

**Trip Report:  
Observations on Conservation Issues in  
Hawai'i**

**New Zealand/Hawai'i Exchange  
Programme**

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*Te Papa Atawhai*

## **Executive Summary**

### **Purpose of the report**

This report was prepared in response to the request from the HCA for observations on conservation issues in Hawai'i, and provision of views on how such issues may be managed in New Zealand.

### **Key Issues and how such issues may be managed in New Zealand**

Below is a list of the key organisational or conservation issues I became aware of, and ways in which we may manage such issues in New Zealand.

The issues are based on information provided through discussions with organisation staff, with limited direct observation of the issues or organisational systems. It represents an outsider's compilation of the views of over 30 conservation organisation staff within Hawai'i and the U.S., filtered and expressed through my understanding of conservation. I take full responsibility for the views and observations contained in this report, which cannot be attributed to any of the many experts who provided input to the project.

The observations outlined below may be symptoms of deeper organisational or conservation issues, however it would require further investigation before any surety can be achieved regarding this, or indeed whether the observations reflect actual issues.

The issues are also not necessarily State-wide ones, as often they were more apparent in some organisations than others. It is left to the discretion of the individuals reading this report, to follow up on whether these observations reflect issues within their own organisations or not.

It must also be kept in mind that in the Hawaiian context, it may not be feasible, practical or acceptable, to address these issues using the approaches we would apply in New Zealand. Different legislative, political and social factors are at play in the U.S. as compared to New Zealand, and careful consideration should occur before any attempt is made to utilise the approaches outlined.

What I heard:

Low level of public conservation awareness.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- Active marketing and communication of conservation and the benefits it offers.
- Identify key stakeholder relationships and target them for communications with the aim of gaining shared understanding.
- Ensure internal communications are resulting in a shared vision and understanding of the purpose of the organisation.
- Integrate communications and marketing into the organisation's business planning system.

What I heard:

Difficulty in managing Hawai'i-wide coordination and integration, amongst agencies responsible for conservation management.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- Amalgamation of agencies; or,
- Alignment of mandates
- Development of shared outcomes between organisations
- Country-wide conservation strategy or integrated strategic work-plan across organisations
- Provision of a coordinating mechanism that enables leveraging of each others abilities and work, the resolution of issues, and prevention of duplication of effort.

What I heard:

Uncertainty over funding and scarcity of resources.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- Prioritisation – an organisation-wide system to set priorities, guide decision-making, and ensure alignment of work with the strategic work programmes of the organisation (and ensure funds go to where the greatest need is).
- Alignment – examine existing work and look for alignment, overlaps or duplication. Look to establish inter-organisation collaboration on work programmes where possible, saving costs by aligning work (shared resources) and timing (economies of scale – savings made by undertaking pest control in adjacent blocks at the same time).
- System Efficiency – examine the structure, support and services provided by the organisation, and look for improvements in efficiency whilst maintaining effectiveness.
- Innovation – identify labour intensive or high material-cost areas of work. Encourage innovation to automate the labour intensive work, and reduce

material costs through more efficient designs or use of alternative (cheaper) materials.

- Partnerships – engage in more partnerships to leverage off others knowledge and resources. Includes interagency partnerships (collectively working towards common goals) business partnerships (sponsorship, green-imaging), partnerships with Maori, and community partnerships (volunteers).
- Seek funding – Submission of budget bids or applications to grants or other funds. (The drawback of this is that the funding may only be short-term, and can be ‘ring-fenced’ for spending on specific areas that may not be the most beneficial for conservation in general).

What I heard:

Problems caused through the application of federal restrictions/guidelines in the Hawaiian context.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- Identify barriers to conservation
- Identify options to address those barriers
- Assess implications of options
- Implement preferred option(s)

What I heard:

Work planning appears variable in its application and not always clearly connected to the organisation’s desired outcomes, if and where these are articulated.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- Provision of organisation-wide coordinated guidance for work planning, including:
  - Providing a clear picture of organisational outcomes and intermediate outcomes
  - Development of an organisation-wide 5-year strategic work-plan
  - Linking of work into the organisation’s business planning through definition of outputs and connections to work programmes and personal work-plans.

What I heard:

Difficulties in managing the tension between use and protection in agencies that have mandates empowering them to do both.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- State clear purposes for which the site is being managed
- Determine the appropriate levels of use and protection, compatible with that purpose.

What I heard:

Lack of clearly defined management purpose, and the resultant multiple use at sites.

How this may be managed in New Zealand:

- Identify the management purpose(s) for the site, and, if applicable, the type of experience desired for the public at that site.
- Identify what type(s) of use, and level of use, is appropriate and compatible with that purpose.
- Provide a matrix of different management purposes and recreation opportunities, aiming to provide a good mix of recreation opportunities within a reasonable travelling distance from key population centres.

**Key Observation:**

People I talked to were well aware of what the issues were, and often they had thought of options for mitigating those issues. Some people expressed difficulty in getting traction within the organisation to achieve resolution of issues.

For me, the underlying question that needs to be addressed is:

What is it that is stopping people from implementing the options/solutions they have?

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## **Purpose**

This report was prepared in response to the request from the HCA for identification of conservation issues in Hawai'i, and provision of views on how such issues may be managed in New Zealand.

## **Background**

Between the 21<sup>st</sup> of July and the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2007, I visited Hawai'i with to attend the Hawaiian Conservation Alliance Conference on Conservation Strategies, and discuss conservation issues with a range of conservation organisations (see Appendix 1 for the list of organisations met).

In total I had eighteen meetings (covering five organisations), and discussions, with over thirty people. I also visited the following sites: USS Arizona Memorial (Oahu); Ka'ena Point (Oahu); Hanauma Bay, and surrounds (Oahu); Mauka Kona - Kahalu'u Forest & Waha Pele (Hawai'i Island).

This trip was funded in part by the New Zealand/Hawai'i Exchange programme (involving agreements between the Hawaiian Conservation Alliance and the Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Center).

My conservation experience comes from over nine years of working in conservation in New Zealand. This includes field experience, technical, advisory, and managerial roles, in the areas of threatened species management, biosecurity & strategic pest management, and organisational strategy.

This report covers the key issues I became aware of and is based on information provided through discussions with organisation staff, with limited direct observation of the issues or organisational systems. It is not so much an outsider's view of issues, as an outsider's compilation of the views of over thirty conservation organisation staff within Hawai'i and the U.S., filtered and expressed through my understanding of conservation. I take full responsibility, however, for the views and observations contained in this report, which cannot be attributed to any of the many experts who provided input to the project.

## **Observations - What I Heard**

Discussions reinforced the consistent theme that both Hawai'i and New Zealand are facing almost identical organisational and conservation issues.

The observations outlined below may be symptoms of deeper organisational or conservation issues, however it would require further investigation before any surety

can be achieved regarding this, or indeed whether the observations reflect actual issues. The issues are also not necessarily State-wide ones, as often they were more apparent in some organisations than others. It is left to the discretion of the individuals reading this report, to follow up on whether these observations reflect issues within their own organisations or not.

It must also be kept in mind that in the Hawaiian context, it may not be feasible, practical or acceptable, to address these issues using the approaches we would apply in New Zealand. Different legislative, political and social factors are at play in the U.S. as compared to New Zealand, and careful consideration should occur before any attempt is made to utilise the approaches outlined.

The approach taken in outlining my observations is to provide a brief sentence highlighting what I heard, followed by an explanation of why I view this as an issue, and then an outline of how such issues may be addressed in New Zealand.

#### What I heard:

##### Low level of public conservation awareness

#### *Why this is a concern*

A low level of public conservation awareness is a problem as conservation is a concept based on human values. People will not value or support conservation if:

- They are unaware of the special animals, plants, places or history they have, and why they are special
- They not aware of the results achieved from conservation management
- They are not aware of the services and benefits they receive from conservation

This has real implications for resourcing (both in terms of dollars and available workforce). Greater government or grant funding is unlikely to be forthcoming if there is poor public backing for conservation. Similarly, people will not want to work, or volunteer, in the conservation area if they do not have an understanding of the benefits conservation has to offer to society (environmental, economic, health and cultural benefits).

Once people are aware of, and understand, conservation, then hopefully they will appreciate it: once they appreciate something, they value it.

#### *How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

- Active marketing and communication of conservation and the benefits it offers including:
  - Raising awareness of native species, their uniqueness and importance.
  - Raising awareness of introduced organisms and the risks they pose.

- Highlight the economic benefits received through the provision of ecosystem services
  - Highlight the economic benefits through conservation related tourism.
  - Highlight the links between healthy lifestyles and opportunities for outdoor recreation
  - Highlight the link between conservation and identity (both cultural and local) and personal well-being.
  - Highlight how conservation is an integral part of the sustainable economic and social future of the country
  - Show the difference being made through conservation management (good news stories).
- Identify key stakeholder relationships and target them for communications with the aim of gaining shared understanding. Identify the necessary relationships at different levels within the organisation. Review at regular intervals as this is not a static list, due to the changing socio-political environment we operate in and the changing nature of relationships.
  - Ensure internal communications are resulting in a shared vision and understanding of the purpose of the organisation.
  - Integrate communications and marketing into the organisation's business planning system.

What I heard:

Difficulty in managing Hawai'i-wide coordination and integration, amongst agencies responsible for conservation management

*Why this is a concern*

Lack of coordination and integration can result in duplication of effort, and the undertaking of work that is not the highest priority. The loss of potential work synergies between agencies through not integrating and aligning is also a concern. Far greater conservation gains may be possible by 'piggy-backing' on to other organisations work plans. Economies of scale can come into play by jointly managing larger areas at a reduced net cost to each organisation (i.e. it is often cheaper to manage one large area than two small areas).

*How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

- Amalgamation of agencies
- Alignment of mandates
- Development of shared outcomes between organisations
- Country-wide conservation strategy or integrated strategic work-plan across organisations

- Provision of a coordinating mechanism that enables leveraging of each others abilities and work, the resolution of issues, and prevention of duplication of effort.

Note: In New Zealand, the formation of the Department of Conservation (DoC) in 1987, through the amalgamation of the conservation related components of the then Wildlife Service, Department of Lands and Survey, the New Zealand Forest Service and the Archaeology Section of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, addressed the integration issue to a large degree. This required a review of roles, mandates and legislation. The formation of DoC enabled the establishment of a clear governance and accountability system to coordinate and drive integrated conservation management in New Zealand. It hasn't been all plain sailing though, and the Department continues to evolve as an organisation to this day.

The amalgamation of conservation agencies was but one option. If it had not occurred then it would have been essential to provide a coordinating mechanism that enabled leveraging of each others abilities and work, the resolution of issues, and prevention of duplication of effort. Ideally a set of shared outcomes could also have been agreed upon, with the agencies respecting the slightly different mandates they had, but recognising the common goals and working together to achieve these.

Note: To some extent the Hawaiian Conservation Alliance (HCA) is providing this mechanism, and it plays an extremely important role in linking and coordinating between conservation organisations. The biggest barrier to major gains appears to be that the governance structure does not exist to require integrated action across jurisdictions. Membership remains voluntary and alignment of work discretionary. Whilst this governance structure is in place, organisations can still retrench to focussing on what is in their best interests as opposed to the interests of conservation in Hawai'i as a whole. In my opinion, trust, willingness and commitment are key to the HCA being successful in its current guise.

#### What I heard:

##### Uncertainty over funding and scarcity of resources

##### *Why this is a concern*

The uncertainty of ongoing long-term funding associated with some projects, makes it hard to plan ahead with any confidence. This could potentially narrow the operating horizon to a year or two, and reduce the ability to strategically address issues.

Lack of resources can result in the continuing decline of native species biodiversity and degradation of historic sites. It can also lead to public perception that agencies are not effective in achieving their mandates. This in turn may lead to less public support, which ultimately results in even less government funding and therefore resources (and so the cycle continues).

### *How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

The following approaches are ways in which we may approach this issue in New Zealand:

- **Prioritisation** – an organisation-wide system to set priorities, guide decision-making, and ensure alignment of work with the strategic work programmes of the organisation (and ensure funds go to where the greatest need is).
- **Alignment** – examine existing work and look for alignment, overlaps or duplication. Look to establish inter-organisation collaboration on work programmes where possible, saving costs by aligning work (shared resources) and timing (economies of scale – savings made by undertaking pest control in adjacent blocks at the same time).
- **System Efficiency** – examine the structure, support and services provided by the organisation, and look for improvements in efficiency whilst maintaining effectiveness.
- **Innovation** – identify labour intensive or high material-cost areas of work. Encourage innovation to automate the labour intensive work, and reduce material costs through more efficient designs or use of alternative (cheaper) materials.
- **Partnerships** – engage in more partnerships to leverage off others knowledge and resources. Includes interagency partnerships (collectively working towards common goals) business partnerships (sponsorship, green-imaging), partnerships with Maori, and community partnerships (volunteers).
- **Seek funding** – Submission of budget bids or applications to grants or other funds. (the drawback of this is that the funding may only be short-term, and can be ‘ring-fenced’ for spending on specific areas that may not be the most beneficial for conservation in general).

### What I heard:

Problems caused through applying federal restrictions/guidelines in the Hawaiian context.

### *Why this is a concern*

Hawai’i faces very different conservation challenges to mainland America. It comes under the wider United States umbrella, yet many of the issues it faces are unique to it as an island State. Also, many options that are not feasible in the context of America as a whole, may be valid and highly successful in a Hawaiian context.

In comparison to mainland USA, Hawai'i has more defensible borders, can address pest issues with greater likelihood of success and less risk of reinvasion, and can more readily achieve social and cultural change through effective communication and awareness due to its relatively small population. As such, federal procedures, criteria, or processes may not be relevant in a Hawaiian context.

#### *How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

- Identify barriers to conservation
- Identify options to address those barriers
- Assess implications of options
- Implement preferred option(s)

This is not as much of an issue in New Zealand as it is in Hawai'i. However, there are processes and procedures in New Zealand which are barriers to conservation. The challenge is to identify exactly what the barrier is, how the barrier came about (its purpose) and then examine options and implications in regards to removing the barrier.

In a Hawaiian context the approach could be to identify those 'America-wide' factors that are proving a barrier to effective conservation in Hawai'i, and then look for means to address them. A good example of this approach in action was the issue surrounding the uncontrolled posting of birds through the U.S. mail service. Clearly this was not desirable from a biosecurity point of view for Hawai'i, yet it was not an issue for the mainland (as birds could freely and easily cross internal state borders). I believe a change in the US postal policy has now addressed this issue.

#### What I heard:

Work planning appears variable in its application and not always clearly connected to the organisation's desired outcomes, if and where these are articulated (i.e. lack of clarity of organisational planning).

#### *Why this is a concern*

There is a risk that work may be being done that is not aligned to the organisations strategic direction or desired outcomes and goals. This can result in an ad-hoc approach to management, loss of efficiency, and it taking longer to achieve goals and outcomes due to lower priority work being undertaken.

#### *How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

- Provision of organisation-wide coordinated guidance for work planning, including:
  - Providing a clear picture of organisational outcomes and intermediate outcomes

- Development of an organisation-wide 5-year strategic work-plan, with;
  - Strategic work programmes required to achieve organisational goals
  - Prioritisation of work
- Linking of work into the organisation's business planning through definition of outputs and connections to work programmes and personal work-plans.

What I heard:

Difficulties in managing the tension between use and protection in agencies that have mandates empowering them to do both.

*Why this is a concern*

Overuse of natural and historic heritage can result in significant degradation and, in the case of species, potentially extinction. Over protection can result in public discontent and their not seeing any value in conservation (e.g. viewed as 'locking-up' the land). The balance of use and protection is difficult. Heritage must be protected in order that people can benefit from it and the more people benefit, or are aware of benefits, the more they will support conservation. Over-protect and restrict peoples use, and the risk is they won't value it. Over use and degrade the resource and the risk is it won't be there to protect. It is also worth noting that while sustainability is implied in many of the use vs. protection cases, sustainability and conservation are not the same. A practice may be sustainable but still result in initial conservation loss. This tension between use and protection is always going to be present.

*How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

- At regularly used visitor sites, take steps to protect natural values through facility design and exclusion areas.
- Clearly state the purpose(s) for which the site is being managed.
- Determine the appropriate levels of use and protection, compatible with that purpose. Where possible, outline the acceptable limits in which to operate. This also links in to the below risk on 'defined management purpose'

What I heard:

Lack of clearly defined management purpose, and the resultant multiple use at sites.

*Why this is a concern*

If no purpose is stated, nor management objectives outlined, for managing conservation land, then it is impossible to determine the suite of management

activities that need to occur, other than do everything. This can lead to multiple use at sites.

Multiple use: This appears to be an issue, possibly evolving from the lack of clearly defined management purposes at sites, but it could also be a cultural issue, in that it is considered every citizen's right to go where they want, when they want, to do what they want. The problem with this approach is that not all uses are compatible with each other, nor with the desired outcome of management. For example, you could manage a site for hunting purposes by maintaining ungulate stocks as a food supply or for recreation. You could also manage a site for ecological integrity. But it is incompatible to manage a site for both ecological integrity and the maintenance of ungulates (unless of course you are prepared to accept a considerably lower level of ecological integrity).

#### *How we may address the issue in New Zealand*

- Identify the management purpose(s) for the site, and, the general recreation zone being managed for (e.g. frontcountry, backcountry, remote)
- Consider if there are any specific values at site that will be managed for.
- Specify if there are to be limits of activity type and level of use, if there are issues to be managed from the values identification.
- Provide opportunities for high impact or incompatible activities at selected sites capable of sustaining this sort of use (e.g. motorised access, mountain biking, horse riding) and promote these. Consider accessibility to population centres.

#### **Concluding Observation:**

In general, conservation staff knew what needed to be done, but were struggling to work out how to get it done within the organisational structure and systems they were operating in. Those I talked to were well aware of what the issues were, and often they had thought of options for mitigating those issues. Some people expressed that it was hard to get traction within the organisation to achieve resolution of issues.

For me, the underlying question that needs to be addressed is:  
What is it that is stopping people from implementing the options/solutions they have?

I believe that if this question is answered, then this will go a long way towards enabling the resolution of many of the issues facing conservation in Hawai'i.

## **Appendix 1: Organisations visited**

**Department of Land and Natural Resources: Division of Forestry and Wildlife**  
Met with Administrator, Program Managers, Coordinators, Planners,

**Kamehameha Schools**  
Met with Land Managers and Ecologists

**The Nature Conservancy**  
Met with Director and Coordinators

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: Pacific Islands Ecological Services**  
Met with Chiefs, Supervisors, Program Leaders, Coordinators, Biologists,

**US Department of Commerce: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
Met with Superintendent and Coordinators