**BRaid AGM, Sept 26, 2018**

**Chairman’s Report**

BRaid was formed in 2006, so this would be our 13th AGM. The past year has been one of good progress – especially considering that we are only a small amateur group, with the majority of us only having spare time to contribute to BRaid.

When I look back over the past year, there are a number of worthwhile activities to be mentioned. They mainly involve spreading the word about braided river ecosystems, and getting alongside those most closely involved with braided rivers. These range from professional managers (such as DOC and ECan), commercial businesses (such as gravel extractors, irrigators, power generators and recreation providers) to the general public – usually represented by interest groups and local residents.

***Promotion*.**

Our website and social media are well established, thanks to Sonny’s efforts. She makes great use of both, with our BRaid site now acknowledged as the nation’s leading public source of braided river information. She has used her considerable design skills to produce attractive brochures and fliers, outdoor awareness signs and interpretation panels, teaching material and the likes of accreditation certificates, awarded for significant field efforts. Last year, certificates went to seven more stakeholders. The Flock concept, which we initiated in the S. Island, has been widely recognised, and is now self-driven, particularly by schools.

***Representation / Submissions***

With the burgeoning interest in braided rivers as the source of the new ‘gold’ – water, and the home of important biodiversity, the job of championing the conservation values of braided rivers is all important. Hence our presence at Zone Committee meetings, and others dealing with science / research findings, plus the BRIDGE project - which aims to determine what people value about braided rivers, in order to define their limits. We have also submitted to the ECan and Environment Southland Long Term Plans, the strategy to control Southern Black-backed gulls, the Canterbury Pest Management Plan (mainly about lupins) and the release of new calicivirus strain.

***Field operations***

The success of our three upper Waimakariri bird surveys encouraged us to look into surveying the Wilberforce river. This year Jim Jolly and myself will go up there to scope what is needed for a survey in 2019. Our intentions to monitor black-billed gull and black-fronted tern colonies over the full season should swing into action this season. We have budgeted for a well qualified member, Grant Davey, to do this, and he has already ‘droned’ a small colony of gulls on the Ashley-Rakahuri river.

***Workshops***

In October last year, we organised one on predator control at Woodend, which resulted in the formation of a new control group for the Ashley-Saltwater creek estuary. The Waikuku Estuary Trapping Group now has 120 traps being serviced by seven volunteers. We are planning to organise another of our very successful public seminars in the winter of 2019.

***Partnership Project***

Sonny will report on this. All I will mention is three partners. One is Karikaas Dairy Products Ltd., which has resulted in our mention on the packages of their premier cheeses, plus a percentage of profits going to the Ashley-Rakahuri Rivercare Group. The second is LINZ, which has yet to be fully explored. LINZ, via their weed control contracts, has operational links to nearly all braided rivers, which offers enormous potential for their contractors to be made more aware of the special environments in which they work, especially relative to assisting the indigenous bird species which breed in the riverbeds. Another group very much involved in river use is Fish and Game, with which we need to develop a closer relationship.

***Thanks***

Finally, sincere thanks to the small band of keen people that represents BRaid. There is little doubt that we punch well above our weight, largely thanks to our ability to employ a permanent. part-time manager, Sonny, who is able to put what I call ‘quality’ hours into implementing our mission. In the next 2-3 years, a number of matters concerning braided rivers will be finalised, and it is essential to keep up the lobbying pressure to bring them home. Hence, we are in the throes of seeking on-going funds from the Lotteries Commission to ensure Sonny’s future input at a similar level for the next 3 years. Major thanks also to our secretary, Edith Smith and our treasurer, Sue Mardon. Lastly, we could not operate without our core funders, DIA, DOC, and ECan , plus their district Zone Committees. These people are professionals. We might be the body which makes passionate pleas on behalf of the public, but without their support it would be very hard to make meaningful progress.

Nick Ledgard, September 26, 2018