



National Wetland Trust

Business Plan

2000-2005

National Wetland Trust of New Zealand

Est. Oct. 1999

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Business Plan of the National Wetland Trust. This document is the culmination of intensive efforts by all the Trustees over the past 18 months and provides a frame work on which the Trust can proceed with work action plans in the coming years.

The Trust was initially established with a sole task of establishing a wetland education centre but as the Trustees began looking at the issues it was clear that there were many more tasks that needed to be undertaken. The preparation of this business plan will assist in the prioritisation of these many projects over the next five years.

While a large number of people have had an input into the preparation of this plan I would particularly like to acknowledge the efforts of Trustees Ian Boothroyd and Angelina Legg who prepared the initial drafts and also Dawn Metcalfe from Mighty River Power who rationalised this final version.

It should be noted that this is intended to be a living document and can and will be changed whenever there is the necessity or whenever issues are raised that need to be incorporated into the document. The Trustees would therefore like to have feedback on this document as we believe that it provides the cornerstone on which the annual activities of the Trust will be based. Planning documents such as this are of no value if they are merely filed and not utilised for their included purpose in which this case is assisting the development of annual priorities.

I commend the document to you for your consideration and look forward to feedback with any suggested alterations or additions.

David Lawrie
Chairman

Background

The National Wetland Trust is a legally constituted Trust and is open for anyone to join. It was established as a result of a meeting of the Waikato Conservation Board in 1998. The original purpose of the Trust was to obtain funding to establish a wetland education centre in the lower Waikato area. This initial concept has grown into a fully-fledged programme of objectives and tasks, of which, a national centre remains at the core.

Following the establishment of a Steering Committee, a Board of Trustees was elected at the inaugural Annual General Meeting and launch of the National Wetland Trust, held on World Wetlands Day, 2 February 2000, at the Hamilton Zoo. The first task of the Board has been to produce this Business Plan. The plan outlines the vision and objectives of the Trust, and details the key methods, tasks, timeframes and likely sources of funding to fulfil our vision.

Vision Statement

The appreciation of wetlands and their values by all New Zealanders, and the enhancement and restoration of wetlands throughout New Zealand.

Key Messages

The Trust has identified four key messages, which we see as our priority to communicate to the New Zealand public through a variety of methods (identified later in the Plan):

1. The conservation and restoration of New Zealand's wetlands is essential to protect their natural biodiversity.
2. Wetlands provide economic benefits to people through their natural hydrological and biological functions, which reduce flooding, prevent siltation of waterways, and improve water quality.
3. Wetlands have considerable historical, archaeological and cultural values that should be protected and retained for the benefit of all New Zealanders.
4. Wetlands have considerable value for recreational use and constructed wetlands can be used for the treatment of domestic and industrial wastewater.



Objectives

The objectives of the Trust are to:

- 1. Increase the knowledge and appreciation of all New Zealanders about wetland values.
- 2. Increase the understanding of wetland processes by policy-makers and landowners at national, regional and local levels.
- 3. Ensure a proactive commitment from landowners and government agencies to wetland preservation, enhancement and restoration throughout New Zealand.



Outline of Key Messages

Conservation and Biodiversity

Wetlands support a very large number of plants and animals. Most of New Zealand's wetland plants and animals are found nowhere else in the world, which makes them highly unusual and valuable. Birds and animals found in wetlands include fernbirds, brown teal, scaup, shoveler, mudfish, eels, dragonflies and damselflies, while plants include cabbage trees, flax and various orchids. Although wetlands now cover less than 2% of New Zealand land area, they are home to 22% of our bird species, and 30% of our native freshwater fish. The biological diversity (biodiversity) of these wetland homes is very significant. Likewise the variety of wetland types need to be preserved and protected throughout New Zealand.

Plants and animals that live only in wetlands face an uncertain future. Habitat loss and damage through land drainage and modification means that the homes of these animals and plants are disappearing. Conservation and restoration programmes make a big difference to the survival of wetland dwelling species.

Our message is that the conservation and restoration of New Zealand's wetlands is valuable for the protection and benefit of the natural biodiversity of wetlands, and protects the habitat of the unique animal and plants that inhabit them, and is a critical element of the New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.

Physical and Biological Functions

Wetlands once covered large areas of New Zealand, and are complex and dynamic ecosystems with many functions and processes. Important functions include physical or hydrological functions, as well as biological processes.

With their hydrological function, wetlands can be seen as giant sponges. The wetland plants slow the flow of water off the land so that, in times of flood, more water can be absorbed into the soil, and less water is released into already high flowing rivers and streams. This lessens the risk of flooding locally and further downstream. In summer, stored water in wetlands is slowly released to maintain water flows in local streams and rivers. Plants also trap waterborne sediment and prevent silt buildup in local rivers and streams. They thus assist in achieving a more consistent seasonal water yield

The biological functions of wetlands are important in improving water quality and decreasing the amount of nutrients in the water. Bacteria living in the damp soil of



wetlands absorb and breakdown up to 90% of nutrients from farm run-off (fertilisers, chemicals, animal wastes). Cleaner water prevents nuisance algal blooms and provides a healthier source of water for stock and human use.

Our message is that wetlands benefit humankind through their natural hydrological and biological functions and reduce flooding, prevent siltation, and improve water quality.

Historical and Cultural Values

Many of the wetlands in New Zealand are of cultural and spiritual significance to Maori. Wetlands are associated with historic maori occupation, and contain Pa sites, unfortified settlements, waahi tapu and burial (urupa) sites. Waikato peat lakes are known to contain some of the best preserved maori pa settlements in the country.

The tannic waters have preserved a number of wooden carvings and artefacts that were associated with the settlement of these sites. Wetlands provided maori with food (particularly wildfowl, eels and other freshwater fish); taro cultivation; flax (harakeke) for weaving and cultivation; access to other areas; and plants for medicinal, food and building/craft uses. Wetland sites, and their resources, are still significant to Maori.

Our message is that wetlands have considerable historical, archaeological and cultural value for all of New Zealand, and unique features should be protected and retained for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

Use and Application of Wetlands

Wetlands form part of our natural landscape and offer many opportunities for recreation. Amongst the most favoured recreational uses of wetlands are hunting, fishing, bird watching, and canoeing. The landscape and aesthetic values of wetlands also have recreational and spiritual value.

Existing and artificially created wetlands are also being increasingly used for the treatment of domestic and industrial waste discharges from community and commercial enterprises. We favour the creation of artificial wetlands for the purpose of wastewater treatment, usually as a final polishing treatment before release into natural rivers, streams, or lakes. An additional benefit of these artificial wetlands is the increased habitat available for native wetland animals and plants.



Our message is that wetlands have considerable value for recreational use as well as beneficial applications in the artificial creation of wetlands for the treatment of domestic and industrial wastewater.



Achieving Our Objectives

Objective 1: Increased Appreciation of Wetland Values by All New Zealanders

The National Wetland Trust believes that an increased appreciation of wetland values by all New Zealanders will improve opportunities for fulfilling the vision and other objectives of the Trust. Knowledge of wetlands and their values is limited amongst the public at large.

Freshwater wetlands once covered extensive areas of New Zealand. About 90% of these wetland areas have been destroyed in the last 150 years, although there is great regional variation in the extent of depletion. An estimated 110,000 hectares of freshwater wetland once covered the lower Waikato area and the Hauraki Plains, and about 32,000 hectares (25%) is left today. Unmodified wetlands cover about 37% of the original area of wetlands in Southland, while only 1% of the original cover exists in the Bay of Plenty¹.

The Trust believes that a greater appreciation of wetlands by New Zealanders will assist in halting further declines in wetland area and result in restoration and thus gains in wetland areas throughout the country.

The Trust aims to achieve this objective by four main tasks:

- Task 1: Establish and maintain a National Wetland Centre*
- Task 2: Facilitate access to information on wetlands*
- Task 3: Develop education programmes for specialist target groups*
- Task 4: Facilitate access to wetland areas*

Task 1: Establish and maintain a National Wetland Centre

Intended customer groups: Special interest groups (e.g., birdwatchers, hunters, landowners, Councillors and local government staff)
Education institutes (primary, secondary and tertiary)
General public
Tourists

Purpose: To provide a central focus for wetland education and information and activities in the Waikato Region, including interactive displays, special events and access to wetland areas.

¹ From the directory of wetlands (1996)



Task 1 will be accomplished by:

- seeking funding for the establishment of the centre
- identifying a suitable site
- purchasing land/buildings as appropriate and available
- organising interpretation through displays and posters
- promoting the centre via an appropriate marketing strategy

Key resources required:

- funding to purchase land, build centre, obtain display resources and support centre manager
- centre manager
- voluntary labour to co-ordinate centre establishment and collate information.

Anticipated Outcome:

- ***a state-of-the-art promotional and educational centre, open to the public during conventional working hours, with interpretation through posters and displays, and with special activities planned for specialist interest groups.***

Task 2: Facilitate access to information on wetlands

Intended customer groups: National Wetland Trust members
Special interest groups (e.g., birdwatchers, hunters, landowners)
Education institutes (primary, secondary and tertiary)
General public
Tourists

The National Wetland Trust aims to make wetland information available to all New Zealanders. We envisage preparing and making available a series of information packs and leaflets, which will focus on the Trust's key messages. The information will have a national focus with regional and local interpretation as appropriate. We see the information packs being available through the National Wetland Centre, Regional and District Councils, Department of Conservation, NGOs, and other local outlets as available.

The Trust will do this by:

- regular Wetland Trust Newsletter to members and key agencies
- providing a focus for wetland information
- acting as a national distribution centre for information on wetlands



- developing a network of regional representatives throughout New Zealand
- providing information on wetlands upon request
- establishing a web site with links to other wetland sites
- advertising key presentations and seminars on wetlands.

Key resources required:

- sufficient funding
- voluntary and funded labour
- access to up-to-date research
- access to contemporary interpretation techniques.

Anticipated Outcome:

- **Information packs on wetlands (with a focus on key messages) prepared, with national, regional and local interpretation, and available at outlets throughout the country.**

Task 3: Develop education programmes for specialist target groups

Intended customer groups: Local iwi
 Special interest groups
 Landowners
 Primary, secondary and tertiary students
 Birdwatchers and hunters
 General public

The National Wetland Trust believes that a key method to achieve its vision and objectives is the education of interest groups. We have identified these groups of people through our collective understanding and experience of education, research, recreational use and restoration of wetlands. The Trust recognises that other agencies (e.g., Regional Councils, Department of Conservation) have a role in the education of targeted groups of people and intends to develop partnerships with these agencies as appropriate. The Trust also intends to prioritise its efforts and develop education programmes for those specialist groups that will contribute the most to the vision and objectives of the Trust. We have identified these groups as:

- Landowners – education programmes on drainage effects, management options, enhancement and restoration methods
- Education Institutes – identify gaps in existing available information, and develop programmes to fill these gaps
- Special Interest Groups – Fish and Game, Ornithological Societies.

We envisage that the education programmes will include:

- Information packs on specific issues for targeted interest groups
- run or co-ordinate seminars, workshops and field days for landowners, interested agencies and special interest groups on wetland management and restoration, in partnership with other agencies (e.g. DoC, Farm Environment Award Trust, Regional Councils, NZ Landcare Trust, Federated Farmers, Fish and Game)
- submit relevant articles on wetland restoration projects and wetland values to rural and conservation publications e.g. Forest and Bird magazine, Rural Press, dairy Exporter.

Key resources required:

- sufficient funding
- voluntary and funded labour
- access to up-to-date research.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- ***Specific education programmes established for key target groups throughout New Zealand.***
- ***Increased awareness of wetland values, processes and good management practices amongst landowners, local, regional and national politicians, and the general public.***

Task 4: Facilitate access to wetland areas

Intended customer groups: Special interest groups (e.g., birdwatchers, hunters, landowners)
Education institutes (primary, secondary and tertiary)
General public
Tourists

Many wetland areas in New Zealand are off the beaten track and often difficult to access. The National Wetland Trust believes that by making wetland areas more accessible to New Zealanders, and through the promotion and advertising of their whereabouts, more people will take the opportunity to visit and appreciate them. The Trust recognises that there are issues such as private ownership, lack of walkways, and lack of location maps and road signs which act as barriers to access for many people. We believe that facilitating the development of local, regional and national wetland trails will enable New Zealanders to seek and enjoy the benefits of wetlands.



The Trust will do this by:

- creating an inventory of existing wetland trails,
- establishing, in conjunction with local iwi, local and regional government, DoC and other agencies, a wetland trail in the Waikato region, with a view to developing guidelines for implementation in other parts of New Zealand,
- establishing wetland trails throughout New Zealand, in conjunction with national, regional and local agencies, and regional representatives,
- facilitate the distribution of information of existing wetland trails,
- facilitate negotiation with local iwi, landowners, corporate bodies, local, regional and national government, and non-government organisations to create new wetland trails throughout New Zealand,
- provide information on accommodation and facilities,
- facilitate the marketing of wetland trails as a recreational activity for New Zealanders and overseas visitors.

Key resources required:

- sufficient funding
- voluntary and funded labour.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- ***Access to a variety of wetland areas for New Zealanders and overseas visitors***
- ***Establishment of an extensive network of wetland trails throughout New Zealand.***

Objective 2: Increased Scientific Understanding of Wetland Functions and Processes

Intended customer groups: Scientists engaged in wetland research
Regional and local district Councillors and senior staff
Farmers
Industry senior staff and managers
Small bloc landowners

As for all ecosystems, wetlands comprise some complex, and often, poorly understood processes. These range from the hydrological role in the water cycle to their role in the breakdown of organic material. Despite current research efforts, much remains to be learnt about wetlands, their processes, their cycles of change, optimum conditions and how best to restore wetlands. In addition we need to understand better the role of wetlands in the historical and cultural development of Maori and New Zealand as a whole. The Trust believes that more research funding for wetlands is required to ensure that our understanding of wetlands increase

The Trust aims to promote and support further research into wetlands through:

- prioritising wetland research needs for New Zealand,
- promoting research on wetlands to research agencies,
- promoting research on wetlands to funding agencies,
- developing and facilitating the transfer and application of the results of scientific research and understanding.

Key resources required:

- sufficient funding,
- skilled scientists and researchers,
- encouraging and mentoring young scientists in wetland research,
- appropriate and efficient University and research institute infrastructure

Anticipated Outcomes:

- **Increased scientific research into wetland ecosystem functions and processes**
- **Improved transfer of the results of research to key target groups.**

Objective 3: Proactive Commitment to Wetland Protection, Enhancement and Restoration

Intended customer groups: Regional and local district Councillors and senior staff
Landowners
Industry senior staff and managers

The Trust aims to promote and support further research into wetlands through:

- developing a community based model of wetland restoration and management as an example
- facilitating active involvement of the local community, tangata whenua and interest groups in community restoration plans and their implementation
- providing explanatory information on-site to tell public what has been done and why
- progress reports on wetland restoration using web site
- developing systems or techniques to minimise the impacts of land use on wetland systems and promote these with landowners
- production and promotion of a Wetland Restoration Manual, in partnership with agencies and interested groups
- liaising with local government to ensure that wetland restoration and enhancement becomes a feature of the resource consent process e.g. consent conditions or mitigation measures.
- meeting with local government representatives, Ministers of Conservation and the Environment, once a year to discuss wetland issues at regional and national levels.
- supporting, promoting and establishing (where appropriate) national and regional wetland awards.

Key resources required:

- sufficient funding,
- voluntary and funded labour.

Anticipated outcomes:

- ***Increased enhancement and restoration of wetlands throughout New Zealand***
- ***Promotion of wetland restoration in all statutory processes.***
- ***Increased involvement of community members and agencies in wetland restoration projects.***
- ***Improvement in the quality of wetlands in New Zealand.***

