Te Waikoropupu (Pupu Springs), Golden Bay[1]

Key issue(s)
Management of conflict between the cultural values, recreational use and visitor impacts

Background
Te Waikoropupu (Pupu Springs) is New Zealand's largest freshwater artesian spring. The springs are located in a Department of Conservation (DOC) scenic reserve in Golden Bay, relatively close to State Highway 60 between Takaka and Collingwood and 15 minutes drive from Takaka township.

The springs' waters originate from the Takaka catchment and emerge from limestone and marble caverns through to main vents - Dancing Sands and Fish Creek, each with multiple springs. The water quality of the springs is unusual in that it is about one part in 200 salt water. The mixture of marine and marble water is full of rich minerals, which, when combined with the constant temperature, provides an ideal growing environment for aquatic vegetation (DOC, 2000). Hence, the biodiversity of underwater plant life there is very distinctive.

The setting of the springs is in rural land and regenerating native vegetation. Access is by a short walk from a car park, and, around the springs, via boardwalks for the most part. The area was once mined for gold and the small scale workings (e.g. sluice runs) are still in evidence and recognised by interpretation. The springs themselves are explained by interpretation boards and there are viewing platforms at various locations.

There are varying numbers of annual visitors to the springs (DOC 2005). Track counters indicate about 45-50,000 visitors per year since 1996, but 70,000 visitors were recorded in 1998-9, and only 29,000 in 2003-4 (an anomalously low number). Access is open at all times, there is no charge and no restriction on entry. It is considered a very special place locally, nationally and internationally for its cultural, physical, biological and recreational values.

Pressures on the catchment water supplying the springs include: management of water flows which are also used by a hydro-electric dam, rural land uses (particularly dairy farms), potential water extraction for export, salmon farm discharges and water take, and recent risks of *Didymo* infestation. Catchment planning is considered by most stakeholders as non-existent.

Stakeholders
- Iwi: Ngati Rarua, Ngati Tama, Te Atiawa
- Department of Conservation
- Tasman District Council
- Residents of the area
- Dive interests
- Conservation groups
- Tourism interests

Tools, models or approaches
In response to conflicts between cultural values, recreational use and visitor impacts, the community, key stakeholders, Department of Conservation (DOC) and Tasman District Council (TDC) have been developing the *Waikoropupu Springs Management Plan*.

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[1] This case study provides an example of the application of some individual tools to specific issues. The case studies are not of themselves examples of a fully integrated approach as they preceded the development of the kete. Links to the individual tools have been added to illustrate how agencies and groups facing similar issues might draw on available tools. Case study Prepared March 2003, minor revision June 2006.

Statutory Status/Management
The area of the springs was acquired by the Crown in 1979 (Pupu Springs Scenic Reserve) and is classified as scenic reserve. The reserve does not include all the land around the springs and there is private ownership on the northern adjoining edge. The bed of the springs is managed as scenic reserve by DOC and some adjacent marginal strips are also managed under the Conservation Act (see Conservation Act framework), but are not part of the Scenic Reserve. The Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for the Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy is applicable. There is currently no management plan for the area although the CMS notes a 1985 draft.

The CMS identifies threats to the cultural values and freshwater ecosystems of the springs include visitors, water pollution, and abstraction. No specific management strategies other than those in place were proposed in the strategy.

All the lands and waters are subject to the Tasman District Resource Management Plan (TDRMP) (see Resource Management Act framework). Through the TDRMP the Council can regulate actual or potential effects of activities on the surface of water in rivers. The springs are covered by a Conservation Zone within the TDRMP. The road leading to the site is also controlled by TDC.

Conflicts over use and values
The intervention of the community planning process described below was in response to the conflicts between cultural values, recreational use and visitor impacts.

With respect to cultural issues, the sacredness of the water for tangata whenua is such that it is offensive for there to be any contact between body and water. Concerns have been raised about limited consultation with tangata whenua in the previous management of the springs, and scepticism as to how cultural issues would be meaningfully addressed in the future.

With respect to diving, it is understood the diving fraternity wanted to continue to be able to view the springs from underwater and had earlier (1997) cooperated with DOC to develop a 'code of conduct' (see care codes) recognising sacred values, controlled hours, limited numbers and time in the water. The code restricts diving at the Dancing Sand springs, resulting in the improvement of the vegetation in this area. There is only limited swimming (it is cold at an even 11.7 degrees).

This earlier non-statutory code has largely been adhered to by divers and has meant that there are times of the day when those wanting not to see divers and quietly contemplate can be reasonably assured of it. However, tangata whenua and some others do not see this as a satisfactory solution and want there to be no body contact with the water. The code was only ever conceived as a stop gap to address the immediate issues and it is anticipated that with a management plan in place it would be superseded. Although there are physical impacts - track use, bank erosion - the conflicts appear fundamentally to be between the desire for a quiet contemplative, non-contact appreciation of sacredness, versus the hustle of people in large numbers in a confined area and those wanting to dive in the springs.

A further factor affecting the use of the springs is a recent (February 2006) ban on water recreation activities imposed by DOC. This ban is a response to fears of an outbreak by the invasive alga Didymo *(Didymosphenia geminata)* and other aquatic pests, and the effect this would have on the springs. The ban does not affect public access to view the springs. This ban has temporarily 'parked' the conflict between sacred cultural values for Maori and the use for diving. However, that conflict is likely to continue to be an issue, if the risk of infestation abates and the ban is relaxed.

Community participative planning process
A community consultation process (see participation models) preceded development of the Plan. It was undertaken in 1999 on behalf of DOC and TDC by Lucas Associates, landscape planners. The process involved a weekend workshop and feedback session and the combination into a written plan. The aim was to get a good representation of interests and the process assisted this by invitations, public notices, public venues, weekend times, and weekday evening report backs. Venues were arranged locally and at the TDC headquarters near Nelson. 40 people attended each of the workshops and small groups were used to summarise values, potential effects, opportunities and visions. The draft plan was devised from

this process and released for public response. The local people also wanted to see a process by which the potential benefits to the economy could be realised for the springs and that its management did not preclude other opportunities in the area.

The concept Plan produced (Lucas 1999) provides recommendations as to actions, including:

- Manage expectations of visitor experiences by interpretation off site so people arrive with understanding of sacred values and are not expecting action adventure.
- Manage catchment with a Care Group - iwi, TDC, DOC, community, landowners.
- Aim is not to increase visitor numbers or commercial use but to improve quality of experience through greater understanding of natural and cultural values and to sustain these for the wider community benefit long term.
- A new interpretation centre through which everyone passes on entry and a low platform at main springs for quiet contemplation.
- Visitor contact with water would not be encouraged.
- Options for varying degrees of limitation for diving were developed (but not recommended on):
    - Small scale - continue drift diving on smaller Fish Creek leg
    - Code - commitment and instigation by dive groups to code - allow diving in main spring on this basis with knowledge of cultural values
    - Transition - recognise that time required for change and aim to phase out diving
    - Cease - agreement to stop diving and work towards statutory backing to agreement.

Management Plan

In 2002 a working party was established to develop the Waikoropupu Springs Management Plan, following the earlier non-statutory plan approach. The aim was a combined statutory plan that satisfied requirements under the Resource Management Act (RMA) and the Reserves Act (RA), as well as an iwi management plan, so that all elements of managing the Springs could be addressed in an integrated manner with the backing of the relevant authorities. It was acknowledged that the three parties (TDC, DOC and Iwi) all had an interest in the Spring's management and that a joint working party approach was appropriate.

In particular, the RMA provisions administered by TDC were considered necessary mainly to manage the effects of swimming and diving in the Springs. However, DOC and TDC now take the view that DOC has sufficient authority to be able to formulate objectives and bylaws that relate to activities in or on the water, provided they are consistent with the purpose of the reserve. As a result of this interpretation TDC have elected to withdraw from further involvement with the working party preparing the Waikoropupu Springs Management Plan, leaving DOC and iwi to continue to prepare a plan under the Reserves Act. TDC continues to be involved in the working group at a staff level, and will consider the need for any changes to the Tasman District Resource Management Plan following the management plan's ratification.

Commentary

Limited discussions with stakeholders as to the pros and cons of the community planning process and approach to date associated with the development of the management plan concluded that:

- he community participative planning process has been important in starting to find a way forward for the management of the springs area, as it has allowed for all the interests to come together in a facilitated way to lay views on the table.
- Some of the output from the community process (Lucas 1999) was considered to be of limited value for DOC in that it went into detailed design of facilities which would not meet stakeholder requirements.
- The outputs were non-committal when it came to the crucial issue of diving versus no body contact for spiritual values. Ultimately if cultural values are to be recognised and provided for, this may lead to the need to prohibit diving and body contact with the water. As noted above the *Didymo* risk has at least temporarily circumvented this issue.
- The process of community consultation/participation has been good, but it can raise expectations of what can be achieved in respect of the statutory side of planning process.
- An alternative and possibly parallel way to restrict contact with water would be by policy in the management plan and the power for DOC to achieve this has now been confirmed.

- Tangata whenua have issues with the transfer of the values that they see as absolute into the management plan format given that other interests are being weighed too, potentially giving rise to compromises that they could not accept.
- There are issues with the management of the area around the springs. Policy connections and rules in the TDRMP may also be required to address margins of the area which are outside the reserved area, but from where effects on the springs may result. There appears to be some interest in peripheral uses which are relevant to the springs' tourism activities. For example, a café proposal for adjacent rural land very close to the springs only failed because access from the main road would have been required over DOC land and it refused to give it. There have been proposals for use of glass bottom boats in the springs.
- TDC's withdrawal from involvement with the working party preparing the Waikoropupu Springs Management Plan raise the question of the jurisdictional roles of TDC and DOC in the wider area and the implications of TDC's withdrawal from the joint process. Even if DOC has the requisite powers for sole management of the Scenic Reserve, a joint approach would have many advantages, given the potential for effects from surrounding land on the conservation, cultural and recreational values of the springs.
- The impact on diving and recreational uses at or around the springs will also need to be considered in light of the recent *Didymo* threats.

Recently an area of north-west Nelson encompassing Kahurangi National Park, Farewell Spit and the Waikoropupu Springs Reserve was suggested by DOC as a possible site for nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status. This would have an impact on future management of the area.

Overall, the evolution of the process for preparing a management plan and the way in which threats and risks are addressed will no doubt affect the final management plan. What it signals is the need for plans and planning processes to be clear about the type of environmental conditions being ultimately sought into the future and to have management actions that can be expanded or changed depending on the changes in risks or from other influences, such as community aspirations, that time will inevitably bring.

Towards an integrated approach

Both the statutory and non-statutory plan development processes took a commendable approach to integrated management, and used several planning, participatory, impact assessment, use limits and interpretation tools described in the kete. The case study illustrates how difficult it may be to develop a fully integrated solution even when such tools are used. Integration is a desirable objective even when one agency has sole statutory authority.

References

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