

Matakanui Gold Ltd

Lizard Workshop

13/3/26

Present

Cheryl Low - MGL	Mandy Tocher – for DOC
Mary Askey - MGL	Marie Payne - DOC
Mark Chrisp – Mitchell Daysh – MGL	Justyna Giesztowt - DOC
Matt Baber – Alliance Ecology - MGL	Trudy Anderson – e3Scientific - ORC
Graham Ussher – RMA Ecology – MGL	
Keith Barber – HabitatNZ - MGL	

Notes

All participants online except Cheryl Low, Mary Askey and Mandy Tocher who were together at MGL Cromwell offices.

Mark – Introduction – this is an inquisitorial conversation, opportunity to ask about points of differentiation, matters of clarification, actions to follow up on. Explore the issues and see where we get to.

Referred to the agenda.

TUSSOCK McCANNS SKINK IDENTIFICATION

Mandy – McCanns skink identification – would create a flaw in the assessment if the identification of lizards is not correct. (Referred to photos in report where McCanns skink were incorrectly identified, discussed with Graham at previous workshop). Found another one – Plates 44-46 tussock skink – plates were referring to both skinks? Next page is also potentially showing misidentification. Evidence of misidentification – need to produce an addendum to sort out what the plates refer to. If you have mis identified tussock skink then it flows onto the salvage of correct of lizards and proposed release.

Graham – compiling photos taken during surveys at the moment, not finished yet which will sort this out. Going to site next week to collect lizards and work through the ID characteristics from various sources. Will resolve tussock skink and McCanns skink.

Mandy – plates show that top left-hand corner is a different skink. Grass skink?

Graham – would ID all as McCanns.

Mandy – Rocky point survey – no tussock skinks found there. Becoming more rare spatially. Lots where you find them but finding them less often. Is very hard to tell them apart. McCanns and tussock sinks. Expect to find tussock in wetter areas. Gives low degree of comfort when foundational work is potentially flawed

Next plate – bottom two are McCanns top two are tussock.

Graham – agreed.

Matt – have we underestimated the number of tussock skink?

Mandy – yes, but not main concern. It's about habitat use. What do you salvage and where do you put them. Are you collecting the right ones?

Matt – Keith's team in the field with Biodiversity Outcomes MP currently – includes manual search component. Won't be able to distinguish between the two because don't have the level of expertise in monitoring team (16 people). If Graham's extra work shows there is an issue then need to default back to just stating skinks in total found, not differentiating by species - not ideal. Deploying 4 ACO at 500 micro sites plus one manual search. Practically how many herpetologists in NZ can correctly identify the lizards?

Mandy – eDNA would have helped, but too late now. Maybe three people in NZ can. It is really hard. Question is how do we deal with it? Changes the assessment of effects.

Graham – whether there are tussock skinks present or have been overestimated, Rocky Point not found then might have overestimated on the site.

Mandy – yes but may have underestimated the importance in the region.

Matt – assessed a high level of effects, even with offset and compensation, still net negative outcome. Stays at high level. May have also underestimated the numbers in surrounding landscape, so doesn't change proportion in landscape just number.

Mandy - but did not survey wetlands.

Graham – Wetlands were sampled during the main surveys. An additional site trip next weekend will provide additional information through targeted gees minnow trapping along edges of the main wetland complex. Probably a broader issue for effects assessment. How reliable are the distribution records for these lizards – where they are? Records go back 20-30 years. How reliable?

Mandy – not that many records for Central Otago. Depends on who made the record in the system. Have hit upon a really tricky site. What does it mean? Tussock skinks are important on this site. Experience on Macraes flat – when not a good survey data then end up with lots of McCanns skinks which are weedy. Not many tussock skinks.

Matt – Missed the window for initial baseline. If feasible to train people, then can pick up the baton and do for next 35 yrs.

Mandy – activities from here affect the assessment of effects.

Matt – No, look at response to effects management because it's feasible to train people up. Does Mandy think it's feasible to train people to ID correctly?

M – yes can train people. But don't understand where that leads us in terms of the application.

Marie – DOC needs to write a report for the panel. Future information does not help with advice to panel. Can see where we are. Comes back to the effects and how to assess them.

Matt – consider worst case, every lizard is a tussock skink. 610ha, done trapping but under sampled in wet areas (3ha), then would have a big effect on tussock skink, maybe several hundred thousand affected. Then look at proportion of effect on surrounding areas and further out areas. If do that still come up with high value (at risk declining), which results in a magnitude of effect as moderate – within high effect because of numbers but watered down due to proportional effect then high effect is watered down to moderate magnitude so end up with a high effect. Proportional effect is important. End up in same place. If tussock skink prefers wetlands then maybe habitat is actually lower than on whole 610ha.

Mandy – only understood part of it – think you are saying it doesn't matter? I like that Graham said 80% of effects not addressed in previous workshop. Thought residual effects would have grown. Needs to be documented and understand. Be good to have that number for all the species. Can anyone else pull it out of the reports?

Trudy – I agree. A better picture, by species, would be handy and a habitat map for each species. Tussock skink like more complex habitat. Would give better understanding of proportional impact.

Graham – its possible to put together a habitat map and refine after site visit next week. Have been working on how far the offsets package goes to address effects. RFI queries – lizards part still working the response.

ACTION – Prepare survey effort map for each species, map of capture locations for three species, results of upcoming fieldwork to resolve potential cryptic populations of Mac and Grass skink. Graham.

ACTION - Effects package – provide an indication of degree to which the offset package addresses residual effects on each species of lizard. Matt and Graham.

Mandy – can residual effect be a number rather than high, medium or low as these are not as helpful as 80%.

Graham – can do for McCanns and Karawau gecko can infer for tussock skink. Yes, will try and get it as numerical as possible.

Map our opinion on what can exist on Ardgour and sanctuaries – the proportion or areas that might be more suitable for tussock skink and compare to DDF.

ACTION: Provide a map of habitat for grass skink in the restoration areas (Ardgour and MRZ and Sanctuaries. Compare to grass skink habitat map withing DDF. Graham

Trudy – needs to be by species.

SALVAGE METHODOLOGY AND SALVAGE EFFORT

Matt – range of options could pursue – from do nothing to attempting to get every lizard out. Trying to get all lizards has a number of challenges. Logistics and feasibility and also likelihood of achieving outcome. Even if did everything possible it would not reduce severity of effects because there is not certainty the salvaged lizards would survive, especially since there would be so many. Finding enhanced habitat difficult and there would be effects on resident lizards.

Look for balance on outcomes, discussed at last workshop. Consider lower salvage effort in exchange for more compensation that has a higher degree of certainty for beneficial outcomes for lizards. What would Mandy do? What is a good way forward noting that currently proposing to salvage 102K lizards.

Mandy – Want to sort out release site first and then work from there. Moving lizards into new area expands effects. Problem is the release site effort – may be solved if put inside a predator proof fence. Benefit in salvage but only if release site is sorted.

Calculated that Karawau gecko has the most high value because 7% of habitat will be lost. Look for release site that optimises outcomes for Karawau gecko, then tussock skink.

Matt – would be prohibitive for numbers proposed to salvage to put inside a fence – need to be big enough for additional 32,000 Karawau gecko.

Mandy – need to find a place, don't know where that area is. Need to nail the release site for DOC to be comfortable.

Matt – to do a better job would need to increase fences in a worthy location – agree.

Mandy – can work this out based on Mokomoko experience, how big their fences are. MGL want to revoke covenant, perhaps put a fence inside the Bendigo covenant. Might be out of my lane.

Keith – it there any indication on what magnitude fence is needed?

Mandy – simple modelling exercise so can work it out. Reproductive rates and longevity are different between species.

Graham – assessment treated all lizards the same. Because no net loss (over 35years), and no modelling is going change that.

Mandy – agreed.

Graham – question – for this project – begs the question is there an opportunity to think outside of the box, can we do something else? Are there priority species? Could salvage some lizards to a degree and then maybe there is a trade for Lakes skink or Jewel geckos to get a better outcomes for these threatened species?

Mandy – number one priority is Karawau gecko. Let's start at home. Would still be residual effects.

Marie – DOC's thinking in novel ideas is in progress. Yes, there is opportunity to think about it. Won't support salvage if won't support good outcomes. But need to think about what DOC position is on salvage but hard because don't know what MGL is prepared to do – bigger fences, better habitat?

Mandy -still want salvage to some extent.

Matt – if we look for better options for Karawau gecko, with MGL, would DOC be more comfortable with salvaging some Karawau gecko and salvaging other skinks and putting them in fences.

Many – worse case – mine wipes out 7% of total habitat of Karawau Gecko.

Matt – nominate a number that can be salvaged, document in consent conditions, that won't impact on resident lizards and will increase percentage of survival.

Mandy – better to salvage less and ensure survival, will breed in good location and then get back up to original population numbers fairly quickly.

Mandy – read in MGL report that DOC requires salvage. But in FTA just want best outcomes, maybe don't translocate McCanns skink because weedy. So can do better job with high value ones.

Mark – where they get relocated to – does it have to be a fence, and can they go on DOC estate? Lots of DOC estate surrounding the mine.

Mandy – have to assume surrounding areas are at carrying capacity. Only create more space for salvaged lizards if control mice. Report says that no lizards will survive relocation. Only tool we know that works is a fence. Acknowledge management issues associated with a fence – but they work. A big fenced area.

Keith – is there the potential to put the fence on DOC land?

Mark – not within scope of current application but shouldn't be hard if DOC supported it.

Marie – do not oppose, but not a yes or no. Is something we can explore.

Cheryl – could we provide additional support to Mokomoko, increase their fence?

Mandy – don't think they would be interested.

Cheryl – they are already set up.

Trudy – they are different geckos, schist geckos.

Mandy – we think that the covenant is in scope, so not a stretch. Do doing something in covenant could be considered.

Trudy – anywhere where Karawau gecko is present is in scope

Mark – panel is constrained by what is in front of them. But expect S127 to accommodate project changes. This could be part of a S127. Maybe an agreement to get to a certain point, similar to walking track agreement. Then obligation to go out and deliver consents etc to achieve agreement.

Shay – are there suitable areas available?

Mandy – yes, informed by work on Rocky Point.

Graham – there suitable areas to the south as opposed to Ardgour, but need to be able to access.

Mandy – if do stuff for Karawau gecko then would be suitable habitat for Lake skink

Matt – a driver for fence was to get good outcomes overall. Could bring back extirpated skinks back into a fence. In the assessment we could not provide certainty because translocation process takes a long time and lots of people need to agree to it. We could not provide that level of certainty. Condition to seek to do that but cannot guarantee as approvals out of our control.

Mark – Best endeavours conditions – demonstrate undertaken to achieve outcome.

Mandy – aspirational. Not part of the package.

Matt – intend to do it but can't guarantee it would happen.

Matt – would really like to make part of the package, but relies on MGL approval.

ACTION – Discuss with MGL how to achieve more certainty that of lizard translocations of Jewel, Lake, Grand and Otago skinks will occur. MGL, Graham, Matt, Mark.

Mandy – just say you will do it by certain time.

Matt – will circle back and see if we can get stronger language.

Mark – can't guarantee survival.

Mandy – more about certainty of undertaking the process.

Keith – uncertainty also due to DOC input to translocation, long process and lots of boxes to tick.

Shay – CODC conditions 118 part (e) – net positive gains at 35yrs must be achieved for grand, Otago. Reads that net gain must be achieved.

Matt – requires third party approval.

Mandy – doesn't gel with pest management plan.

Mark - shared condition 118 on screen – requires net gain – legal requirement.

Mandy – management plans don't reflect that condition. DOC needs to understand but not described.

Trudy – genuine problem with source populations.

Matt – needs more work, can't guarantee translocation of Otago et al will happen, but we can guarantee we will apply for translocation.

Mandy – where does this leave us, this is not described in management plan.

Cheryl – we are aware MP need some work, plan to do workshops on MPs.

Mandy – might not even be possible? Is it in the application?

Mark – big part of the uncertainty is it requires DOC approval. Not out of scope, there are two fences in application. If want third fence then that is out of scope.

If bringing in Otago et al then that is not in the scope.

Matt – we really want to get lizards from elsewhere into fences. Just need to find certainty for that intent, which includes third party approval. Need a cohesive plan that we will do it.

Mandy – 80% not accounted for, is this taken into account?

Graham – its subjective – do you like Otago skink more than Karawau gecko? But creating new populations which has very high value. If a condition depends on third party approval then a condition can't make it happen if third party hasn't already agreed. Causes the uncertainty. Amazing if we could make it happen. Setting up the circumstances for it to happen by making fences, but can't guarantee.

Matt – best we can do is to condition the preparation for translocation but can't guarantee.

ACTION – MGL to consider how to create greater certainty of outcome, noting will not be able to overcome third party approvals.

RELOCATION SITE MANAGEMENT

Matt – Need to find sites for salvaged Karawau gecko.

Mandy – no more to say on this one, already discussed

Trudy – endorsed Mandy’s position in discussions.

Keith – to confirm, do all accept landscape wide mouse control is a bridge too far?

Trudy – in the absence of mouse control can’t guarantee survival

Mandy – need fence to control mice.

Graham – if we remove stock and get increased habitat complexity then generally there are more lizards. Or is it possible that lizards will occupy more areas / higher numbers where stock can’t access.

Mandy – in some places removing stock is a disaster, in some places works well. Karawau gecko are probably more vulnerable. Extreme weather is harder on lizards than mice, lizards can’t evade mice when it is cooler, maybe a snapshot in time when all the damage is done. Don’t really know, data doesn’t exist. Grant Norbury’s data might show.

LIZARD HABITAT REHABILITATION IN DDF

Mandy – was pretty scathing at last workshop, except for McCanns who are weedy. Experience is from Macraes. Did a lot of work but only got McCanns. Issue of soil fertility flush creates an issue.

Trudy – Central Otago soils are fertile; moisture is the issue. Certain grassy plants grow because of the fertility. Cushionfields are less fertile.

Mandy – rehab process -w ill result in McCanns and maybe tussock skink, but not Karawau gecko

Trudy – takes a long time to get lizards back into areas highly disturbed.

Matt – using Macraes as what not to do. Robyn S is the national expert in rehabbing mine sites. Put a lot of time into designing rock stacks and rock deployment, planting to get good outcomes. Have good targets for habitat complexity – tussock and shrubland, acknowledging that it takes time. At year 35 expect lizards to be similar to what there is now. Only attributed 20% towards no net loss in assessment because of time lag. Is a prediction. Have considered experience on other sites to achieve position.

Graham – Question is if we create a field of dreams, will something live in it? Experience in MacKenzie is that lizards will move in. We could actively intervene by putting lizards into rehab from fences. Lot of confidence because lots of edge on the DDF, so plenty of

area to come in from. Farm experiences include geckos and skinks moving back in. Tweak wording to include active intervention to reintroduce lizards.

Mandy – what mouse control over DDF?

Keith – not proposing mouse control on DDF, predator control as per Ardgour and MRZ.

Mandy – it could change? Adaptive management if introduce lizards?

Keith – yes could be done, range of controls that could be done.

Graham – we could put something together. Is mouse eradication necessary? Mt Cass down to 10% mice get similar recovery to Mokomoko. Room for tweaking what we do around rehab sites.

ACTION: LMP to include active intervention to reintroduce lizards into rehabilitation areas supported by animal pest control, including possibly mice. Matt. Graham to review Mt Cass data to inform proposed actions for lizard recovery.

Mandy – encourage not to say same levels in 35years for Karawau gecko, can't happen.

Graham – proposed rocky habitat will be more than pre-mining. This data is available.

ACTION: LMP to be updated to quantify the increased availability of rocky habitat compared to now. Matt and Graham.

Matt – BOMP will show if failing then can implement adaptive management.

Mandy – did a calculation, you will need 9million plants for tussock. Don't know of any rehab program of this scale.

Matt – planting nodes, to achieve 220ha of tussock, more of woody shrubland. Reports define % cover.

Graham – workshops with Robyn and David Norton to determine if this could be achieved – based on local experience.

Matt – having big impacts, so need a commensurate rehab program.

Mandy – if everything goes to plan then only 20% of lizards are offset. 80% short.

Graham – a rough calculation. Rehabed surface will contribute, but not dominant. Acknowledged.

Trudy - only for one species of lizards?

Graham – yes.

Matt – start of with an impact, 20% from uplift, 3-4% on fences, 0% from rehab.

Trudy – difficult to respond because not substantiated in the reports. Lots of trust required and that's how we will respond.

Graham – need to read Robyn's rehab reports, there is a lot of detail in them.

Keith – Robyn's reports show how methodology has been designed to be successful in this landscape. Need to look in appendices.

Mandy – not in LMP, so need some commentary in LMP of how rehab contributes.

Matt – agreed, the LMP references out to other plans. We discussed this at length, do we have action specific plans or site-specific plans. Did the best job we thought we could. Depends on who it talks to.

Mandy – talked about salvage, rehab and fences shouldn't they be fleshed out in the plan?

Matt – will flesh out LMP so one stop shop, if need more detail

ACTION – revise LMP to include salvage, rehab and pest management contribution.
Matt

Keith – different aspects to MPs, fences are not just for lizards. Once we get all the technical assessments then needs to be built. Santana needs a MP that can be used in operational sense.

Mandy – agree, but MGL need to balance additionality. Mandy needs to understand with reference to lizards.

OFFSET COMPENSATION FOR IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR LIZARDS

Matt – clear that lizard people agree that fences provide the most assurance and certainty. Is there anything else?

Mandy – I think we have covered it. For DOC need to look after effects on site, Karawau gecko and incidentally for tussock skinks. Will be residual effects and will be significant.

Matt – need to test what no net loss looks like and put on the table what we are proposing

Trudy – will do for just lizards or other aspects of the environment. Are lizards separate?

Matt – will include benefits achieved for other aspects. Will see where we end up, with net loss overall. If we get additional compensation on the table. End game is nature accounting system net positive to net negative. Get to “this is where we are at” and decision maker determines what that all means.

Shay – will you provide the info to us or part way through to the panel.

Cheryl – all the information from the workshops will be distributed and actions will be distributed to agencies early next week.

Mark – lots of actions from workshops are on EPA website as were update and loaded earlier this week. Covering memo explains it all.

Shay – thinking how we might practically manage. We can reference in our submissions, may not need to attach to all our submissions.

Matt – we have lodged, responded to RFI and workshops questions as quickly as possible to allow agencies to make a more informed assessment and advice to panel.

Shay – there will be a cut-off point, we will note that additional information coming from MGL, panel can ask for it.

Marie – given reliance of using process, MP needs to be updated, additional information on website. Not possible to include all of it in already drafted reports. How to manage?

Mark – changes to concessions, for example – a few word changes here or there, directly responding to issues raised in workshops. Should be easier for DOC. Onsite with Meg earlier in the week, agreed changes to concession ok.

Marie – additional / updated documents, someone has to read them and understand the changes, not realistic in five days.

Cheryl – Heritage report amended as requested. Other documents were documents that had been provided to some agencies when they asked for them, so levelled the playing field by providing to everyone with the same info.

Mark – as soon as you look at the document you will know who it is targeted at. E.g. Ryan Burgess seepage report is for ORC.

Marie – maybe we take offline.

Mark – thirty documents, 12 are track change documents so can see the changes. None is news to you, provided in workshops.

Marie – many actions were to “explore” no requirement to do something. I will have a look through to see what’s there. Everything is changing.

Mark – if we are not prepared to make changes then no point having this process.

Cheryl – EPA asked to put info on website so there for all parties.

Marie – it is a challenge and there are tensions.

Cheryl – acknowledged.

Mark – pulled up recently loaded docs on the screen and explained, many are one-page maps, many are split concessions as requested. Naomi's report split into two to keep under 50MB.

Any further issues?

Meeting finished at 3pm.