



SOUTHERN  
LAKES  
SANCTUARY

# CHAIR'S REPORT

Y.E. 30.06.22





# CHAIR'S REPORT

YEAR ENDING 30.06.22

**Kia ora Katou e te  
whanau o te “He taonga  
mai I a nehe ki nāianeī.”**

**A treasure passed down for current and future  
generations (passed down through the ages).**

This report co-authored by Greg Lind, Leslie Van Gelder and Steve Batstone as Co-Chairs is the first such end of year report for Southern Lakes Sanctuary Trust.

The last 12 months has seen an incredible growth and momentum for the Trust largely driven by the Jobs for Nature funding (J4N) of \$2,986,000 over three years, granted in the middle of 2021. However, we must remember that the story of the Trust began much earlier.



## Where we came from

The genesis for the project really came in 2017 through the vision of Central Otago Branch's Forest and Bird committee members Bruce Jefferies and Ross Sinclair, whose past experiences in landscape scale conservation overseas made them curious about what it would take to establish a landscape scale predator control project seeking to protect 30 endangered species in our region. Chris Hankin who was involved in Community Partnerships at DOC helped to facilitate the bringing together of the main large groups working in the conservation through predator removal space.

Out of this was born the Southern Lakes Sanctuary Trust. The Founding Trust members were:

- Routeburn Dart Wildlife Trust
- Whakatipu Wildlife Trust
- Wanaka Backyard Trappers
- Matukituki Charitable Trust
- Mahu Whenua/Soho Properties
- Central Otago Branch Forest and Bird



That early advocacy and landscape scale plan gave rise to funding from ORC, QLDC, DOC and then Chair of the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust, Tom Pryde, to develop a Plan which Wildlands Consultants provided in February 2020.

The Plan was ambitious, with a mixture of predator control and expansion into new areas as well as areas identified for eradication and an initial budget cost projected at \$36,000,000 over five years. They described the project as **“an unprecedented large-scale predator trapping effort that has no equal in any other region in New Zealand.”**

## Where we came from...

With the arrival of the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic and Central Government's reaction, in late March 2020, the consortium group were approached by Predator Free 2050 Ltd. to put in a bid as part of a larger bid they were creating to secure significant funding for the sector. This galvanised the group and thanks to Mo Turnbull we named ourselves the Southern Lakes Sanctuary. A working group that was to become the Project Mobilisation Unit of Ross Sinclair, Bruce Jeffries and Leslie Van Gelder took the lead to develop the initial funding bid, working closely with the wider working group and assisted by Daniel Sweeney to make the bid beautiful. It was successful with an \$8 million offer, but, later suffered from not being able to match 1:1 funding outside of Crown funding and the offer had to be rescinded until a time when that might be possible.

**With the emergence of the Mahi mō te Taiao / Jobs for Nature funding stream in mid 2021, the Southern Lakes Sanctuary put in multiple applications and eventually secured \$2,986,000 over three years.**

## Getting operational

In July 2021, the founding members of the Southern Lakes Sanctuary formally constituted the Trust with the valuable support from Anderson Lloyd. Then things got serious – the J4N funding from DOC enabled the Plan to get underway and from that began the building of the Operational Team.

A key factor in getting started was formally contracting the services of GSD Ltd - a subsidiary of AJ Hackett Bungy, energetically led by Matt Hollyer (Operations Manager). GSD provide support service including staff management, HSE and payroll, office space and vehicles, a major reason why Southern Lakes Sanctuary was able to “get moving quickly”.

The appointment of Paul Kavanagh as Project Director in November 2021 was a major benefit given Paul's conservation knowledge, experience, people management background, strategic skills and community relationship ability. Since then, the team has been established by Paul and Matt, working closely with the Founding Trusts in identifying the initial and urgent resource needs.

# Outcomes

## Enhancing the trapping network

Included in the initial outcomes has been a major push to undertake an audit of existing trap networks and provided skilled advice to the operators.

To date over 73% of the networks have been audited. Of these, 23% have been replaced and 32% recalibrated (made fully effective) and 1065 traps added to the overall numbers through simply counting and properly recording what is already out there.

**The total existing traps now stands at 7,489, an increase of 14% since 2021.**



# Getting our strategic focus clear

Southern Lakes Sanctuary Trustees and Advisors, led by Leslie Van Gelder and Steve Batstone held a two-day workshop at Camp Glenorchy focused on developing a strategic governance plan that focuses on our landscape scale approach to insuring flourishing biodiversity, an empowered community, and supporting a thriving conservation culture and ecosystem.

And our six areas of strategic focus and activity are:

- Growth
- Innovation
- Relationships
- Knowledge Advancement
- Storytelling
- Measuring Progress & Impact

The workshop was very successful in providing a foundation for Southern Lakes Sanctuary trustees to prioritise strategic growth including staff needs, fundraising, key relationship development, innovation and technological leadership.

One of the key strategic initiatives for Southern Lakes

Sanctuary was the adoption of the Conservation Standards framework, a planning tool used by international agencies including conservation for developing long-term strategic plans. The framework takes a lot of the guesswork out of converting strategic aspirations into an executable plan, while also putting Southern Lakes Sanctuary in good company globally.

This approach was strongly advocated by Bruce Jefferies (Special Advisor) who had significant experience in its use overseas. It was Bruce's initiative and drive that led to Southern Lakes Sanctuary becoming the first user of the Conservation Standards in Aotearoa/NZ.

This crystallised at an amazing week-long workshop held at Cardrona Skifield where 85 conservation leaders, local, regional, and central government officials, tangata whenua and international leaders gathered together to begin this work together.

# Our “Real” launch

## The Conservation Standards Workshop

Cardrona Ski field (RealNZ) acted as a real partner in providing a venue and funding for the five-day workshop came from:

- US Embassy
- QLDC
- ORC
- The Nature Conservancy

The fully funded workshop was an outstanding success from a number of standpoints:

- 1 An outstanding and iconic venue
- 2 Excellent organisation (thanks to Paul Kavanagh, Katrina Black and Real NZ)
- 3 Professional facilitation led by Philipa Walsh, Bruce Jefferies and their team
- 4 Training for implementation of Conservation Standards



- 5 Participation by the more than 85 attendees during the five days that uplifted the entire conservation community and created synergies among most especially the conservation hubs across the project area. The continuing “buzz” post workshop remains very evident. All were impressed by the level of engagement from Southern Lakes Sanctuary staff and trustees as well as participants from key associate groups particularly during the breakout sessions.



## Growing our tools – traps and smart tech

The Conservation Standards funding also enabled training and equipment for Southern Lakes Sanctuary staff to be introduced to SMART field technology which allows for recording of data and downloading very efficiently. Earlier in 2022 we also received private community funding to support the first use of eDNA testing in the project area to get baseline studies of the waterways feeding into the Rees Catchment.

Over the course of 2021/22 Southern Lakes Sanctuary has also been working with Central Lakes Trust (CLT) to develop a proposal for funding the capital purchase of trap materials to build the 2500 traps required to expand the networks.

CLT certainly took into regard the landscape scale of the proposal and the involvement of most of the existing predator control groups in the region. In June 2022 CLT granted \$370,000 over two years and the construction of new predator traps is well underway for field delivery in Spring. The funding also assists with helicopter support and field costs.

Southern Lakes Sanctuary Trustees are incredibly grateful to the CLT Trust and the Grants Team for the obvious understanding of the threats to taonga species posed by introduced predators and that control across the Central Otago landscape is a priority.

While the impact of these introduced killers is widely known and control efforts are expanding there has been advances in understanding/technology and methodology. Feral cats are a particular threat as climate change is seeing them expand into the mountain valley areas. Southern Lakes Sanctuary is investing in feral cat trapping systems as are our Founding Trust groups.

Recently Southern Lakes Sanctuary has been working with the DOC takahē Team and Rees Valley Station on proposals for releasing this taonga species into the Rees Valley in the future. This will depend on ability to control predation but, if successful will act as a hallmark in restoring the biodiversity of our mountain lands.



# Looking forward

As we look forward to 2022/23, our priorities fall out of the strategic focus areas previously mentioned:

## **GROWTH**

The work of ensuring Southern Lakes Sanctuary has a sustainable future is the clear, overriding priority. That will entail seeking out funding sources from both within our community – especially the wealthy and engaged sector. We will also look to expand into new “Hubs” such as the Cardrona Valley working with existing key groups (Wai Wanaka) and businesses (RealNZ).

## **RELATIONSHIPS**

Ensuring our dedicated Founding Trusts are fully supported and able to continue their trapping programmes, deepening our relationships with Ngai Tahu partners, and engaging with the high-country stations through the networking, experience and knowledge of Jo Booker and Amanda Hasselman.

## **STORYTELLING**

Maintaining a high profile for Southern Lakes Sanctuary both regionally and nationally as a group with the vision and landscape scale ideal for support in the Predator Free Aotearoa space.

## **INNOVATION**

Partnering with developers of conservation technology to use our diverse landscape-scale project as a test-bed for new technologies and innovative approaches.

## **KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT**

Growing the skills, expertise and mana of our full Operational Team to become the “go-to” source for all predator trapping knowledge regionally, and sharing that knowledge openly with the full conservation ecosystem.

Underpinning our success in all of these areas will be excellence in the delivery of the DOC J4N programme of work. All in all, there is much to look forward to.

# Acknowledgements

In closing we wish to acknowledge the tremendous benefit Southern Lakes Sanctuary derives from Paul Kavanagh as Project Director and Matt Hollyer as Operations Manager. Between them they not only make the work of the Trust look effortless and impressive, they also expertly recruited a team of versatile, hardworking, passionate and skilled staff of whom we are most proud of the work they've accomplished this year. Amongst that latter group will be the conservation leaders of the future, but not only that, they provide a pool of growing expertise on which the Trust totally relies.

Finally, the Southern Lakes Sanctuary Co Chairs wish to acknowledge the Founding Trustees for their unstinting support for the mahi of the Trust. Not only is the work unpaid and extending beyond attending the regular monthly meeting into workshops and networking, it also must be noted that they are also leaders within their own organisations. We are humbled by this dedication.

The Founding Trustees are:

- Geoff Hughes
- Jo Booker
- Mo Turnbull
- Daniel Sweeney
- Kris Vollbrecht
- Paul Hellebrekers

We also include the following Special Advisors in this acknowledgement:

- Amanda Hasselman
- Bruce Jefferies
- Ross Sinclair

With special acknowledgment for the role both Bruce and Ross played in the Project Mobilisation Unit phase of the project and Ross's first year as a Trustee.

# Ngā mihi



Greg Lind, Co-Chair



Leslie Van Gelder, Co-Chair



Steve Batstone, Co-Chair



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## OUR CONSORTIUM MEMBERS:



Forest & Bird  
TE REO O TE TAHIRO | Giving Nature a Voice



Matukituki  
Charitable Trust



Wanaka  
Backyard  
Trapping



## THANKS TO OUR PROJECT PARTNERS:

JOBS | MAHI  
FOR NATURE | MO TE TAIAO



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

