while out on the water) about the visual impacts of the proposal and Toko had immediately turned and looked to the mountains and the land – the impacts are from that direction, he explained.

Lois reported on the discussions with Mark Farnsworth. EW’s concerns are with the Aquaculture Bill, which deals with Wilsons Bay, but this proposal (and the Panel) is not actually concerned about Wilsons Bay. The purpose of the Bill is to lift the moratorium on fish farming in the Gulf. Lois also had doubts about the benefits to the local economy, with the proposal most likely to involve movement of whole fish from the farms to the ports and shipped overseas. Lois had also expressed concerns about the use of anti-biotics in treating fish.

Dell asked if there had been any discussion about eutrophication that might result from fish farming. There had been problems with algal blooms along the east coast for months now and assurances that existing problems are not worsened by the proposal would be helpful.

David reported that he had been part of a delegation to Port Lincoln some years ago to study the impact of fish farming off the South Australian coast. He had doubts about how wide were the economic benefits accruing to the local community there, based on discussions with local people and business owners. While the local situation was different to Australia, there was clearly a need to be careful because along with the benefits there would be long-term impacts.

David thought there were few similarities with farming of salmon in South Island rivers and a trial in the Firth would have been helpful in many respects. Lois said it would cost something like \$90 million to set up the infrastructure and that amount of money is not likely to be spent on a trial that might not finally gain approval. Pip said the cost of a trial should not be the determining factor on whether or not a trial is undertaken. Greg commented on possible similarities with the Huarau Ma Raki wind farm proposal – trials had also been suggested for that but the infrastructure requirements for a trial were about the same for the real deal.

Alison reported that Thames-Coromandel District Council had received a presentation from Ben Dunbar-Smith, who had been an enthusiastic advocate for the proposal. Her own concerns included the possible impact fish farming might have on the long-established mussel farming industry, and possible impacts on the Ramsar sites because no one is quite certain about the water flows and directions of currents and where anti-biotic and fish meal residues might end up. If some disease

happens to the salmon fishery there are no native fish to be jeopardized but a disease in the native caged fish could be a major problem.

Basil said he also had some real concerns about the proposal and he looked forward to a much more robust investigation under the Resource Management Act than that presently being undertaken by Sir Doug Kidd and the Panel. He suggested the debate now taking place on fish farming was similar to that which had taken place prior to the establishment of the mussel industry and he would favour a full investigative process by the appropriate authorities (EW, TCDC and Auckland Council). He had noted David's earlier comment about the site being much closer to Waiheke Island (8km) than it is to Coromandel Harbour.

Greg noted the letter from Auckland Conservation Board raised the question of possible escapes of fish from the cages, and asked whether that issue had been raised in any of the discussions. Alison said Ben Dunbar-Smith had commented during his presentation to TCDC that, with the amount of money likely to be invested in the project, there would be none (fish) getting away. Basil noted the same assurances had been given about deer!

Coincidentally, Peter Buckley and Dr Tony Petch arrived at the meeting at this point (11.21am) for the presentation of Stella Frances Memorial Scholarship (next agenda item). The chairperson invited Tony (EW's Group Manager Resource Information) to comment on the issues being discussed. A lot of work has been done by EW staff over the past year, building on NIWA studies etc. While EW no longer has a consenting role, Council staff have been involved with the standards of monitoring, and will be involved with monitoring.

Several Council staff have also been to South Australia to study operations there. Tony said EW's Graeme Silver would be available to attend a meeting of the Board and provide a wider-ranging background and summary of the issue. Agreed that Graeme be invited to attend the May meeting. (Note Graham made a presentation to the Board in June 2009. Tony also undertook to email summary information to Greg for information.

Summary of concerns:

Taking of fish from the cage to the port to export will provide little benefit to local economies.

Infrastructure requirements could be costly

Fish feeding – possible risks to the mussel industry not known but require cautious approach

Problems with disease and use of antibiotics

Fish farming at Wilsons Bay not favoured

Who cleans up if it all goes wrong?

Would Whitianga cope with infrastructure?

Effluent disposal

Does it make sense to take fish from the proposed cage location to Whitianga for processing and then back to Auckland for export?

Conclusion: The Board has some major concerns about the whole proposal and would support a robust process under the Resource Management Act before final decisions or approvals are granted. Pip commented that the scale and location of the proposal indicate to her that a national consenting authority would be involved in the final decision rather than (for instance) the Regional Council.

Resolved: That the Board reply to the letter received from Auckland Conservation Board, summarizing the discussions above and suggesting that both Boards should collaborate their efforts in helping to preserve the same body of water. (Hood / Johns)

Copy of the reply (abridged as necessary to be emailed to the Aquaculture Panel (as invited by Sir Doug Kidd) contact: andrew.hill@fish.govt.nz

11 STELLA FRANCES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTATION

Arthur welcomed Renee Foster, Stella Frances Memorial Scholarship recipient, together with Peter Buckley, Tony Petch and Jane Hennebry from Environment Waikato, for the joint presentation of the Scholarship. Greg also welcomed the visitors, explaining the background to the scholarship, noting that this is the sixth year that the scholarship has been presented. Stella Frances had been his predecessor as Waikato Conservator and had previously been an elected Environment Waikato councillor. After her death the department and EW had come together and established the scholarship to encourage research in environmental issues.

Greg mentioned that Stella's former partner, Bill Brownell, had hoped to be present for the ceremony but was unavoidably absent because of other pressing business. Alison Henry read a statement from Bill on his behalf:

“Stella believed with all her heart that we New Zealanders collectively possessed the wairua and the vision and the courage to set an example for the rest of the world in the sustainable use of our natural resources in ways that will be beneficial for us all, in equal measure, today and tomorrow, while still being available for our mokopuna to treasure and enjoy ... and from which to learn the important principles of kaitiakitanga, which is the key to a just and sustainable society.

“Stella had a mission: to inspire us all to be responsible Kaitiaki (stewards) of our fundamental natural treasures, bound up in the relatively unspoilt land and waters all around us in New Zealand. And, out of that principle of individual and collective responsibility for the world we live in, come the building blocks of healthy communities and healthy people.

“Stella didn't live long enough to realise her dream, but she made a mighty start on it, and she inspired heaps of people along the way to contribute significantly to the stewardship of those natural resources that are the life blood of any nation, particularly a primary production-dependent country like us.

“Renee, I hope you will accept Stella's challenge as your own, and help to lead your generation into a mind set and a value system that celebrates the richness of our commons, the natural heritage that belongs to all of us in equal shares ... and actively defend those physical and biological taonga against the forces of waste and greed that are so prevalent today. I wish you great success, and I know Stella would have been very proud of you.”

Jane Hennebry said she had managed to have a few words with Renee prior to the meeting during which it became very obvious that Renee's enthusiasm for her task was just “so out there”. In accepting the scholarship Renee thanked the Council and department for the opportunity she had been given and she looked forward to coming and reporting back when her study on coastal changes at Pauanui (??) has been completed. Peter Buckley welcomed Renee's offer of a report back and suggested that the Board and EW councillors come together again to facilitate that opportunity

Renee and EW representatives then joined the Board for lunch. The meeting reconvened at 1.00pm.

12 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

North Island CMS committee convenor Matt Ward joined the meeting to update members on progress with the CMS review. He recapped the information presented at the December meeting including the new document format and the timetable for Waikato's review.

Matt said that all efforts would be made to honour and preserve the existing work that had been done last year, and that, as much as possible, existing information would be used to describe the “outcomes at places” statements. This new approach CMS would save the department “hundreds of thousands” of dollars for land use consents where there is enough information in the CMS to allow exemptions under the Resource Management Act.

Matt referred to the “animated conversation” at last meeting about whether DOC was putting business ahead of conservation. As a result of that discussion a flow diagram showing the linkages between the Act, General Policies and CMS and corporate systems – Public Finance Act, Statement of Intent and business planning have been added to the summary document. Pip agreed this had helped to improve understanding of the process.

Use of the National Heritage Management System (NHMS) and Destination Management Framework (DMF) “optimized species and ecosystems lists” will be an integral part of the process, though Greg noted that these are still likely to be just drafts when the CMS is being prepared. Both will be put out for public comment and feedback.

Arthur enquired whether the “optimized species and ecosystems lists” would be compiled in conjunction with regional council. He knew, for instance, of a local block of bush that is likely to be cleared, even though it is regarded as a key ecological site (by regional council) but has no protection whatsoever. His concern was the prospect of working in tandem with EW but duplicating work at the same time. Matt suggested such areas would probably need to be dealt with under local or regional government processes.

Greg added that the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy [pub 2000] had signaled that the biodiversity values most at risk were on private land, because public land already has some form of protection. He agreed such areas could not be covered by the department’s CMS though agreed it may be an important opportunity to discuss such issues with regional council.

Dell asked by whom the “optimised lists” would be optimised. Greg said the lists would involve a hierarchical process but there is still much organizational debate about how and when the list will be made available. It comes down to deciding whether a liverwort or bryophyte is more important than a kakapo, or whether several objectives can be achieved at a particular place. His own uncertainty was around the fact that (for example) Waikato is a stronghold for kokako but there is no guarantee of continued funding to maintain that status for kokako.

Dealing with local communities who are heavily involved with conservation projects and initiatives will be a major challenge, especially those depending on the department for funding support. Arthur suggested that there’s a real risk of having to make the CMS fit the level of funding and maybe reducing the number of places that can be properly managed.

The department also needs to be mindful of the Treaty claims process, with the Hauraki Collective claim process now in progress and other claims (Waikato River Accord, Raukawa, Maungatautari (Ngati Koroki Kahukura, Maniapoto) likely to have major impacts on the department’s work.

The new CMS will contain a conservancy-wide vision, description (themes and values), objectives (reflecting the NHMS and DMF information) and the Treaty of Waitangi. The Places section will include descriptions and detail on measurable outcomes, policies and milestones. That will be followed by sections covering policy requirements, implementation, monitoring, reporting and review, together with maps, appendices and a land inventory (Vol II).

Matt then summarized the CMS process timetable:

CMS Stage	Timeframe
Project planning / initiation	February – March 2011
Preliminary consultation	March – June 2011
Preparation of draft CMS	July – September 2011
Internal sign-off of draft CMS	October – November 2011
Publishing draft CMS	December 2011
Public notification of draft CMS	February – March 2012
Hearings / further consultation	April – May 2012
Revision of draft CMS	June – July 2012
WCB consideration	August 2012 – January 2013
NZCA consideration	February – June 2013
MOC consideration	July – August 2013
NZCA approval	September – October 2013
Public notice of approved CMS	November 2013

Greg informed members that Amanda Haigh has been appointed to the Conservancy planner role and the Board would get to meet her at the first opportunity. Amanda has a planning background and has previously worked for the Conservancy in threatened species work (frogs).

Resolved: That the Board continue its direct involvement in the on-going process via a CMS sub-committee comprising David, Pip, Wyne, Arthur and Mark. (Livingston / Henry)

13 WAIKATO CONSERVATOR'S REPORT

Greg presented his report on major issues affecting the Conservancy since the December meeting.

- Public support for protection of New Chums Beach – a summary report from the department has been sent to the Prime Minister via the Minister of Conservation.
- Native bees – Lisa Evans (a research associate) was searching for native bee (*Leioproctus huakiwi*) nesting sites in the Waikato and Bay Of Plenty during January with the intention of catching specimens, marking and describing nest locations and documenting nesting density. Her plans are to monitor these sites over the next five years. Information about sites on the Coromandel were forwarded to Lisa.
- Native spiders – Fred Litchwark of Raglan had forwarded images of spiders that he thought were katipo – these were exposed when Council removed some trees from the foreshore. Department opinion is that the spiders are some other non-native species.
- Campground issues at Port Jackson – patrons are upset at management changes being implemented by the department, with one “Flying Tortoise” named Keith Levy generating much adverse publicity for the department through media contact and a petition for which he had gained 1000 signatures. Bollards placed along the foreshore to prevent random vehicle access to the beach and to protect future plantings had been removed, a matter the department has referred to the Police for investigation.
- Cathedral Cove – Cyclone Wilma caused major damage to the access track, taking out the main stairway and depositing 30 tonnes of material onto the beach. There has also been a further rockfall in the arch – right beside the warning signs that visitors in their hundred continue to ignore. Work is already underway to reinstate the track There is still major uncertainty about what might be done to restore the arch – reparation costing an estimated \$300,000 could be spent on it with no guarantee of success. Cyclone Wilma also caused major damage to roads at Fletcher Bay and other DOC-managed facilities, perhaps \$75,000 worth of damage.

- DOC's new branding image – changes to DOC publications and logos and a new “strapline” *Conservation for prosperity*.
- Whale stranding at Port Waikato – some adverse publicity in the Waikato Times because the first department staff on the scene were totally inexperienced in strandings and “stood around doing nothing” until some colleagues with more expertise arrived. Meanwhile the local people were continuing their own efforts to save the whales.
- Hauraki Collective – two meetings have been held in recent weeks, with strong requests coming through for the return of Moehau and Te Aroha. DOC is a minor player in the negotiations behind the Office of Treaty Settlements.
- Maungatautari – changes in governance structure have resulted in considerable controversy and media interest, much of it inaccurate in fact and substance. Gareth Morgan is among the leading critics of the changes and four adjoining farmers have “locked their gates” preventing access to the fence for maintenance in protest at what they perceive to be an “Iwi takeover”. A public meeting arranged by Morgan et al is to be held at Cambridge on 22 February. Greg suggested the issue now needs a “circuit breaker” to come in and pull the opposing factions apart and start afresh. Basil observed that the whole project had been founded on goodwill rather than sound agreements with adjoining landowners.
- Cultural use timber extraction – Ngati Maru will soon be extracting an amount of kauri from the Kauaeranga Valley in coming weeks, for cultural use purposes in conjunction with the new Kopu bridge. David explained the timber will be used as a mould to produce 10 bronze pou that will stand on the bridge.
- Central North Island Rail Trail – development is progressing satisfactorily though completion by the end of this year now looking unlikely. Will be renamed the Pureora Timber Trail and Maniapoto Kaumatua Phil Crown has been asked to provide a Maori name for the trail. Part of the trail was used for the recent Pureora helibike event held as part of the summer programme.
- Northern Operations manager – The Northern and Southern operations manager positions have been disestablished in the recent department restructure. A farewell for Barbara Browne (and for Greg's departing PA, Amy Hinaki) was held in Conservancy Office a fortnight ago. Those two positions have been replaced by one operations manager, Sue Tucker, who is based in National Office.
- Te Uku windfarm opening – Greg attended the ceremony with opening performed by the Prime Minister, who commented during his speech on Government's recent statements about selling off national assets. This would not include national parks!

Resolved: That the Waikato Conservator's report be received. (Hood / Brough)

14 CONCESSIONS SCHEDULE

No report received.

15 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT ISSUES

No report received.

16 ADVOCACY MATTERS

Maungatautari: covered in Conservator's report above. Arthur added that an executive committee is managing the project while the present turmoil is sorted.

National Wetland Trust: World Wetland Day celebrated on 5 February.

Ballance Farm Environment Awards: No report.

Te Whanganui-A-Hei (Cathedral Cove) Marine Reserve: Next meeting to be held on 18 March. Arthur noted Alison's question at the previous meeting about any new marine reserve proposals in the "pipeline" and reported that he had been doing some work behind the scenes about the possibility of a reserve being established off-shore from the Wallace property at Whenuakite. Any firm proposal would have to proceed with the support of the local community and it would impact on one commercial cray fisher in the area.

17 LIAISON OTHER BOARDS

NZCA – Minutes 12 and 13 October 2010 received. Basil reported that the Authority has approved the Rakiura National Park management plan at the December meeting. Heli-hunting has been a major issue for the Authority, with Basil involved as a member of the NZCA subcommittee. Mark commented (as a member of the Professional Hunting Guides Association) that only 5 of 60 members were in favour of heli-hunting. A thousand bull tahr had been shot by overseas hunters last year and the Association was suggesting that a tag of up to \$1000 should be put on each bull tahr, with the money going to the Department of Conservation. There is general agreement among members that the practise has to stop.

Tongariro/Taupo Board – no recent minutes received.

East Coast Bay of Plenty Board – no report.

Auckland Conservation Board – Minutes of meeting 19 November 2010 received. (Well, every second page at least!)

Taranaki / Whanganui Conservation Board – minutes of meeting 3 December 2010 received. Dell noted the item 6.3 regarding Conservation Law. Des said he would find a copy of a paper prepared by a DOC solicitor some years ago and circulate to members. Dell also noted with interest the nomination of a board member for the Taranaki Regional Transport Committee. Des undertook to find out the history behind that. [*Subsequent enquiries revealed that the member (Rex Hendry) had been nominated for the Transport Committee in his own right rather than as a Conservation Board member. The Board, with its resolution, had endorsed Rex's nomination.*] Arthur noted the item (6.4) about feral cats having killed 102 short-tail bats over a seven day period. While they are a problem in the city, they are just as much a problem in the country.

Auckland / Waikato Fish & Game Council – Des confirmed he had invited Doug Emmett to the meeting. Doug had gracefully declined but said he was just a phone call away if information is required about any issues.

Forest and Bird – Brian reported non-success in obtaining a report.

Blue Print Project – Greg had attended recent meeting on Alison's behalf. The report appendix listed the projects with which DOC could be involved in. He agreed with the intent of the list but couldn't guarantee on any financial commitment three years into the future. The report might need some re-writing around that. There was also some uncertainty about lead agencies where several were involved in a project. There will be another meeting of the Political Steering Group in six weeks time.

Hauraki Gulf Forum – David reported the next meeting is scheduled for 11 April. The forum chairperson position is up for review and administration agreements with the new city council will be required.

QEII Trust/Historic Places Trust – no issues.

Tainui issues – Greg reported on the implementation strategy being prepared as a result of the Waikato River settlement. He expects to sign it off in the next fortnight and will be able to report further at the next meeting.

Kauri 2000 – no issues.

Shore Futures – no report.

18 KAKAPO RECOVERY PLAN

Greg suggested the plan may be of interest to members given that there has been some suggestion of kakapo being translocated to Maungatautari some time in the future. This would require some expensive modifications to the fence to stop them climbing out. With the present state of play at Maungatautari, the prospect could be some way off.

19 GENERAL BUSINESS

Monthly report to members – Greg confirmed some preliminary thought had been given to compilation of a monthly report for members using the various weekly/monthly reports that are already prepared for department purposes. Des and Rachel to follow up.

Board member appointments – Arthur noted that the process had dragged on for longer than usual and he was concerned that consideration of applications for the Biodiversity Condition and Advice funds were also behind schedule. That was creating problems for agencies who need to know they have been declined by one before they can apply for the other.

Next Meeting – 19 May 2011 at Hamilton.

20 CLOSURE

David offered a poroporoaaki and Arthur closed the meeting at 4.40pm after thanking members for their attendance and input.

Confirmed

Arthur Hinds
Chairperson
20 July 2011