

Chair's report.

BRaid AGM, September 16, 2022.

BRaid was formed in 2006, so this would be our 17th AGM.

When I look back over the past year, it has been less active than previously. A major reason has been the brakes applied by Covid19. There is little doubt that the most notable event was the braided river symposium held at Lincoln University on July 6.

Symposium

Despite the limitations imposed by Covid, we had 168 attendees (plus 11 who booked virtually) to listen to 15 presentations. As I said in my summary on the day, I felt that this year's event was notable for addresses which talked about results and solutions, rather than the problems which have dominated past events. All the feedback was positive, and we have started thinking about topics for another similar event in 2022. Major thanks are due to Sonny Whitelaw for the organizing the symposium, and to ECan and Manawa Energy for the funding.

Promotion.

Our website and Facebook page are well established, thanks to Sonny's efforts, and remain vital for our existence long-term. The website is acknowledged as the nation's leading public source of braided river information. Over the years, I know that Sonny has been frustrated (as have I) with our relative failure to attract more community and commercial interest in braided river management via our Partnership Project. This Project has finished, perhaps before its time, as the general interest in, and institutional support for, braided rivers, is much advanced over what it was when the Project was launched in 2016.

Over the past year, the issue of commercial gravel extraction from braided rivers has been in the limelight. We have been liaising with ECan on this matter, and submitted to ECan's Catchment Subcommittee - the major link between ECan and gravel extractors. This Subcommittee has significant influence on braided river management, and in the past, it has been difficult for other stakeholders to influence its thinking. We await the outcome of our submission with considerable interest.

Independently to braided river advocacy/promotion, the BRaid 'umbrella' is being used to host a climate / biodiversity resiliency project funded separately by ECan. Sonny has continued assembling website material. Even though this project is officially part of BRaid (for administration and funding application reasons), it is being managed separately - as there is not a great depth of appropriate knowledge/experience within the BRaid committee.

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. We have also investigated opportunities for working with local people to promote bird assistance in the Opihi catchment. As the agenda today indicates, we are always here to assist promotion of field work and research in all braided rivers.

A recent initiative has been to seek a grant from the Waitaha Action to Impact Fund to assist bird breeding outcomes in the Waiiau/uwha and Hurunui rivers, especially at two black-fronted tern and black-billed gull breeding locations at the Sharks Tooth and NIWA island sites.

Hopefully, this application will be successful, as so far there has been less progress in achieving the above goals than we would have liked. This is not due to lack of enthusiasm (far from it), but is the consequence of being an amateur volunteer body with limited resources.

Funding

In addition to the Waitaha application mentioned above, we have submitted another application to the same funder to support Sonny and our major annual functions (website, social media and symposium) for another 2 years. 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, who is able to put what I call 'quality' hours into implementing our mission. Our employment ability is primarily due to the support we get from ECan, who have supported our Manager for the past 2 years. Major thanks also to our treasurer, Sue Mardon. Without all this support it would be very hard to make meaningful progress.

Nick Ledgard, September 16, 2022