 **Minutes of the BRaid General (52) Meeting held on Friday January 24th 2020 at 2.00pm at DOC Maahanui Area Office, Sockburn.**

**Present:** Nick Ledgard, Sonny Whitelaw, Bev Alexander, Edith Smith, Sue Mardon, Grant Davey, Jim Jolly, Adele Coombes, Tony Doy, Donna Field, Andy Bray, Frances Schmeckel, Colleen Phillips, Mike Harvey, Eleanor Bissell, David Owen

**Apologies:** Sue Stubenvohl, Nicky Snoyink, Rosalie Snoyink, Ailsa and Ted Howard, Peter Howden, Val Clements, Sarah Ensor, Pete Caldwell. Nick/Jim - carried

**Minutes of the Sept 6, 2019** meeting had been circulated beforehand, and were confirmed as a true and correct record*.* Moved by Sonny, seconded Edith. Carried.

.**Matters Arising:** All dealt with in agenda.

**Correspondence:**

**Out: \*** Report to ECan at end of December.\

\* Liaison with LINZ and Boffa Miskell about plans for 2020 braided river forum.

**Financial Report.** Sue presented Financial Report for the period 1/07/2019 to present day.

Income over expenditure for period: -$5,310.12

Closing Bank Balance: $43,749.64

Allocated future funds: $27,460.02

Unallocated funds: $16.289.62

Resolved: ‘That the financial accounts be received as true and correct’ Edith / Andy. Carried

‘That accounts amounting to $9,190.85 be approved for payment’ Sue / Bev. Carried

A short discussion followed relative to use of unallocated funds, as some felt that these could become excessive. It was pointed out that if the Wilberforce survey had gone ahead, then that would have incurred expenses, plus that we still have to pay for Grant’s ‘other river’ reports. A reserve amount of say $5k was suggested.

**Membership:** 37 paid up general members (12 unpaid); 6 of unpaid moved to casual members (42). 190 recipients of newsletter.

**David Owen report.**

David is ECan’s relatively recently appointed Principal Biodiversity Advisor Braided Rivers. He is charged with writing 9 plans for braided rivers over 10 year, bringing together the likes of ECan, DOC, LINZ and communities in a common strategy. The first ‘cab off the rank’ is the Ashley / Rakahuri river. Chosen due being a foothills-fed river, and local Group’s good records since 2000, depth of community interest, and support by Zone Committee, rununga, ECan and DC. End result will be a long-term plan with appropriate funding for implementation. All plans will have an emphasis on protecting and enhancing indigenous biodiversity.

**Manager’s Report** (delivered by manager**):**

**Braided River Partnership Project:**

* Contact maintained regularly with interested parties through social media, newsletters
* Delivered information and marketing material to Way2go helicopters. One pilot has responded with signs along the Ashley River. While these birds already are well known, it’s always great to see people engaged
* Designed layout concepts for possible kids’ menu, on request from a restaurant (a direct result of the Ashley Rakahuri video being shown at Kaiapoi)
* Discussion underway with LINZ and Boffa Miskell re 2020 forum + more direct relationship with both over time.

**Funding**

* End of calendar year report to ECan sent
* Next report to Lotto due in June
* Currently in discussion with LINZ (with representation from Boffa Miskell) for braided rivers ‘forum’ 08 July 2020. Costs to be spread between them (running costs) and ECan (manager wages). Details still being nutted out but the Lincoln University venue has been booked
* Awaiting quote from Mike Bell for SBBG control before applying for funding from (possibly) RATA foundation or other to help with costs.

**Education/outreach/support**

* **Three newsletters** sent since the last meeting. Newsletters are archived here: <https://braidedrivers.org/news/> A copy is automatically archived with DIA (Lotto).
* **Website**: added a stats. and daily backup plugin ($55.00) December 20, 2019. As a result of not having a ‘site stats’ plugin since rebuilding the site, no data is available on the number of unique (based on ISPs) visitors each day, prior to December 20. The software has blocked almost 100 malicious login attempts (Government sites will have that many attempts every second, as most attempts are by automated bots, not targeted but opportunistic). Also deleted the newsletter signup plugin as they were about to charge $250 (I was using a trial version) and after a couple of hours of trial and error, replaced it with a simpler version on the News page. Currently all other plugins and updates are up-to-date.
* **Facebook** **posts**: approximately 165 (Jan 13) posts since the last meeting.
* **2020 planned Braided Rivers Forum:** work in progress
* **Hurunui Zone Committee**: presentation on climate change impacts on braided rivers 26 September
* **Environmental Compliance Conference**: Thanks to Rice Speir, BRaid had a stand there for three days in November
* **Boffa Miskell:** weed contractors given 2-page river bird ID kit, no direct feedback but we are systematically developing a closer relationship and better communications, inc, plans for the forum.
* **ECan**: presentation on climate change impacts on braided rivers
* **BRIDGE project**: The Court of Appeals (Dewhirst Land Company Ltd v Canterbury Regional Council decision) found in favour of farmers. As this is in direct opposition to the science but is instead based on exiting wording in the RMA, changes to the RMA and other statutory mechanisms such as ‘Healthy Waterways’ are now in the consultation/development phase.
* **Historic reports of bird counts** – nothing additional, recommend this be shelved until Andy Grant can make his database public, as everything I have is already on the website under respective river pages.

**Action item:** *Sonny to visit Andy Grant to explore how to make summary data more available.*

* **Awareness signage** – created sign for Orari River Protection Group; copies of most signs here: <https://braidedrivers.org/conservation/signs/> plus awe now have 5 x A0 signs made for the Environmental Compliance Conference
* **Monitoring reports.** All reports and monitoring sent to me are loaded under the respective ‘river’ names on the website and also forwarded to Andy Grant at DOC. Where reports are from within the main catchment of primary rivers they are listed on the main river pages.
* **Submission to Act for Healthy Waterways**: this is going to be the defining policy and (hopefully) legislation in the coming years, so I submitted answers to some 75 questions online (there were many more questions regarding drinking water, treatment, wastewater etc., outside BRaid’s mandate). I’m not surprised people objected to the short time frame as it took me several days to look over the questions and formulate replies. Unfortunately there was no (or more likely I failed to see) way to download a copy of our final submission, but my answers were derived mainly from the recent NIWA publications on fluvial, pluvial, and coastal flood risk, recommendations in the Draft Productivity Commission report, and content I’ve previously written, or collaborated in writing, on our web pages. This was my key statement:

“*Human activities (weeds, agriculture, river engineering, and built structures) have reduced the physical area of braided river ecosystems and damaged their hydrology. These historic activities and mismanagement should not now be viewed as a license to exploit these (often weed-infested) damaged spaces in order to increase or protect personal or corporate profit margins. Allowing marginal/ephemeral spaces on braided rivers to be available for agricultural or other development will continue an ever-increasing cycle of contraction until braided rivers as ecosystems vanish, systematically squeezed into becoming ‘normal’ rivers.*”

Links to material referenced/used:

* + <https://braidedrivers.org/defence-braided-rivers-as-public-goods/>
  + <https://braidedrivers.org/defining-a-braided-river/>
  + <https://braidedrivers.org/the-bridge-project/>
  + <https://braidedrivers.org/braidplains/>
  + NIWA: <https://braidedrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019118WN_DEPSI18301_Flood-Exposure_Final-1.pdf>
  + And the **Draft** Productivity Commission report (no longer available) that recommended (p9):

"*The Commission recommends that the Government creates a climate-resilience agency…. the new entity should also assist regional councils and communities consider the best way to lessen future risk of flooding from rivers. This would include, where appropriate, the potential for using* ***the best-practice model of giving rivers room and developing multiple innovative uses of the wider river corridors."***

(Their final report, released in December, expands this idea in far more detail: <https://www.productivity.govt.nz/assets/Documents/a40d80048d/Final-report_Local-government-funding-and-financing.pdf>)

**ECan / DOC braided river projects**- updated by Frances

These projects are in addition to work described above by David Owen.

* Widespread influence of December floods, particularly on the alpine fed rivers. Main Clarence tern colony largely escaped and had reasonable productivity. One good BBG colony on Waiau. Waimakariri significantly affected (most breeding failed?) – no survey possible. Maybe a third of wrybill chicks on Rangitata survived. Major impact on lower Waitaki man-made islands means little success this season, and most will have to be re-structured. This work will be reviewed as part of Meridian / Genesis’s water-use consent renewal.

**Monitoring / river reports**

* **Wilberforce.** Recce trip on Oct 17 determined that a ‘volunteer-led’ survey of upper Wilberforce would not be possible, but a survey would be possible on lower stretch (down from diversion into L. Coleridge). A field-day was held there on Nov 5 (20 present), and a full survey to be organised for spring of 2020.

***Action Item.*** *Nick / Jim to plan for lower Wilberforce survey this coming spring.*

* **Local colony monitoring.** Reports by Grant being written for gull and tern colonies on Okuku and Opihi rivers.

***Action Item.*** *Grant to complete reports.*

* **SBBG control.** Floods meant that less control carried out this year. Specific funds still available for upper Waimakariri.

***Action Item.*** *Nick to explore potential for Niall Mugan to do upper Waimak SBBG control****.***

* **Waiau / Hurunui.** Plan implementation by Wildlife Management on-going.
* **Ashley-Rakahuri.** 2018-19 report written. Survey (Nov 16) recorded record bird numbers. 2019-20 breeding season a good one, except for BFTs. RHS study of aquatic insect life on Ashley/Rakahuri stalled. On-going weed PhD study by Sanaz Safavien.

***Action Item:*** *Sonny to see if the RHS aquatic insect work can be continued.*

* **Waimakariri.** Severely affected by December floods. Colleen reported on lupin control in Klondyke Corner area. A student being sought to co-ordinate a promotions exhibition, with aid of local EnviroHub.
* **Rakaia and Rangitata.** No reports but similarly flood affected – maybe 1/3rd of wrybill chicks survived.
* **Ashburton.**  Good verbal report from Edith. Considerable disruption of BBGs by hail storm and floods, but reasonable numbers by SH1 bridge (1300) with chicks currently fledging. Plan written by Innes Staeger for hapua/river mouth, being implemented by Donna Field – good awareness initiatives and tying in with conservation reserve work at Ashton Beach.
* **Orari.** Good written report by Adele and Tony of local Group. Success with single BBG and BFT colonies, protected by trapping and signs. Support of local shingle extractors. Other work on water quality and invertebrate monitoring. Ongoing challenge of weed invasion.

***Action Item.*** *Adele to outline potential student study topics for outside support – plus any other areas where BRaid could possibly assist.*

* **Opihi.** Survey on November 26. On-going monitoring of a gull and tern colony by Grant and locals – report being written. Discussion concluded that there is a good opportunity to set up a local rivercare group.

***Action Item.*** *Adele and Sonny to liaise relative to convening a local meeting to set up an Opihi rivercare group.*

**Meeting concluded at 4.55pm**

**Next meeting: To be determined**

**Signed: Date:**

**Action Items**

1. ***Sonny*** *to visit Andy Grant to explore how to make summary data more available.*
2. ***Nick / Jim*** *to plan for lower Wilberforce survey this coming spring.*
3. ***Grant*** *to complete small river reports.*
4. ***Sonny*** *to enquire how Rangiora HS river studies are proceeding.*
5. ***Nick*** *to explore potential for Niall Mugan to do upper Waimak SBBG control.*
6. ***Adele*** *to outline potential student study topics for outside support in Orari / Opuha and Opihi catchments – plus any other areas where BRaid could possibly assist*
7. ***Adele / Sonny*** *to liaise relative to convening a local meeting to set up an Opihi rivercare group.*