

## **Chair's report.**

**BRaid AGM, October 6, 2023.**

BRaid was formed in 2006, so this would be our 18<sup>th</sup> 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 5.

### ***Symposium***

We had close to 200 participants who listened to 16 presentations. All the feedback was generally positive. Since then the organizing committee has met to review the event. Aspects discussed were how often to organize seminars (continue with annual while interest remains high), length of presentations (increase to allow time for questions), topics and posters (call for speakers well in advance), the virtual Teams option (big problems this year, needs prior organizing and IT specialist on site), and costs (charging for attendance, reduced catering, importance of sponsors). Major thanks are due to Sonny Whitelaw for the organizing this year's symposium, and to the Waitaha Action Fund, ECan, DOC, and Rakaia Catchment Environmental Enhancement Fund for the funding.

### ***Promotion***

The general interest in, and institutional support for, braided rivers, continues to increase (eg., ECan's 'Braided River Revival' project). Hence, our website and Facebook page remain 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.

The issue of commercial gravel extraction from braided rivers remains in the limelight. We have been liaising with ECan on this matter, and submitted to their Catchment Subcommittee - the major link between ECan and gravel extractors. We await the outcome of our submission and have requested to be involved in future Subcommittee deliberations.

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. 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. One example over the past year was assistance in improving bird breeding outcomes in the Waiau/uwha and Hurunui rivers, especially at two black-fronted tern and black-billed gull breeding locations at the Sharks Tooth and NIWA island sites. Results from the Sharks Tooth site have been particularly encouraging, and show the success which can be achieved from appropriate management. Another location with which we have been involved is up at the head of L. Coleridge, where ManawaEnergy has created habitat for indigenous birds as part of their water flow management. The most significant development is the creation of a 70ha braided fan where the Harper river is diverted into the lake. Next week, we will be inspecting this relative to bird presence and breeding attempts.

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. We have submitted another application to the Waitaha Action to Impact Fund to support Sonny and our major annual functions (website, social media and symposium) for 2024. 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, October 6, 2023