

Native forest along the spectacular Ahaura River Gorge in North Westland has long been sought for reservation by the Wildlife Service (1976, 1977), DSIR (1981) and conservation and recreation groups. The Ahaura Gorge is recognised as a Wild and Scenic River in the draft Government inventory. However, delays in the Government's long-promised reserve/development package for the North Westland-Buller native forests have already doomed some forests in the proposed Ahaura Gorge reserve. On December 13 1985, 12,000 cubic metres of timber from Sale Area 628 at Bywash Creek, a superb dense rimu-beech-covered terrace just above the gorge, was offered to the Kopara Sawmill Co. Prior to this our Society had believed all the proposed reserves would be secure from logging pending the Government decision.

The company has now roaded the forest and logging will commence shortly (see inset photo). Conservation groups have identified equivalent timber in an adjacent cut-over rimu forest now deteriorating from logging damage. This could be used to save the magnificent Ahaura Gorge virgin forests. However, so far Forest's Under-secretary David Butcher refuses to offer the alternative timber to the logging company.

Photo: Les Molloy Inset: Kevin Smith



Cover caption: The jagged slopes of Te Atakura, the highest peak on Rarotonga, rise above steep and densely forested valleys. A series of articles on South Pacific rainforests is featured inside.

Photo: Rod Hay.

