

Otinga Kōrero Final Results Report due at: 26/11/2021

Lottery Environment and Heritage

LEH-2019-100229 \$30,000.00

Grant Term: 1/11/2018 - 26/11/2021

BRAID INCORPORATED

OTINGA KŌRERO RESULTS REPORT

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BENEFITS OR OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

What happened?

The key goal of the project was to continue to engage new and recognise existing positive actions from stakeholders working on or around braided rivers, to protect, enhance, and restore habitats for the Nationally Critical black-billed gull and Nationally Endangered black-fronted tern. A positive outcome for these birds as 'flagship birds' would result in wide-ranging collateral benefits to other endangered specialist endemic braided river species and restore overall ecological function and biodiversity of braided rivers, and their hydro-geomorphological function as globally rare landscapes. The broader goal was achieved. There is now significant and widespread recognition that the problems facing these species hinges on the loss of braidplain ecosystems through weeds and agriculture as well as predators. However, this recognition has not stopped the continued loss of these ecosystems primarily from agricultural incursion, due to outdated and conflicting legislation and powerful lobbying primarily from the dairy sector, to delay improvements to riverwater quality.

Who participated or benefitted?

Bird numbers are still declining, but the rate of decline has slowed. Moreover, far more research and on-the ground action plus funding for individual river and bird protection and restoration projects has been injected into braided rivers. Better techniques to enable this have been developed and that information, the processes used, and the outcomes, is now widely shared amongst stakeholders. Local communities are, by and large, more aware of the problems facing the birds and the rivers that support them. That awareness has translated into an increase in volunteer trapping and weeding, and greater demand for awareness signage. The town of Geraldine, for example, holds an annual festival. This year, the theme is 'braided rivers' and they are considering making this their permanent annual theme. The Orari River Protection Group has expanded its trapping network well beyond its original aim of setting traps around a small colony of black-fronted terns, and now have ambitions to trap the length of the river. These are the kinds of outcome we were hoping for, as they demonstrate that once communities are aware of what they have (and are close to losing) with a little help, they will take pride in and value their local braided rivers and the unique species that inhabit them.

What was achieved?

Outline of work completed since the mid-funding report May 2020

Planned: Organise and run one braided river seminar for the remaining period of funding (by Nov. 2021).

Completed: Two Braided Rivers Seminars. The rationale for running two was to direct limited resources and Covid issues into what is now proving to be an essential tool to connect with existing partners and stakeholders, and expand that networking group by running public events in a centralised location across one full day, every year rather than every second year. This is the most cost-effective way we can engage with all interested parties at no cost (except their time) to them. Both events received partial funding from other organisations. The types of attendees (eg council, university, conservation volunteers etc) are included in the reports for each:

- July 2020:

- o Presentation papers: <https://braidedrivers.org/2020-symposium/>

- o Speaker bios: <https://braidedrivers.org/conservation/2020-symposium-speakers/>

- o 93 attendees; report with breakdown of attendee demographics: <http://braidedrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/BRaid-seminar-report-2020.pdf>

- July 2021:

- o Presentation papers: <https://braidedrivers.org/seminar2021/>

- o Speaker bios: <https://braidedrivers.org/conservation/2021-symposium-speakers/>

o 180 attendees; report with breakdown of attendee demographics: <https://braidedrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/BRaid-seminar-report-2021.pdf>

Planned: information and interpretation signs

Achieved:

- Based on community consultation and feedback (via ECan), completed designs for 21 panels as permanent signs for the Ashburton hapua and river mouth, which have now been installed (see an image of one of the three x largest 3-panel signs, each total size 2.7m long, here: <https://i2.wp.com/braidedrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/ashburton-1-scaled.jpg>)

Planned: Support and expand activities to engage a broad range of organisations...Recognise these activities by continuing to develop and implement the BRaid accreditation Awards

Achieved:

- Annual seminars largely achieve this outcome. Recognition of activities in this period has been phased out as the project is now coming to an end and the project cannot become self-funding given the conditions for that (primarily tourism partners/donations) is no longer viable (see the section 'anything else').

Planned: Work with stakeholders to support trapping and weeding projects

Achieved:

- With an injection of funding via the 'green jobs for nature' DOC has taken the lead running these workshops. We continue to work with them by speaking at these workshops and/or assisting with communications. A planned workshop for North Canterbury 31 October had to be virtual due to Covid concerns (this was postponed from the planned workshop during Conservation Week, due to Covid lockdown).
- We are still working with locals and DOC on plans for a nascent river care group for the Opihi River
- Trustpower continues to clear weeds and is expanding its trapping network on critical nesting sites in the Harper River delta.
- Nascent river care groups such as the Orari Rivercare group and Aspiring Biodiversity Trust Group are now established expanding its network of traps and river care work well beyond its original plan and are now self-sustaining
- A much wider awareness of weeds as a major problem for braided rivers has resulted in LINZ receiving funding via the 'green jobs for nature' to make significant inroads into the weed problems in key sections of rivers, primarily upstream at the point of origin.
- LINZ, ECan, and Boffa Miskell are working on multiple projects across several rivers to achieve this; our bird ID kits are distributed to contractors.

Planned: Work with professional educators to refine existing educational resources

Achieved:

- With greater interest being shown from schools in linking the role of ecosystem protection and restoration with climate change, some funding from the Rata Foundation and ECan kick-started a climate wiki project for learning and education, which includes the role of braided rivers ecosystems and their broader context. For example:
 - Rivers: <https://climateandnature.org.nz/our-places/rivers/>
 - Orari River: <https://climateandnature.org.nz/our-places/orari-river/>
 - Ashley Rakahuri River: <https://climateandnature.org.nz/our-places/arrg/>
- We are also working with ECan staff to develop material and provide drone footage for a LEARNZ video project on climate change and rivers, with a focus on the Rakaia River that showcased positive actions, not just the impacts of climate change: <https://climateandnature.org.nz/our-places/fantail-trust/> and <https://climateandnature.org.nz/our-places/coleridge-habitat-enhancement-trust/>

Planned: Monitor colony nesting birds on key sites throughout the season, and report outcomes

Achieved: Annual surveys are run by river care groups including our volunteers, and we ensure the results are added to DOC bird database, published on each 'rivers' pages on the website, and send to members and subscribers.

Planned: Maintain and continually update the BRaid website with the latest information and send at least 6 newsletters to active subscribers, annually

Achieved: Website maintained with security upgrades in place, constantly updated with research, reports. To ensure complete transparency of activities including funding and annual audits, the members' area is open to the public: <https://braidedrivers.org/members/>

Thirteen newsletters have been sent to members and subscribers (currently 269 people)

What other community benefits or outcomes were achieved? :

At this time, considerable attention is being paid on the increasing flood risk posed by rivers under a changing climate. The best risk management strategy is to retreat from braidplains, remove the weeds infesting them, giving the rivers room to move. While this approach does not consider the benefits to bird breeding habitats or indeed any ecological benefits, the outcome will be better habitats for multiple species that depend on these ecosystems, as

well as a less costly (economically and socially) outcome from projected flooding, improved mahinga kai, and overall far greater resiliency to climate change.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Challenges/problems

1. While we periodically are notified of bird nesting colonies on some irrigated paddocks, for example around Ashburton, the issue of SNAs (Significant Natural Areas/biodiversity loss), limits to nitrogen loading due to extremely high nitrogen levels in waterways, proposed taxes on some non-EV vehicles, and mounting pressure to reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions under the Emissions Trading Scheme has generated considerable resentment from the rural sector. Loss of critical braided river habitats is still ongoing in some high country areas and the Canterbury Plains (see for example <http://braidedrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/dpgray-2021.pdf> and <http://braidedrivers.org/wp-content/uploads/Helen-Greenep-Land-use-change-on-Braided-river-margins.pdf>). This is destroying entire ecosystems including permanent and ephemeral wetlands, exacerbating water quality problems for ecosystems and human health alike, and demonstrably increasing flood risks by forcing larger volumes of water (based on NIWA climate change projections) into increasingly narrower channels. In sum, braided rivers are increasingly contested spaces between (a) their role as globally rare ecosystems, their natural landscape values, and their life-supporting role in providing safe and clean water and kai; (b) the demand to prevent floods by preventing their natural hydrology function, forcing them into increasingly narrower channels (which ironically exacerbates flooding); (c) the economic drivers of landowners to convert every scrap of land into dairy support, and the economic drivers of councils and governments responsible for protecting critical infrastructure and private property from floods.

While some regional and district councils recognise this contradiction and are trying to grapple with it, they are constrained by conflicting legislation that is not fit for purpose: mandated flood protection versus biodiversity values and ecosystem services fundamental to a viable climate change response.

2. Covid-19 has severely hindered some operations.

(a) Education requires being in classrooms and field trips to rivers. Even across Canterbury where lockdowns have been relatively short, schools are by and large focussed on core outputs, not 'nice-to-have's. The school-strikes-for climate has prioritised interest in climate change, however the connection between climate and why healthy braided river ecosystems are at the core of any and all adaptation and mitigation strategies, as well as providing habitats for endangered endemic and taonga species is absent.

(b) Planned Work with Te Kohaka o Tuhaitara Trust to support the goal of having the Ashley Rakahuri pūahatanga granted the legal status of a person is still underway with Te Kohaka o Tuhaitara Trust taking the lead. This was always going to be a process that would take several years and we will continue to support them.

(c) The goal of engaging with and ultimately becoming self-funded through tourism operations and donations is no longer feasible, as most tourism operations depended almost entirely on international visitors; many have either closed or gone into indefinite hibernation. Follow up every opportunity to develop and implement new partnerships also restricted for the same reasons. We have, however, been able to secure funding from Trustpower to support the cost of running annual seminars, which has enabled us to share research and information amongst key stakeholders.

While funding has now ended, we have secured a small amount of funding from ECan to continue our core communications and support activities of BRaid.

An application to the Lotteries Environment and Heritage fund last year to support a surge in demand for information and support to help people respond to the dual biodiversity and climate crises, was declined. Based on increasing demand and urgency for solutions, we secured some funding from ECan and the Rata Foundation to kick start this project: www.climateandnature.org.nz. There is no certainty around future funding, even as the demand and urgent need for nature-based information and solutions increases. Climate change adaptation strategies set to be introduced in the first quarter of 2022 may not necessarily include mandates to reduce flood impacts by supporting the ecological and hydrological restoration of braided rivers through a managed retreat.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

How did you use the grant?

Partial funding of manager's wages throughout the funding period.

Did you use the entire grant? : Yes

REPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Required documents:

1. Financial statement document - *Required*.

For information on what is required refer to Results reports information on Community Matters - Results Reports

REPORTING DOCUMENTATION
<p>Summary BRaid Lotteries and Heritage managers wages .docx</p> <p>Financial statement (OK) Added by Sandra Whitelaw at 3:50 PM on 2 November 2021</p>
<p>AuditedFinancials2020.pdf</p> <p>Financial statement (OK) Added by Sandra Whitelaw at 8:47 AM on 31 October 2021</p>
<p>Audited Financials - Braid Inc (2021)04102021.pdf</p> <p>Financial statement (OK) Added by Sandra Whitelaw at 8:45 AM on 31 October 2021</p>

Is there anything else we need to know about the financial statement in relation to the budget?

Financials are summarised in the audits; the grant used from Lotteries and Heritage is in the summary Word document.

CONFIRMATION

I confirm this report is true and correct for this grant: Yes