

## A New Era for the Trout Centre

By Rob Lester  
Rob is the Chairman of the  
Tongariro National Trout  
Centre Society

During the late 1990's, a small group of Department of Conservation staff discussed the possibility of a fresh water aquarium at the Tongariro National Trout Centre. This vision included enclosed aquariums, full of indigenous fish and crustacea on exhibit in an environment as close to reality as possible. At the time a supporting paper for the venture was put together. Simultaneously the Tongariro National Trout Centre Society was planning the first stage of a Visitor Centre Museum, themed on trout and conservation values.

Given that DOC and the Society were closely aligned, both in terms of facility

development and common purpose, it was a given that the Aquarium project would become part of any development considerations for the future once planning and funding had been achieved.

The first 'River Walk' Museum and Visitor Centre was opened in 2003 - the result of a prodigious effort by Tongariro National Trout Centre Society volunteers and benefactors - on land made available through a Management Agreement with the Department of Conservation.

The success of this venture, due in no small measure to the enthusiasm of volunteer support, generated further interest in expanding the delivery of

conservation and bio-diversity programmes to young New Zealanders. With generous support from Genesis Energy, DOC and the Society directed their combined efforts towards a school room - and in 2006 the 'Whakapumautanga (Darkie) Downs' Learning Centre was put in place complete with a full-time Educator, a part-time assistant and support from Society volunteers.

Concurrent with this activity, the Society began working in earnest on the expansion plan for the Museum, which was running out of space for exhibits - and the possibility of bringing into reality, the aquarium development that had been first raised some years before.

After four years of discussion and \$155,000 spent on architectural drawings and building consents, the dream of DOC staff and Society volunteers is now close to becoming reality. The Tongariro National Trout Centre has entered a new era in its bid to become a premier

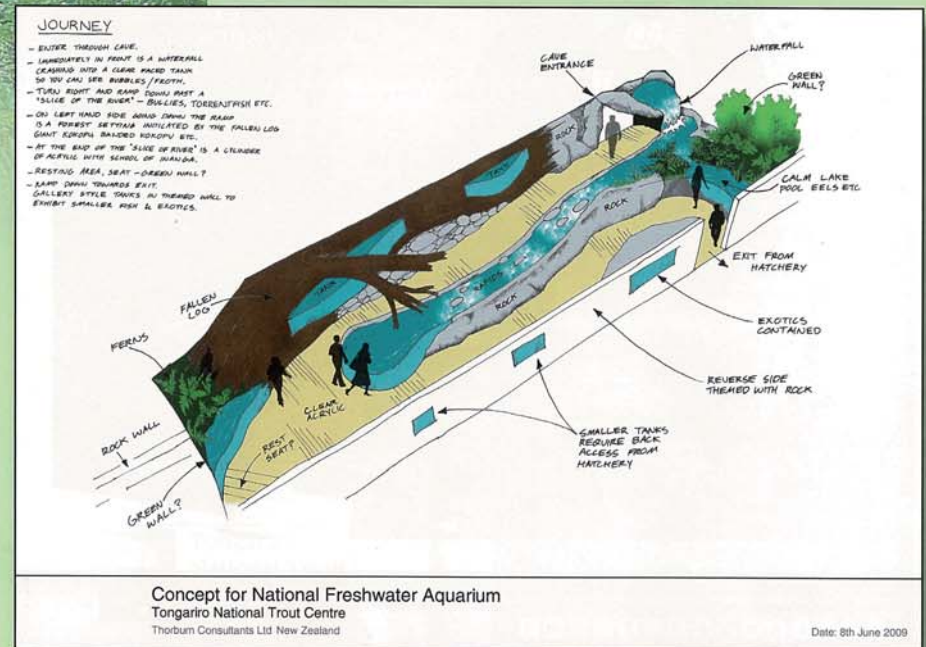
attraction for tourists and the public of New Zealand alike. This includes the integrated education programme, teaching young people about the importance and sustainability of fresh water and conservation values.

Work began in early 2009 with the installation of a sewage reticulation system and the construction of a more scenic and user friendly entrance pathway to the facility, both of which are now complete. The first stage of the visitor centre expansion at the end of the new entrance pathway is now well underway and the final stages of planning for the aquarium project are being worked through. These facilities will eventually all be integrated make a spectacle for visitors to the site.

It doesn't end there though. In the medium term there are plans to house the captive breeding programme for the rare Whio or blue duck on site which will also be a fantastic addition to an already vibrant and active facility.

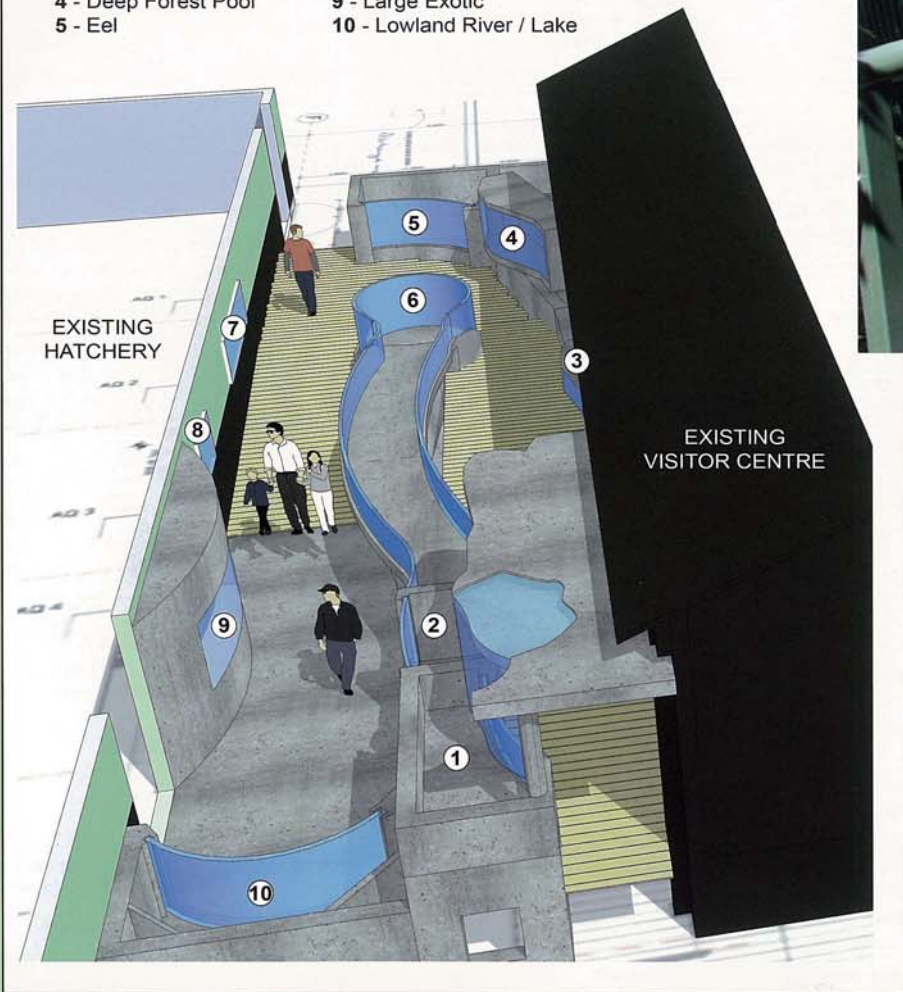
Top: The expansion of the  
visitor centre and museum is  
well underway  
Photo by: Ken Kimmins

Far right: Conceptual  
drawing of the proposed  
aquarium complex  
Courtesy Thorburn  
Consultants and John Grose



## NATIONAL FRESHWATER AQUARIUM Tongariro National Trout Centre

- 1 - Splash Tank
- 2 - Headwaters
- 3 - Mudfish
- 4 - Deep Forest Pool
- 5 - Eel
- 6 - Riffle Pool
- 7 - Native - Close up
- 8 - Exotic - Close up
- 9 - Large Exotic
- 10 - Lowland River / Lake



Computer generated graphic of the proposed aquarium complex. *Courtesy Thorburn Consultants and John Grose*

The new entrance pathway is now complete  
*Photo by: John Webb*


The major players in this endeavour - Genesis Energy, the Department of Conservation and the Tongariro National Trout Centre Society will be well rewarded by being acknowledged over future generations, for making this happen.

New Zealand will have a valuable asset, a national fresh water aquarium, for



indigenous species and pest fish, which will be 'state-of-the-art in both presentation and substance.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE TONGARIRO NATIONAL TROUT CENTRE SOCIETY

If you are email [ust\\_routcentre@reap.org.nz](mailto:ust_routcentre@reap.org.nz)  
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