

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027



Authorised by the Executive Board:

Saturday, 6 August 2022

Contents

Strategy at a glance	3
Vision	3
Mission	3
Goals	3
Core Values	3
Executive Summary	4
Journey	5
Map of Current Projects & Activities	8
Organisation Structure	9
The Future	9
Partnerships	10
Events	11
Projects	12
Our Project Direction	12
9.1 Biodiversity	12
9.2 Historic Heritage	13
9.3 Education	14
9.4 Recreation	15
Our role as a 'Hub'	15
Identity and Opportunities	16
Resources	17
Implementation	17
14. Appendix	18
14.1 Major Relationships @2022	18

1. Strategy at a glance

PROJECT TONGARIRO

Vision

Enjoy, discover, know and care for Tongariro / Taupō / Central Plateau.

Mission

Inspiring New Zealanders and international visitors to connect physically, emotionally and spiritually with Tongariro National Park and its surrounds.

Goals

In 100 years, Project Tongariro's over-riding goal is to see Tongariro National Park and its environs pest and weed free, with our members and all New Zealanders enjoying our special place in its natural state. In 10 years, our goal is to see significant environmental enhancements at the sites we have chosen to work and for our community to be adopting sustainable practices.

- Harness and connect like-minded people
- Work together to improve our place
- Create opportunities for others
- Share knowledge and experience in conservation
- Achieve organizational sustainability and resilience
- Promote sustainability in our rohe

Core Values

Kaitiakitanga

Strong conservation ethics, a spiritual connection to the whenua and caring about our environment.

Maumaharatanga

We value the tradition of our story and that of others.

Manaakitanga – mahi tahi

We value working collaboratively with respect, honesty, integrity and aroha.

2. Executive Summary

Tongariro Natural History Society (aka Project Tongariro) was established in 1984. The organization came into being as a result of a 1982 helicopter crash in Tongariro National Park in which four park staff died. Project Tongariro (PT) is apolitical. As an entity it has always tried to appeal to a wide range of people in local communities and beyond. For more than three decades the organisation has worked to engage its members and volunteers in a variety of ways including hands-on conservation projects, planting days, field trips, involvement and managing events such as the summer nature programme and numerous conservation projects in support of the Tongariro National Park and wider region. To appeal to a broader audience, PT has adapted its approach and created new opportunities for people to engage with and support it.



Mahi Aroha Waipakihi Heli-hike

PT's support base has evolved over time from full membership, to supporters who give practical help or share their individual area of expertise. The level of support differs from one project to the next, which PT understands and must cater for. PT recognises that these supporters are not only potential members but also advocates and promoters of PT in general. This network of supporters is of great value and can help create future funding opportunities. This strategy was developed to support PT's aspiration to continue as an influential conservation partner and leader in the

Tongariro/Taupō region. The organisation's reputation as being useful, effective and easy to work with is important and assists to attract partners and funders alike on an ongoing basis. Our school education role, together with our appointment as a Environmental Hub has led us to becoming a champion for sustainability.

This strategy will guide the priorities and focus of the organisation through the next five years and outline a vision for the next ten years. In 2022 PT will implement this strategy. PT will continue to build strong relationships with current and new funders and promote its refreshed identity through digital and web mediums. A key focus will be to strengthen our capacity, resources and capability to do the work. We need to be resilient to cope with factors like pandemics, climate change, economic downturns and change of government policy.

PT's strategic focus is to:

- Implementation of work and strengthening capacity
- Look for opportunities to work with Iwi and hapū
- Connect to a broad range of people
- Be relevant to future conservation directions including sustainability and climate change mitigation
- Work collaboratively with key groups and the community
- Leverage opportunities
- Offer a range of environmental and recreational opportunities
- Secure long-term funding
- Enhance and add to Government and The Department of Conservation's (DOC) conservation efforts
- Ensure PT is fit for purpose as an organisation

3. Journey

PT has a defined beginning arising out of the 1982 helicopter crash tragedy in Tongariro National Park. It remains committed to sharing this story, when appropriate, as it forms part of the essence and spirit of the organization. In the early years PT focused on producing and selling publications as a way to build a funding base. This was successful, allowing the organisation to contribute to Tongariro National Park in a variety of ways including volunteering, conservation projects, interpretation and education. For more than 20 years PT has funded annual research grants (Memorial Awards). From the outset, PT has worked with DOC to prioritise projects and at times assisted them with funding. This relationship is based on an enduring Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) between the two organisations. PT continues to work with DOC on a number of conservation projects including wetland and forest restoration and recreation events such as Mahi Aroha as well as PT's annual student internship programme. PT has a number of major biodiversity projects underway with a focus on wetland, forest and riparian restoration in and around Tongariro National Park, as well as two urban restoration projects based in Taupō.

PT prides itself on being agile and able to quickly react to changed circumstances and opportunities. This is essential in conservation and sustainability as Government, policy and funding priorities can quickly change. PT must continue to take advantage of changes. Our future priorities will include an emphasis on education and sustainability. The organisation's strengths are in its people and their connection and drive to care and carry out outdoor activities in the region. PT is a not-for-profit organisation that works in an area that is internationally recognised for its environmental, landscape and recreational values. Geographically, PT operates from Ohakune in the south to Taupō in the north. See the map on page 8 for PT's current projects.



View of Lake Rotopounamu from Mt Pihanga summit

From the outset PT was a member-based organisation with around 400 members at any time. In the early 2000s it recognized a need to offer other ways for people to be involved in PT. Membership was becoming inefficient to administer and had lost much of its appeal. While recognizing the need to change the executive decided to keep the

membership base rather than have it erode due to fee demands. A 'membership for life' system was instigated which meant that existing members paid nothing further and new members paid a one-off \$50 joining fee. All members can vote at an AGM. There are no membership privileges other than a close connection with PT, its ideals and opportunities, together with an opportunity to influence the direction of the organisation and preferential rights to participate in field activities. To minimize costs all communication with members and supporters is electronic.

PT has a supporter's category which allows those with an interest, but perhaps not an involvement, in PT can receive our e-newsletter; this category allows PT to reach a wider audience, which is especially important when there is a need to recruit, as an example, marshals for an event. The e-newsletter provides an excellent summary of PT's work and projects and is a useful resource to share with funding agencies and for general audiences on www.tongariro.org.nz.



Volunteer event marshal

4. Map of Current Projects & Activities



5. Organisation Structure



6. The Future

There are generally three key elements that make a great organization and/or business. They are; know your point of difference, have a great culture and be agile so you can adapt to the changing technologies and community around you. This strategy was developed to ensure PT remains agile, builds on its existing culture and refreshes its point of difference. PT's culture and activities need to represent the diversity in the community across a range of activities. Developing a clear strategic plan and a supporting an annual business plan takes into consideration emerging trends and opportunities in the region, how to leverage PT's strengths to achieve long-term sustainability and ensure its effectively leveraging its point of difference effectively. PT also maintains specific strategies and operational plans for its key projects.

Future priorities are (but not exclusive to):

- Work that enhances biodiversity in our rohe
- Tongariro National Park and the Waimarino
- Collaborating with iwi and others
- Projects that have shared values with others
- Education, particularly for rangatahi
- Leading or facilitating as an Environmental Hub
- Modelling best practice and encouraging sustainability

The emerging trends include preparing and catering for people who are increasingly time poor, constant technological changes, visitors who are hungry for fun and adventure activities which are frequently not family-based. Of benefit to PT is that it operates in an area that is internationally recognised, is a recreation paradise and has many holidaymakers who have an affinity for the region. Treaty of Waitangi claims are currently being settled in Tongariro National Park and the central North Island generally; this provides new opportunities for PT to work with iwi. The priorities for Government and other funders will frequently change and PT must be alert to these challenges and any opportunities and take note of them in settling its direction. Technological change is rapid in biodiversity work. We must ensure staff and any contractors are well trained and qualified to undertake any specialist roles. This may extend to volunteers in certain instances.

7. Partnerships

PT works on a wide range of projects across the Taupō/Tongariro area. These vary in size, length of time and complexity; some are one-off while others are ongoing. PT believes collaboration with a variety of partners is vital to its ongoing existence and success as an organisation.



DOC rangers assisting with Oruatu community planting day preparations

Our primary long-term partnership has been with DOC as the successor to the Lands and Survey Department. This relationship dates back to our establishment.

Today in a post treaty environment we will need to increasingly form partnerships with iwi and hapū. The best current example we have is at the Rongomai Marae where we help with restoration of marae owned land. Our relationship with iwi or hapū may involve māori owned land or private land. This relationship will continue to evolve.

PT values all its partnerships and relationships and strives to sustain and maintain these in the future in accordance with its core values. Integrity is important and it's important to partner with organisations and fundraising activities that are compatible with PT's vision. Conservation gains and conservation outcomes are critical. Because of shared interests and values, PT has a strong desire to continue work with and strengthen its relationships with iwi. It also seeks to expand relationships with other regional organisations such as Taupō District Council, Waikato Regional Council, the Horizons Regional Council and Ruapehu District Council. PT is an environmental hub as a member of Environment Hubs Aotearoa (EHA) and must seek to fulfill the goals of that organisation within our rohe.

8. Events

PT has a long history of involvement with recreational events in and around Tongariro National Park. For example, Mahi Aroha (previously called the Summer Nature Programme), Kite Day, Tussock Traverse, Ring of Fire, The Goat, Central Plateau T42 and the Poronui Passage. PT understands that involvement in events fits with its vision – a sense of fun, discovery and adventure in Tongariro/Taupō. Events also bring new people into the region and potentially to the organisation. PT remains committed to supporting recreational events and opportunities in Tongariro/Taupō.



Tussock Traverse event competitor

9. Projects

PT plays a valuable role in initiating projects and working in collaboration with others getting projects started. Ongoing examples are Greening Taupō, Kids Greening Taupō and Predator Free Taupō. But projects may be short term too like Turoa Alpine Flush or the Wilding Pines Removal projects. We are keen to prioritise projects in Tongariro National Park and the Waimarino provided funding and community support is available. To test a project idea, PT considers the following;

1. Does the project fit a goal? If so, which one?
2. Align with vision, mission and values.
3. Will it have member support?
4. Does it align to Government, DOC or Regional priorities and have their support?
5. Will it attract collaboration or partners?
6. Are the goals sustainable?
7. Will funding be possible / available and sustainable?
8. Do we have the capability and capacity to project manage and deliver?
9. Does the project have a good story – will it resonate with people?

Our Project Direction

Projects may be ongoing or be 'one off'. We often describe our projects fitting one of the following pillars;

- Biodiversity
- Heritage
- Education
- Recreation

9.1 Biodiversity

Biodiversity outcomes are our primary conservation goal. Current long term sustainable projects are Mt Pihanga – Lake Rotopounamu Forest restoration and Te Matapuna Wetland (south Lake Taupō) restoration. In the future Mt Pihanga restoration may be increased in size to increase conservation outcomes and achieve 'landscape scale' conservation.



Walking along the shore of Lake Rotopounamu, Mt Pihanga

Te Matapuna Wetlands is very dependant on multi landowner support and this increases its complexity. Note, Te Matapuna Wetlands include the area from Waitetoko, Tauranga-Taupō, Waiotaka and down to the Tongariro River in our definition. Greening Taupō and Predator Free Taupō are important brands established by PT.

It must be noted that the Taupō environment has been extremely modified by land development and that it always struggles to achieve priority funding from the National or Regional Government. There is potential to expand Predator Free throughout our rohe but once again funding outside Tongariro National Park will be limited. We will also support our members assisting DOC, Predator Free Wairakei Estate and other organisations working in biodiversity. This can provide support to priority conservation projects, motivating and upskilling our members.

9.2 Historic Heritage

Protection of our Historic Heritage has always been of great importance to PT. We have no current projects being undertaken. Plans to complete restoration of the Tokaanu Wharf and the Old Whakapapa Ski Field Drive Station are on hold unless significant funding can be found. Historic funding for work of this nature is very expensive with

few funders currently active. There is an opportunity to work with agencies like DOC or Iwi to ensure historic sites are protected and interpreted where appropriate.



Hapuawhenua Viaduct

9.3 Education

Education often relates back to our Biodiversity or Historic Heritage goals. Our current Kids Greening Taupō project and our Waimarino Education projects are key programmes that require employment of educators so funding in a sustainable fashion can be challenging. Project Tongariro considers these programmes to be fundamental to our future generations looking after our environment. They also provide us a key opportunity to promote sustainable living including climate change mitigation.

The annual Mahi Aroha programme remains a great way of providing the public an opportunity to engage, learn and enjoy the special places in our rohe. Field trips provide our members unique opportunities to visit special places and learn. There will be opportunities for PT to support a small number of key onsite interpretation signs, as well as assist publications that would not otherwise be available. Project Tongariro is committed to continuing its annual Memorial Award grants and will review the amount

available for distribution. Our role as an Environmental Hub will increase our opportunities for extending Education contribution.



Kids Greening Taupō education coordinator Rachel Thompson with a group of students at Spa Park

9.4 Recreation

Recreation is important to our members. We do not specifically target opportunities apart from ensuring we plan about 5 field trips a year within our rohe or places further afield. Most activities are led or accompanied by members or invitees with special knowledge or reference in the area being visited.

The annual Mahi Aroha programme also provides these opportunities that are often taken up by our members or supporters. Experience has shown that our role assisting events with volunteer marshals, bookings or BBQ teams are valued by members. They are also a valuable opportunity to profile our organisation and to raise funds.

10. Our role as a 'Hub'

Given we have an active presence throughout the Taupō and Waimarino rohe, support by members, staff, volunteers and our 'online resources' that are actively managed, we

are in a good position to act as an Environmental Hub; particularly in being able to share information. Our appointment as an Environmental Hub under the Environmental Hub Aotearoa (EHA) network increases our capacity to share information and assist environmental care in the community.

Our priorities in this role are still to be established but we will prepare an annual 'action plan' as an Environmental Hub, in tandem with our Annual Business Plan to help our role evolve. Our Education programmes in Taupō and now in the Waimarino provide a unique opportunity to promote care for the environment with a sustainability focus.

11. Identity and Opportunities

As an organisation PT has a 'personality'. Many of the current traits of PT's public face are positive and can be retained. That said, it should always be ready to adapt to reflect the modern environment. PT's personality currently evokes the following feelings: 'practical, traditional, experienced and enduring' and mostly appeals to an older generation. The challenge now is to ensure this culture is shared and adopted by our members of the future. PT's identity needs to

- Inspire connection and involvement
- Be compelling to contribute towards outcomes
- Create a spiritual feeling of connection - emotional wellbeing
- Build a sense of community, belonging and team spirit
- Provide opportunities for participation that are unique

This strategy promotes the necessity to adapt and refresh PT's identity within the organisation and how it projects itself publicly. PT wants people to connect, understand and identify with its values and inspire them to get involved. This is key to any promotional plan. Evoking feelings such as 'emotive, holistic, responsive, fun, diverse and collaborative' is a future focus. PT will use more casual language to help resonate with different age groups to help attract interest and engagement from younger people.

PT is now an Environmental Hub. This is a new identity for us and reinforces the need for us to promote and adopt sustainability as a core value. This will include the need to have a framework for climate change mitigation.

12. Resources

People are PT's greatest resource. They have a small team of committed long-term staff, a number of dedicated volunteers and a volunteer executive team. Our key focus is an increase in capacity and capability to implement the directions in the strategy.

Our Executive and staff need to accept the challenge of upskilling in their roles to ensure we are a fully competent and resilient organisation. Employment of staff needs to be supplemented by the use of skilled contractors as well as volunteers. Conservation is increasingly reliant on technology and the need for highly skilled people. We will be creative involving young people in our management and governance. We will pursue the idea of inviting the Kids Greening Taupō Senior Leadership team to participate with our Executive at meetings.



Project Tongariro wider team at the Greening Taupō Day 2022

13. Implementation

The Executive will approve a Business Plan Direction and Priority document each year that will reflect goals from our Strategic Plan.

Refer to our [2022-2023 Business Plan & Priorities](#).

14. Appendix

14.1 Major Relationships @2022

The organisation has numerous relationships with local trusts, organisations and businesses including the Bay Trust, Contact Energy, The Department of Conservation, The KBIH Fund, The Len Reynolds Trust, Geyser Foundation, Lottery Grants Board, Ministry of Primary Industries, Ministry of Education, Environment Hubs Aotearoa, Project Crimson Trust, Taupō District Council, Victory Events, Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust, Waikato Regional Council and World Wildlife Fund.