

Community – Kea Project Plan

Upper West Coast (North of Okarito)

Funded by: Department of Conservation Community Fund (DOC Community Fund)

Period: 1 December 2015 – 31 October 2017.

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Aim

The aim of the Community – Kea Project Plan is to i) facilitate long-term community kea conservation initiatives and ii) to change the way we think, act and live with kea in our communities. This will be actioned through development of collaborative Community – Kea Project Plans across the South Island. Each community plan will address concerns specific to the local community and threats to the resident kea population.

Project Background

This initial project plan outline has been developed as a result of discussions with communities during the Kea Conservation Trust's (KCT) Winter Advocacy Tour - 20 July – 3 August 2015. The tour was funded by Dulux and supported by Department of Conservation (DOC). The tour theme, "Building a future with kea", aimed to promote a new MOU between communities and kea. This initiative is in line with the new Strategic Plan for Kea Conservation (refer attached document), objective 3: to i) increase positive perceptions of kea and reduce conflict and ii) facilitate formation of community led kea conservation initiatives.

Local Community – Kea Project Plans will be activated by two Community Engagement Coordinator's (CEC's) based in the following areas:

1) Upper half of the South Island: Northern region (Nelson/ Motueka/ Kahurangi), Central North (Nelson Lakes/ Murchison/Arthur's Pass/Christchurch/Mt Hutt) and upper West Coast (Greymouth and Hokitika). There is also the potential to include Kaikoura at a later date (the eastern most population of kea).

2) Lower half of the South Island: Lower West Coast (Franz/Fox Glaciers and Haast), Central South (Mt Cook, Wanaka/Mt Aspiring and the Routeburn/Dart/ Queenstown areas) and Fiordland (Te Anau/ Milford/Murchison mountains).

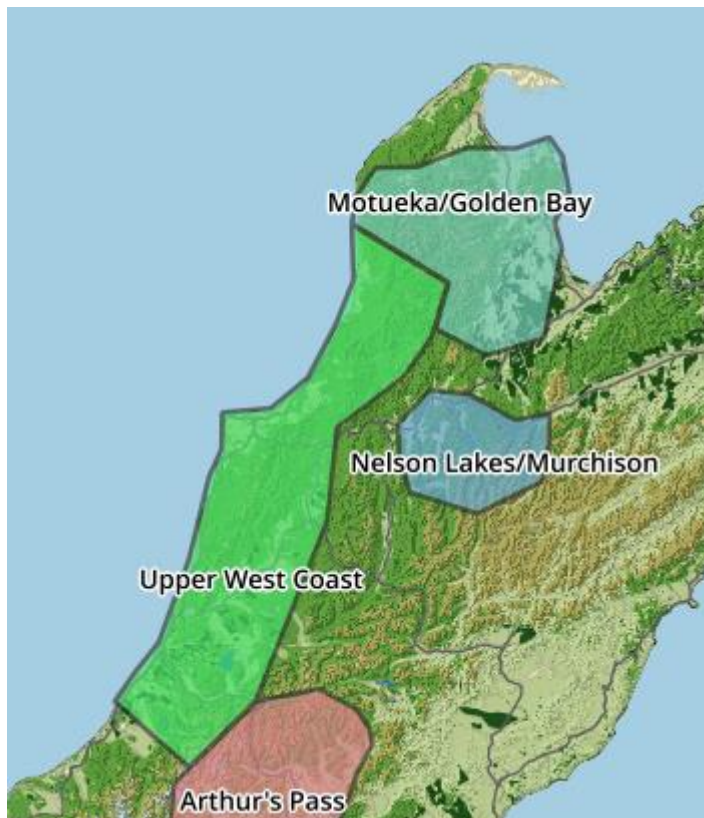
Each project plan, will be developed in detail over the next two years and will involve creation of an active volunteer network and facilitation of funding streams (external and internal). The plans will take into account eight threats, actual and potential, to the wild kea population which have been identified by kea researchers.

- 1) Predation by introduced mammals
- 2) Lead in kea habitat (e.g. flashings and lead-head nails, tyre weights, lead shot)
- 3) Poorly-deployed pest control devices (e.g. poison baits and traps laid for pest control and aerial 1080 operations)
- 4) Avian diseases

- 5) Climate change (e.g. changes in predator abundance, food availability and habitat quality)
- 6) Accidents with human objects (e.g. motor vehicles, snow groomers, rubbish bins, electricity sub-stations)
- 7) Destruction/removal of nuisance individuals (permitted or illegal)
- 8) Illicit trade in wildlife

Threat focus and mitigation will be area and resource dependant and take into account community interests, expertise and support.

Upper West Coast



The upper West Coast is defined as north of Okarito. The principal towns are Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika. The Coast Road (the coastal stretch of SH6 on the West Coast) goes from Westport in the north to Greymouth in the south. The eastern boundary is the Southern Alps. The land is incredibly scenic, with wild coastlines, mountains and native bush. Punakaiki is the gateway to the Paparoa National Park (38,000 ha), centred halfway between Greymouth and Westport. The Paparoa National Park Visitors Centre, located at Punakaiki, has 190,000 tourists visit annually, with most visiting the Pancake Rocks at Punakaiki before heading either south (to the glaciers) or north towards Nelson and Picton (Paparoa Visitors Center pers. Comm. February 2016).

The nearest major cities are Christchurch and Nelson. Hokitika is 250km from Christchurch via Arthurs Pass. Westport is 222 km from Nelson (via SH6).

Upper West Coast Conservation Efforts

There are a number of conservation efforts occurring in the Upper West Coast region. The Paparoa National Park being a central figure in these efforts.

Paparoa Wildlife Trust (PWT) is a group of mainly volunteers who work collaboratively with DoC on conservation projects in the South Paparoa Range, north of Greymouth. Trapping began in 2006.

Their main focus has been on whio and great spotted kiwi (GSK), however, the pest control undertaken by PWT will be protecting other native species including kea.

In 2014/2015 DOCs 'Battle for our Birds' pest control programme was again implemented on a larger scale. This was a pest control operation (aerial 1080) in response to an exceptionally heavy beech seed fall event – mast. DOC treated more than 600,000 hectares nationally in the Battle for the Birds programme in 2014/2015, and monitored 48 kea through the aerial 1080 operations. Four of the 48 kea died from 1080 poisoning (Department of Conservation, 2015). Continued monitoring and research is necessary to better understand and direct kea conservation. The Upper West Coast areas included in this programme were Oparara, Western Maruia and Lake Daniel.

There is currently no pest control occurring at high altitudes to directly support nesting kea (as is occurring in the Nelson Lakes area), although pest control lower down will be supporting kea populations generally.

The steep, inhospitable terrain combined with very small communities along the Upper West Coast, can make conservation efforts very difficult.

Table 1. Location of conservation work carried out by conservation groups in Greymouth and Hokitika.

Group	Location	Activity	Trap #s	Focal species
DOC	Otira/Deception	Aerial 1080 for possum control	0	rata
DOC	Maruia	'Battle for our birds', aerial 1080 for rats	500	Long tailed bats
DOC / Volunteers	Styx – Arahura – Taipo – Kawhaka	Stoat control along river margins	1200	whio
DOC	Oparara/Ugly/Kakapo	Stoat control along river margins	1700	whio
DOC	Kahurangi National Park, Mokihinui catchment in mast events	'Battle for our birds', aerial 1080 for rats and stoat control	0	Range of species
DOC	Punakaiki 3 to 7 year intervals	Aerial 1080 for possum control	0	rata
DOC / KCT	Hokitika environs	Respond to kea conflict	0	kea
SENZ	Oparara	Stoat control Oparara basin	700	GSK
PWT/DCC	Blackball/Moonlight/Pike	Aerial 1080 – rat control Trapping – stoats	800	Whio, GSK, Powelliphanta
Paparoa Wildlife Trust	South Paparoa Ranges	Predator control, species management, advocacy and research.		Whio, GSK
TB Free NZ	Various sites on a 3-7 year cycle: (Barrytown, Buller, Matiri, Craigieburn/Rough River, Turiwhate, Taramakau)	Aerial 1080 for possum control	0	Cattle
Robin Judkins (Coast to Coast)	Deception	Stoat traps		whio
West Coast blue penguin Trust	Coastal West Coast	Coastal restoration and predator control		Little blue penguin
Forest and Bird	Rainy Creek	Trapping – stoats Bait stations – rats	98	SI kokako

Upper West Coast Kea

Although kea are known from the upper West Coast, very little research has been done on them in the area. Anecdotal information suggests low numbers of kea in Paparoa National Park (Paul Van Klink pers. Comm. February 2016). Kea are encountered frequently in the foothills of the mountains, and these lower altitude populations may be large (Tim Shaw, pers comm. 2016).

Kea have been monitored through 1080 operations in the upper West Coast, with four birds monitored in the Lake Brunner (Moana), Taramakau area in 2007 and nine kea in the Victoria Range in 2009. No mortalities were recorded.

Although kea are generally inconspicuous in the upper West Coast, they still come in contact (and conflict) with people. Kea are known to visit properties in the ranges east of Hokitika. DOC and the Kea Conservation Trust have provided advice and support in resolving these conflicts. Historically there have been mixed attitudes to kea on the West Coast, and as a result education and advocacy is particularly important.

The risk of kea dying from lead poisoning is a known issue for kea throughout kea habitat and West Coast kea have tested positive for the heavy metal. There has been no survey to date of local buildings to ascertain presence of lead nail heads or flashings. Anecdotal reports have been received by the KCT of lead in old whitebait huts and older DOC huts (pre 1990's) maintained on conservation land may pose a risk to kea.

Project Plan Focal Areas (not ranked in importance)

Discussions with the community and researchers over the years as well as recent meetings through the Winter Advocacy tour, talks with Department of Conservation and via kea-conflict 'call-outs' has highlighted the following areas locals wish to get involved with regarding kea conservation:

- i) Reduction of local threats (pest control, nest protection, removal of lead from buildings)
- ii) Kea advocacy
- iii) Kea conflict resolution and support
- iv) Development of kea protocol for the South Island forestry sector working in kea-country
- v) Care of injured kea
- vi) Identify status of local resident perception of kea

These focal areas may be added to in the future.

i) Reduction of local threats

Pest Control – Support and expand local pest control efforts to support kea

Aims - Look to increase the volunteer pool to support the current predator control initiatives in the area.

Method - Development of a sustainable volunteer programme (with associated advocacy programme) to support local pest control efforts. The CEC will work with local communities and interested stakeholders to develop this list and help coordinate with conservation groups as required. Due to the environment volunteers will be required to work within, this programme will require careful assessment and coordination of volunteers, and development of robust training and health & safety plans.

Funding - DOC Community Fund for Community Engagement Co-ordinator (KCT).

Removal of Lead

Aims - Support local residents in the removal of lead from buildings within local back country and conservation areas

Method - This project will look to;

- a) identify the status and presence of lead within the area
- b) to support local initiatives in removing all lead from local buildings and huts in conservation areas in and around Paparoa National Park and the wider area
- c) to provide alternative materials (tech screws and flashings) to replace the lead removed
- d) to support safe disposal of old lead.

Funding - Initial development of the local area project (including identifying who has information on locations of buildings with lead, potential local volunteers (individuals and groups)) to be undertaken with DOC Community Fund monies. Funding partners for alternative non-toxic materials and technical support to be secured (this is currently being investigated as part of a South Island wide project).

ii) Kea advocacy/education

Aims - To increase the public awareness of the endangered status and threats to kea, and reduce the incidence of inappropriate behaviour and conflict.

Method - Main education points to cover

- a) kea are endangered and fully protected,
- b) no feeding of kea,
- c) conflict resolution and
- d) call to action. This will be achieved through the following methods:

- Supply of kea education resources to the Department of Conservation and local schools
- Development and delivery of interactive kea talks by kea personnel (targeting school and tourist groups)
- Promotion of kea sightings reporting (via website or phone app)
- Promotion of kea proofing database and conflicts programme

Funding - This project will be funded through the DOC Community Fund - Community – Kea Project Plan.

iii) Kea conflict resolution and support

Aims - To provide support and advice for those in conflict with kea.

Method - Ensure Kea Conservation Trust personnel are available for immediate support and advice for those having conflict issues with kea, including the updating of the kea proofing database (as per the Community Conflict Resolution Program).

Funding: This project will be funded through the Community Conflict Resolution Programme (KCT) funded by Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens and DOC CCPF.

iv) Development of kea protocol for South Island forestry sector operating in kea-country

Aims - To develop kea protocol in forestry.

Method - This project will look to create an education pamphlet for forestry staff and crew who work in areas where kea may be present. At times, kea can cause conflict by interfering with, and damaging logging equipment. This pamphlet would look to include information on kea ecology (such as nesting, dispersal, behaviours, threats etc...) and ways to kea-proof logging equipment.

Funding: This project will be funded through the DOC Community Fund - Community – Kea Project Plan and written in consultation with Forestry Companies.

v) Care of Injured Kea

Aims - To support and develop initiatives in the care for injured kea.

Method - A fund is to be set up to take donations to support volunteer efforts to access medical care for injured kea. This will be driven by the KCT and be used for the following purposes:

- Reimbursement of travel costs (petrol) on production of receipt/s;
- Purchase of any equipment (carry cages etc), expendables (food and hydration) to support holding and transport of kea (any proposed purchases must be cleared first to ensure there are sufficient funds available);
- Development of veterinary register (list of local vets able to provide initial and long-term medical support for kea);
- Process for transporting kea to specialist veterinary facilities (Massey University (Palmerston Nth), the Nest (Wellington Zoo)), Vet Ent (Queenstown) or the South Island Wildlife Hospital (ChCh));
- Develop local SOP with community stakeholders for dealing with injured kea

Funding - potentially through crowd sourced funding (as per the Arthurs Pass initiative). A funding plan to be set up to assist this. Development of Injured kea SOP will be supported through the DOC CCPF Strategic plan funds and DOC Community Fund - Community - Kea Project Plan.

vi) Identify status of local resident perceptions of kea

Aims - To understand local resident perceptions of kea to enable better targeting of resources.

Method - Develop a confidential online / hardcopy survey and promote during the annual Winter Advocacy Tour. Results to be utilised to direct local conflict resolution and education/advocacy programme.

Funding - This project will be funded through the DOC Community Fund - Community - Kea Project Plan.