

Lawyer plays big role in conserving natural stronghold

Preserving and enhancing indigenous biodiversity is the prime goal of the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust, which has placed protection covenants on approximately 1000 hectares of sensitive land since 2001.

The peninsula is a haven for rare and protected native flora and fauna, and the trust's greatest tool in achieving its biodiversity goals is by working with the community to promote sustainable land management.

Anderson Lloyd has a long history with the trust and Christchurch partner Mark Christensen, through many hours of pro bono legal work, has played a particularly prominent role in the preservation of one of Canterbury's most important natural environments. Mark also serves as trustee and chairman.

The trust is the only organisation in the country outside of the Department of Conservation, the QEII Trust, and regional and district councils that has been granted covenanting powers.

The pro bono work Mark does for the trust is something he's extremely passionate about.

"The trust is all about protecting an amazing environment, which means we've got volunteers that go out and kill pests and predators and fencing contractors undertaking work on very steep land," he said.

"My role as a lawyer providing services to the trust means I can be working on everything from health and safety guidelines for those volunteers, to employment contracts and the covenanting process itself."

The peninsula was initially mistaken for and noted as an island by Captain James Cook. If he had arrived a million years earlier he would have been correct, but during that time the ancient volcanic landmass merged with New Zealand's South Island.

In the present day the trust has been a driving force for conservation and preservation and has gained a reputation for innovation.

"In the past the trust has had part-time managers, but recently has been able to employ a full-time manager. The good work the trust has been driving has been well-recognised in the area, and the trust has started a membership scheme."

Anderson Lloyd is a foundation sponsor of the trust. The majority of the protection covenants that the trust has placed over private land protect the conservation values of that land in perpetuity.

The trust's general manager Maree Burnett said the very existence of the organisation would not be possible without the contribution made by the highly skilled, passionate volunteers and corporate supporters like Anderson Lloyd.

"Mark tirelessly champions the trust's work, and his enthusiastic leadership as chair of trustees and the numerous hours of invaluable pro bono legal work he has contributed are invaluable," she said.