



» ≈ ANNUAL REPORT

FOR *THE* YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER | 2005



ADVOCATES
FOR THE
TONGARIRO
RIVER

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COMMITTEE 2005

Bruce Coldicutt
Mark Cosgrove » **IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT**

Richard Kemp
Heather Macdonald » **PRESIDENT**

Julian Proctor
Sylvia Smith
Tuatea Smallman
John Toogood*

Eric Wilson » **SECRETARY TREASURER**

John Wheeler

* Co-opted during the year.

Graeme Duff and Gill Osborne resigned
during the year.

The Registered Office of
The Advocates for the Tongariro River
Incorporated is care of
213 Taupahi Road, Turangi.
The postal address is
P O Box 335 Turangi 2751.
www.tongariroriver.co.nz

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Advocates for the Tongariro River Inc. will be held at the Tongariro River Bridge Fishing Resort, State Highway 1, Turangi, on Easter Sunday 16th April 2006 at 4:00pm.

≈ AGENDA

The business of the Annual General Meeting will be to:

- 1 Record those present and note apologies.
- 2 Receive the Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting held on 27th March 2005.
- 3 Receive the President's Report and approve the Financial Statements.
- 4 Consider any motions of which due notice has been provided. (The full Rules of the Advocates for the Tongariro River Inc. are printed in the 2004 Annual Report and are also available in the Advocates' website. www.tongariroriver.co.nz.)
- 5 Appoint an Executive Committee comprising a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer (or a secretary/treasurer) and Committee members.
- 6 Consider any other matters.
- 7 Speakers from the Advocates will address the meeting on directions for the next twelve months.

At the conclusion of the meeting, members are invited to afternoon tea at the Tongariro River Bridge Fishing Resort.

≈ **MINUTES**

Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting of the Advocates for the Tongariro River Incorporated held at the Tongariro River Bridge Lodge, Turangi on Sunday 27th March 2005.

Present

Invited guests Don Ormsby Turangi Community (Board Chairman), Laurie Burdett (Environment Waikato Councillor), Neil and Rosemary Small and

Members Mark Cosgrove (Chair), Tuatea Smallman, Graeme Nahkies, Natasha Nahkies, Bob Appleton, Peter Coker, Bruce Coldicutt, Bill Colston, Alison Cosgrove, Sam Cranston, Laurie Croxson, Bruce Diehl, Bob Duckworth, Richard Kemp, Peter Lean, Sarah Lean, Julian Proctor, John Toogood, Eric Wilson, Neville Young.

Tuatea Smallman opened the meeting with a Karakia.

Apologies

Mayor Clayton Stent, Councillor Christine McElwee, Conservator Paul Green (Department of Conservation), David Perry, Ghassan Basheer and Rex Hawkins (Environment Waikato), Professor Paul Williams, Alistair Treadwell (Pharazyn Trust)

Heather Macdonald, Graeme Duff, Gill Osborne, Sylvia Smith, Warren Butterworth, Virginia Church, Stuart Crosbie, Renny Cunnack, Helen Elliott, Walter Freitag, Iris Freitag, Will Kemp, Ray Legge, Alaistair McNab, Andrew Morrison, Graham Pyatt, Ernie Sharpe, Jenny Shieff, Glen Spackman, Dick Truebridge, John Wheeler, Betty Wheeler, Lorraine Wilson.

The motion (M Cosgrove, T Smallman), that these apologies be sustained, was carried.

Minutes of 2004 Annual Meeting

The motion (R Kemp, J Proctor), that the minutes of 11 April 2004 as read be received, was carried.

President's Report

The President noted that his full report was included in the published Annual Report. Two particular highlights were noted. First, that the requirement for a Tongariro River Management Plan to be developed as part of consents for river work meant that for the first time there was some legal status for the river. Second, the grant of \$10,000 from the Pharazyn Trust would be used in restoration works.

The motion (M Cosgrove, B Appleton), that the President's report be received, was carried.

Financial Report

The Treasurer presented the accounts for 2004 as published in the Annual Report, and noted (1) that these accounts had not been audited in accordance with the Society's constitution and (2) that if the meeting required, the accounts would be audited.

The motion (G Nahkies, B Coldicutt), that the Financial Report be received was carried.

Appointment of officers and committee

The following positions were filled by election –

<i>President</i>	Heather Macdonald
<i>Vice President</i>	Richard Kemp
<i>Secretary/Treasurer</i>	Eric Wilson
<i>Committee</i>	Bruce Coldicutt, Graeme Duff, Gill Osborne, Julian Proctor, Tuatea Smallman, Sylvia Smith, John Wheeler

Mark Cosgrove holds the ex officio position of Immediate Past President. Tuatea Smallman is our Kaumatua.

General Business

1. Recent proposals for river management

A summary of proposals made by NIWA scientist Dr M G Smart for Environment Waikato and presented to the Tongariro River Management Forum was distributed at the meeting. In the discussion that followed, members noted that some of the proposals had been made as long as 40 years ago, that the river's mouths seemed to be on a westwards drift, that new channels into Stump Bay might quickly result in sedimentation in that Bay, and that a significant brown trout fishery at the present mouths may be lost.

The Chairperson of the Tongariro River Management Forum, Councillor Don Ormsby, stated that one of the options, to do nothing, should not be an option, and (2) that the Forum would meet on 18 May 2005 to act on the proposals.

2. *Towards a cleaner New Zealand.*

John Toogood informed the meeting of the progress being made to clean up the river's environs. He said that the Minister for the Environment Hon Marion Hobbs was seeking funding in the next budget for an education program to deal with the problem.

3. *Meeting with Parliamentary Candidates.*

The President informed the meeting that as it was election year the Advocates would seek to hold a meeting of political candidates to discuss environmental issues.

The outgoing President was thanked for his work done in getting the Advocates up and running.

The meeting closed at 5.40pm

≈ **FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT, 2005**

This, the fourth Annual Report of the Advocates for the Tongariro River Inc, consists of the President's Report, together with the Financial Report.

President Heather Macdonald reports:

The Advocates for the Tongariro River aim to be recognised as an informed, balanced and authoritative group, seeking to sustain and enhance the Tongariro River for future generations. The Advocates' purposes are to

- actively engage in fostering Tongariro River management strategies, including long-term strategies
- promote methods of managing the river which have the desired effects of flood protection and of preventing and/or minimising erosion
- take such steps as are appropriate to facilitate the protection and promotion of the Tongariro River and its environment as an effective nursery for rainbow and brown trout.

At the start of 2005 the Committee sought answers to the questions, "How can we continue to improve what we do and what kinds of strategies are going to be most effective?" We invited Graeme Nahkies of BoardWorks International to address this question at the public seminar which followed the AGM at Easter 2005. Graeme provided some valuable insights which have shaped the way we have developed our goals and approached our advocacy work this year.

Ten goals were set by the Advocates Committee for 2005 – 2007. These are outlined and reported on in detail below. In summary, achievements in 2005 were:

- participating in the Tongariro River Management Forum and working towards the development of a strategic management plan for the river
- working to get science and engineering reports onto the River Management Forum table so that the strategies that go into the management plan will be soundly based and defensible
- acting in a brokering role with other members of the Forum, to ensure that the Forum continues to meet and to give substance to discussions and plans on river management

- hearing that our 2004 submission on the development of walking tracks had been successful and that an access track from the Hydro Pool to the National Trout Centre is scheduled for completion by Department of Conservation by 31 March 2006
- lobbying Environment Waikato Councillors about the need to find a funding model for restoration, emphasising that residential rating increases under Project Watershed are both inequitable and unsustainable
- developing effective informal advocacy networks with Genesis, Environment Waikato, the Department of Conservation and the National Trout Centre Trust
- instigating a Planting for the Future Project, to resource and implement the first stage of a planting plan commissioned by the Department of Conservation for the riverbank
- producing and disseminating information on the risk associated with the alga Didymo, and on containment measures
- convening two public seminars, aiming to get more scientific information onto the table
- speaking publicly through press releases on:
 - the unsustainability of ongoing increases in Project Watershed rates levy as the basis for funding river restoration
 - support for flood protection measures
 - the Didymo alga and the need to be pro-active in protecting our waterways
 - “Planting for the future”, a project being steered by the Advocates with the participation of the Department of Conservation and the community
- improving and updating our website **www.tongariroriver.co.nz** and incorporating a discussion forum
- reporting to members through the 2004 Annual Report, the Advocates’ website, and two newsletters – The Advocate 5 and 6.

GOAL 1

To have widespread public awareness of the Tongariro River – its past, its present state with the negative impact of the hydro power scheme, and its potential future degradation if remedial action is not taken.

Our Annual Reports are the main means of addressing this goal. I had anticipated that Environment Waikato's draft Catchment Management Plan for the Tongariro River would be a substantive appendix to this year's annual report. Unfortunately the draft is not yet available for public consultation. Advocates members will be sent a copy as soon possible, hopefully before the end of May, and your comments on the draft will be keenly sought as part of our feedback to Environment Waikato.

The threat of a Central North Island invasion by the alga *Didymo* (*Didymosphenia geminata*) has become a stark reality during the past year. The Advocates lobbied the Department of Conservation and the Lake Taupo Fishing Advisory Committee for quick, strong and active leadership strategies to help manage and contain this risk, including getting information to the river users as soon as possible. We were keen to see Biosecurity NZ take immediate action to contain the threat in the Central North Island but in the absence of any publicity from these agencies in those early stages, the Advocates took steps to fill the information gap. Some 4000 pamphlets were designed, printed and distributed to sports shops and fishing lodges in the Taupo/Turangī area, and posters were placed at frequently used river and lake access points.

Two newsletters, The Advocate 5 and 6, were sent to members in July and December 2005, as a way of keeping members in touch with current issues and what the Advocates are doing. We continue to receive positive feedback on our newsletters.

The convention we have developed of having two annual seminars continues to put new information into the public arena, allowing for the checking of assumptions, challenging of ideas and providing opportunities for new ways of thinking about river related issues.

Graeme Nahkies's presentation at Easter 2005 and Paul White's seminar at Labour Weekend on the water quality of Lake Taupo, provided a basis for some rigorous discussion and informed action. Paul White's talk was particularly timely as we had been concerned to know about the water quality of the Tongariro River.

GOAL 2

To gain public involvement and support for the Advocates' aims and to build membership

Members were invited during the year to take part in an informal membership satisfaction survey, to let the Committee know whether we are doing what members want us to do. Members who decided not to renew their subscriptions were invited to tell us why. We published an article in the Taupo Times: "Advocates of Flood Protection", to address a misconception that we picked up from two people who resigned, that the Advocates did not support flood protection.

We have continued our role of including the public in our advocacy work, through seminars and press releases, and in the Planting for the Future project instigated by the Advocates. This is a staged project that involves working with the Department of Conservation and the community to plant the parts of the riverbank managed by the Department of Conservation. The Department have had a planting plan drawn up which provides cover for trout and strengthens the riverbank, after noxious plants such as blackberry, broom and honeysuckle have been cleared. Stage 1 of this project is due to take place in the first week of May 2006 and we have agreed to raise funds for the plants and provide volunteer labour to work alongside Department staff. We have arranged press releases and we invite the public to become involved.

Membership stands at 214.

GOAL 3

To establish effective dialogue with Iwi and develop mutual trust.

The Committee have had the benefit of the support of our Kaumatua, Tuatea Smallman who has provided a valuable link between Ngati Turangitukua and the Advocates. More widely, we recognise it will take time to achieve effective dialogue and mutual trust, yet we see this goal as being of primary importance because of Ngati Turangitukua's ownership of and responsibility for the river. We have been supportive through the River Management Forum of Ngati Turangitukua's drive to determine what should be done to improve the channelling of the Lower River, drawing on the information presented in the engineering reports that have been completed.

In November 2005, we received a letter from Arthur Smallman, Chair of the Ngati Turangitukua Marae Committee, notifying the Advocates that Ngati Turangitukua had adopted a plan drawn up by the engineer Kerry Scott for work on the Lower River, and that the work was to be commenced immediately. At the time of writing this President's Report, no details were known about the timing or extent of this work. The Advocates look forward to seeing the Ngati Turangitukua's plan and we hope to be able to offer our support for this initiative.

GOAL 4

To ensure the promises made by central and local government and power companies in respect of doing least harm to the Tongariro River are kept.

The Advocates have continued to affirm our view that Environment Waikato, as the environmental watchdog, has to look after the river as a whole. We have been advocating for a management plan that addresses river channelling improvements and flood protection throughout the river system, and have been critical of many of the piecemeal and re-active approaches to flood protection in the past. To this end, the Advocates have adopted an approach of regular informal meetings with Environment Waikato and have vigorously lobbied Environment Waikato Councillors regarding the need for a Catchment Management Plan for the whole river.

The Advocates' Committee was concerned to discover late in 2005 from Environment Waikato Councillors, that what was to have been the Catchment Management Plan that the Forum has been working towards, had been significantly reduced in concept. It is not in the interests of the river or of Turangi properties to have the river management plan reduced to focus just on the mid section of the river and the Project Watershed works. We are keen to see the draft and provide Environment Waikato with comments which may help shape the final version.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment assured the Advocates that Environment Waikato would take on the management of the total catchment of the Tongariro River. The Advocates find this reassuring but notes some comments from the Chairman of the Environment Waikato Council that the proposed Management Plan would apply only to the river works covered by current consents.

It is most encouraging to see the start of the gravel extraction work in the lower river, in the area immediately below the Bridge Pool. The removal of 20,000cm of gravel which is part of Environment Waikato's Project Watershed is scheduled for completion by the end of March.

GOAL 5

To have significant input into the development of a Management Plan for the River, drawing on up-to-date scientific and engineering information.

The Advocates have been fully represented at all meetings of the Tongariro River Management Forum. Further, the Advocates have analysed all documents and reports pertaining to river management. The development of a Management Plan for the river, while legally required under the conditions of the consents granted for river works, is proceeding all too slowly, so much so that the momentum needed has been largely dissipated.

We are concerned that two important reports on lake level management that will have a bearing on the river management plan have not yet been presented to the Management Forum. The first of these is from Professor Paul Williams, an eminent University of Auckland geomorphologist and keen angler who has presented interesting ideas on lake level adjustment. The second is from Don Scarlett of Mighty River Power, who has informally presented a draft report to a few Committee members of the Advocates on implications for lake level changes.

GOAL 6

To monitor the River Management Forum's effectiveness in involving key stakeholders and interest groups in discussion and input into decisions about the river.

This goal has been a particular focus of the Advocates as we seek to ensure that fullest informal as well as formal consultations take place amongst the stakeholders. While such consultation is very much a 'work in progress', we have two particular matters to which insufficient attention has been devoted. Both of these matters are volcanic in nature.

The first applies to further eruptions: the deposit of mega-tonnes of ash in the catchment from an eruption ought to be specifically planned for and dealt with in a management plan. At a minimum, the plan ought to provide for flushing flows of sufficient intensity to move ash quickly into the lake.

The second applies to similar concerns after lahars; while small, overflow lahars might be contained or confined to the Whangaehu River bed or deflected back by a bund, major lahars in the past have found their way into the Tongariro River catchment via the Upper Waikato and other streams to the north east of the crater lake.

The questions to which we seek answers now concern the survivability of the Tongariro River's ecology under such events. In part, these questions are two-fold; one set relates to the operation of the Rangipo Dam and the Poutu Canal, the other relates to the Department of Conservation's plans and procedures, as the manager of the fishery, for damage limitation and recovery.

GOAL 7

To liaise effectively with central and local government, their relevant agencies and key personnel on freshwater matters and policy issues that impact on the river.

The Advocates have developed open and constructive relationships with Genesis, Environment Waikato and the Department of Conservation and have met with each of these organisations at least twice in 2005.

In particular, we have met with the Genesis Company Secretary, Maureen Shaddick on the matter of the Genesis/Tuwharetoa agreement and in particular on the contributions made by Genesis to the Ngati Tuwharetoa Trust Board, a matter that we had taken to the Ombudsman. We now know that Genesis is making a significant sum of money available to the Trust Board during each of the 35 years of the resource consent period. We understand that it is intended that at least some of this money will be used for river restoration

GOAL 8

To establish effective liaison with all local groups which have similar interests in the Tongariro River and other rivers, with the purpose of co-ordinating lobby and action.

The Advocates continue to have representation on the Taupo Fishing Advisory Committee.

During 2005 the Advocates had frequent interaction with the National Trout Centre Trust and have agreed to work collaboratively with them on a project-by-project basis, starting with the tracks initiative, which aims to open up a circular walking track from the Major Jones Bridge to the Red Hut Bridge. We note that the north part of this left bank walkway,

on land controlled by the Department of Conservation, from the Hydro Pool to the Tongariro National Trout Centre is scheduled for completion by 31 March 2006.

GOAL 9

To increase the Advocates' collective knowledge of (a) all aspects of the river and (b) the functions and findings of other similar advocacy bodies.

It has become clear that a good deal is known about the hydrology of the Tongariro River especially under restricted flows. Also, there is some knowledge of the physical, chemical and biological aspects of the river, especially its habitat value for introduced rainbow and brown trout. So now an education programme is needed to ensure that the public are fully informed not only about the river's recreational values but also about what is needed to keep the river robust and in good health. Very few other places in New Zealand have a major mountain stream near a state highway and near populated areas, so there is important groundwork to do.

GOAL 10

To maintain financial stability and cash flow to meet planned activity

The Financial Report for the year ending 31 December 2005 follows. We are most appreciative of the \$3,000 received from the Pharazyn Trust whose generosity to us has continued for two years in a row. The Trust's recognition of the value of the work of the Advocates is inherent in their gestures and is inspirational to us.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all Advocates members for their continued support, and in particular I wish to thank the Committee. Those who live locally – Mark Cosgrove, Tuatea Smallman, John Wheeler and Eric Wilson – have been invaluable in keeping the day-to-day work of the Advocates at the forefront of their year's activities. Out-of-town Committee members have provided a wide range of advice and insights by telephone and email.

We were sorry to lose Graeme Duff as a Committee member during the year. Gill Osborne resigned to take up residence on Waiheke Island and a tribute to her was published in the Advocate 6 issue of December 2005. John Toogood was co-opted to the Committee during the year and we have been fortunate to have Graeme Nahkies accept our invitation to act as advisor to the Committee.

Special thanks go to Tuatea Smallman, our Kaumatua, to our Vice-President Richard Kemp, and to Eric Wilson who picked up the reins of the Secretary's job from Gill and added them to his role as Treasurer. His efficiency has been very reassuring.

I wish to thank Bob Appleton for continuing to represent the Advocates on the Taupo Fishing Advisory Committee; and Mike Forret who maintains our website and email database.

Sylvia Smith supports our work by giving freely of her graphics expertise, her time and her design initiative. It is thanks to Sylvia that our printed materials, including our Annual Reports, are of such good quality and she donates at-cost printing.

I wish to thank Bob McDonnell for giving his ideas, time and layout skills – and for giving us at-cost printing services. Bob researched and put together the Didymo pamphlets and posters, an initiative which would not have been possible without him. Financial support for the pamphlets and posters was given by Bob, Sylvia, Colourcraft Reprographics (Wellington) and Service Printers Ltd (Wellington).

Jenny Shieff provides writing and editing expertise. This has been a huge support and I wish to thank her for this and also for taking on the management of Stage 1 of the Planting for the Future Project.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Mark Cosgrove, our Immediate Past President, who has not only represented the Advocates on the River Management Forum and has been available to discuss with me all aspects of the Advocates work all year, but has continued to provide expert scientific background for our thinking.

I am pleased to move the adoption of this, the fourth Annual Report of the Advocates for the Tongariro River Incorporated.

Heather Macdonald

President

16 April 2006

≈ **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

for the twelve-month period ended 31 December 2005

Income and Expenditure

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>
<hr/>		
<i>Income</i>		
Subscriptions and donations	4930	5579
Pharazyn Trust grant	3000	10000
Total Income	<hr/> 7930	<hr/> 15579
 <i>Expenditure</i>		
Advertising and Promotion	162	616
Post Box Rental	125	125
Website Hosting and Registration	423	2369
Newsletters	1448	694
AGM, Seminar, Report and Expenses	2548	4542
Postage, Stationery and Banking	975	1742
Farewell Function	124	-
Submission Hearing	-	233
Total Expenditure	<hr/> 5805	<hr/> 10321
Excess of Income over Expenditure	<hr/> <hr/> 2125	<hr/> <hr/> 5258

Statement of Financial Position

	2005	2004
<hr/>		
<i>Current Assets</i>		
Bank Current Account	6223	11583
Bank Term Deposit	8000	-
<i>Fixed Assets</i>	-	-
Total Assets	<hr/> 14223	<hr/> 11583
<i>Current Liabilities</i>	<hr/> -	<hr/> 297
Net Assets	<hr/> 14223	<hr/> 11286
<i>Accumulated funds</i>		
Balance at beginning of year	11286	6243
Net Income	<hr/> 2125	<hr/> 5043
Total funds employed	<hr/> 13411	<hr/> 11286

E H Wilson

Secretary Treasurer

7 February 2006

≈ **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

for the period ended 31 December 2005

Statement of Accounting Policies

Reporting Equity

The Advocates For The Tongariro River Incorporated is incorporated under the Incorporated Societies Act 1908.

The Financial Statements of the Advocates For The Tongariro River Society Inc. have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice.

Measurement Base

The accounting principles recognised as appropriate for the measurement and reporting of earnings and financial position on a historical cost basis are followed by the Society.

Specific Accounting Policies

The following specific accounting policies which materially affect the measurement of financial performance and financial position have been applied.

Subscriptions are recorded on a cash received basis

Changes in Accounting Policies

There have been no changes in accounting policies. All policies have been applied on bases consistent with those used in previous the year.

Preparation of Accounts:

The accounts have been produced on information provided by your Treasurer and have been verified by R H Glover a retired Chartered Accountant and show the financial position at 31/12/2005.

≈ **APPENDICES**

The remainder of this Report contains the Advocates' press statements, a newspaper article from the NZ Herald and a note from Professor Paul Williams summarising his views on managing the Tongariro River.

≈ **ADVOCATES OF FLOOD PROTECTION**

Letter to the Editor, Turangi Chronicle, August 2005

The Advocates for the Tongariro River Incorporated are pleased to note the completion of the 2004-2005 summer works, which saw the removal of some 15000 tonnes of shingle from near the State Highway bridge, the extension of a rock wall downstream from Herekeikei Street, and the erection of a wall in front of the Tongariro Bridge Fishing Lodge.

The Committee of the Advocates have been concerned to hear that some Turangi residents have expressed the view that the Advocates are opposed to these flood protection measures and others proposed by Environment Waikato for the left bank of the Tongariro between Kutai Street and Te Aho Road.

The Advocates support flood protection measures and have expressed the view, through the Tongariro River Management Forum, that flood protection should be carried out in the context of a management plan for the Upper, Middle and Lower Tongariro. The Advocates, through our representation on the Management Forum, are committed to ensuring that a plan for the whole river is developed and implemented.

One committee member of the Advocates has objected to a stopbank proposal for the stretch of riverbank between Poto St and Cherry Reserve as he believes that a stopbank may not be adequate or may not be the best flood protection solution. He perceives a serious risk if stopbanks are built in a piecemeal fashion without due consideration of their impact on the whole of the river and has requested that further assessment is carried out by Environment Waikato to ensure the best solution is found. The Advocates wish it to be made clear that his objection is based on his personal view.

The Advocates are committed to property protection and fully support the works that have been done to date. We hope that they represent the beginnings of a comprehensive and well thought out programme that will see regular removal of shingle to lower the river's bed at several key places above and below the town of Turangi.

The Advocates are also keen to see channel restoration especially in the Lower River, as well as some removal of silt from the mouths and channels presently blocked, such as Dan's Creek and the Hook.

If you would like to become a member of the Advocates, please visit our website, **www.tongariroriver.co.nz**

Heather Macdonald

President, Advocates for the Tongariro River Inc

≈ **ADVOCATES HIT OUT AT RATE INCREASES**

Taupo Times Friday, September 23 2005

The recent huge increase in Project Watershed rates, imposed by Environment Waikato has concerned the Advocates for the Tongariro River. The AFTR Committee met with Environment Waikato's Taupo Constituency representatives, Laurie Burdett and Rex Hawkins, earlier this month to express concerns about the lack of progress on a management plan for the river, and the threat of escalating costs for flood protection work.

"We asked two main questions," says AFTR President, Heather Macdonald. "First, why the rates increase had been so high? Secondly, should we expect the rates to carry on increasing like this?"

"Unfortunately, we did not get an answer to either of our questions and we are concerned about that."

The Councillors made the point that the cost of cleaning up after the 2003 flood had been massive.

Heather says that this is the very reason for the Advocates' concerns.

Heather says that Turangi ratepayers need to know that Environment Waikato has a well thought out plan for funding river works, and a budget.

"AFTR has advised Laurie and Rex that they have given some thought to alternative methods of funding river works and have talked with Marian Hobbs, the Minister for the Environment, about possible national initiatives," Heather says.

"The Minister considered the local rates burden excessive and told us that some work has already been done to look at alternative funding methods at a national level, but this was twelve months ago and nothing has been heard since. AFTR believes it is unrealistic to expect residents to continue to bear the cost, especially when there is a risk that those costs will escalate."

Heather says, “Laurie and Rex recommended that the Advocates present a paper to the Catchment Services Committee of Environment Waikato, proposing alternative methods of funding river works. The Advocates will be asking Environment Waikato, as the environmental watchdog, to give these proposals serious consideration.”

Want to have your say? Visit the Advocates for the Tongariro River website: www.tongariroriver.co.nz and go to the Discussion Forum. Advocates membership forms are available on the site.

≈ **DIDYMO THREAT**

Taupo Times, 5 October 2005

The threat of an invasion of the Didymo (Rock Snot) alga has caused the Committee of the Advocates for the Tongariro River (Inc) to call on the Department of Conservation to adopt some basic containment strategies. Didymo poses a grave risk to freshwater habitats and consequently to fisheries.

Biosecurity New Zealand has warned that Didymo will threaten the rivers and lakes of the Central North Island if it spreads from the five South Island rivers where it has already been identified. At a meeting in Tokaanu on 11 October, Biosecurity NZ staff advised stakeholder attendees that clumps of weeds are to be removed from boats, skis, and fishing nets; dogs need to be dried thoroughly before moving from one river to another; equipment needs to be soaked and scrubbed in hot, soapy water at 60 Celsius for one minute; a 2% bleach solution can be used as well, and/or a 5% saline solution, or detergent.

President of the Advocates for the Tongariro River, Heather Macdonald, says that the rivers in the central plateau area of the North Island are particularly vulnerable to a Didymo invasion, given their proximity to each other and the suitability of the Central Plateau's conditions. "Didymo loves shingle river beds and the climate we have on the Central Plateau," she says. "All it would take is one contaminated boat or one water ski or one pair of waders or one fishing net or one dog bringing the unwanted alga to our region."

The Advocates have called for immediate preventative measures to be applied by the Department of Conservation, who administers the Taupo conservancy.

The measures include firstly, everyone purchasing a Taupo fishing licence being given with their licence a copy of the most current Biosecurity NZ fact sheet on Didymo and how to prevent its spread.

Secondly, the Department of Conservation would mail all licence holders with information about Didymo and how to care for fishing gear so as to minimise contamination risk.

And thirdly, signage would be placed at key fishing access points including boat ramps and the rivers feeding into Lake Taupo, informing of Didymo and of strategies to be taken by anglers and river users to try to prevent it entering Lake Taupo and the rivers which feed it.

While the Department of Conservation supported and co-ordinated Biosecurity NZ's stakeholder meeting at Tokaanu, the Advocates are calling for the Department to take immediate action to ensure the advice given at that meeting is heeded by the public, who are the principal spreading agents of Didymo.

≈ **GAMEBIRDERS BAG COSY DOC DEALS**

Philippa Stevenson

24 February 2005

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/index.cfm?c_id=1&ObjectID=10112378

A feisty group of gamebird hunters have bagged a bigger than usual quarry – the Department of Conservation.

More than two years ago, the Wildfowlers Association trained its sights on the highly questionable practice of private deal making in the resource consent process when electricity generator Mighty River Power was after consents to continue operating its eight Waikato River hydro dams.

Last month it scored a bull's-eye.

In 2003, after lengthy proceedings before an Environment Waikato consent hearing committee, Mighty River was granted consents spanning 35 years.

But a troubling feature of the process was the many groups which made submissions and then withdrew them wholly or partly because they had made private agreements with Mighty River.

They included the Department of Conservation (DoC), Fish and Game, Forest and Bird, the Taupo District Council, the Tuwharetoa Maori Trust Board, Waikato-Tainui, Genesis Power and Carter Holt Harvey.

The Wildfowlers, too, got around the negotiating table but dropped out after becoming unhappy with the level of money Mighty River agreed to provide for a trust to work for the sustainable ecological management of the river and Lake Taupo.

The Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust is now up and running, providing funds for research.

Its members – DoC, Forest and Bird, Fish and Game, and Acre, Waikato’s Advisory Committee for Regional Environment – were happier to have the money than trust to the vagaries of the consent process.

But Wildfowlers patron Mike Hucks said his organisation remained disturbed that bodies with statutory public duties like DoC and Fish and Game struck a deal rather than present information to the hearing committee.

The Wildfowlers dug into their own pockets to put up six hours of evidence on the impact of Mighty River’s aggressive use of the river – spilling vast quantities of water through its dams at times of peak power demand – which was slowly destroying precious environments, Hucks said.

“The river can go up and down four to five metres daily – sometimes twice daily – and it is in the process of destroying absolutely irreplaceable wetlands. The normal vegetation is changed and consequently the habitat for wildlife is destroyed.”

The Wildfowlers also took their concerns to the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

The commissioner first criticised private deals, or side agreements, in a report in 1998 but none of those investigated then involved Government agencies.

DoC’s and Fish and Game’s deal with Mighty River struck the commissioner’s investigator, Bob McClymont, as a disturbing trend.

In a report to the Wildfowlers last month he said DoC’s side agreements were potentially detrimental to the environment because its failure to take part in hearings could mean consenting authorities had less information on which to base decisions. That could lead to conditions that were not as stringent as expected or warranted.

Secret agreements also meant scrutiny of public bodies was compromised and DoC “runs the risk of creating perceptions of complicity and impropriety”.

And if either party to an agreement reneged, the only option would be to sue for enforcement of the contract.

Discussions between the commissioner and DoC over the issue prompted DoC Director-General Hugh Logan to issue the department's first set of guidelines for side agreements.

In December he advised the department's conservators that they must be prepared to explain why they had entered into a side agreement, including the outcomes expected for the environment.

The department had to be prepared to provide information to the public on any side agreements, and should ensure parties signing up to them were financially and technically capable of meeting their commitments.

Mr Logan's edict also said side agreements should not stop DoC taking part in consent hearings on aspects not in the agreement.

Mr McClymont said the commissioner remained concerned about environmental trade-offs occurring in side agreements.

For the Wildfowlers it had been a pleasing moral victory, Mr Hucks said.

"The only trouble is it doesn't assist the wetlands."

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≈ **SOME THOUGHTS ON MANAGING THE TONGARIRO RIVER**

Professor Paul Williams

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My general position on managing the physical features of the landscape is that 'nature knows best'. This is because natural processes can be so powerful that our human-scale 'fixes' are usually of only limited effectiveness. Floodplains will flood and there's no way we can stop that. We can only stop the frequency with which small floods (<50 years) overflow onto the floodplain. Big floods will always beat us unless, perhaps, we dam the river and have a lot of spare storage capacity behind the dam.

So my reactions to Dr Graeme Smart's (NIWA) suggestions are as follows:

1. The sensible course of management will vary according to what one's trying to achieve.
2. If the aim is to restore the river to as close to its natural state as possible downstream of State Highway 1 bridge, then (i) the lake needs to be permitted to operate within its natural range, (ii) the river should be left unconstrained to operate naturally, and (iii) regrowth of natural vegetation needs encouragement.
3. In practice the above may not be possible and we will have to compromise. The operators of the power schemes may wish to continue to control the lake level, as at present, and the owners of land downstream of the bridge may wish to see flooding no worse than at present. My reaction to that would be: (i) try to achieve a median lake level reduction of 10 cm while permitting the lake to still be controlled within the existing range. (ii) maintain existing flood protection downstream of the bridge.

I believe that lowering the lake level would definitely help improve the lower reaches by promoting natural scouring of the river bed, thereby increasing channel capacity and reducing the frequency of channel overflow. This is the best way to 'rejuvenate' the channel. Taking gravel from the channel is a waste of time as an almost limitless supply of gravel is waiting upstream to replace any that's taken. It would be an ongoing cost with the money better spent elsewhere.

It is possible that willow clearance along the lower reaches might also help rejuvenate the channel by reducing channel friction, but the downside might be channel widening and less channel stability, because the river would be able to migrate more freely. Willow clearance would need to be done from the delta end working upstream. I'd be in favour of that provided it's done cautiously, bit by bit to assess its effect.

If retraining is contemplated by cutting through meander bends, then that would certainly increase average channel slope and send a wave of river bed scouring upstream. Depending on how much meander cutting off was done, and where it was done, the bed scouring could reach upstream to the piles of State Highway 1 bridge. This would reduce the depth of flooding by about the depth of the scouring in the areas concerned. However, considering the cost of making the cut-offs and maintaining them, I'd be doubtful if the benefits would be justified.

4. If the desire is to reinstate the farming activity in the lower reaches, then both lake lowering and floodway construction (overflow route to Stump Bay) would be necessary, though even that would not stop the larger floods from inundating the delta area. Construction of a grassed floodway to Stump Bay from Graces Rd would alleviate some of the impact of flooding downstream, but there are so many potential natural overflow routes on both right and left banks that it would be much cheaper to let nature decide which ones to use. However, the grassed floodway recently constructed on the left bank of the Tauranga-Taupo River seems to be successful and equal success could probably be achieved with a channel to Stump Bay (or left to the Blind Mouth). Though unlike the TT, there's not a settlement to protect (other than Graces farm buildings) at the delta, so the cost is less justified. The more water that is encouraged to follow overflow routes, the less water is left for scouring the main channel and its distributaries as it passes through the delta.

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