



# THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY CONSERVATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Prepared for the Auckland Regional Council by  
Rachael Trotman

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## Executive summary



This report presents the results of a small scale literature review on the benefits of community conservation. Its aim is to increase understanding of community conservation within the Auckland Regional Council.

### Key findings

The modern conservation movement emerged in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in response to population growth and the impact of industrialisation on the environment. In time jurisdiction over natural resources passed largely into government hands in the Western world, with corresponding low levels of public participation in conservation.

Global interest in community conservation has blossomed in recent years due to disillusionment with state and market conservation efforts, indigenous calls for populations to become stewards of nature, and communities and non-government organisations taking the lead in local areas.

Conservation refers to the preservation or restoration of the natural environment and wildlife; and the preservation and repair of archaeological, historical, and cultural sites and artifacts. Community conservation initiatives involve local communities and interest groups undertaking this restorative and protective work.

Key aspects of community conservation include place based community participation, flexible implementation, a small scale in area and financially, and a focus on problems that are difficult to address through conventional top down methods. Community conservation takes a spectrum of forms from community participation via consultation, to communities initiating and independently running conservation efforts.

The complex nature of communities needs to be acknowledged, including the existence of multiple views and interests, local politics, that economic concerns can sometimes outweigh environmental ones, and that communities may not always know best when it comes to ecosystems and natural processes.

Arguments for community conservation include a need for localised, tailored responses rather than a one sized approach, the need for prevention and preservation rather than end of pipe or after the fact 'fixes', and the skills, resources and assets communities can bring to environmental issues, especially when combined with government resources and expertise. Community approaches are not however appropriate in all situations.

Key benefits of community conservation include its community building effects (skill development, social bonding, trust, stewardship, self-reliance, community identity, sense of pride and belonging); locally appropriate responses and application of local knowledge; efficiency of effort and resources; multiple individual benefits such as enjoyment, self esteem, satisfaction and personal development; community responses are more likely to be locally accepted and implemented; and that it supports positive community and government partnering and innovation and better outcomes through having wider input. The literature tends to emphasise social and economic benefits of community conservation, reflecting a lack of evaluation of its environmental impacts, especially compared to government efforts.

At a community level, barriers to community conservation include a lack of time, resources, information, capacity, advice and support, a lack of appeal for some people, sustaining voluntary effort and economic barriers. Barriers for Maori include lack of recognition of

tikanga Maori and traditional expertise and knowledge, resourcing and lack of commitment by some agencies to involving tangata whenua.



Agency barriers to supporting community conservation and working with communities include the resources and time it takes, difficulty in proving impact, limited certainty as to outcomes, lack of support for staff to work with communities, fear of sharing control and lack of clarity on what they wish to achieve through supporting community conservation.

Key elements that support community conservation include environmental education, fostering working partnerships, delegating monitoring responsibilities, encouragement and inspiration, skills and knowledge, contacts and networks (for example being asked to participate), adequate funding and resources, opportunities for involvement, successes and acknowledgement.

Working with communities involves developing mutual trust, respect and cooperation, with attitudes for those facilitating this to include openness, humility, curiosity, sensitivity, establishing rapport, neutrality and avoiding being dominating.

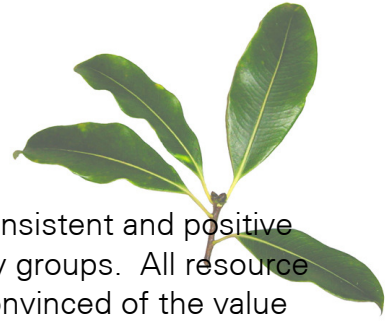
## Implications for the Auckland Regional Council

Complexity and uncertainty imply the need for experimentation, working together, robust monitoring, plus approaches that are localised, integrated, responsive and flexible (adaptive management).

The ARC can work with communities to identify real problems and needs, develop a shared vision of what to do, build the capacity to act, initiate and maintain action and monitor and evaluate progress. Further key implications for the ARC from this review include the following.

- Acknowledge the need to work with communities and support community based efforts (can't do it alone).
- Acknowledge the multiple challenges and rewards of working with communities.
- Have a realistic rather than a 'mythic' view of communities that recognises their differences and complexities.
- Recognise uneven resources and power between the ARC and communities, support local self-sufficiency and avoid creating dependence on the ARC.
- Respond proactively to community identified issues.
- Hire and support staff who can establish rapport with local people, and who can guide them towards appropriate action and generally support their efforts. This requires complex, high level skills that should be acknowledged and valued.
- Give appropriate staff responsibility and budget to support community projects flexibly.
- Monitor and evaluate community based efforts and compare results with ARC efforts.

Key roles for the ARC in terms of community conservation include: facilitating, brokering, partnering, researching, monitoring, educating, informing, communicating and resourcing.



## 1.0 Introduction

“Government agencies need to present an open, consistent and positive approach to expressions of interest from community groups. All resource management agencies staff therefore need to be convinced of the value and contribution of [community conservation initiatives] to environmental goals, and be prepared to be proactive” (Forgie et al 2001: 56).

This report presents key findings from a literature review on the benefits of communities undertaking conservation. Conservation refers to the preservation or restoration of the natural environment and wildlife; and the preservation and repair of archaeological, historical, and cultural sites and artifacts.<sup>1</sup>

This research follows a review of the Auckland Regional Council’s support for community groups involved in conservation (Trotman, April 2008). This review found that while there is an implicit assumption within the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) of the value of communities leading or being involved in conservation efforts, that the benefits of this are not clearly understood. It recommended:

- Identifying and quantifying the benefits of the ARC’s support for community conservation, for the ARC, local environments and communities.
- Developing a creative internal programme to increase staff, management and Councillor understanding of the benefits of community conservation and its impacts.

As such, this literature review seeks to enhance understanding within and beyond the ARC of community conservation, including its benefits and challenges.

## 2.0 Method and scope

This review is small scale and predominantly web based. The following methods were employed.

1. Provision of relevant literature by the ARC and Department of Conservation.
2. A general web search.
3. Web search of academic databases.

The review focuses mainly on New Zealand and Western based literature. It addresses what community conservation involves, its benefits and challenges, barriers to community conservation, what is effective in supporting community conservation and implications for the ARC.

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<sup>1</sup> Concise Oxford English Dictionary.



## 3.0 Key findings

### 3.1 Emergence of community conservation

The modern conservation movement emerged in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, in response to population growth and the impact of industrialisation on the environment (Western 2002: 54). Before long, jurisdiction over natural resources passed largely into government hands throughout the Western world (ibid).

Current conservation policy and practice is vested in government, and until recently has done little to encourage public participation in conservation (Western 2002: 53). It has also tended to focus on changing the conservation awareness and behaviour of individuals rather than groups or communities (Pretty and Ward 2001:3).

Poor outcomes from many government led conservation efforts have moved attention to the potential of community conservation (Grawal and Gibson 1999:632). Other supporting factors for this are a trend towards greater public participation, indigenous communities emphasising a stewardship role for populations in relation to nature, disillusionment with state and market conservation approaches and increasingly vocal non government organisations.

As a result, in the last two decades community conservation efforts have become widespread globally and in recent times communities have reportedly become "...the locus of conservationist thinking" (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:631). International and local agencies direct significant resources to community conservation and community-based resource management, and a vast literature on the subject has emerged.


### 3.2 Describing community conservation

Conservation is fundamentally about restoring, protecting and maintaining natural processes and ecosystems. Community conservation initiatives involve local communities and interest groups undertaking this restorative and protective work.

Key characteristics of community conservation projects include (Horwich and Lyon 2007:377):

- community participation (of varying degrees and levels)
- an inclusive and holistic approach
- being flexible in implementation
- typically small scale financially and spatially.

Agrawal and Gibson outline how within community conservation literature 'community' tends to be conceived as a small placed based unit (such as a neighbourhood or suburb), or as a homogenous or undifferentiated group (within which harmony reigns and outside of which conflicts prevail), or as a group with common interests and shared norms about resource use (1999: 633-636). The assumption is that these 'types' of community can achieve desirable resource use and conservation outcomes. They can also however hold norms which support environmental degradation and exploitative behaviour, or resist outside attempts to change (ibid).



As such, Agrawal and Gibson (1999) warn against simplistic and idealised perceptions of community conservation. These include assuming that local people possess more knowledge about how to conserve the area they live in than others; that if communities are not actively involved in resource management they will use resources destructively; and that as it is in community interests to protect their environment that they will (633). These assumptions can underplay the complexity of communities, how local interests and processes work within them, and between communities and external groups. Also, viewing communities as an organic whole fails to attend to their differences, and the role of local politics and competing interests.

Agrawal and Gibson argue that a more realistic and accurate view of communities and their relationship with natural resources needs to pay attention to three core aspects of communities (1999: 636-638):

- That they are made up of multiple actors with multiple interests, and actors who attend to their own interests, whom can change as circumstances change.
- The processes through which people interrelate at the local level, and between the local level and outside agencies, including government.
- The formal and informal rules and norms that shape peoples interactions with each other and nature.

In general, community conservation is place based, participatory and often focused on problems beyond the scope of the environmental regulatory system (Meyer 2005:4). Some efforts are organic and ground up, driven by a crisis or problem or by concerned individuals, while others are government driven, seeking to encourage public participation or to tackle problems difficult to address through conventional top down methods (ibid). Sitting in between are multi-stakeholder processes where government does not make the final decision.

Forgie's table below highlights a spectrum of citizen involvement in conservation decision making from low, where an agency is in charge, to high, where independent community groups undertake their own initiatives, with or without agency assistance (2001:21). Regardless of the level of community involvement, community conservation typically involves policies, rules and regulations developed by government, rather than communities (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:638).



**Table 1. Citizen involvement in conservation decision making<sup>2</sup>**  
 Low (full control by agency in charge) ← → High (full control by stakeholders)

Process	Information sharing	Consultation	Deciding together	Acting together	Supporting independent community initiatives
	Awareness building Telling people what is planned	Identifying problems, offering solutions and getting feedback. Increasing the knowledge base from which decisions are made	Encouraging interested stakeholders to contribute ideas and options and together decide the best way forward	Different interests decide together what is best and formalise an organisational structure to carry it out	Groups are helped to do what they want within a framework of grants, advice and support provided by the resource holder
Outcome	Understanding	Legitimation	Participation	Participation	Determination
Tools (to achieve desired outcome)	Public relations Education material Informal feedback	Submission making Voluntary projects Conservation Corps Focus groups	Working groups Action planning* Citizens juries	Community based conservation initiatives eg Landcare groups, Trusts, Partnerships	Independent community based conservation initiatives

\*Action planning is a process whereby experts, agencies and community members work together to look at issues in a holistic way.

In a similar vein, Allen et al (2002:30-31) cite Pretty's 1995 participation continuum to describe types of community engagement in agriculture, which can be usefully applied to community based conservation.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Wilcox 1994.

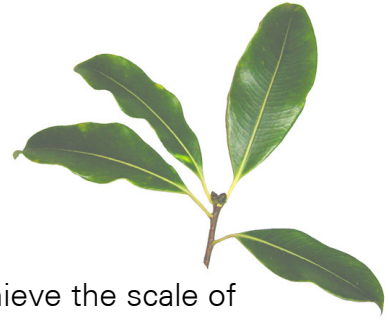
Table 2. Participation continuum

Types of engagement	Description
<b>Manipulative participation (co-option)</b>	Community participation is a pretence, for example with community representation on official boards who are unelected and have no power.
<b>Passive participation (compliance)</b>	Communities participate via being told what has been decided or has already happened.
<b>Participation by consultation</b>	Communities participate by being consulted or by answering questions, with no share in decision making.
<b>Participation for material incentives</b>	Communities participate by contributing resources such as labour in return for material incentives such as food or cash.
<b>Functional participation (cooperation)</b>	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined project objectives and may be involved in decision making, but only after major decisions have been made by external agents.
<b>Interactive participation (co-learning)</b>	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local institutions. As groups take control over local decisions they have a stake in maintaining structures or processes.
<b>Self-mobilisation (collective action and empowerment)</b>	People participate by undertaking initiatives independent of external institutions. They may link with these institutions for resources and advice, but retain control over what is done and how resources are used. Self-mobilisation may or may not challenge existing patterns of wealth and power, and can spread if governments and NGOs provide an enabling framework.

Community conservation efforts typically involve interactive participation and self-mobilisation. In terms of where New Zealand local government sits in this hierarchy of participation, Allen et al note that the terms consultation and participation tend to be confused, and that an internal process and planning to support community participation in conservation is often lacking (2002: 31-32).

Forgie et al identifies guiding principles for community based conservation initiatives (2001:40-41):

- Localised and community solutions should be a first approach rather than a back-up measure.
- Different communities and circumstances require different responses and support. Professional advice, administrative assistance and expertise need to complement local knowledge, but agency support provided to communities should not encourage dependency.
- It is important for agencies to work with existing groups and not displace them.
- Community conservation initiatives are more effective if they involve all stakeholders – the broader the base of community representation the better.
- Community based initiatives need to be issue-driven, with specific goals.
- The organisational structure should not precede the local expression of interest, and organisational models should not be imposed from outside.
- An integrated and collaborative approach by agencies involved in community conservation efforts is needed.



### 3.3 The case for community involvement in conservation

“Working with the community is essential to achieve the scale of change required to halt environmental degradation” (Forgie et al 2001 p20).

Ecologists have underscored the limits of the state in protecting natural resources; as rules and regulations do not ensure compliance and states do not have the power to enforce perfectly (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:642). It is also generally difficult for outsiders to effectively introduce conservation ideas and practices into a community, and “we hardly know which strategies successfully alter the norms people hold about conservation, especially when the resources in question are a critical part of the family income” (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 636).

Western argues that top down government conservation approaches can be simplistic and take approaches that communities either don’t understand, don’t agree with, or don’t have the skills or capacity to do anything about (2002:59-60). He believes that imposed conservation ideology, principles, policy, legislation and practice will flounder due to community resistance, indifference and non-compliance, rather than being sanctioned by cultural expectations and norms (bid: 63).

For Meyer (2005), community conservation appeals to all sides of the political spectrum, as it supports place sensitive responses, can be more efficient and lower cost, and provide potentially more effective solutions to complex and diffuse environmental problems (2005: 2).

The United States Environmental Protection Agency states that community based environmental protection are needed as issue specific, command and control approaches cannot address the following issues.

- Problems are local and unique to a region and require tailored solutions, not a one sized approach.
- Impacts cut across air, water, land, flora and fauna.
- Economic, social and environmental impacts are inextricably linked.
- Solutions require an emphasis on prevention, preservation and planning, rather than end of pipe fixes and remediation or mitigation.

Key assets of community groups include local knowledge, skills and resources, built-in flexibility, direct responsiveness to local interests and conditions, socio-cultural cohesiveness, confidence and the trust of local people (Feyerabend and Brown undated). Combining these with the resources and expertise of government agencies demonstrate “how governments and communities can work together to evolve a more sustainable balance between human activity and nature. This is truly one of the most important issues facing the world over the next generation” (Campbell 1994: 297).

It should be noted however that community participation is no guarantee of conservation success, and that no amount of local involvement can save a poorly designed and implemented project from failure (Forgie et al 2001:9). Community based groups are one option for implementing resource management aims but are not appropriate in all situations (Maorgoluis and Salafsky 1998:24).

## 3.4 Benefits arising



Advantages and benefits of involving communities in conservation activities and/or supporting community conservation are summarised from the literature as follows.

### Builds communities

- Builds local skills, interests and capacities.
- Builds a sense of stewardship and community capacity for environmental problem solving, a benefit whose value long outlives any one project.
- Involvement in a group elevates common interests and groups can achieve more than individuals.
- Builds local self-reliance, community building and group identity (Borini-Feyerabend 1996).
- A bottom up approach can unite communities and support them to solve their own problems (Osterman et al 1989).
- Greater stability in well established communities than government agencies with high turnover.
- Working together at the local level can lead to improved communication, information exchange and problem solving.

### Approaches are tailored to local needs

- Locally responsive - responds to unique community and environmental needs and characteristics.
- Benefits of local knowledge, as local people may better understand the dynamics of their environment and its problems.

### Efficient use of resources

- Economies of scale – efficiency of effort and pooling of resources.
- Draws upon community resources and can be more cost effective than top down approaches.

### Individual benefits

- Volunteering benefits the volunteer through “enjoyment, satisfaction, increased self esteem and personal development “ (Ringer 1996:15).
- Other benefits include social bonding, therapeutic/healing processes, physical fitness, stimulation and better relationships with nature (ibid).

### More likely to be locally accepted and sustainable

- Increased likelihood of acceptance and successful implementation when actions and decisions are seen by those involved as responsible and appropriate.

### Supports community/government relationships and wider outcomes

- Sharing responsibility – communities can increase their understanding of how government operates and balance different needs and interests. This can reduce criticism of how government operates and improve support for bureaucrats and elected representatives (Thomas 1995:180).
- Citizen groups can play key roles in enforcing environmental laws, environmental advocacy and protection and educating the general public (Shelley 1993).

### Supports innovation

- While attitudes can be slow to change, group dynamics accelerate the development of new approaches and systems across a community (Campbell 1994:53).
- Improved outcomes through having wider input.



Echoing the above, Buchan (2007:2) analysed the social and economic benefits of three community-led environmental restoration projects in New Zealand. These included:

- Social and psychological benefits for volunteers.
- Increased social capital through strengthening connections between community groups, business interests and local and central government.
- Development of leadership, skills and confidence.
- Personal development and increased quality of life through socialising and recreation opportunities, and raised awareness and appreciation of the natural world.
- Generation of new income earning employment opportunities.
- Economic benefits for local businesses.
- Benefits for socially dysfunctional youth, including improved attitudes, behaviour change and social wellbeing through engagement with the natural environment.

A key point to note however is the lack of literature on the efficacy and achievements of community conservation initiatives, and especially their environmental impacts. Meyer describes the existing community conservation literature as an “advocacy literature that explores the unrealized potential of CBEP [community based environmental protection]...[with] arguments...presented as case studies intended to illustrate, describe and probe rather than to analyze critically” (2005: 3). This reflects a general lack of monitoring and evaluation of community based conservation efforts, including how they compare with agency and government efforts.

### 3.5 Barriers to community conservation

“Command-and-control conservation has placed itself at odds with the very communities it ultimately depends on for success” (Western 2002: 59-60).

James (2001) undertook five focus groups with people from Auckland’s general public (including older and younger people, parents, urban Maori and Pacific people) on conservation issues facing Auckland; their awareness and views of the Department of Conservation and involvement in conservation. Reasons given for not being involved in community based conservation were a lack of information about opportunities for involvement, lack of advice and help to undertake conservation on their own land, not knowing who to contact to have their say about issues of concern, being too busy or that hands on conservation activity is not appealing (2001:24-25).

Other barriers and obstacles include (James 2001; King 1996; Bennett et al 1999):

- Finding resources for projects/initiatives, including funding expert assistance.
- Lack of long term commitment of resources.
- Unrealistic objectives and expectations.
- Sustaining voluntary effort long term.
- Lack of threat/issue perceived. Willingness to participate must come from the community itself – if catalysts, leaders and sponsors appear dormant then government agencies may need to provide the impetus to activate them.
- Lacks of capacity – many communities do not have the capacity to initiate change, and there may be conflicts or economic considerations that override environmental concerns (especially in lower socioeconomic communities).
- Economic barriers to changing practices – land management practices can improve more for economic reasons than environmental considerations, and the most commonly identified barriers to more sustainable practices are economic in nature.



Barriers to tangata whenua involvement have been identified by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment as follows (1997:51):

- Lack of recognition of kaitiakitanga, tikanga Maori and traditional expertise and knowledge, and the contributions iwi and hapu can make. Cultural and local knowledge is frequently undervalued.
- Limited resourcing for tangata whenua.
- Limited acknowledgement and use of the policies already prepared by some iwi for management of natural resources and other taonga in their areas.
- A lack of commitment by some public authorities to actively involving tangata whenua.

Other barriers include the ecosystem approach which may not recognise or correspond to tribal or rohe boundaries, ignorance of cultural values, perceived takeover by government agencies and proposals that are not geared to the local context: "Increased understanding of the shared, mutual and complementary interests of Maori and the wider community will lead to alliances and partnerships at the local community level" (ibid:51).

### 3.6 Agency barriers to supporting community conservation

Agencies can be reluctant to work with community groups due to reservations about directing resources where performance measurement can be difficult, and the often slow implementation rates for community based approaches (Little 1994 p351). They can also be unclear as to what they want to achieve in supporting community conservation, be fearful of sharing control and organisations seldom speak with one voice, therefore giving mixed messages to communities (Allen et al 2002: 32 citing Wilcox 1994).

Agencies need to be aware of community mistrust of government, inequities in costs and benefits of conservation, and deficits of knowledge and power in communities to undertake conservation, especially in poor and disadvantaged communities (Western 2002: 60). Community groups can also find it difficult to link with the right people in local government and across the various departments of agencies (Scott 2007:18).

Supporting community conservation can require agencies to relinquish control over rules and outcomes arising (Agrawal and Gibson 1999:640). Also, how agency outcomes will unfold in local areas through community conservation can not be plotted precisely, only roughly assessed (ibid). This means that there can be limited certainty as to outcomes, compromising goal and target setting. Letting things unfold is often of limited appeal to agencies desiring accountability and clear and quick results.

There can be some resistance to integrated management within agencies, including how to mesh narrow agency mandates with the broad aims of community based ecosystem management (Campbell 1994:48). Campbell cites inflexible institutional cultures in resource management agencies as one of the biggest constraints to community conservation in Australia (ibid: 52). Government agencies tend to protect their traditional domains of influence and authority and can be reluctant to take responsibility in areas not usually part of their role.

Agencies can also be slow to respond to grass roots signals that people are ready to take action – these can include complaints and criticism arising from environmental conditions, to community suggestions for specific projects and programmes. The government agency

needs to pick these up and expand the circle of interest to see if partnerships can be formed. Agencies can however have an unrealistic understanding of local social dynamics, and need to foster widespread community support so that projects do not rely on one or a few individuals who may withdraw.



Agencies also need to work alongside communities to address community skepticism about science and expert knowledge. “This requires an institutional change in attitude and a willingness to work with people and organisations rather than telling them what to do” (Forgie et al 2001:9).

In some government agencies there can also be a preference for hands-off methods such as education, research and participatory action. There can also be a lack of support for local level staff to form partnerships and participate in multi-stakeholder groups (Campbell 1999: 48). Personal inertia and a reluctance to change occurs within government and communities, requiring a diverse range of incentives.

### 3.7 What enables community conservation

“To succeed, conservation must be as widely understood as hygiene and as voluntarily practiced as bathing” (Western 2002: 54).

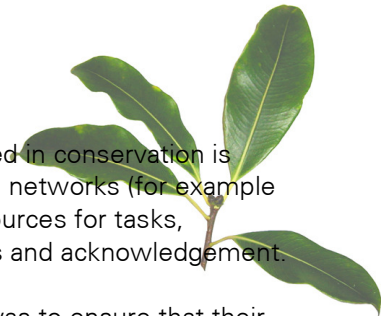
In 1992 an international meeting was held in Virginia to review and promote community conservation. Over 70 participants examined a range of case studies and identified conditions that enable local participation in conservation as being (Western 2002: 59):

- Democracy
- Human rights
- Justice
- Trust
- Equity
- Opportunity
- Incentives, including conservation funding, easements and market incentives
- Skills
- New forms of institutions

Western notes that the communities represented at this international meeting did not abandon government; what they called for was “better governance to facilitate such initiatives and to provide the larger checks and balances not achievable locally” (ibid).

Closer to home, Greenaway et al (2006) studied ten community action projects in New Zealand to uncover lessons learnt. They found that all projects were enhanced when power dynamics influencing communities and stakeholders were acknowledged and addressed throughout, and that effective community action requires (4-5):

- Skilled leadership
- Adequate resourcing
- Infrastructural development
- Strategic support
- Coordination
- Vision building
- Facilitation
- Advocacy
- Networking
- Mentoring
- Planning
- Critical reflection



Ritchie (2002) states that what supports communities to be involved in conservation is encouragement and inspiration, skills and knowledge, contacts and networks (for example being asked to be involved by someone they know), sufficient resources for tasks, opportunities for involvement, two way communication, successes and acknowledgement.

Bell found that a motivator for peoples conservation involvement was to ensure that their children and grandchildren can enjoy the environment into the future (2003:38).

James (2001) found that the reasons participants put forward for involvement in conservation activities tended to stress personal, social and cultural reasons, not simply desired environmental outcomes. Their reasons included (2001:24):

- recreational opportunities
- personal satisfaction
- skill development
- doing something that would benefit the community
- doing something that would benefit future generations
- preserving heritage.

Fitzgerald (1999:48) identifies four conditions necessary for community based action to succeed:

1. A pressure for change
2. A shared vision
3. Capacity for change
4. Actionable first steps


Agencies such as the ARC can play supportive roles in all of the four areas above, by highlighting pressures facing the environment and how they might be addressed, facilitating the development of a shared vision and resourcing community capacity and practical first steps.

Forgie et al (2001:22) adds the aspect of supporting community monitoring: "Four features are critical to facilitating active public involvement in conservation: environmental education; the fostering of working partnerships; delegating monitoring responsibilities; and the provision of adequate funding."

People must feel a genuine need to improve or change the existing situation; without this an initiative has no perceived relevance and at worst can be seen as interference by outsiders (Forgie et al 2001:22). Effective community based or bottom up initiatives involve valuing local knowledge and skills and working in a spirit of trust, respect and cooperation (Fitzgerald 1999: 55). Outside experts and agencies must move from being project implementers who do planning and action for local people to become enablers for community based projects.

The attitudes and behaviours of those who facilitate this process are crucial, and for Fitzgerald the right attitudes include openness, humility, curiosity, acceptance, sensitivity; and right behaviours include sharing, establishing rapport, being friendly and encouraging, showing respect, listening carefully (not lecturing), embracing and learning from mistakes, neutrality and avoiding being dominating (1999:55).

James states that ways for agencies to encourage community involvement in conservation include coordinating volunteers, improving consultation and communication with communities and having clear points of contact and ongoing communication (2001:26-27). James also found these specific issues and needs for iwi, Pacific people and young people (ibid):

- 
- Government agencies need to understand the unique relationship of Maori to the land, including recognition of the role of Maori as kaitiakitanga.
  - Appropriate consultation.
  - Having to deal with a number of agencies, some with inconsistent approaches.

Specific issues for Pacific peoples include:

- Low levels of awareness of different agencies and their roles.
- Need for information on appropriate use of land and sea resources.
- Appropriate people to work with Pacific communities on conservation issues and use of appropriate local media.

Young people need incentives to get involved in conservation, focused on socialising, recreation and enjoyment.

Western states that some government agencies are taking their cue from successful communities and community based conservation efforts and reshaping their policies and practices to achieve broad participation: "The distinction between directing and responding is narrowing as dialogue, negotiation, and collaboration replace command-and-control methods" (2002:60).

## 4.0 Implications for the Auckland Regional Council



“The need for community involvement [in conservation] is well identified. The challenge is to structure government agencies in a way that...creates an environment that empowers, welcomes and supports community initiatives” (Forgie et al 2001:20).

Complexity and uncertainty shift the conservation emphasis from simplistic models (the ‘one recipe’ approach) to “experimentation, monitoring, and adaptive management aimed at multiple benefits” (Western 2002:56). For Fitzgerald (1999:54, original italics):


“Community-based action implies working *with* the people of a particular area or district to address a problem or issue which *they* recognise, consider important, and feel the need to respond to *themselves*. To do this successfully...the outsider has to work through a process with the community to:

- identify its real problems and needs
- develop a shared vision of what to do about these problems
- build the capacity necessary to achieve the desired changes, including leadership, skills and processes for people to be genuinely heard and to participate
- initiate and maintain action
- monitor and evaluate progress.”

This approach provides a broad process for the ARC to follow, particularly when it wishes to support community participation in its own activities.

Further key implications for the ARC are as follows.

- Acknowledge that the extent and complexity of environmental problems requires working with communities (i.e. that the ARC can not be effective by itself).
- Facilitating greater community involvement in conservation means being proactive with resources and efforts to develop partnerships with other agencies, community groups and iwi (James 2001:32).
- Promote an understanding of ‘community’ that reflects its complexity, differences, inequities, multiple actors and competing interests, rather than a ‘mythic’ idea of community that assumes harmony, sameness, a conservation agenda and shared norms.
- Accept the challenges and rewards of a community based approach (Fitzgerald 1999:54).
- Recognise the different levels of resources and power between the ARC and its communities.
- Support local fund raising of community based conservation and avoid dependence of communities on the ARC for their existence and operation.
- Beware of directly devolving decision making and providing unchecked authority to communities, as this may lead to perverse conservation outcomes (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 640). Instead, checks and balances and collaboration among local groups, government and other stakeholders is most likely to lead to good conservation outcomes (while taking more time and possibly resources).
- Implement decision making processes that include different interests, including those most marginalised.
- For ARC led initiatives that seek to involve communities identify and involve key individuals and groups as to their views and level of interest at the earliest stages.

- 
- Respond proactively to community identified issues.
  - The ARC may begin with one problem and learn that this can not be tackled without getting involved in wider related issues: “Becoming involved in a community-based conservation and resource management effort...means participating in a process of community change and development” (Forgie 2001: 54).
  - Staff is needed who can establish rapport with local people and guide them towards appropriate action (ibid: 56). Give appropriate staff responsibility and budget to support community projects flexibly.
  - Identify interdependent and important decisions that need to be made jointly with communities and allow groups to get on with the rest.
  - Undertake outcome and results based monitoring and evaluation of community conservation efforts and compare these with ARC efforts. Monitoring also provides a key way to engage local people and raise awareness of issues and responses.

Key roles for the ARC in terms of community conservation include: facilitating, brokering, partnering, researching, monitoring, educating, informing, communicating and resourcing.

Overall, while collaborative approaches are time-consuming and exhaustive in terms of human effort (Grant 1997), according to the literature canvassed here the anticipated long-term pay off – a community that takes greater responsibility for protecting its environment - makes the effort worthwhile.

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