

Much of the land and its natural cover, under ongoing management policies, will be sustainable. But some parts of it may carry rare, fragile and ancient, and therefore precious ecosystems that, if left to the economic assumptions of land use for profit maximisation, would not be sustainable. There are the threatened communities that for an appealing variety of reasons — not hard-nosed or 'productive' in the accounting sense — we may have to preserve.

## Conservation and preservation

An impression is abroad, even among some environmentalists today, that CONSERVATION is a good word, meaning balanced and sustained multiple use, with a little for everyone — being able to log our forests and mine our national parks, all to be accounted admirable and sound-headed. PRESERVATION, by contrast is a bad thing, only to be urged by unrealistic academics and activists, that entails the selfish, unjustifiable locking up of resources.

It is high time every environmentalist learnt the proper place of both, as our own Society painfully had to during the North Island forest campaigns late in the '70's. PRESERVATION is, properly regarded, a special case of conservation with its own appropriate place and occasions. Some resources — like fossil fuels — we have to use up and ultimately run down. We can conscientiously do this if we are using them to tide us over to, say 2020, to the change from stock to flow sources.

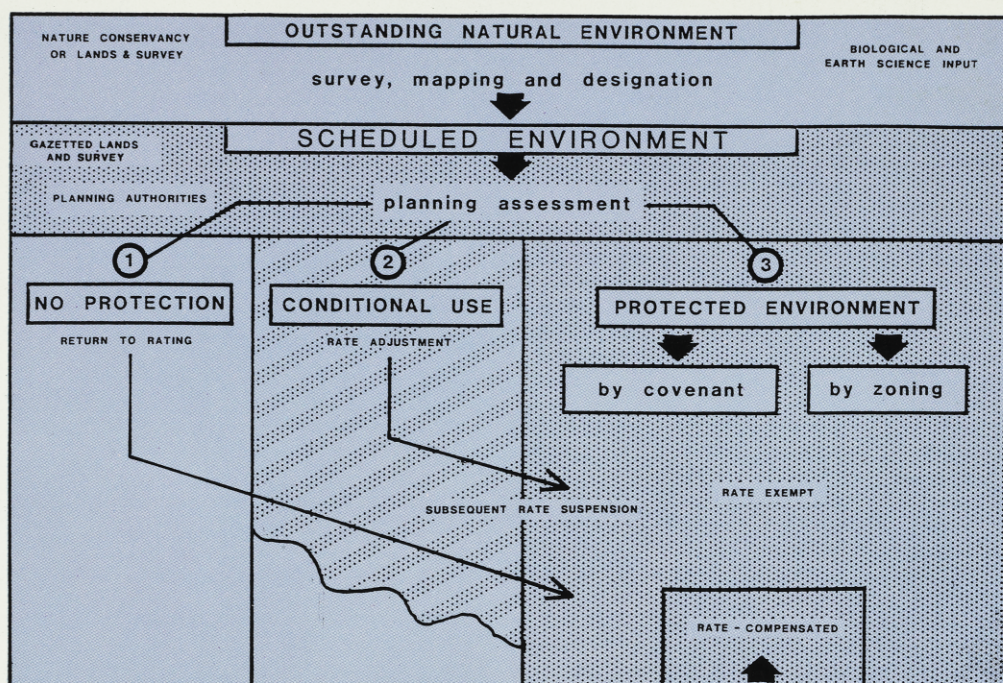
A large range of resources, probably the majority of our ecosystems, can perfectly well undergo sustained yield management: dairy farms, wheat fields, pine forests, snapper fisheries, operated with due attention to growth rate, productivity and the age structure.

There are other ecosystems — complex, slow-growing, beautiful in their diversity and precarious stability, that we may not be able to exploit or consume, without losing them. Two of these are forests of mature kauri and of giant podocarps. The oldest podocarps in Whirinaki were seedlings when the first canoe arrived. The middle-aged are as old as the Wars of the Roses. The time scale is too slow and prolonged for human manipulation.

We must nonetheless try to take account of that stately rhythm and pulse. We must not in our human presumption cut off options that it has taken hundreds or thousands of years to create.

This arrogance that, since 'the land is ours', we have unlimited power to change its future by our present exploitation, is a fiction of human law as unrealistic as the notion that our fee simple title reaches in space from the centre of the earth to the vault of the heavens.

The good sense and capacity to live upon the land, in harmony with its cycle through time, is one of the virtues — whatever else may be the faults — of a land-owning class, a squirearchy or a tribe, whose tradition has brought it into a proper respect for that land.



In graphic terms, the way in which the author would envisage private land being protected, and the planning process involved.

Great Britain is today a remarkable country in that the best seashore in Europe is preserved as a National Sea Coast (virtually a national park) in private hands, in some part by protective planning, but far beyond that, by the virtues of private restraint.

So that one of the indicia of a 'gentleman' — in a landed sense — was in being brought up to know how to treat his land. That is why, over so many years, we got along without Town and Country Planning. It could even explain how the loveliest New Zealand areas, city and country, took their present form long before our own first Town and Country Planning Act of 1926.

## The New Zealand Experience

In New Zealand, planning has tended to be 'country' oriented. Unlike the landscape of England, much of New Zealand's bio-surface is fragile and primeval; with podocarp forests, groves of kauris, high level forests of beech, swamps and wetlands, marshes with wading birds; high country with scree and shingle, threatened plants like *Ranunculus parviflorus* at Mt Clarence.

Anxiety is also being raised by the amounts of Maori land — small patches in the north, to threatened Waitutu in the far south — that are being effectively signed away from Maori ownership in forestry leases and regularly approved or enjoined by the Maori Land Court. By all the signs Maori people are being pushed into exploitative attitudes, and turning out no more far-seeing or value-conscious than the European did before him.

## What shall we do?

First, we need to know the *resource we have*. Nation-wide ecosystem survey is going on. Much of it is by part-time staff, some working in summer projects: most of it dedicated work by young people with a care for the environment beyond their present weight or influence in the

bureaucracy. Their enthusiasm, and the quality of their work should push departments concerned such as Lands and Survey to go on funding, to get it finished ... and put it into circulation.

One of these student groups showed me a large scale bush and forest map of Northland, made last summer. Its complexity and richness was a revelation. I am not now talking of great forest sanctuaries like Waipoua, but all those many small strips and remnants that are the scattered glory of the North. All these are in danger. Most of them are privately owned. They are confronting us with the problem only a little more urgent in the north than in the rest of New Zealand.

Second, there should be an obligation enshrined in law recognising its as aboriginal New Zealand environment, calling for planning or total protection.

Since 1973 there has been an obligation in the Planning Act to look after our rivers, lakes and the coastline. This should be enlarged to enable mature and regenerating forests, tussock, montane communities and wetlands to be placed under secure planning protection. The gazetting of it as Scheduled Environment would bring it before the attention of local planning bodies.

Third, such bodies would than be charged with giving it explicit planning consideration. They would be nudged with suitable incentives to do this without undue delay. This scheduled environment would be rate exempt until a planning decision was made. Thus, the owner could be given a pleasurable foretaste of the privilege that would attach to any land that became Protected Environment.

## Still in private hands

Three results would emerge:

1. The District Planning Authority may decide that a piece of environment will not be put under protection at all.

2. Exploitative use of land might be made a Conditional Use, which would be publicly notifiable and challengeable.

3. Scheduled Environment could become Protected Private Space,