

Minutes of a Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board meeting held on Friday 26 February at the Mackenzie Country Inn, Wairepo Road, Twizel.

1. Karakia

Joseph Hullen opened the meeting with a karakia.

2. Present/apologies

Board: Steve Lowndes (Chairman)
David Round
Jan Finlayson
Dr. John Keoghan
Joseph Hullen
Mandy Waaka-Home
Fiona Musson
Mal Clarbrough
Jimmy Wallace

Department: Rob Young (Area Manager Twizel)
George Hadler (Area Manager Raukapuka)
Cheryl Colley (Community Relations Manager Canterbury Conservancy)
Brenda Preston

Public: Lesley Shand
Shaun Maloney and other recreational hunter representatives

Apologies: Mike Cuddihy
Wiki Baker

3. Declaration of conflicts of interest for recording

Jan Finlayson advised that she has written a personal submission on the Mackenzie water consent applications.

4. Confirmation of minutes of Thursday 26 November 2010

Resolution:

That the minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2009, having been previously circulated to the full board, be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting subject to the aforementioned changes.

*Steve Lowndes
Carried*

5. Matters arising from previous minutes

Discussion took place between members in relation to which committees they would like to stand on.

Mandy declined membership on the Resource Consent Committee and elected to stand on the Water Committee and the Iwi Committee

John declined membership on the Water Committee and joined the Resource Consent Committee in Mandy's place.

6. Late agenda items and any matters to raise from the board's informal meeting

Discussion occurred on freedom camping in light of statements made by the Otago Conservation Board and enquiries from Christchurch City Council who realise they have a problem with freedom camping in Cranmer Square and other places.

Steve tabled an email from Vincie Billante, Christchurch City Council, re freedom camping in Christchurch.

Steve asked if board members had any thoughts on campervans and the consequences of letting them run all over the place. Joseph said it isn't really the campervans causing the problems but freedom campers. He said the matters raised in the email from Vincie Billante are really Christchurch City Council policy law and enforcement matters. For the department it is an issue of inappropriate camping where camping is not allowed. In reserves, conservation areas and parks managed by the Department of Conservation it clearly states whether or not camping is permitted or not.

Freedom campers don't usually have toilet facilities or shower facilities in their vehicles. If these people camp in a designated camping area and use the facilities it is not an issue, but if they are freedom camping to avoid paying hut fees or campervan fees and are not using camp toilets and refuse disposal facilities then that is a concern. It comes back to the fact that the department doesn't have resources to enforce these rules in much the same way that Christchurch City Council doesn't have the resources to enforce them. Jan suggested a campaign to educate people and Mal said it is down to the point of trying to regulate the industry.

Steve asked if there might be a reasonable way of saying there can only be a certain number on the road at a particular time. Mandy asked if they were talking about legitimate campervans with toilet and shower facilities or the freedom campers in vans with no facilities. Steve said that some of the facilities in the campervans were quite delicate and the camper needed to be perfectly level in order for them to work properly and sometimes it is probably easier to go in the bushes.

John said signage and education needed to come from different levels to get the message out there.

7. Section 4 Matters

There were no section 4 matters for recording.

8. Canterbury Conservator's verbal report and update from area managers

Cheryl Colley provided the Conservator's report and covered some issues relating to the Waimakariri Area in Kingsley Timpson's absence. George Hadler and Rob Young attended the meeting to provide Area updates.

Cheryl said that board members should have seen a copy of the Operations Plan for the St James Area. The department had carried out wide consultation and received a lot of input from a number of groups, including iwi and runanga. That plan is now operational.

One aspect of the Operations Plan relates to the cycleway through St James Station. Work is being undertaken on the first section of that cycleway which will probably be completed in early March. The Minister of Conservation, the Hon. Kate Wilkinson, has asked the Prime Minister if he would like to open the first section of the cycleway. A letter has been sent to the Prime Minister inviting him to open the cycleway but to date there has been no response. The first section of the cycleway is still a bit raw so the Prime Minister may wish to wait for the remainder of the cycleway to be completed in November 2010.

Cheryl delivered a report from Kingsley Timpson, Area Manager Waimakariri

Great spotted kiwi have been put into a crèche at Riccarton Bush as part of the Bank of New Zealand Operation Nest Egg. Five sub-adult kiwi chicks were released into the Hawdon valley a few weeks ago. They were tracked but unfortunately one died. The remaining four are adapting well to the wild. Six more eggs have been recovered from the Hawdon valley to go through the Operation Nest Egg programme and they will also be put into the crèche at Riccarton Bush.

Jan asked why one of the kiwi had died. Cheryl advised that the chick had been sent for post mortem but to date no results are available. Three chicks were set free in December, two were released in January and one of those five died.

Review of WARO permits

The review of Wild Animal Recovery Operation permits for the recovery of deer carcasses for food processing and export has been concluded and the new permits came into operation on 1 December. The department has no issues relating to those permits apart from some comments from the North Island operators who are somewhat concerned about the viability of the industry in the North Island. That process has gone very well, with Canterbury leading the whole process for New Zealand. It was an expensive process because of the large number of staff involved.

The new WARO permits specifically exclude heli-hunting. Operators had been using a loophole in the old WARO. Whether or not the old WARO permits permitted heli-hunting had not been tested in court. So the department has made it absolutely clear that the new WARO permit will not cover heli-hunting and explained to the operators that if they wished to continue that activity they would have to apply for a concession under the Conservation Act.

Fifteen operators have applied for that concession and those applications are being processed, in other words we are making sure the applications are complete applications and once they have been to the board and to the rünanga around the South Island those applications will be notified. Those applications will be sent to the board and 20 working days will be provided for feedback. It is hoped this will occur before the end of March. It is pretty clear that the 2010 season between March and September will be underway before the department has had the chance to consider the applications for the longer-term five-year permit for heli-hunting so the department is issuing a short-term permit for the 2010 season to operators who have applied for the longer-term concession permits.

On 12 February the department held a meeting with a wide-ranging group of stakeholders about heli-hunting and presented to them the draft permit for the 2010 season. There seemed to be a reasonable amount of support for the approach the department is taking for this particular permit. The main thing, which probably has helped, is the fact that the permit does not allow herding, driving or hazing.

In the past heli-hunters used three modes of operating. One is the 'spot and drop' where an animal is located, a helicopter drops down and the client and guide get out of the helicopter, shoot the animal and the animal is then recovered and the helicopter flies away.

The second way of carrying out heli-hunting is herding and driving, where the helicopter is used to herd and drive the animals to a place where it is easy for the guide and the client to get out and then shoot the animal. It appears from some of the you-tube videos that herding and driving the animals to a place where the shooting can occur can actually exhaust the animal.

The final mode of operation is shooting from the helicopter. Following discussion with the operators, the department made it very clear that it was not going to allow shooting from the helicopter.

At a meeting held in Luggate last year the department heard that herding and driving was essential to the operators to be able to carry out the activity. The department subsequently concluded that it does not want to include herding and driving in its permits.

Mike Cuddihy visited Reno in January this year where heli-hunts are sold a year in advance. He learned from his visit there and his meetings with Safari Club International that animals that are shot by means of herding and driving animals to exhaustion are not acceptable as trophy animals under Safari Club International rules, so this led us to the conclusion that the department will not allow herding, driving and hazing in its 2010 permits. The department has had some reaction from the operators to this decision which they believe will prevent them from carrying out the activity, as sold to their clients. So there may be some repercussions for the department from that. Cheryl said she was referring to the 2010 short-term permit, rather than the longer-term concessions, which will go through a public concessions process after notification, probably in April.

Resource Management Act matters

The Hurunui Water Conservation Order

The department is now able to move forward with the court process on this application. Last year the Hurunui Water Group applied to the Environment Court for an adjournment of the Water Conservation Order process in a bid to gain consent to dam the South Branch and put a weir on the North Branch.

A pre-hearing meeting occurred at the Environment Court last week and an extension of time has been granted to April for evidence to be presented.

Mount Cass Wind Farm

Cheryl advised that the department was engaging in mediation, led by Andrew Cameron, a barrister working for the department, and DOC solicitor, Phillipa Rutledge as Junior Counsel, David Newey, DOC Senior Planner, Nick Head, DOC Ecologist, Theo Stevens and Bill Lee.

Akaroa Harbour Marine Reserve application

Minister Groser previously met with Ngāi Tahu representatives and the applicants, the Akaroa Harbour Marine Protection Society, to discuss their respective views on the Akaroa Harbour Marine Reserve application with the interested parties. Kate Wilkinson is the new Minister of Conservation and she has yet to decide how she wants to move forward with the application. She has the department's report and all the accompanying papers and is looking through them at the moment. It is likely that she will want to meet with the parties and find out for herself.

Transfer of pāua from the Pōhatu Marine Reserve for re-seeding the taiāpure

The Ombudsman received a complaint from the Akaroa Harbour Marine Protection Society and other members of the Pōhatu Marine Reserve Committee that the Conservator had approved the removal of pāua from the marine reserve. There was dispute over the agreement between the department and Koukourārata Rūnanga and the wording of the agreement, which the complainants said was to be “only as a last resort”. In the last few weeks the Ombudsman has sent his final opinion to the department. His view is that Mike Cuddihy should not have relied upon the Minister of Fisheries concurrence letter as the basis for making his decision. The Minister of Fisheries concurrence letter said he agreed with the creation of a marine reserve at Pōhatu with the proviso that Koukourārata Rūnanga should have the ability to take the pāua for re-seeding purposes. That was the premise Mike Cuddihy used to base his decision to allow Koukourārata to take pāua from the reserve. The Ombudsman said Mike should not have based his decision on this instrument but he did also add that didn’t mean that Mike might not have arrived at the same conclusion by using some other instrument to make his decision. He also said that it did not mean that the rūnanga should have the approval rescinded.

The other aspect of the Ombudsman final opinion was that he asked the department to put together a Conservation Management Plan for the Pōhatu Marine Reserve to cover aspects such as the issue of the taking of pāua. The department wrote back to the Ombudsman saying that a statutory plan or strategy of some description was probably useful but there were other statutory mechanisms beside a management plan that could be used. The department suggested it could include Pōhatu as a ‘place’ in the revised Canterbury Conservation Management Strategy. To date the department has not received a response from the Ombudsman in relation to this suggestion.

Loch Katrine huts

A Loch Katrine Management Plan was written a number of years ago in an attempt to get rid of the illegal huts built on the reserve at Loch Katrine. This was to be achieved by issuing concessions for huts to be built that would be open to the public. The Loch Katrine Association applied for a concession and has only recently started to build two huts with a third about to be built. As the official huts are built, a number of the old illegal huts are to be removed so eventually there will be no illegal huts left on the reserve.

Two brand new huts have subsequently been built without concessions. The department doesn’t know who built them, which means a Court Order for demolition cannot be issued.

Recently an organisation calling itself the Loch Katrine Recreation Reserve Trust has set itself up. The department is not sure if it is an official legal entity or not. This group has claimed jurisdiction over the reserve and is threatening to put up signs saying that anybody who comes onto the reserve or tries to enter the huts or do anything there would be trespassing. It is a fluid situation

and quite taxing to the department's legal team. The department will keep the board updated on the situation.

In the meantime the Hurunui District Council has served an abatement notice on the department to remove the buildings from the reserve, which it cannot do until it finds out who the owners are.

Report from George Hadler – Area Manager Raukapuka

Biodiversity

Pest work is continuing on possum control in the Mathias River, which is a tributary of the Rakaia. Three hundred hectares have been treated in an attempt to protect the seeding mountain cedar and tōtara forest. That work will continue for the next 4 – 5 years over a relatively small area but the Area believes that its work using a ground-based cyanide treatment has been very successful.

One thousand, eight hundred hectares has been the subject of an aerial wallaby shoot in the Hunter Hills. Trials have also been undertaken to develop a practical, low cost, wallaby-density monitoring sampling technique to determine wallaby numbers and densities. That work has been completed in conjunction with Landcare Research and will assist wallaby control work into the future.

Restoration

Department of Conservation and Landcare Research staff have recently carried out seeding trials at Ealing Springs, just on the upstream side of the State Highway bridge on the Rangitata River. Landcare Research is providing funding for this project.

Coastal vegetation surveys

Ongoing survey work is being carried out on threatened plants between the Waitaki and the Rakaia. This work is in its fifth year. Populations of sand tussock and sea holly have been found. Staff noted that compared with 4 – 5 years ago, coastal erosion has diminished some vegetation sites. This appears to have been caused by a combination of wind and an encroachment of the tide in some places. Steve asked if that was in part caused by water extraction and because there is less aggregate coming down the rivers to be pushed up by the current? George said it could be but most of the erosion has occurred between the rivers in open space without the influence of direct river-mouth situations so it is probably more to do with wind and other things.

Community

George reported that World Wetlands Day at Lake Wainono had been very successful event, with 100 participants taking part. It was a combined ECAN/DOC event that included activities such as bird watching, harakeke weaving, and Māori history.

George said that a progress report on the Ō Tū Wharekai Recreation Strategy had been included in a separate report, Board Paper 2010/001. He said the

Area Office had received very good community feedback on the proposed strategy, with thirty five comments received from the public. He said these comments will help the department develop a robust community plan about what we do, how we do it, and how we manage the conflict between visitor activities and biodiversity at Ö Tü Wharekai.

A new group has been established at Lake Heron for predator trapping. Two high-country farmers, Phillip Wareing and Phillip Todhunter, have led this and are both taking an active role part in predator trapping around Lake Heron.

South Canterbury Sports Club has taken on the task of upgrading the Growler Hut on Mesopotamia, which is a new tenure review property. Some very dedicated members of that club have raised \$5,000 from Fonterra to assist the department in upgrading the Growler Hut.

Visitor Asset work

A new section of Te Araroa has been developed between the Rakaia River and Lake Heron. The trail from Lake Tekapo to Rangitata was developed 12-18 months ago. This leaves a section in the middle through Arrowsmith Station which is still being negotiated.

George said the Area had received some very positive community feedback re the upgraded Peel Forest motor camp from the community and it is very good for the Area and the Conservancy.

New land

Seven thousand seven hundred hectares of new land came into the public conservation land from Redcliffe Station in the Rakaia several months ago. Visitor Assets and Biodiversity staff have been busy finishing tracks and distributing brochures. This site backs onto Mt Hutt Conservation Area.

Another piece of new conservation land is the four thousand eight hundred hectares of west-facing foothill country in the Hunter Hills at Kaiwarua which lies from the top of Mount Studholme looking towards Twizel. This is a significant piece of new public conservation land and combines Mt Cecil Station as well.

The department will soon take over 4,800 hectares from Barossa at the entrance to Ö Tü Wharekai, Hakatere Conservation Park. Tenure review has been in train on this land for 10 – 12 years and is quite a prominent piece of new land that will provide an entranceway to the park.

Report from Rob Young – Area Manager Twizel

Biodiversity threat work

Rob advised that Twizel Area has been trying to obtain a permit for rabbit control work in the Mackenzie Basin. This went to appeal and the department tried to sort this out through mediation. Unfortunately, the mediation has not been completely successful so it will go to hearing in May or June this year.

In the meantime, rabbit numbers continue to increase in the basin and while staff have been able to keep a lid on numbers on conservation land, particularly where rabbit fencing is in place, that situation is different where there are high rabbit numbers on neighbouring properties and there is no rabbit fencing. There is a certain point where night shooting and patch poisoning won't work any longer and there is a need to use wider controls. RHD is currently having relatively little effect on rabbit populations. It is still circulating through rabbit populations but is not having the same effect it has had for the last 10 to 12 years.

John Keoghan asked if there were any plans to bring in new strains of RHD. Rob said he had only seen one report in the media where Environment Canterbury was looking at options around different strains of RHD that could be brought in. John said if the department found anything else out about RHD the board would be interested to know.

Wilding tree control

Rob said wilding tree work continues as it has for the last decade. Recent work has focussed on the Kirklistons, with the last of the adult trees to be removed shortly. A cusp has been reached in terms of progress, with this project ongoing for the last 12 to 13 years.

Other work on wilding trees has been going on at Mt Cook Station which has just come out of tenure review. Staff are starting work at Braemar in anticipation of the property coming out of tenure review in the next few months. The other major focus for Twizel Area this year will be in the Ben Ohau Range where staff are continuing to work with other parties, including ECan, LINZ, local run holders, the Ohau Conservation Trust and various other groups.

Another major project for wilding trees is a research spray trial, also underway in conjunction with Otago, looking at sprays, quantity of spray, and dilution rates. There hasn't been a scientific study of sprays so we need to know what the most effective and economical way to carry out this work is. That work will conclude in the next few months. If successful it could potentially reduce the cost of spraying by one quarter to a tenth of the current cost.

Tahr management

Twizel Area is tasked with managing tahr numbers throughout the Canterbury Conservancy and has finished work in the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park and the Two Thumb Range for this year. Work has also been completed in the risk zones which are essentially to the south of the Twizel Area and outside

the feral range, particularly in the Hawkdun and St Marys Range area. Work is still pending in the Mount Hutt risk zone and that will be carried out in April.

Biodiversity assets

Twizel has had a very successful season with the kakī project, with 127 eggs hatched with a record number of eggs into the aviary system. There are currently 96 chicks in the aviary at the moment which will be reared until next spring and then released. Twizel Area recently carried out a juvenile release because the aviary cannot cater for any more than around 100 birds at a time.

Tasman Project

This is a mainland island predator project which is now in its fifth year. The results of this work will be written up over the next few months and then a review of that work and the kaki project will be carried out to see where Twizel Area should go with both those projects. The Tasman project looks as though it has been really successful, with over 5000 predators caught over the five-year period.

Recently a new site for big-nosed galaxiids was discovered in the Hakataramea valley. This was as a result of some genetic work done on fish that was undertaken by Dean Turner late last year. This is quite encouraging because it means they are more widespread than was previously thought.

Didymo

Didymo continues to spread and is now in the aviary ponds and in the spring. The thought was that it wouldn't invade spring water systems but it has. It is also in the Huxley and is established in the Cass and the Macaulay, so it continues to spread despite all the efforts to slow it down and is now widespread in the Twizel Area.

Community Relations

Staff have been involved in the Upper Waitaki Water Hearing. Dave Murray gave some excellent evidence at the hearing in December, and that work was supported by Joy Comrie, who assisted on the field trip yesterday.

Project River Recovery

A teacher resource kit has recently been updated for Project River Recovery and is used as part of the New Zealand curriculum in terms of studying braided rivers and human impacts on the Mackenzie Basin.

Summer Holiday Programme

This was confined to a one week programme in conjunction with Aoraki and was very successful. Aoraki's programme dovetailed into Twizel's, with one-day activities. One of the events was a 4x4 trip around the Little Omarama Saddle loop track. Sixteen vehicle loads of people took part which was quite a good effort because the people that turned up were generally not the sort of people who come to summer holiday programmes, so it is good to engage with a new group of people.

Twizel Area staff have been involved in a cycleway proposal from Aoraki to Oamaru which has now been approved for a feasibility study. Two staff members, Gus and Sally, have been involved in that because large pieces of it traverse conservation land. Gus has been quite instrumental in helping choose the routes.

In terms of recreational work, staff have been doing quite a lot of work down at the Benmore Peninsula Track Walkway, upgrading and rearranging parts, so it can't be accessed by motorbikes, which are causing quite a lot of damage to the track and making it harder for mountain bikers and walkers to use. Quite a lot track and road damage has occurred during the spring/summer season and staff have spent quite a lot of time undertaking repairs instead of doing what they are meant to be doing.

An upgrade of the camp ground down at the Ahuriri River bridge has been completed and this has been very favourably received with a lot of really good comments on that.

Two new interpretation panels have been installed, one for the historic Ohau River bridge down below the Ruataniwha arm and another for the riverbed hut in the Hopkins. The hut in the Hopkins is one of the first tourism huts built in the Twizel area back in the early part of the last century by the Wrigleys.

Work is progressing around the use of the facilities at Birchwood Station, which the Nature Heritage Fund purchased some years ago. The Williamson family will move out of the property in the next couple of months and Twizel staff will then be embarking on a process of working out how those facilities will be used. One of the next steps will probably be seeking expressions of interest in terms of what concessionaires might want to do with those buildings.

Steve thanked Rob for organising and leading yesterday's field trip.

Reports requested by the board

9.1 Report from Raukapuka on Ö Tü Wharekai 2010/001

The board received the report

9.2 Update on the Lake Heron Road 2010/002

The board received the report.

10.0 Public forum

Please refer to the end of the minutes for record of the public forum.

11. Land

11.1 Mining on conservation land – Letter of response from Hon. Gerry Brownlee to the board’s letter of 30 November 2001

Mal reported that the government had issued a statement today that not all conservation land would be considered for mining and that there had been significant exclusions from the proposal. It was suggested that this was in response to a public outcry. Jimmy asked what land was most at risk. Board members said the West Coast, Coromandel, Mount Aspiring, Fiordland National Park, Kahurangi National Park. Jan commented it is the downstream values that are so at risk in terms of what happens to the waterways.

11.2 CACB submission on Hunter Hills Pastoral Lease

The board endorsed the actions of David Round on behalf of the Land Committee in writing a submission on behalf of Federated Mountain Clubs and the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board. Steve thanked David for his work on this paper.

11.3 CACB submission on Dunstan Peaks Tenure Review

The board endorsed the actions of John Keoghan on behalf of the Land Committee in writing a submission on behalf of the Board. Steve thanked John for his work on this paper.

11.4 Board submission on the proposal to establish a Game Animal Council

The board endorsed the actions of Jan Finlayson on behalf of the Land Committee in writing a submission on behalf of the Board. Steve thanked Jan for her work on this paper.

Cheryl reported that Mike Cuddihy had recently had a conversation with Gary Ottman of NZ Game and Forest Foundation, on 12 February at a heli-hunting stakeholders meeting, in which Gary indicated that the Establishment Committee was hoping to have its report completed and to the Minister in a couple of months. Steve asked if there was a time period on the board’s response. Cheryl said it is important the department receives a response as soon as possible. Mandy asked for a copy of the original agreement. Cheryl advised the board that Brenda would arrange for a copy of the agreement to be sent to Mandy, Joseph and John. Brenda will arrange this.

11.5 Proposed land exchange – Spittle Hill

Steve reported that the board had discussed the proposed land exchange in its informal meeting and had formed a sub-committee to provide a response. Steve asked what the timeframe for the board’s response was as no indication of this appeared in the original notification. Cheryl said the department would like to move this forward as quickly as possible because the whole of the rest of the agreement with Castle Hill is based on this exchange proposal. Mandy asked if the board could see the rest of the proposal in order to make an informed decision. Mandy, Joseph and John will progress this on behalf of the Board.

12. Resource consents

12.1 Board submission on Upper Waitaki Water Consent applications

Steve noted that the Government had called in all the Resource Consent applications for effluent disposal for the upper Waitaki. Mandy said that another application for resource consent has just come out and is flying in under the radar at the moment and she had just received notification of it at Arowhenua Marae.

12.2 Statement presented by Ines Stager to Upper Waitaki Water Consent Hearing

The board received the paper prepared by Ines Stager on the board's behalf. Ines has appeared at the hearings on the board's behalf.

12.3 MainPower's appeal against the decision of the Hurunui District Council to reject the proposal to establish a wind farm on the Mt Cass ridgeline – report on mediation from Jimmy Wallace.

Jimmy said his recommendation is that the Board go with DOC on its appeal but the committee needed some sort of mandate. He said that DOC had been very helpful and allowed the board to use its expert witnesses. The board would like to stay on the sidelines until an agreement is firmed up and the board is in the position to know where it stands. Jimmy said that Mal, he and Steve required some sort of mandate from the board.

Resolution

That the Conservation Board grant Jimmy Wallace, Mal Clarbrough and Steve Lowndes the mandate to act on its behalf in matters relating to MainPower's appeal against the decision of the Hurunui District Council to reject the proposal to establish a wind farm on the Mt Cass ridgeline.

*John Keogh/Mandy Waaka-Home
Carried*

13. Visitor Management and Concessions

13.1 Board comment on Ö Tü Wharekai Discussion Document

The Board endorsed the actions of Jan Finlayson in her comments on the discussion paper on behalf of the Land Committee.

13.2 Concession applications

CACB comments on the Helicopter Line's application for renewal of a concession for landings within Aoraki Mt Cook National Park.

The Board commented that this was the renewal of an existing concession but one point Mal reiterated is the cumulative effects of concessions operating in a national park. In the past the recognized landing sites all focussed on ski plane landing, and the recreational use that was assessed over previous years to determine how many landings would be acceptable and identified in the management plan. If another operator comes in later on those sites then the cumulative effects must increase. The department needs to bear in mind that as helicopter use increases then ski plane use may decrease and it is something the board and the department need to keep an eye on with regards to any renewal of the Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park Management Plan.

The management plan does not allow for a 20-year concession period and is the reason the board recommends a 10-year concession period. John Keoghan said cumulative effect is much broader and we need to ask if there is a total stocktake of total flights just to keep an eye on how far the cumulative effects are going, to check we don't reach a tipping point.

Steve asked Poma to make a statement re the cumulative effects of aircraft. Steve cited the problem now being experienced with campervans and their cumulative effects and asked what mechanisms the department has to monitor the effects of aircraft landing on conservation land. Poma said the department had a very good picture of landings on the conservation estate because every aircraft that lands in the park is required to furnish returns to the department every month. Poma said the plan was based on two things – there were no limits on aircraft positioning recreationists at approved landing sites and the reason for that was that the number of climbers going into the park was declining so there is no need to put a limit on the number of aircraft.

The company that is operating a fixed wing/helicopter combination has another 70 odd years to run on its lease. The government set this up when it sold the Tourist Hotel Corporation. Initially that was an unlimited amount of landings and over the years the department managed to put a limit on landings and got them down to around 7,000. They don't go anywhere near that. In 2002 they were down to about 2,000 per year and it was dropping off last year before the helicopters came in and now with the helicopters it looks to be back up at around the 2000 figure. Poma said they can keep increasing to 7,000 under their lease but this is unlikely to occur. This is why we don't have any other scenic company undertaking landings in the park because we didn't want to have a cumulative effect and at the moment it is locked down to just the one operator. Other companies don't like it but it is a result of the 70-year lease.

The department did allow the positioning of hunters at the Liebig Hut in the new plan and the positioning of recreationists at a site at the head of the Mueller on Baron Saddle, where people used to land anyway. They just used to kid themselves they used to land outside the park.

13.3 Status of concession applications before the Board

Mandy asked about Concession number 3 – re an application for variation to the Old Mountaineers Property Ltd concession. Cheryl advised that last year the application for this concession was referred to the Southland Office who has appointed a contactor to undertake various consultation aspects of the process. Cheryl advised that Canterbury Conservancy has heard nothing to date.

David Round asked for more detail to be included in the concession subject line so board members can get a better understanding of what the concession application relates to.

14. Planning

14.1 Progress report on application for a Conservation Order on the Hurunui River.

14.2 Proposed amendment to the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan

Poma Palmer, DOC Senior Planner, Canterbury Conservancy, introduced himself to those present at the meeting.

Poma discussed three different issues in terms of amendments to the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan, all at different stages.

Tasman Road realignment

Poma reported that the department has received the ecological and landscape reports in relation to this proposal. There are a number of river protection issues related to this proposal. The river flats the department wants to realign the road to were not there in the 1930s to 1950s. The Tasman cut right into the bluff section at that time and that is why the road was put over the bluff section. It will, therefore, be necessary to carry out a river-protection investigation on that. There are also some other options which may mean the road stays within its current alignment.

Tasman Lake concessionaire vehicle access

The department is in the process of clarifying what combination of plan amendments, concession variations and national park management plan amendments will be needed to resolve this issue. A meeting is planned for next week and that will come back to the board.

Heli-hunting

Poma said he wished to point out that the department has never, and is not now proposing an amendment to the plan. The department is carrying out an investigation into whether or not a plan change is something it should or should not seek. Poma said the more he investigates, the more he realises that even if heli-hunting is not permitted in the park we will probably still have to

make an amendment to the plan to do that because the plan was written in 2004, and the plan only allows for WARO. The definition of WARO that the department holds to and the definition the heli-hunters hold to is not in agreement at the moment and that is what part of the issue is about. If we want to resolve that issue then it may be that the only way the department can resolve that is by amending the plan.

Poma said that as this board knows he believes in very open public processes and is not a person who does back-door deals. In December 2009 when the department started investigating this issue it put out a draft background paper to identify the issues related to heli-hunting for public comment, in order to get feedback and identify any issues it may have missed. This is not an end discussion document it is an initial starting point in an open process to get public comment. From that paper the department received around 102 public comments. All of those, apart from one, were opposed to heli-hunting. The way some people responded showed that they hadn't even read the background paper. Many of the submissions were responses to email messages from all around the world. So there is a level of misunderstanding of what the department is trying to do and what the issues are.

If the department wishes to undertake an amendment to a management plan it has to prepare that amendment in consultation with the Board and work with the board before it eventually gets put up to the New Zealand Conservation Authority who make the final decision. It is not for the department or the Minister to make the final decision on a management plan; it is the Conservation Authority's decision. Poma said the board and the department need to undertake this investigation together rather than the department simply passing a proposed plan to the board. The whole issue around helicopter-assisted hunting activities includes quite a continuum of activities.

Poma said Wiki and Mandy were on the board when the Aircraft Guidelines were completed and the issue of aircraft movement within the park was discussed. Heli-hunting was not dealt with at that time because no one raised the flag to say that it was occurring or that it was an issue. This is despite the fact the activity had been going on for 20 odd years in the park. People like NZDA who made submissions on the plan didn't cover the problem of heli-hunting in the park and no one else told us there was a problem with heli-hunting in the park. So to some degree this has been a 'silent, no victim' activity until quite recently. The issue under consideration is just like having to consider helicopter- or aircraft-assisted recreation activities.

Poma said that Shaun Maloney had been very helpful in carrying out this work and they have built up quite a good picture of what the level of public use in the Murchison valley and Godley valleys. This is being achieved through a combination of working with hunters who hunt in the area sending maps and providing data about when and where they hunt. Poma has also been analysing old historic hut books. The NZDA hut book from the Godley starts in 1964 and goes through to 2008 providing forty four years of history from that valley. It is not a complete record but it is a very good record. The department is also getting information from concessionaires who fly people

into these areas and it is very interesting when you start looking at the hut books and you start to find out that ground hunters have been flying into the park illegally for some time.

From the paper Poma prepared in December and from public comments he has prepared a list of about 120 questions which he believes need to be asked if the department is going to address this issue fully.

Poma said he is firmly of the view that the department doesn't have sufficient information at this stage to make an informed decision about recommending allowing or not allowing heli-hunting in the park. His advice to Cheryl and Mike Cuddihy is that until all the information is gathered, an informed decision cannot be made. If the department and the board cannot provide an informed decision then we are open to legal challenge. The department is dealing with an industry and groups that have some clout politically and legally. If we don't do the job well we are open to judicial review – it is as simple as that.

Poma is requesting three actions of the Board which are as follows:

1. Progress is being made on the Tasman Road and the Lake Tasman issues and Poma will soon be approaching the board further on that.
2. Agree that further investigation by the board and the department should occur into a possible amendment of the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan in respect of heli-hunting.
3. Confirm that the Board's Planning Committee will be the contact persons for the department for consideration of the planned amendments.

Steve said the board noted the progress and said it is not in conflict with what the board has said. Steve confirmed that the board will co-operate through its Planning Committee.

Poma said that since first putting together his presentation he has added another slide showing some options on the plan amendment available to the board and the department.

- Seek an amendment on heli-hunting now;
- Await the review of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan which has been suggested;
- Await amendments to the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan because the proposal is to include land that has come from the Mount Cook Station under the tenure review process. This would resolve issues such as the Liebig Range;
- Await the review of the CMS which will include the Canterbury Aircraft Guidelines;
- Wait until 2014 when the whole plan is due for renewal and build it into that process;
- Await the decision on the setting up of the Game Animal Council.

The board received Poma's paper.

14.2 Letters and submissions to the board from recreational hunters

Board Paper 2010/014(a)
Board Paper 2010/014(b)
Board Paper 2010/014(c)
Board Paper 2010/014(d)

The board received the correspondence from recreational hunters and would discuss the matters raised following the public session at 1.30 p.m.

14.3 Board comments to the New Zealand Conservation Authority on its checklist for Conservation Management Strategies

John Keoghan discussed the paper and said he wasn't too happy with the wording of some of the criteria so had tried to reword some of them. He was concerned with the synchronization in order of presentation, in other words, outcome 1 should match objective 1 in terms of presentation order.

Jimmy asked where CMSs stand generally. Poma said that National Office have said that it is unlikely they will get back to the department re CMSs before the middle of this year and all work is suspended, other than a small amount of recreational planning work that we are preparing as a background for the CMS.

15. Water

15.1 Application to release grass carp into Lake Crichton

This paper was included for the board's information only. Cheryl explained that this is a weekly update which goes to National Office and the issue of releasing grass carp into Lake Crichton. The board has already provided comment on this application.

16. Matters of general business

16.1.1 Conservation Board chairpersons' conference 21/22 May 2010.

Mandy asked the chair if he could ask the other chairs when the next iwi meeting would occur. An iwi meeting has not occurred for four years.

17. Correspondence

Inward correspondence Board Paper 2010/018

Outward correspondence Board Paper 2010/019

The board received the inward and outward correspondence.

18. Administrative matters

18.1 Financial report

Steve asked Brenda to comment on the financial situation. Brenda advised that the board was currently overspent by \$2,250 for the year to date but some of that will be a reimbursement from the Nelson Board who haven't paid their share of the Hanmer meeting yet. The next two meetings are one-day meetings in Christchurch so expenses should be kept in check through those.

Recommendation:

That the Board endorse the actions of its Visitor Management Concessions Committee as set out in board papers 2010/011.

That the Board endorse the actions of its Resource Consents Committee, as set out in board papers 2010/008 and 2010/009.

That the Board endorse the actions of its Planning and Land Committees, as set out in board papers 2010/004; 2010/005; 2010/006; 2010/010; 2010/015 and 2010/016.

That the Board receive information, as set out in board papers 2010/001; 2010/002; 2010/003; 2010/007; 2010/012; 2010/013; 2010/014(a)(b)(c) and (d); 2010/017; 2010/018; 2010/019 and 2010/020.

*Steve Lowndes/Jan Finlayson
Carried*

18.2 Conservation Board Award

Steve discussed the board award and the way it is managed. Steve said he had a little bit of difficulty separating and being able to evaluate conservation activity that was managed by volunteers on public land for public good and applications that came from private individuals that were carrying out conservation activities on private land with a vested interest in what they were doing. One of the implications is that the board ends up with two awards and therefore double the trouble and to some extent double the cost. Mandy said ECan has conservation awards and there are about five different categories.

Another concern is that you get such a mixture of handwritten, poorly put together material on highly deserving projects versus a really polished application that includes letters of endorsement.

The call for nominations this year would include the caveat that nominations must be of a high quality for the board to consider them – they should be typed and have letters of endorsement attached. The board hopes that it will encourage a better standard of application. Applicants are also to include a covering letter with an overview of the project with photos and maps to support the nomination.

John Keoghan will be included on the sub-committee to manage the award process and all board members will receive copies of the nominations so that they can provide comment if they wish.

The sub-committee will consist of: John Keoghan
Steve Lowndes
Wiki Baker
Jan Finlayson

Presentations

19.1 Presentation on conforming-tracks process – Gemma Dear

Gemma delivered a presentation on the new conforming-tracks process which will be implemented very soon.

19.2 Presentation on concessions review

Cheryl said the board would be aware of the review of concessions within the department. It is a review that was set up by the director general looking at ways of improving ways the department serves its customers, the concession applicants. This review has been going on for a while and has now reached its conclusion. Several recommendations have been made and will be released by the Minister, Kate Wilkinson, probably in a few weeks time.

20. Highlights of the board field trip Thursday 25 February 2010

Board members, hosted by Rob Young, Area Manager Twizel, departed Twizel at 8.30 a.m. and drove to Omarama and onto Little Omarama Saddle Omarama Station (in tenure review) / Tara Hills (ex research station) /Berwen (completed tenure review) to Twin Burn Station (LINZ purchase) Little Omarama Saddle /Twin Burn purchase and management of the Oteake Conservation Park. Dunstan Peaks tenure review was also discussed at this time.

Killermont tenure review and the Williamson dairying proposal were discussed.

Rob discussed Project River Recovery with board members. Project River Recovery was established in 1990, recognising the impacts of hydro-electric development on braided rivers and wetlands. The project is funded through a compensatory funding agreement with Meridian Energy Limited.

Project River Recovery's goal is to maintain and restore braided river and wetland habitat in the South Island's upper Waitaki Basin for the benefit of its native plants and animals, some of which are found only in, or breed only in, this region.

Intensive weed control, predator control, construction of wetlands, and research and monitoring programmes are all part of Project River Recovery's work.

The board also discussed:

- Water Conservation Order Ahuriri River
- Farm developments adjacent to river system
- Stock management adjacent to river systems
- Land ownership in and around river systems

A number of tenure review proposals were also discussed:

- Longslip –Dalrachney tenure reviews
- Ben Avon / Quailburn tenure reviews
- Birchwood – NHF purchase
- Ahuriri and Hawea Conservation Parks

At 12.30 the board and DOC staff returned to Omarama

The board enjoyed lunch at Wrinkly Ram Café, Omarama (in the shade!) and were joined by Jim Morris who discussed his ideas relating to restoration and carbon farming in the high country.

Joy Comrie, from the Twizel Area Office, joined the board for the afternoon session of the field trip to discuss Waitaki water consent issues.

At around 2.00 pm the board departed for Quailburn.

The board drove past the Ben Omar wetland and stopped along the roadside to discuss the illegal modification and management with Joy Comrie. The site of the Southdown dairying proposal was pointed out to the board and the Nature Heritage Fund purchase at Tarnbrae was also discussed.

The board and DOC staff visited the historic woolshed at Quailburn, built in the 1920s. The historic woolshed is still in working order and is equipped with shearing stands and wool press.

Board members then travelled to Lake Ohau road to inspect the Ohau Downs Five Rivers dairying proposal, QE II covenant, Lake Ohau – management and protection – and the cycleway proposal.

The board then travelled back to Twizel via SH 8
Glenbrook tenure review and its subsequent development were discussed as well as Spring Creek Conservation Area and its possible use as a salmon farm and for tourism and recreation and hydro-power.

21. Public Awareness

No items were identified for public awareness

22. Karakia

Joseph Hullen closed the meeting with a karakia

Public session 1.30 p.m. – 2.00 p.m.

Recreational hunters addressed the board on the subject of heli-hunting

Steve said the board would listen to what the hunters had to say in their presentations. The board would then leave the room to discuss these and come back to provide a response.

Shaun Maloney addressed the board on behalf of the Southern Lakes Branch of the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association. Shaun also delivered New Zealand Deerstalkers National Office comments re consideration to allow some heli-hunting to occur in the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Plan through a change to the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan. Shaun addressed the board in Maori. He thanked the board for the opportunity to address them.

Shaun is a Search and Rescue team leader with over 10 years of service, a volunteer rural fire fighter, a member of Federated Mountain Clubs, a member of New Zealand Deerstalkers Association and is married with two children. Shaun has hunted his whole life and is a keen tahr hunter and wished to compliment the board on its approach to many issues he and New Zealand hunters hold dear. They wish to seek and find a common ground when it comes to conservation. Shaun outlined their opposition to the proposed change to the Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan.

Southern Lakes branch response is: Heli-hunting as a recreational concession activity should not even be considered for advancement. The board requires more information before an informed decision can be made to seek an amendment to the existing Aoraki Mount Cook National Park Management Plan. The reasons NZDA presented were as follows:

- Heli-hunting concessions currently do not exist.
- Temporary concessions do not exist right now – they are still arguing this.
- How can the board advise on a plan change for a concession activity the plan seeks to accommodate does not exist? The board would be writing a cheque without even putting some zeros at the end of it.
- By advancing a plan change the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board puts itself in the difficult position of broadly defining a concession that has not been publicly notified and advancing a plan to accommodate a concession prematurely and it may imply endorsement of the activity before public consent has taken place.
- Should the board seek public comment for aerial-access plan changes to recreational heli-hunting concessions they would like the following to be

considered for inclusion: We request that the Canterbury Aoraki Conservation board seek a plan change to define and prohibit heli-hunting in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park. The reasons are that we do not consider enough information on impact assessments has been sought from back-country user groups, the Conservation Authority, Conservation Boards, the Tahr Liaison Group and other commercial concession holders currently operating in the national parks. We consider heli-hunting concessions are a defining event in terms of national-park recreational use. Heli-hunting is a currently unapproved concession activity. It is unsupported and has been declined by Otago, Canterbury and West Coast Conservancies. Applicants have sought consents. These consents have all been declined. There is a good reason – it is repugnant. It is a sick perversion of commercial carcass recovery somehow masquerading as sportsmanship. It has nothing to do with that.

It has been confirmed to Southern Lakes Branch of the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association that heli-hunting is already occurring without authorisation within the park. They expect that prohibition enforcement is the only option to restore the integrity of the park plan. Shaun said that applicants declined consents have continued to operate in breach of the Conservation Act, the National Parks Act and the Wild Animal Control Act. Rewarding illegal concession activity by approval sets a dangerous precedence and undermines the integrity of the Conservation Authority, Conservation Boards and any park plans. They are already doing it now. People who do this get arrested under the Conservation Act. Kahurangi National Park – December – two different people had unauthorised concessions. Shaun asked why should we give these guys a free pass. Mt Aspiring National Park Plan is identifying a prohibition on heli-hunting within its national park plan. Prohibition on heli-hunting in the Aoraki National Park Management Plan would align aerial-access policies across conservancies as directed under the Conservation Authority's CMSs. Shaun directed board members to a paper by Ines Stager prepared for the board in 2007.

This plan change is about the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan. Tahr are a pest controlled under the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan. Advancing helicopter hunting concessions allowing aerial access for commercial guided hunting usurps the priority of control defined within the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan for NUZ4. NUZ4 is the zone the park is categorized under. There are seven zones, each of which has a priority of control and is accorded in all cases to recreational ground hunters first and then to guided hunters and/or commercial concessions after that. Shaun referred the board to comments by Professor Ken Hughey, who wrote the Tahr Control Plan. Allowing guided heli-hunting is effectively denial of access by another means and relegates recreational hunters a lower priority after guided helicopter commercial activity. Heli-hunting contravenes the intent and wording of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan under which tahr are managed.

Peter Dowling addressed the board. He said he is a local hunter and a father of three teenage boys who also hunt. He is opposed to heli-hunting for several reasons. Peter said that heli-hunting is against the tradition and history of hunting in New Zealand. In New Zealand all working people, no matter what

income they have, had the chance to go out and bag a deer or a trophy tahr. This heli-hunting is eroding this. He said his family was up hunting in the Ohau Ranges recently and were up at 6,500 ft with their sons. He and his wife took a bull each and were quite pleased with that. They set up camp for the night and the next morning awoke to the sound of helicopters hounding the same mob of tahr. They picked the best bull from that mob and hounded it and then, dropped a shooter off, hounded it again, got round behind it again shot the tahr and picked it up, all in about a quarter of hour. He was really annoyed to have the hunting experience ruined by a helicopter and someone paying big bucks to take a better trophy than them.

Peter cited animal cruelty as another concern. He said the animals were scattered everywhere. Animals came down the hill past where they were camped, running away from the chopper.

Aaron Neagle from Oamaru addressed the board. Aaron used the analogy of a good wine which he argued was the essence of public conservation land and that adding things such as heli-hunting to the mix contaminated it and turned it into something akin to sewage. He said that heli-hunting affects everybody's experience and has a negative net effect. He said they have garnered support from New Zealand Deer Hunters, the New Zealand Alpine Clubs, and organisations like Forest and Bird, who are not naturally the best of bedfellows with NZDA but on this issue, he said, they are singing off the same page.

Jules Curry addressed the board saying he represented the Marlborough Branch of NZDA to say he is in support of the proposal to decline the activity of heli-hunting.

Chris Nichol addressed the board. He is a hunter and a keen outdoorsman with a young family. He has just recently been on a hunting trip with his dad and shot a tahr. He said he is concerned about the loss of natural quiet in the back country through heli-hunters hounding animals. Helicopter hunting is very efficient on tahr and it takes approximately 6 years for a bull tahr to reach 12-inch trophy bull status. The heli-hunters applied to take 1300 bull tahr in the first year. Chris is concerned that this is unsustainable and requests that the board denies the application.

The board retired from the room for a few moments and returned with the following resolution:

Resolution

"The Canterbury Aoraki Conservation Board sees itself as a body which operates according to sound conservation principles. It is aware of the government's priority on this issue and considers itself aware of the current debate on heli-hunting and has unanimously agreed to stick to our core conservation principles. We will not look favourably on any alterations to National Park Plans, Conservation Management Strategies or any other conservation plans to facilitate the activity of heli-hunting. The Board is of a mind that the activity of heli-hunting should cease on conservation land after 30 September 2010. The reasons for this statement have their genesis in the following aspects of the issue:

- *The fact that heli-hunting is not an essential conservation tool;*
- *We do not see heli-hunting as recreation*

- *We are concerned on the issue of animal welfare*
- *New Zealand's international reputation*
- *The erosion of natural quiet*
- *The disturbance of and competition with traditional hunters safety*
- *Management conflicts with any putative game council; and*
- *Carbon emissions*

This is our statement on these principles and in future we will adhere to those concepts"