



Motu Kaikoura Trust AGM June 2025

Annual report from the chair

2024/25 has been a challenging 12 months but also a very productive one. Since our last 2024 AGM the Trust has made significant progress in advancing our strategic objectives for Motu Kaikoura. My thanks are due for the support and teamwork of Trustees and especially for the dedicated work of reserve ranger Clint Stannard.

Highlights of the past year:

- **Infrastructure upgrades.** Especially our ranger Clint's comprehensive refurbishment of the island's ablutions block and the overhaul and protective sheathing of the wharf piles. Thanks to funding from the Aotea Great Barrier Local Board. Also an important achievement this year, the comprehensive upgrade/maintenance of the island's main walking tracks.
- **Operations Plan and Operations Report**
In response to operationally focussed submissions from interested members of the public to our draft Reserve Management Plan in 2018, the Trust agreed to establish an annual Operations Plan setting out the work agreed to be undertaken on the island with estimated costs and funding sources. A progress report is presented by the ranger after six months, with a final report at the end of the financial year. This year we received the Operations Report for 2024/25 and approved the Operations Plan for 2025/26.
- **DOC-CF Application.** The joint effort undertaken by trustees and ranger in preparing our visionary DOC-CF application '*Motu Kaikōura - Zero rats in 1000 days*' was more than just a funding application but provided a clear and feasible way ahead to our goal to eradicate all rats from Motu Kaikoura. Our application made it through to the selection panel's second round but was eventually edged out by other very strong competitive bids. These from conservation projects notable for their focus on rare and endangered species. (A lesson to be learnt there).
- **Relations with tangata whenua Ngāti Rehua.** These are of fundamental importance to the Trust and over the past year. I have had meetings with the new chair of the Ngati Rehua – Ngati Wai Trust Board, Fletcher Beazley who is also the new DOC operations manager on Aotea. Fletcher is proving to be a firm friend of Motu Kaikoura. We have had useful face-to-face meetings with the chair, trustees and lead of Tū Mai Tāonga.

- **Biological surveys.** These led by trustee Rosemary Barraclough, supported by secretary David Gauld over the past two years have expanded the scale of Mel Galbraith's annual bird surveys to include invertebrate and reptile and fresh water e-DNA, and the introduction of vegetation photo points. These are undertaken by a team of volunteer scientists including Peter Maddison, Brian Gill and Sean Clancey with Barbara Hughes, Trina Smith and Ian McLean. We look forward to a visit from Ewen Cameron and a team from the Auckland Botanic Society in January.
- **Rat eradication project.** The thinking that went into the DOC-CF proposal has considerably focussed our strategic perspective ('attrition by intensification'), providing us with a feasible action plan to progress towards complete eradication. This entails moving from 100m x 100m grid which successfully eliminated the ship rat population, to a 100m x 50m grid (by 31 March 2026) and thereafter progressively to a 50m x 50m grid to eradicate kiore.

The current project is in 2 parts.

Project 1. funded by grant from Lotteries Environment & Heritage Fund (66%) and Motu Kaikoura Trust (34%) to intensify stations on existing lines from 100m spacings to 50m & to replace worn snap-traps.

Project 2. funded by an Auckland Council Biosecurity non-contestable grant is to intensify and expand the Intensified Management Area (IMA), an experimental grid covering 30 ha at the southeast corner of the island based around the Lodge.

- **Intensification rollout.** This commenced in late December, with Clint intensifying stations on the main tracks, as well as cutting new lines in the IMA, creating a 50m x 50m grid. This work has further progressed in recent weeks with new tracks cut in areas identified as gaps in the network. This work will ramp up during the network operational winter pause from the end of June to the end of September. This time last year we had 720 stations deployed, currently we have 876 and these will significantly increase when the new tracks are armed. After this work is completed 1095 stations will be deployed and operative.
- **Finances.** The latest Performance Report suggests despite the financial challenge of 2023/24, our funding situation over the last year has been rather healthier, with grants received from DOC and Auckland Council (environmental & biosecurity), Lottery Grants Board, The Aotea / Great Barrier Local Board and our long-term partners Foundation North. Thanks to trustees who undertook the painstaking work of completing these applications. We will need a similar level of funding in the coming year to maintain our momentum.
- **Concessions.** Valuable income has also been received from Telco concessions and helicopter landings (thanks to treasurer Harry Doig and DOC for sorting out the latter).

- **Building Insurance.** After wrestling with the rising costs of building insurance for years, (the Trust has for 20 years insured Crown-owned assets) after negotiations with DOC, last November the Trust formally resolved to retrench all building insurance except for the new Lodge which was paid for by the Trust from the Trust Fund, grants and volunteer labour.
- **Nelson Island.** Under the Trust Deed, one of our purposes is 'to encourage, aid and assist the restoration of other islands in the Hauraki Gulf.' It is great news that DOC is now introducing native bird species (initially saddlebacks) to Rakitu which we have long encouraged. Closer at hand the Trust is currently managing rats on neighbouring Nelson Island which forms part of our 'off-island protection area' by agreement with the island's owner Bryan King. In November Clint and myself visited Nelson climbing to the summit, collecting plant specimens for Auckland Museum and the Auckland Botanic Society, refilling bait stations and hand casting rat bait.
- **Flax planting programme.** Under our Reserve Management Plan we have a non-intervention policy for native forest regeneration. However flax planting in open areas to forestall weed invasion and to provide bird food sources is encouraged. This year we have 1000 flax seedlings being raised for planting out around the perimeter of the airstrip next year.
- **Airstrip.** The airstrip is regularly mown and maintained for use. The new windsocks installed earlier this year are lasting very well.
- **Biodiversity Management Plan review.** The long delayed review of the Trust 2012 Biodiversity Plan is now underway led by myself and Rosemary Barraclough. The draft will be presented to Trustees for consideration and approval at the August trust board meeting.
- **Seabird audio attraction.** Installation of such equipment has long been foreshadowed in our Biodiversity and Scenic Reserve Management Plans. Funding for a petrel survey on the island was provided by an Auckland Council environmental grant. After a visit by specialist Jo Sims and her trained dog earlier in the year and after helpful advice from DOC Principal Science Advisor Graeme Taylor, we are now in the process of acquiring seabird audio attraction equipment from DOC. Artificial burrows will be installed at the same time. We will be hoping to attract black petrels, grey-faced petrels, flesh-footed shearwaters and Cook's petrels.
- **Trust youth representative.** The Trust is very pleased to welcome Xyra Stannard to the Trust Board as a non-voting youth representative with speaking rights. We believe Xyra's perspectives and close experience with Motu Kaikoura will be very helpful to the work of the Trust.

- **Trust Board strategy review exercise.** The Trust Board made up of unpaid volunteers is mandated by the 2004 Trust Deed and by the 2008 Heads of Agreement with the Minister of Conservation, in which the Trust Board is recognised as ‘administering body’ of the Motu Kaikoura scenic reserve under section 29 of the Reserves Act. A strategy review session was held for trustees on Friday 6 June conducted by professional facilitator Carol Scholes and proved to be a helpful and affirming exercise. Thanks to trustee Chris Ollivier for organising and funding this.
- **Communications.** Apart from our website: <https://motukaikoura.org> our main communication approach is via our popular *Kaka Comments* newsletter and the annual Motu Kaikoura rat management programme progress report. The latter provides transparent, detailed, scientifically useful data. Both publications are going out to a steadily expanding audience.
- **Stakeholder relations.** I am pleased to report our relations with key stakeholders are in good shape with several in-person meetings with DOC’s new Auckland operations manager Alex Rogers and Aotea operations manager Fletcher Beazley especially – and increasing recognition and support from Auckland Council, notably from regional biosecurity manager Jonathan Miles and Great Barrier biosecurity manager Jeremy Warden. Over the past year we also welcomed visits from the council weed monitoring team and the Cleave family wilding pine contractors.
- **Supporters and volunteers.** Thanks are due to key supporters and technical volunteers who assist our work especially our accounting adviser Kim Grove, legal advice from Rupert Wilson, and technical assistance from Auckland Council GIS manager Cat Boyes and team, and finally to Sven & Trish Stellan for permission to access their land for a rat monitoring control line and for bait stations.
- **Finally...** Once again my thanks to the valued support of deputy chair Michael Ngatai who represents the Motu Kaikoura Trust at regular Gulf Island Trust meetings. Treasurer Harry Doig and secretary David Gauld and to Trustees Rosemary Barraclough and Chris Ollivier for their team work and contributions to the Trust governance and administration role, acquiring grants as well as on the ground, hands-on volunteering and biological surveys.

Michael Lee
Chairperson
 10 June 2025

