

Chair's report.

BRaid AGM, September 27, 2024.

BRaid was formed in 2006, so this would be our 19th AGM. When preparing for this meeting, I realised that we have not had a BRaid meeting this year. But that does not alarm me, as BRaid is still in good heart and widely appreciated, thanks to Sonny and the website, and the very successful annual event - our braided river symposium held at Lincoln University on July 10.

Symposium

We had around 190 participants who listened to 12 presentations. The slightly changed programme, allowing for more speaking and question time, was well received. Plus overall costs were significantly down on previous years. All the feedback was generally positive. Major thanks are due to Sonny Whitelaw for the organizing this year's symposium, and to the Waitaha Action to Impact Fund for the funding. The organizing committee has not yet met to review the event, but interest appears sufficient to hold another one in 2025.

Promotion.

The general interest in braided rivers, continues to be strong. As is institutional support, although current budget and staff reviews, could well lead to reduced funds. Hence, our website, newsletters and Facebook page remain even more vital to service this interest. The website is acknowledged as the nation's leading public source of braided river information. Its immediate future is entirely dependent on Sonny's input, and funding bids are in place to ensure that.

Over the past couple of years, we have been liaising with ECan on braided river matters, more specifically on the issue of commercial gravel extraction – on which we submitted to their Catchment Subcommittee. We await the outcome of our submission and have requested to be involved in future Subcommittee deliberations. We also submitted on ECan's Long Term Plan 2024-2034.

As reported last year, independently to braided river advocacy/promotion, the BRaid 'umbrella' is being used to host a climate / biodiversity resiliency project. Feedback has been excellent, but there is no current funding, so all running costs and maintenance are supplied by Sonny. Needless to say, we are indebted to her passion for keeping this project going.

Field operations

In the past we have run BRaid bird surveys, such as in the upper Waimakariri catchment - one outcome from which was exploring the opportunities for reducing the local karoro (Southern black-backed gull) population in the river headwaters. There has been discussions about, but no progress in, advancing karoro control over the past year.

We are always striving to promote field work and research in all braided rivers. Although BRaid does not have the resources to be involved directly, we closely follow management and research projects, which are regularly covered on our website, with more detailed reporting on specific studies at the annual seminar.

Standardising braided river bird survey data gathering, storage and access. We have discussed this with ECan for some time, and are very pleased to see one of their staff, Miles Burford, undertaking and promoting what is required.

Funding

Sincere thanks to the Waitaha Action and individual donations for funding support over the past year. This will continue for another 6 months, after which we may have to submit another application to the Waitaha Action to Impact Fund to support Sonny and our major annual functions (website, social media and symposium) for 2025. If this is successful, the future of BRaid will be assured for the immediate future.

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 part-time manager, Sonny Whitelaw. Our ability to employ a manager and function effectively is primarily due to the support we get from ECan. Major thanks also to our treasurer, Sue Mardon. Without this support it would be very hard to make meaningful progress.

Nick Ledgard, September 27, 2024