

Annual Report by the Chair: Tasman Environmental Trust 2019/20

I am pleased to present my report for Tasman Environmental Trust on its 20th anniversary.

It has been an interesting and challenging year for TET. This time last year TET had completed the development of a Business Plan and the community conservation hub was poised to significantly increase support for conservation projects in the region. We can be proud of our work over the year which has resulted in significant achievements:

- We now provide support to 25 community groups and conservation projects
- Fifteen funding applications have been submitted and all but one or two have been successful
- Project grants have increased to nearly \$5M currently and significant applications are in the pipeline with the potential to double project funding in the next year.
- Following discussions with Nelson City Council, we have amended the Trust Deed to include NCC area within scope for TET support. TET is now working with the Nelson Tasman Climate Forum and there are two major funding applications pending which include the Nelson area.
- TET has worked with Project Mohua Management Group in Golden Bay to develop terms of reference for the group, a strategic/action plan and new projects aligned with the plan. The group is now ready to focus on implementing the agreed actions.
- TET has collaborated with Te Atiawa Manawhenua ki te Tau Ihu Trust on a project in which TET and iwi will partner for further planning and delivery.

TET has achieved these results in a year in which Covid19 has presented many challenges. Our organisation is resourceful and flexible, and policies and systems were quickly put in place to support staff and project managers and ensure the safety of volunteers. The TET team was already accustomed to working from home and meetings by Zoom became the norm. I would like to thank the team for their work to ensure TET has been able to continue to develop projects and deliver results through these difficult times.

The growth over the year has been supported by a small and highly effective team of managers. Sky Davies, Trust Manager has contributed to regional planning initiatives: Kotahitanga mo te Taiao alliance and the TDC Biostrategy, in addition to planning and implementing projects for TET. The Hub management team of Sky, Abby Boffa, Operations Manager, and Kathryn Brownlie, Financial Manager, has been assisted this year by other part time input for Planning, Communications, Admin Support and Regional Predator Control Coordination. Thank you for your sustained effort and your contribution to awesome results.

We are lucky to be working with some great project leaders and field workers too. They are the ones that mean the right plants get into the ground in the right place, at the right time and with the right follow-up care. They are the ones that organise trap networks, trap checking and catch reporting, and keeping volunteers motivated.

The Hub Team supports each project to prepare an annual budget, and the project managers report regularly on their project expenditure and achievements. This is part of TET's culture of quality

improvement. Last year consultants advised on a methodology for Evaluation and Monitoring and funding from Hoku Foundation has enabled the appointment of a dedicated position to lead this work. Funders want to be assured that their money is achieving the expected goals and targets. TET wants to be assured that we are achieving planned environmental benefits. This is complex work if it is done properly and will contribute to better planning and reporting, not only for funders but also for the volunteers who are contributing their time and need to know that we are doing things in the most effective way for the best outcomes. Feedback on results is critical for volunteers to sustain their efforts. The revitalised website will help spread the word on activities and results, Ro Cambridge has continued to make improvements to the monthly Conservation Volunteers' Newsletter which goes to 264 mailboxes, and the Battle for the Banded Rail newsletter goes out to 300 volunteers and celebrates the work of the many who are involved around Waimea Inlet.

TET's board of trustees is also committed to a culture of continuous improvement. A robust set of policies and procedures to guide culture, decision making and accountability has been developed over the last 18 months. These policies provide confidence and support for the Board and staff and regular review and improvement of these policies is part of the board's annual work plan. Earlier this year, the board carried out an assessment of board strengths and capabilities and has completed annual self-review using the NZ Navigator Assessment tool. The results reflected the strength of the board and its systems in all areas except the security of funding. This is our Achilles Heel. We have been fortunate to have significant funding from Rata Foundation and DOC for the development and provision of Hub services, but this has been on an annual basis only. The lack of continuity of funding means that a lot of time is spent chasing opportunities for funding support for Hub services and we need to be cautious engaging staff because we cannot be confident that we will have funds available beyond the term of a particular funding grant. We are hopeful that we can move to a longer-term funding arrangement soon.

TET has welcomed two new trustees during the year: Mirka Langford and Marion Milne. Mirka and Marian are both members of the Project Mohua Management Group, which plans and manages projects in Golden Bay and which Marion chairs. Their participation on the Board contributes to wider understanding of environmental issues and organisational interests. Mirka works as a Farm Environment Planner for Fonterra and Marian is heavily involved in conservation work for Healthpost Trust at Farewell Spit, and other conservation projects throughout the region.

Christeen Mackenzie who joined the trust last year was elected to Tasman District Council and moved to the Council representative position and Tom Stein, Regional Representative for QEII in Nelson Marlborough will take up the QEII representative position this year. Tom has been with TET in the past and his wide knowledge of the region, and issues for new and existing QEII covenants, will be valuable for our future planning.

Martin Heine will step down from his role as a Trustee this year after eight years on the Board, three of which, he held the role of Deputy-Chair. We will miss Martin's contribution and enthusiasm. He has provided wise counsel to the Board, sound environmental advice and valuable institutional knowledge.

Our conservation work has benefited from new national funding opportunities and TET is now leading two large projects funded by Ministry for Primary Industries and Ministry for the Environment:

Waimea Inlet Restoration

TET received funding from MPI in 2019 for Waimea Inlet restoration over three years. Planting commenced this year with approx. 30,000 native plants planted with the support of Battle for the Banded Rail community volunteers, Tasman District Council, Dept of Corrections, DOC, Nelson City Council, the team at Dominion Flats and NMIT rangers. This is a great achievement as Covid19 threatened to seriously delay our ability to commence the restoration and dry ground conditions also delayed the start of planting. The planning and collaboration to achieve this coordinated result does not happen without a lot of work but it produces a greater level of ownership of the result and shared responsibility for the long-term sustainability of the restoration. The community plantings attracted an average of 50 volunteers for each session: a tribute to the organisation and the friendly atmosphere at the plantings.

TDC has been successful in securing funding from MfE for more work on Waimea Inlet so we look forward to a continued partnership to protect and enhance the biodiversity around the Inlet.

Restoring the Moutere: Ridgetops to the Sea

This project has received funding from MPI and the Provincial Growth Fund (MBIE) of nearly \$3M for riparian planting and fencing and plans to plant 270,000 plants over three years in fenced riparian areas. TET's hub support enabled a keen community group to respond quickly to significant funding opportunities and make amazing headway in a short period of time. This project is also another example of the benefits of coordination and cooperation across many different organisations and community groups, including over 100 local landowners in the Moutere Catchment Group, Kina Bird Song, Landcare Trust, TDC, and Whenua Iti. They will be working to establish a significant corridor of native habitat that can sustain populations of native birds and wildlife into the future and improve water quality in the streams flowing into the Moutere Inlet.

Tasman Environmental Trust seeks to achieve the **Vision** of “healthy diverse ecosystems woven through the Nelson Tasman landscape” by working with private landowners and on reserves outside of the Crown administered conservation estate, to restore connected habitats of vulnerable ecosystems. The focus on **valued ecosystems and sites outside of the public estate** means that we need to understand the interests of, and work with, a wide range of landowners to achieve our goals. Landowners will include farmers, horticulturalists, lifestyle blocks and those living on small residential properties.

This focus on the role of private landowners in contributing to environmental benefits is a unique feature of TET work and an area we would like to grow. The work of the Moutere Catchment Group demonstrates the potential to make changes over a wide geographical area by supporting private landowners to restore, protect and maintain native planting and control predators.

It is extremely rewarding to see these large-scale projects involving multiple organisations and community conservation groups working together to achieve major change to the environment. There are also many small community groups that benefit greatly from the “back office” support provided by TET that allows them to focus on the important work in the field.

Participating in conservation work impacts on the way communities think about the areas in which they live. Covid19 slowed us down, at least for a while, and many people have treasured the moments spent in a more peaceful world. Many are also looking for ways to address the impacts of Climate Change at a personal level.

TET works to connect people to nature conservation in their communities and provide them with an opportunity to contribute – through trapping or planting or weed control. Our reported volunteer hours increased this year, despite the lock down, and we are on track to involve even greater numbers of community volunteers in conservation projects next year.

“Biodiversity” has entered the national vocabulary and through its work, TET is helping to make greater biodiversity a reality we can all appreciate.