



Investing in Conservation Education for a Sustainable and Prosperous Future

Tai Ao—Tai Awatea

National Education Strategy 2010–2030



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

‘In the coming decades the survival of humanity will depend on our ecological literacy—our ability to understand the basic principles of ecology and to live accordingly.’

Fritjof Capra 2002: *The hidden connections: a science for sustainable living*. Random House, New York.



Cover image: DOC staff member showing children from Waiotahi Valley School the way to plant trees, Ohiwa Harbour, East Coast. *Photo: Nikki Slade-Robinson.*

Updated May 2017, New Zealand Department of Conservation

Through the magnifying glass.
Photo: Catherine Tiffen.

Common dolphin pod.
Photo: Nadine Gibbs.

Snapper. *Photo: Brian Mackie.*

Aerial view of Rahanui.
Photo: Kevin L. Jones.

Art (depicting the weather with a Māori theme). *Photo: John Mazey.*

Sunset and sea, Whangaparaoa.
Photo: Kim Westerskov.

A message from the Director-General of the Department of Conservation



Imagine a future where our children have a deep understanding and appreciation of the fundamental processes that support life on the planet, and of the biodiversity that provides the foundation for our survival.

I believe the development of ecological literacy and conservation capability is critical for New Zealanders' well-being and prosperity. Our young people, along with other New Zealanders and visitors, need to understand the value of our conservation inheritance and the benefits it provides for our social and economic well-being.

Biodiversity and the resulting ecosystem services (such as clean air, fresh water, fertile soils and abundant seas) provide the foundation for our personal and economic health in the short term, and our very survival as a human species in the long term.

Our conservation parks and reserves in New Zealand, and the ecosystems and species they protect, give us a sense of national identity and pride as well as being the mainstay of our tourism economy and our pure, clean, green export brand.

Our mission is to equip young New Zealanders with a breadth and depth of understanding, and a solid basis of attitude and value, from which to make wise decisions and choices about conservation and natural resource use. We need to give our young people the motivation and skills to act as conservation advocates and carry out conservation work, perhaps even leading them to choose a career in conservation.

I hope this strategy and its implementation will inspire creative thinking, new ideas and new partnerships to help us make New Zealand the greatest living space on Earth.



Al Morrison
Director-General
Department of Conservation
March 2011

Young people—a primary focus

As we look to the future, our approach to conservation education is to focus on proactive, quality education activities with young people.

National and international research¹ shows that early contact with nature plays an important role in developing pro-environmental values and behaviours. It also shows that frequent, positive early childhood experiences with the natural world have a major impact on the healthy growth of a child’s mind, body and spirit. Research suggests that it is between the ages of 6 and 12 that a sense of ‘ecological identity’ is commonly

developed, largely as a result of significant childhood experiences in nature.

As well as this, young people have a wide span of outreach and influence in the community—across several generations, all cultures and different sectors (see Figure 1).

Our aspirational goal is that by 2030 one million conservation kids are connecting with nature and restoring New Zealand’s natural and historic heritage because they understand and value its contribution to their quality of life.

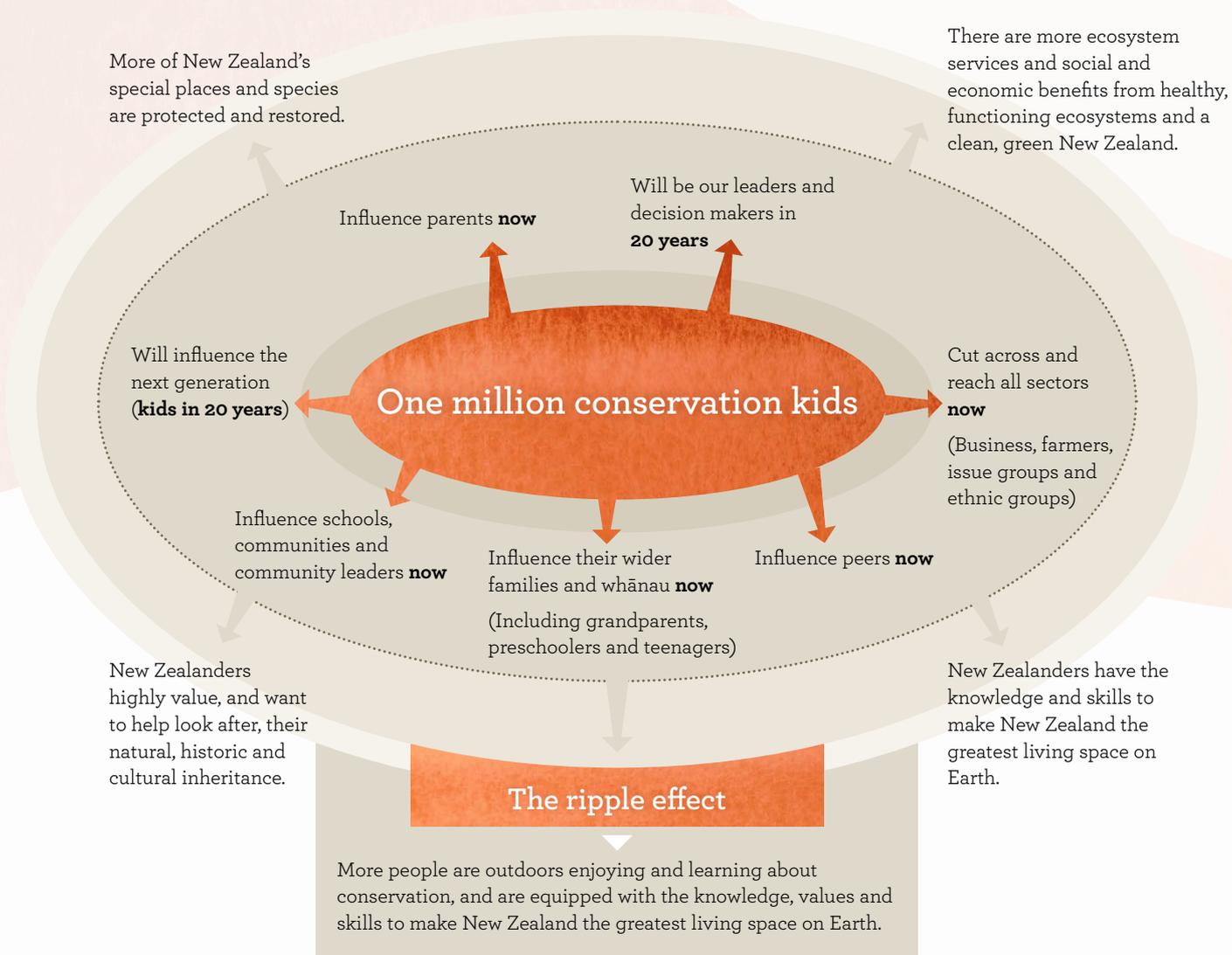


FIGURE 1. THE OUTREACH OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

¹ Department of Conservation 2011: Benefits of connecting children with nature. Department of Conservation, Wellington.

Scope of this strategy

The focus of this strategy is on young people up to 20 years old. However, the education initiatives targeting this age group are set in a context of lifelong learning and community engagement.

People of all ages, life stages and backgrounds have the opportunity to learn about and extend their skills in conservation through a variety of training, volunteering and outreach programmes provided by the Department of Conservation (DOC) and partner organisations.



Traditional Māori
medicine garden,
Pokai marae.
Photo: Trudi
Ngawhare.

What do we mean by conservation education?

DOC's quality education activities aim to develop knowledge, values and skills in young New Zealanders so they may be confident, connected and actively engaged learners, who are able to sustain and care for their environment now and in the future.

Our approach is aligned with and supports the Ministry of Education's mission: *Building a world-leading education system that equips all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills, and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century.*

A quality education programme or project in DOC is one that takes a structured approach to learning and develops mental, emotional and physical competencies to help young people participate in their world as critical, informed and responsible citizens.

These education activities are distinct from, but complement and overlap with, awareness-raising, communication, interpretation and volunteering.

Conservation education from a Māori perspective means viewing the natural world as a single entity made up of a number of interrelated, interconnected webs. This holistic paradigm, based on a foundation of knowing, understanding, hearing and feeling the rhythms and heartbeat of Papa-tū-ā-nuku and Rangi-nui, continues to inform the way Māori view and interact with the natural world. It can best be summed up in this saying from the Whanganui area:

*E rere kau mai te awa nui nei,
Mai te kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa
Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au*

*Just as the river flows
from the mountains to the sea
I am the river, the river is me*



Photo: Lynette Brown, Taupo-nui-a-tia College,
teacher liaison, Kiwi Forever programme.

'We hope to pass on the respect of the environment and acknowledge that we are part of the environment. We are connected to it and we live with it, it is our elder. The students taking part are 'rays of hope' and we watch these young people grow through the week.'

Keith Wood, Ngāti Rangi
Kiwi Forever programme
Tongariro National Park

Our ambition for education



FIGURE 2. STRATEGY VISION, GOAL, OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH.

The changes we expect to see by 2030

Young people (up to 20 years old)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are connected with our natural and historic heritage. • Have conservation capability—knowledge, values and skills—and are actively applying these to support, develop and sustain their actions. • Are actively initiating their own conservation opportunities and actions. • Are leading their peers, family, whānau and wider community to take action.
In schools and formal education settings	<p>Conservation education is being delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely in teaching and learning contexts to deliver the NZ curriculum in primary schools and across the early childhood sector. • In secondary schools across a wide range of curriculum subjects. • In tertiary and vocational programmes.
In informal learning settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation education is being delivered widely in settings such as conservation sites and in volunteer and summer programme activities.
In the wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities, including peers, family and whānau of young people, are actively participating in conservation learning opportunities and taking action.

FIGURE 3. THE CHANGES WE EXPECT TO SEE BY 2030.



Implementing the strategy

The department's National Education Strategy Implementation plan gives practical guidance and direction on how we will achieve DOC's National Education Strategy aspirational goals. It replaces the implementation approach set out in the National Education Strategy, published in 2010.



Tree climbing.
Photo: P. Jacobson.

‘The fate of our ecosystems and the plants, animals and people that depend on them lies with our ability to educate children and adults, in settings as diverse as schools, communities, farms and forests.’

Jacobsen, S.; McDuff, M.; Monroe, M. 2005: Conservation Education and Outreach Techniques. Oxford University Press, Oxford, NY.

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