

Haere Rā Lou Sanson

The Director General of Conservation Lou Sanson retires this month after eight years at the helm. The relationship between NEXT and DOC has been a crucial part of NEXT's strategic philanthropy approach, and here we pay tribute to his contribution to our land and our people.



Lou, I have always been struck by your enthusiasm – enthusiasm for Aotearoa New Zealand's nature, enthusiasm for conservation, and enthusiasm for partnership as a way to deliver both. On a Fiordland bush walk you led a group of us on, you knew all of the history, the current status, and the 'what was possible for the future' of the flora and fauna we experienced - and told us excitedly about them, all the while marching at great pace through the undergrowth.

Your most tangible expression of partnership with NEXT has been your energetic championing of the Tomorrow Accord – the agreement that enables philanthropics like us to support DOC to achieve more ambitious and more difficult predator eradication targets than it might otherwise be able to. Nothing about that work is easy, and so none of it can happen without the 100% belief and determination of the Director-General. Thank you Lou for your energy, your enthusiasm, and your passion for our land, and our people.

– BILL KERMODE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE NEXT

NEXT environmental advisor Devon McLean (left) with the retiring Director General of Conservation Lou Sanson.



Lou you can look back with great satisfaction on your time leading one of the most complex and important organisations in New Zealand. Your passion for the environment and the energy you have committed to advancing its place in the hearts and minds of New Zealanders at all levels, has always been infectious. Right from the early days of NEXT you have embraced the idea that restoring the prospects for our natural places requires a broad church of ideas, energy and resources, and you have constantly encouraged the DOC team to look outside their world. We will miss that smile, the early morning texts, the exuberant advocacy for all things in nature, and know that as the work you have advanced continues, you will remain an essential observer and no doubt a participant in new ways.

– DEVON MCLEAN, ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISOR, NEXT



Kidney Ferns.



Kia ora Lou – your passion and energy for conservation and the people who make it happen are unparalleled and infectious. I can recall one of the walks I did with you where after a few days we ended up between Lake McKerrow / Whakatipu Waitai and the coast at Martins Bay on the Hollyford – the conversation was as always, multi-dimensional yet solution focussed, this time focussed on the complexities of large scale Fiordland predator control, when mid-sentence you asked us all to stop and admire these Kidney Ferns, gleaming at us in the sunlight along the track – an eye for detail, and time for admiration. Your joy in the small things in nature, the energy to actually get out there and be in it, and being able to be bold enough to see and support the innovation and the potential in other's way of thinking, has inspired. You have been a key supporter for NEXT's strategic approach to conservation investment, helped in convening key players along the way, believed in the necessity of changing how conservation investment has been done, and thinking big around the outcomes we can and have shown can be achieved if we focus accordingly. We hope you get to all the huts!

– JAN HANIA, ENVIRONMENTAL DIRECTOR, NEXT



Lou Sanson taking a restorative moment at Martins Bay, Fiordland National Park, Oct 2017. When I asked him what he was thinking he replied "just reminding myself why it's all worth it." - Al Bramley CEO ZIP.

There are two big standouts for me with Lou's leadership. The first has been his willingness to back an ambitious plan. Lou understood that we are not going to significantly improve the prospects of our endangered species and ecosystems by tinkering around the edges - that's why he embraced the Predator Free mission and sold it long before it looked possible. The second was his commitment to ensuring the team always comes home safe to their whānau and friends. Managing teams that undertake work in remote challenging environments is not easy and Lou has lifted our culture and expectations around the health and safety of our teams.

Lou's bold, grounded and caring leadership style coupled with his infectious excitement has nurtured great things. Thank you Lou.

– AL BRAMLEY, CEO ZIP



In the early days of NEXT. NEXT Board members Carol Campbell, Barrie Brown, Bill Kermode, and Chris Liddell with Lou Sanson.

I have always appreciated Lou's dedication and enthusiasm for conservation. When Devon McLean proposed Project Janszoon to the trust that was to become NEXT it came with the programme to work closely with DOC. A partnership between DOC and philanthropy. Lou was a strong supporter for this project which is achieving wonderful conservation outcomes and has acted as a model for other NEXT conservation partnerships throughout New Zealand. Lou understood the complexities of managing outcomes agreed with philanthropy (NEXT) and at the same time having to work through the structure and protocols of a Government Department. He is very skillful. I wish Lou all the best for the future, he has done a great job.

– BARRIE BROWN, FORMER CHAIR, NEXT