

Community Group Translocation workshop – November 2006 - Discussion points

Please note that I did not take notes from every presentation. This is not a reflection on that presentation in any way. It's more related to the amount of discussion that was generated and the time provided for discussion.

Starting from Scratch – Gaye Blunden/Pauline Stephenson

- We talked about the need for a 2-3 page initial outline that is submitted to DoC so potential applicants can get some feedback on whether their translocation will be successful and what they need to do to get it to an application stage. The outline would cover key points including disease screening. Tim Lovegrove pointed out that this is often hard as it relates to disease screening as there is often very little baseline data
- Doug Armstrong was concerned that his experience with translocation proposals was much less daunting and pointed out that if there is too much detail the context may be lost. Editor's note: I think that people who have a science background and/or some experience with translocations or working with DoC do tend to find it a lot easier but the point is that it should be an easy process for everybody.

Bringing robins back to Great Barrier – Judy Gilbert

- Translocation process was made a lot easier by support from lots of people and proximity to Auckland
- Because Little Windy Hill is owned by a variety of landowners Judy has a one page working agreement with landowners
- Little Windy Hill has mice, rats, cats and pigs and it took a 5 year pest control programme to get pest levels down to a point here robins could be reintroduced. This included the removal of about 25,000 rats and 185 cats
- Judy would like to see more information about what to expect after a release and would like support to do 'booster' releases following the initial release
- The translocation cost about \$8600. Filling out forms for funding applications was onerous due to the level of detail and long application forms
- Receiving the translocation permit one week before the translocation was due to happen was very stressful
- Found the iwi consultation very time consuming. There were 6 groups to consult and no guidelines. Need to allow 5-6 months
- Discussion on whether there was a minimum habitat size for robins – Tim Lovegrove said there was a perception that robins were confined by the geography of their location on islands but on the mainland there can be enormous dispersion. From Wenderholm birds dispersed between 2 and 15km. Some areas for releases have been as small as 25ha. Tim said there is some evidence that the birds use corridors of vegetation as a dispersal mode

Reintroductions into Regional Parks – Tim Lovegrove

- Wenderholm robin reintroduction examined impacts of moving large numbers of birds from small source populations
- Robins are a great species for translocations as they are gregarious and visible to the public
- Some birds have moved out of Wenderholm into the surrounding countryside with the result that landowners are now working with ARC on animal pest control initiatives – a great form of conservation advocacy

The Maungatautari Experience – Chris Smuts-Kennedy

- Thinks a two page summary as mentioned above would be really useful
- Found iwi consultation a difficult process – no easy answer
- Recovery groups were useful and helpful
- Health screening is important – MEIT is trying to develop baseline data on diseases that are at Maungatautari now. Found Mike Goold invaluable – good pragmatic approach but there are some inconsistencies with the process
- DoC capacity issue – processing of approvals needs more flexibility with permit conditions
- Has had some great support from DoC
- Whole process needs more big picture strategic planning

- Would like to see a recovery plan for Cooks Petrel which only has one known population on Little Barrier

Warrenehip – a private landowner’s perspective – David and Juliette Wallace and Phil Thomson

- Used the kiwi released into Warrenehip and people’s emotional attachment to them as a hook to draw people into the MEIT project – 60 kiwi chicks have now gone through Warrenehip as part of Operation Nest Egg
- Phil Thomson was employed as project manager and this was very worthwhile to have someone coordinating the pest eradication project and release of first species
- Found the whole experience of dealing with DoC over translocations to a small private property very demoralising – the main issue with DoC related to what would happen to the translocations and the management of the area if David and Juliette sold the land
- Found considerable inertia in DoC staff at lower levels

Greg Martin – DoC Waikato Conservator

- Acknowledged issues that David and Juliette have. DoC is limited by the funding provided by the government. Need to get every NZer to value conservation and increase Vote Conservation
- DoC needs more technical support people to fulfill all the expectations of the community
- Community groups have expanded so quickly that DoC is not able to provide the capacity to help as much as people want
- DoC needs to be more trusting of private individuals such as David and Juliette
- Legislation hasn’t kept up with the speed of community based conservation
- S4 of the Conservation Act requires that DoC has to take account of the Treaty of Waitangi. No other government department has to do this. So as a result iwi consultation must be done with all resources that DoC has a responsibility for

Disease screening – Pam Cromarty and Mike Goold

- How do you determine which diseases are a real risk as there are many natural diseases in the wild?
 - Undertake a physical assessment at time of translocation
 - Minimise movements of animals with diseases that may harm others
- Lack of knowledge is a reality. Diseases such as *coxidia* are present in many wild species and causing no harm. Kerry Morgan has identified 5 new strains of *coxidia* in kiwi.
- Important for people to do as much disease screening as possible as we need to build up information.
- Important to minimise handling of birds and know what you are doing and have enough people available to do the work quickly and properly and so minimise stress
- Isobel made the point that its important to appreciate that not all diseases, parasites etc are bad. There are many native strains of parasites and they are part of natural processes and play an important role.

The Translocation SOP – A Quick Snapshot – Pam Cromarty

- People would like to see some examples of good proposals and post release reports. Pam happy to do this but people need to take caution with copying information from one proposal to another as changes to the SOP in the meantime may make this information null and void
 - Some wanted to see a simpler SOP for community groups but Pam replied that its more efficient to only have one that is amended to make it an easier process for all to follow
 - Pam stressed importance of people following the electronic copy of the SOP as it is the most up to date. DoC will once the new website is up and running put the translocation SOP onto the website. Brent said this should include access to the translocation summary spreadsheet and a link from the DoC website to the translocation database that Doug is connected with is needed
 - Once the SOP amendments have been made Pam will get someone to word the whole document into ‘normal words’ and not ‘DoC speak’
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- People need to feel monitoring is valued and used as this is a key requirement following translocations and people put a lot of work into it and rarely get any feedback

- Some initial work has been done with making the SOP more user friendly. *An initial assessment of a translocation proposal* form has been developed – this would act as the first written point of contact between a community group and DoC. Some work has also been done on simplifying the translocation proposal template and removing areas that specifically relate to DoC.

Key issues identified:

- Access to templates – need to be put onto the DoC website so that anyone can download them. The SOP needs to be checked regularly for changes. Important to start with electronic form. Would be a good idea to post changes to SOP as they occur at the top of the area of the website on translocation SOP
- Need a simplified model/template and good model examples. Examples could be referred to throughout the SOP
- Format of the templates need to be less threatening
- Need a list of key steps and documents required right at the start of the SOP
- Need a list of people to contact who are accessible and all over the country and able to help community groups. This includes people who can prepare proposals
- Need a list of wildlife vets and people who are trained to take samples
- Need to clarify the whole issue of iwi consultation and help people to undertake it
- Need to resolve issues surrounding releases onto private land where it does not involve a community group, e.g. the Wallace's
- Need to 'warn' people of learning that needs to be undertaken to do translocations and the ongoing work that is required once the translocation has been approved
- Threatened plants are not included in this SOP as they were originally excluded at the request of DoC botanists and may require a slightly different SOP
- Need to have a list of resources required – i.e. gear needed, people etc
- Information is only as good as the experience of the DoC person you talk too. This relates to a number of experiences that people have had talking to DoC staff who were inexperienced in the area of translocations
- The question was asked: How precise do you have to be about where the species occurred? Pam replied that you need to state what you know and how you have obtained that information as for some species little is known
- David Wallace made the point that its clear that community groups should take responsibility for their own proposals and form and develop their own relationships and partnerships with people in the community which includes iwi
- Isobel made the point that translocations involve a commitment to management for many years once they have been approved and that perhaps there is a need for an annual community wildlife management workshop where people can get together and discuss issues, problems etc
- John Innes said that a lot of the uncertainties people have are technical and perhaps DoC needs to consider the establishment of a Community Advice Group which provides advice to people on technical issues and can collate, facilitate and inject technical advice to community groups
- Perhaps there is a need for one national coordinator for translocations – a first point of contact.

ACTIONS RESULTING FROM WORKSHOP:

- *The group moved that we support Pam's initiative to put the translocation proposal form (SOP template, application form and proposal form) on the DoC website so that community groups can access and download it*
- *Pam will have the SOP rewritten in such a way that DoC jargon is minimised*
- *Pam will establish some working group's people from the workshop. Pam has a list of people who said they were keen. These people will help with the rewrite of the SOP*
- *That DoC be thanked for its contribution to the workshop and the open manner in which staff listened and dealt with people's concerns (this was done in early December).*