



Mahinepua Radar Hill Landcare Group

Strategic Review

2024 - 2030

3 June 2023
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Introduction

This report considers [Mahinepua Radar Hill Landcare Group](#) ("MRHLG") future direction. It is intended to inform the Committee's discussion of MRHLG's strategy for 2024-2030. The Committee is asked to agree next steps and a timetable for completing this strategy review.

Existing Operations

Mission & Goals

MRHLG's stated mission is

"...to promote and enhance the habitat of native birds, especially the Kiwi and the Kukupa, and other native species of plants and animals within the designated impact area by eliminating the population of predatory and/ or introduced plants and animals.

- a) To help local people or organisations to work together in planning and implementation of sustainable management of the land and resources in the Mahinepua Parish or other areas.
- b) To help in the planning and implementation of sustainable management of such lands and resource based projects.
- c) To seek funding for such projects.
- d) To invite resource persons and organisations to assist with and /or participate in activities, to commission research, and to share information.
- e) To be involved with any other activities or agencies which may assist the above."¹

How MRHLG creates value

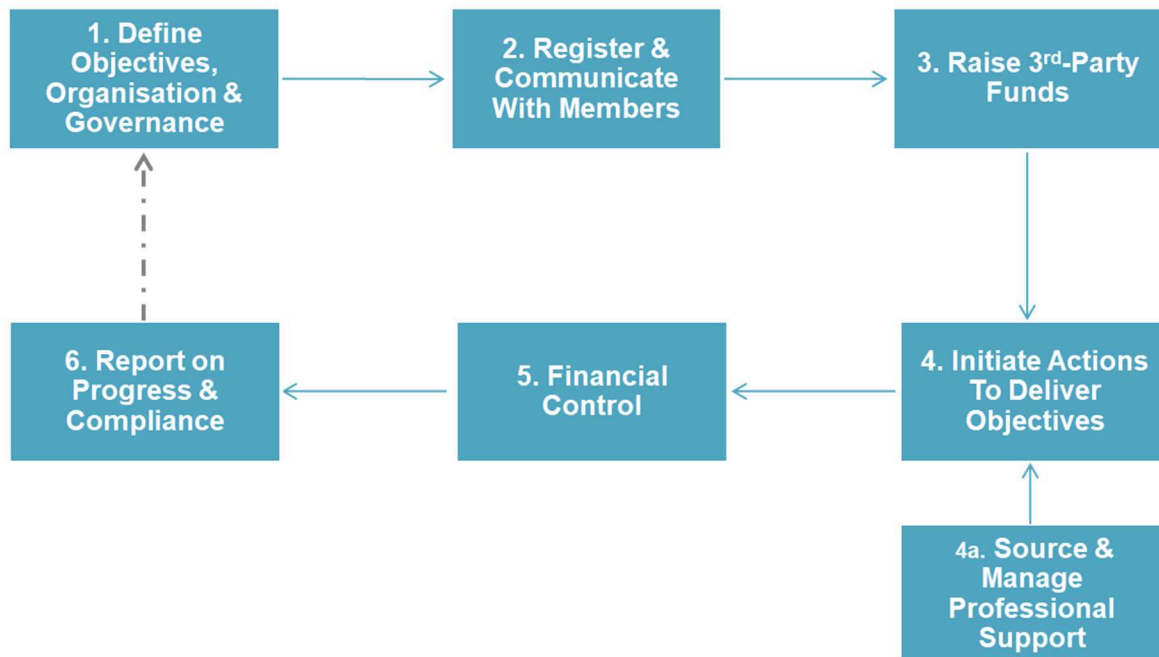
MRHLG adds value for Members and third-party funders with the time its Members volunteer to

- 1) define a direction for & manage MRHLG's operations
- 2) initiate and manage activities that support Kiwi conservation
 - a) Kiwi Avoidance Training (KATS) for dogs
 - b) predator control (directly by Members or using professional support)
 - c) source and oversee the services from professional trapper
 - d) collectively source & deploy predator control traps and consumables (toxins)
 - e) liaise between members to enable management efforts (e.g. trapping)
- 3) monitor progress towards the defined objectives
 - a) periodic Kiwi population surveys (including annual Kiwi listening)
 - b) regular electronic monitoring of Kiwi activity in the DIA (data collection from transmitters)
- 4) raise funds
- 5) ensure financial control, accurate reporting & regulatory compliance
- 6) communicate with Members as well as local & broader communities (awareness & advocacy)
 - a) provide Members & funders with feedback on progress made
 - b) supply Members with accurate and relevant information

¹ See 2015 Revised Constitution 3 January 2015. Note: the "designated impact area" ("DIA") is only loosely defined. It is understood to be the Tauranga Valley and Mahinepua Bay water catchment areas.



MRHLG Value Chain



Source: C. Campbell, CC BY-SA

Roughly 1/3 of MRHLG's fifty-five (55) households volunteer some of their time and about 15% of the group's Members actively engage with the MRHLG committee's ongoing work.

Strategic vision

Historically, MRHLG has

- focused on conserving North Island Brown Kiwi².
- restricted its geography to a Designated Impact Area ("DIA")³
- emphasised simplicity and cost control
- mostly limited Member communications to the Radar Rattler and, ad hoc, informal channels
- engaged actively with national Kiwi forums

while expending relatively little energy/resource on

- conserving endangered species beyond the Kiwi
- engaging with sustainable land & water use issues
- cost-effectiveness⁴
- collaborating with similar (non-funding) community groups and local Iwi

² through local Member and professional predator control effort, building local awareness, and providing supporting community services such as Kiwi aversion training, information & advocacy. Note: while some bush regeneration efforts have also been initiated, these have been limited and intermittent. Regeneration is not a current focus.

³ loosely defined as the "Mahinepua Parish", for which there is no map

⁴ e.g. investing in technology to broaden and formalise MRHLG's communication channels



The proposed vision for MRHLG is to:

1. increase and deepen the conservation effort for ***all native flora and fauna*** in MRHLG's designated impact area (DIA), with a particular focus on the most threatened species;
2. further develop Member and funder engagement by demonstrating our impact and operational effectiveness⁵;
3. work to establish an effective environmental corridor by increasing MRHLG's engagement with adjoining conservation groups interested in collaborating.

The result of such a change should be

- accelerating native bush regeneration⁶
- introduction of new, collective initiatives to support the revised objectives
- continued growth in
 - o in Kiwi numbers
 - o local community and funder engagement

Delivering the Strategy

Guiding principles

1. Maximise MRHLG's impact and appeal to existing and prospective Members;
2. Emphasise operating efficiency opportunities and effectiveness.
3. Align MRHLG's objectives to New Zealand's emerging conservation priorities;
4. Preserve and protect MRHLG's
 - a. not-for-profit status
 - b. reputation for financial control and operational integrity
 - i. Maintain at least six months of funding to limit continuity risk for suppliers
 - ii. Explore opportunities to "outsource" essential services for which there is insufficient volunteered support⁷

while continuously realigning and recalibrating its ambitions to MRHLG's evolving volunteer and financial resources;

Proposed actions

- Re-define MRHLG's objectives as part of the next AGM or constitution discussion with Members
 - o broaden MRHLG's operating scope to include flora and fauna conservation (i.e. preserving biodiversity), particularly for threatened species
 - o expand MRHLG's geographic coverage to increase Membership and volunteers
- Translate MRHLG's revised objectives into specific conservation initiatives
 - o bird counts, water quality surveys, monitoring of foliage browsing
 - o native tree planting, erosion control, invasive pest plant control
- Identify Committee members interested in leading change initiatives
- Explore the potential to collaborate with other land-care, Iwi and similar groups⁸

⁵ i.e. cost effective programme delivery and administration

⁶ i.e. reduced vegetation browse by invasive species

⁷ i.e. pay third party providers

⁸ Such as [Papa Taiao Earthcare](#), Kowhairoa Historical Reserve, Gatekeepers, Karangahape Marae Trust, Te Komanga Marae Trust, Pest Free Totara North and [Kauri Cliffs](#)



Suggested operational and constitutional changes

Subject	Existing objective	Proposed objective
Objectives & member engagement	“...promoting and enhancing the habitat of native birds, especially the Kiwi and the Kukupa, and other native fauna and flora within” its Designated Impact Area	“...conserving biodiversity within” its Designated Impact Area
Volunteered resources	Focus on Kiwi-centric activities and administrative tasks	Diversify efforts to focus on conserving the most threatened native flora & fauna; actively manage predators, and invasive species (weeds)
Operating efficiency	Undefined	Selectively hire and pay third parties for services that volunteers are unable (or are unwilling) to undertake
Target geography	Designated Impact Area = Parish of Mahinepua	Designated Impact Area = Waipahihi Creek, Tauranga Stream, Orua Stream, Kaiwararu Stream, Waihinepua Stream, Waipareira Stream, Wharearo Stream, Ngutukoi Stream, Tieru Stream, Ngamoko Stream, Ngaere Stream, Whau Stream, Parua Stream and Matauri Creek water catchments

The above action proposals and changes require further development and elaboration.

THIS STRATEGY’S SUCCESS DEPENDS ON

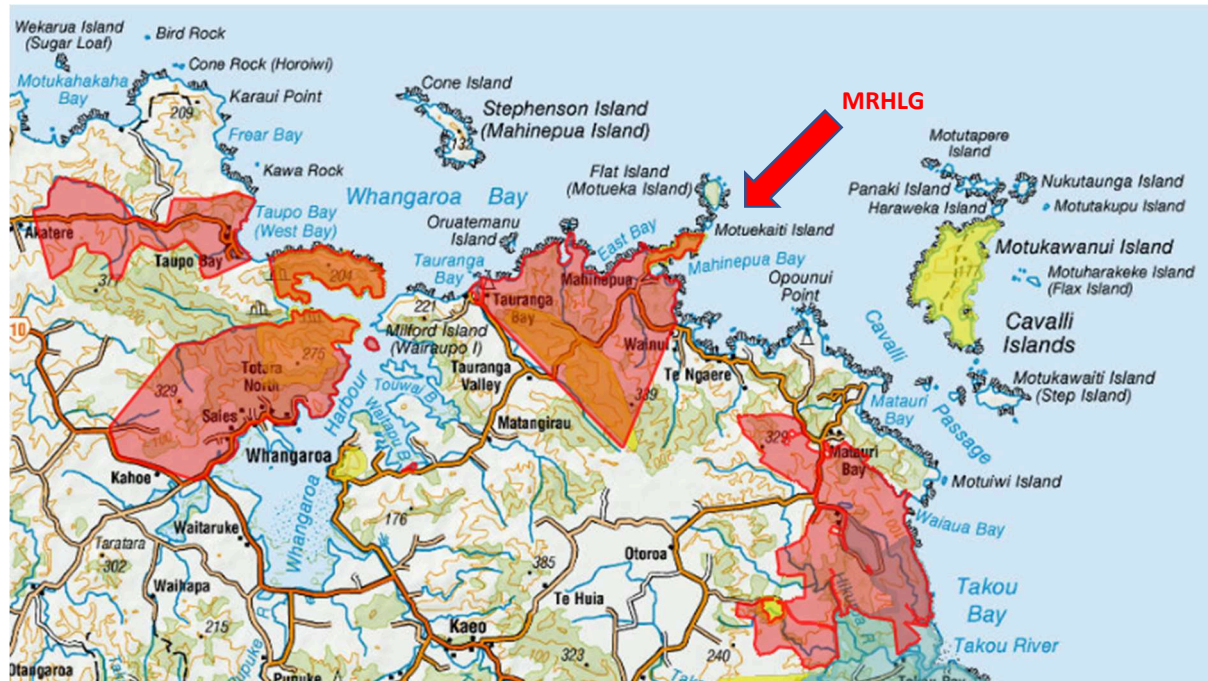
- APPROPRIATE MEMBER SUPPORT (VOLUNTEERING & TASK LEADERSHIP)
- CONTINUED THIRD-PARTY FUNDING
- SELECTIVE OUTSOURCING TO FREE-UP VOLUNTEER RESOURCES
- COLLABORATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH/BY LOCAL IWI, OTHER LAND CARE AND SIMILAR COMMUNITY GROUPS



Appendix 1 – Operating context

General background

MRHLG is a long-established charity focused on conservation work in the Far North of New Zealand. Its DIA, within the Ngāpuhi / Ngāti Kahu ki Whāingaroa rohe covers over a coastal area designated as an Outstanding Landscape¹⁰.



Source: Predator Free NZ Trust, <https://pfnz.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Style/index.html?appid=b878e844750c4aa98af322d0c6d7845c> and C.Campbell

Historically, MRHLG has limited both its geographic remit and focused on Kiwi conservation related work¹¹.

Except for one, contracted professional trapper, MRHLG is managed and operated by volunteers. Decisions are reached by consensus and recorded in written meeting minutes.

The group's funding comes from a combination of membership fees, private donations, and third-party grants. These funds are primarily used to pay for contracted trapping services and to purchase consumables (traps and bait). Operationally, financial controls are robust while all overheads are deliberately minimised. Overhead expenditures require specific approval by the committee. Such decisions seek to balance the need for operational efficiency while limiting recurring costs. Third-party funders and various regulatory bodies¹² require structured, periodic reporting to monitor progress, ensure regulatory compliance and guard against fraud.

Successes

Community engagement - over the past twenty-one (21) years MRHLG's membership has evolved from a founding group of six to fifty-five households within the same geographic footprint. Similarly,

¹⁰ See maps 17, 64 and 68 in Far North District Council, (25 May 2023), *Operative maps*

¹¹ Although, several years ago, there was also some flora-oriented conservation work

¹² The Charities Commission, NZ Department of Conservation, Save the Kiwi, Foundation North, Kiwi Coast



annual volunteered hours have jumped from 1,000 hrs by 10 Members in fiscal year 2021 to 1,900 hrs by 20 Members in fiscal year 2022;

Kiwi conservation - since its inception, the Kiwi population within MRHLG's target area is estimated to have grown tenfold to roughly 120 birds¹³. This makes MRHLG's DIA one of the relatively few zones where the North Island Brown Kiwi population is expanding in the wild;

Reputation - MRHLG is well recognised, respected, and supported within New Zealand's broader Kiwi conservation community.

Sustained, practical performance – while sound administration¹⁴ continues to underpin MRHLG's success, ultimately, effective conservation impact¹⁵ is what attracts members, donors and institutional funders alike.

Challenges

Community engagement – while membership and engagement numbers have jumped, engagement remains both limited and supportive.

Volunteered activity comprises:

- predator control, particularly on the Member's own land
 - o joint sourcing of associated consumables (toxins)
 - o disposal of large pests (possums)
- some co-ordinated, collective activities:
 - o Kiwi census (listening),
 - o collective predator control (rat knock-downs)
 - o organising Kiwi aversion training (for dogs)
- participation in committee meetings
 - o preparation of materials for funding or advocacy purposes

And there appears to be some (re-)emerging interest in broader, land care issues such as:

- biodiversity and flora conservation (native revegetation, invasive species control)
- climate change, water quality and ecosystem sustainability issues
- closer co-operation with neighbouring volunteer groups and Iwi.

That said, a chronic resource shortage, particularly around information gathering (research), information processing/preparation, fund raising and communications. These activities tend to fall to the same few Members each year. And each of these tasks provides an "economies of scale" opportunity;

Local environmental pressures – while MRHLG's Kiwi population appears to be growing, predator migration from adjoining areas is an ongoing challenge.

Similarly, the broader human footprint (housing, permanent residents, residents' pets and their recreational activity) in MRHLG's DIA is increasing. This impacts the DIA's biodiversity and raises

¹³ This informal estimate is about to be validated with a targeted survey

¹⁴ Financial control, effective communications and the accumulation of land care expertise

¹⁵ such as cost-effective predator control, efficient consumable sourcing, Kiwi population monitoring and periodic progress reporting



environmental sustainability questions. There are also simmering tensions between those wanting to regulate human activity¹⁶ and those resisting any such restrictions¹⁷.

MRHLG's trapping success, where mustelid and possum numbers have been significantly lowered (see Appendix 1), means that other invasive species, such as for rats and mice, are likely to flourish and inhibit flora regeneration. MRHLG's trapping priorities may therefore require adjustment.

Expertise & relevance – MRHLG's membership, while knowledgeable, struggles to keep abreast of the rapidly evolving regional and national conservation agendas (see Appendix 4 - New Zealand's Emerging Conservation Priorities)¹⁸.

Similarly, MRHLG might usefully review the longer-term ecological impact of the toxins it uses and whether its operating practices need to change to manage these more effectively.

Collectively, these issues bring into question whether MRHLG should limit itself to Kiwi conservation or try to adopt some of the emerging conservation objectives (and if so, which ones?);

Funding – while funding is presently healthy, its medium-term continuity remains a vulnerability and concern.

Informal feedback from our funding efforts suggests that some funders find MRHLG's Designated Impact Area (DIA) relatively small, creating engagement efficiency issues for them. A chicken & egg challenge then follows where further funding might emerge if more administrative efficiency, objective alignment and regional engagement can be demonstrated;

Administrative complexity, ambiguity & efficiency – there is considerable manual processing of MRHLG administrative tasks. This consumes valuable volunteer resources¹⁹. Most MRHLG processes are also undocumented, which makes it more challenging to rotate roles between volunteers;

Evolving public policies (conservation priorities) – DOC no longer prioritises [Brown Kiwi conservation](#)²⁰, which directly challenges the relevance of MRHLG's traditional objective (Kiwi conservation). The following statement from the Department of Conservation is noteworthy:

"Kiwi conservation (primarily through the trapping of predators, and through advocacy for dog control and road awareness) has been increasing within the range of Northland brown kiwi for the last 30 years. The success of this effort was reflected by North Island brown kiwi (of which Northland brown kiwi are one taxa) recently being re-classified as Not Threatened under the New Zealand Threat Classification System. This is remarkably good news, but it comes with the caveat that the new ranking is conservation dependent; the species is still in partial decline and is vulnerable to recruitment failure (Robertson et al. 2021). In summary, the change in status of North Island brown kiwi is due to the conservation efforts of individuals and communities, but if this effort reduces the birds' conservation status will also decline."²¹

¹⁶ for instance, vehicle use on beaches

¹⁷ MRHLG deliberately refrains from taking on "policing" or arbiter roles.

¹⁸ This struggle reflects, to some degree, by the group's volunteer hour resource constraints

¹⁹ And the drivers for some of this are the competing reporting demands from multiple funders

²⁰ See Sommerville T. (11 January 2022) "North Island brown kiwi 'no longer threatened' as population swells to 20,000"

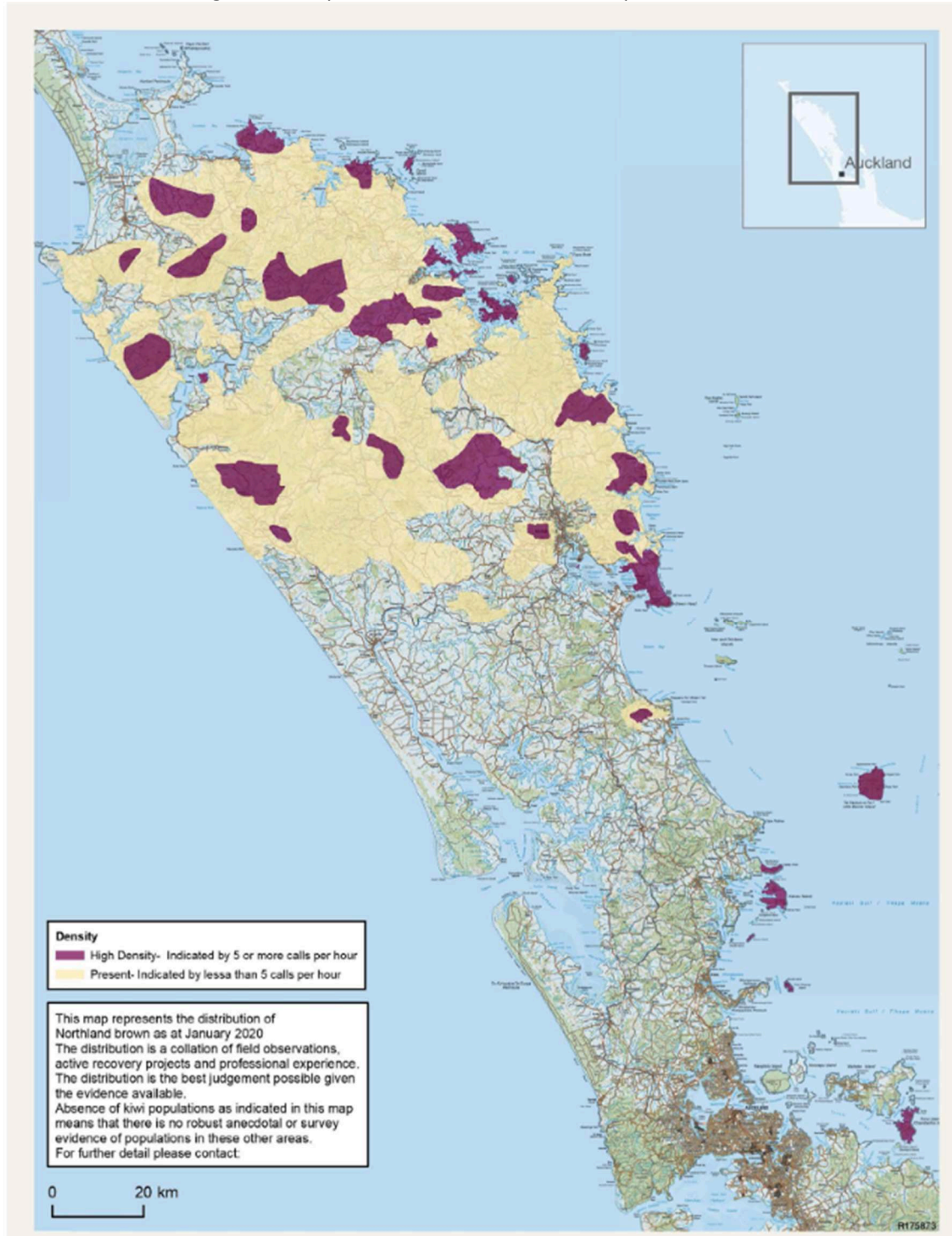
²¹ P 21 in Craig, E, (1 December 2022) "Kiwi call count monitoring of Northland brown kiwi"



At the same time, there is increasing political and commercial interest in developing and supporting sustainable land care practices and initiatives.

Regional engagement (with external counterparties) – engagement with DOC, neighbouring social groups as well as other Landcare groups has not been as productive and extensive as it could be.

Relative Kiwi Listening Data – Department of Conservation Map



Source: P. 6 in Craig, E, (1 December 2022) "Kiwi call count monitoring of Northland brown kiwi"

Note: MRHLG did not contribute to the Department of Conservation's 2021 survey due to a lack of resources. The 2022 survey has yet to be published.

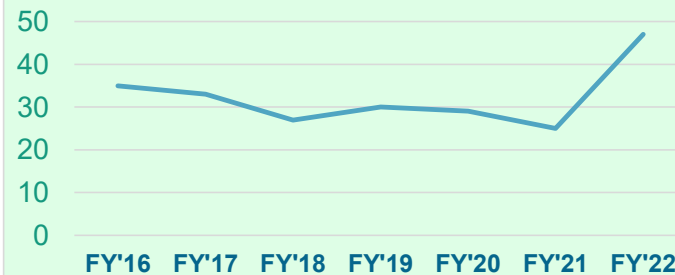


Appendix 2 – MRHLG's Recent Performance (2022 AGM Report)

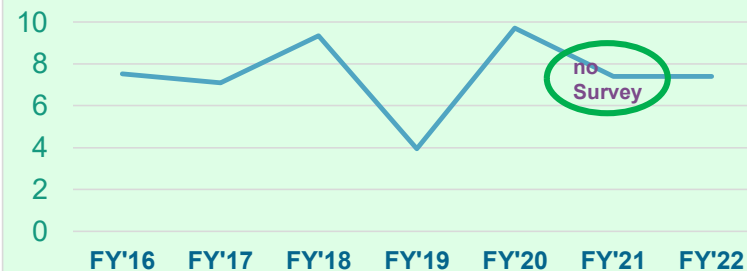
Progress being made



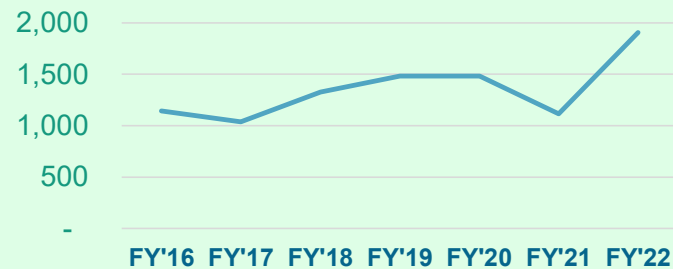
Paying Members



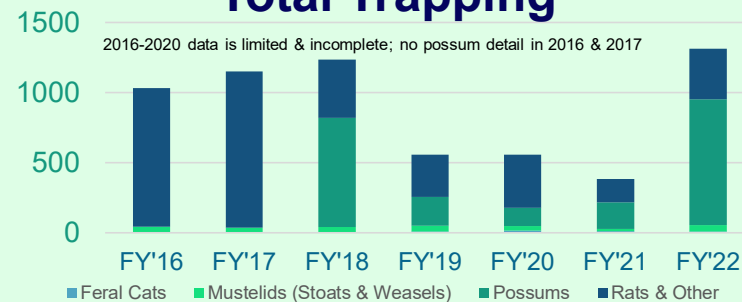
Kiwi Calls / Hour



Volunteered Hours



Total Trapping



In 2022, membership ↑88%; volunteered hours ↑71%; Kiwi calls ↓24%; total trapping ↑240%



How we are volunteering our time

Volunteered Hours

	Admin	Travel	Advocacy	Monitoring	KATS	Funding	Predator Control	Pest Plant Control	Misc
FY'21	642	13	99	36	0	38	229	34	24
FY'22	453	19	118	281	2	12	558	420	45

MRHLG FY 2022 impact:

In FY 2022:

Annual membership cost per household	\$ 60
MRHLG's annual expenditures per member household	\$580
Feral cats, mustelids, possums etc. trapped per household	56

Fred Barnes Jnr trapped 59% of all FY 2022 catches by member households, including 170 possums.

We depend on members doing their own pest control & volunteering even for just a few hours p.a.



Appendix 3 – Topics to explore and develop further

Research & strategy alignment with National conservation and funders' priorities

- Review of published material and what other land care groups are doing
- Trapping technology upgrade (automated trapping stations)
 - o Identification of MRHLG's most threatened flora and fauna species
- Ongoing dialogue with national conservation groups
- Survey of funders' priorities

Operational adjustments to implement the agreed strategy

- Target effective date for changes
- Resource (re-)allocation
- Outsourcing of tasks for which there is insufficient volunteered resource²²

Internal & external communication

- Updated communications of new volunteering opportunities
- Approach third parties for associated grant funding

Progress monitoring

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for this strategy

²² Note: this may entail outsourcing to Members and any potential for a conflict of interest needs to be scrupulously managed so that a clear separation of interests may be demonstrated



Appendix 4 – New Zealand’s Emerging Conservation Priorities

Surprisingly, a clear statement of New Zealand’s current conservation priorities is proving challenging to find. Similarly, there appears to be no simple, succinct guidance on how land care groups, such as MRHLG, might support of New Zealand’s national conservation objectives.

As a follow-on to this strategy review, the information on the following websites might usefully be reviewed and summarised for the committee:

Ministry of the Environment, (21 July 2022), “*National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity*” <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/npsib-exposure-draft-summary.pdf> and <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/national-policy-statement-for-indigenous-biodiversity-draft-implementation-plan/> and <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/environment-aotearoa-2022/> and <https://environment.govt.nz/facts-and-science/biodiversity/statement-of-national-priorities-for-biodiversity/north-island-biodiversity-priority-map/> and <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/conservation-and-environment-science-roadmap-at-a-glance/>

Department of Conservation, “*Tools to Market: developing new predator control technology*”, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/goal-tactics-and-new-technology/tools-to-market/>

Department of Conservation, “*National Predator Control Programme*”, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme/>

Department of Conservation, “*Kiwi recovery plan 2018-2028*”, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/tsrp64entire.pdf>

Stats NZ, (30 March 2023), “*Extinction threat to indigenous species*”, <https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/extinction-threat-to-indigenous-species/>



References

Craig, E, (1 December 2022), Department of Conservation, “Kiwi call count monitoring of Northland brown kiwi” <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/conservation/native-animals/birds/northland-brown-kiwi-monitoring-2021.pdf>

Department of Conservation, (viewed 25 May 2025) “National Predator Control Programme”, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme/>

Department of Conservation, (viewed 25 May 2025) “Brown Kiwi”, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds/birds-a-z/kiwi/brown-kiwi/>

Department of Conservation, (viewed 25 May 2025) “New Zealand Threat Classification System” <https://nztcs.org.nz/>

Department of Conservation, (viewed 25 May 2025) “Statutory Plan, Northland Conservation Management Strategies” <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-policies-and-plans/statutory-plans/statutory-plan-publications/conservation-management-strategies/northland/>

Eco, (viewed 25 May 2025) <https://www.eco.org.nz/>

Far North District Council, (viewed 25 May 2023), “Operative Maps”, <https://www.fndc.govt.nz/Your-council/District-Plan/Operative-maps>

Far North District Council, (viewed 25 May 2025), “Operative Plan”, <https://www.fndc.govt.nz/Your-council/District-Plan/Operative-plan/Part-2-Environment-Provisions>

Kauri Cliffs, (viewed 25 May 2025), <https://www.robertsonlodges.com/the-lodges/kauri-cliffs>

Ministry for Foreign, (viewed 25 May 2023), “Biodiversity and species conservation” <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/environment/biodiversity-and-species-conservation/>

Ministry of Māori Development, (viewed 25 May 2023), “Find Iwi by Map”, <https://tkm.govt.nz/iwi/ngapuhi-ngati-kahu-ki-whangaroa/#>

Ministry of the Environment, (31 May 2018), “Climate change projections for Northland region” <https://environment.govt.nz/facts-and-science/climate-change/impacts-of-climate-change-per-region/projections-northland-region/>

Ministry of the Environment, (8 August 2021), “Conservation and Environment Science Roadmap” <https://environment.govt.nz/facts-and-science/science-and-data/conservation-and-environment-science-roadmap/>

Ministry of the Environment, (31 May 2018), “Environmental indicators” <https://environment.govt.nz/facts-and-science/climate-change/impacts-of-climate-change-per-region/projections-northland-region/>

Ministry of the Environment, (21 July 2022), “National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity” <https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/npsib-exposure-draft-summary.pdf>



Northland Regional Council, (viewed 25 May 2023), “*Environment*”
<https://www.nrc.govt.nz/Environment/>

Northland Regional Council, (viewed 25 May 2023), “*Northland’s climate issues and emissions*”
<https://www.nrc.govt.nz/environment/climate-change/climate-change-in-northland/northland-s-climate-issues-and-emissions/>

Predator Free New Zealand (viewed 25 May 2023), <https://predatorfreenz.org/> and
<https://pfnz.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Styler/index.html?appid=b878e844750c4aa98af322d0c6d7845c>

Sommerville, Troels, (11 January 2022), “North Island brown kiwi ‘no longer threatened’ as population swells to 20,000”, Stuff <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/127469374/north-island-brown-kiwi-no-longer-threatened-as-population-swells-to-20000>

Stats NZ, (viewed 30 March 2023), “Extinction Threat to indigenous species », <https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/extinction-threat-to-indigenous-species/>

NZ Topo Map, (viewed 25 May 2023) <https://www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap?v=2&ll=-35.014761,173.822937&z=15>