

Unfinished Business in WESTLAND

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Last November in a decision welcomed by conservationists the Government approved the protection of 137,000 hectares of new reserves and Paparoa National Park. They also required the Director-General of Forests to call for public comment on a further 20 reserve proposals totalling 57,000 ha.

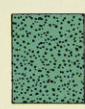


Because of confusion over maps, these reserves were not advertised for public comment in the preliminary Blakeley report as required by the West Coast regional scheme. However, most of them had earlier been well documented in Government and conservationist scientific reports or were the focus of major historical restoration and interpretation work by the Forest Service. The proposals were split into three categories:

- (1) **Native forests** in lowland valleys and on coal measures and limestone primarily in the Buller. First proposed as ecological reserves (ER) by the joint campaign on Native Forests, Wildlife Service and DSIR as early as 1977, reservation of these areas would complete representation of the diverse ecosystems of the region.
- (2) **Wetland areas** mainly in Central and South Westland, sought for protection as wildlife management reserves (WM) by the Wildlife Service and conservation groups to safeguard our fast dwindling fertile swamps which have been largely destroyed elsewhere by farm drainage.
- (3) **Historic sites and scenic backdrops.** These areas have been proposed by the Forest Service as amenity reserves (AR) to recognise and protect from insensitive development Westland's goldmining relics and scenic views behind main roads.

Many of the reserves include areas of intractable swamps and forest modified by past mining with no development potential. However, five of the reserves in the Buller region totalling 47,970 ha in area do contain some potential production forest. They are therefore likely to be controversial, even though the Government's West Coast Accord guarantee timber supplies for Buller sawmills from areas OUTSIDE the newly created reserves and the new reserves proposed here.

The Government is due to decide the proposed reserves' future by 31 March of this year. Public support will be crucial if these superb areas are to be protected. Otherwise they will be alienated to the Forestry Corporation and logged.

West Coast State Forests Lands for conservation and production

-  Department of Conservation lands (national parks, reserves, wildlife corridors and protection forest).
-  Forestry Corporation lands (for production, including exotic plantations and the beech scheme).
-  20 proposed reserves totalling 57,000 ha. Decision by 31 March 1986.

