

Important Dates in the Kaimai-Mamaku Campaign

In 1972 the Forest Service proposed that the eastern slopes of the Mangatotara State Forest and the north-eastern part of the Katikati State Forest be made available for clearing and pine planting. Negotiations were quickly under way with N.Z. Forest Products on the Mangatotara Forest. A group of Kaimai farmers first became aware of these proposals and spearheaded the public movement to protect the Kaimai forests.

Between 1973 and 1975 public pressure gathered momentum at public meetings with politicians and through a petition signed by more than 15,000 people.

Because National Park status was seen as offering the desired protection, more than 30 local conservation and user groups formed the Kaimai National Park Promotion Council and invited the National Parks and Reserves Authority to inspect the Kaimais. The Authority visited the Kaimais early in 1975 and reported that in the future when regeneration was further advanced the Kaimais would be of National Park quality.

In October 1975 the forest was gazetted a Forest Park and in December an Advisory Committee was appointed. Management plans were produced in 1976 and 1982 and suggestions of salvage logging, kauri thinning and exotic planting were strongly opposed in the 1360 public submissions. Nevertheless these activities proceeded.

Easter 1983 Joint Easter Gathering at Tauranga focussed on Kaimai-Mamaku and featured a dramatic visit to the burnt over forests of Waipari-Kuhatahi valley leased to N.Z. Forest Products. The company have since agreed to reserve the remaining forests in these valleys.

In 1984 the NPRA again visited the Kaimais and recommended that the Kaimai State forests be protected as a National Park or Reserve. Management to that end should not permit any activity which would jeopardise the integrity of the forest.

Late 1984 Labour Government elected on a policy pledge to give permanent legal protection to the Kaimai-Mamaku Forest Park.

The economic value of the Park lies not in the gold which may be in small quantities in the rocks but in the priceless water catchment it provides. The multi-million dollar horticulture industry is totally dependent on natural water supplies during the summer and recognition is slowly dawning that the forests are the key to providing that water. The Tauranga County Council has this month called a special meeting to discuss protection of the watershed.

Legal recognition and protection. Forest Park status gained in 1973 has offered scant assurance of protection because of the continued emphasis on management and inclusion of timber resources in management plans. When it is politically convenient both major parties have promised permanent protection, and Kaimai MP Bruce Townshend has a Private Member's Bill to introduce giving special status to the Kaimai-Mamakus.

Community involvement in management of the Park. Advisory Committees for Forest Parks have been too strongly influenced by the policy of the department administering them. Reading the analysis of the submissions on the 1982 management plan submitted by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to the Minister of Forests makes this abundantly clear. A Park Board similar to those operating National Parks would be ideal, not the total political and departmental discretion given to formulate policies and management plans and analyse submissions in the Conservation Parks

proposal in the draft Bill. The energy and commitment of local people in protecting their forests so far would be well suited to assisting in policy decisions for the Park's future. It is a reflection of the determination of local people and the tenacity of several members of the Forest Park Advisory Committees that not a single tree has been felled in the Park since 1973.

Inclusion of the Mamaku Outliers — Puwhenua, Otanewainuku, Kaharoa, Rotoehu. Forests to the south and east of the gazetted Park must be included as part of the protection package. It is fruitless to defend these forests hectare by hectare. The only definitive statement I have read about Otanewainuku, for instance, is that it is a long-term timber reserve. Wildlife Service studies have proved the value of these outlying forests, which contain record numbers of breeding kokako, kiwi, robin and blue duck. They also serve a most important role in the landscape. The dark green shadow of pine forests has crept far enough, and a checkerboard of kiwifruit and shelter belts covers farmland, turning roads into pale green tunnels. We need the diversity of our forests.

What now

The 1984 National Parks Authority report recommended immediate dedication under the Forests Act of the whole Park, including the outliers of Puwhenua, Oropi, Otanewainuku, Mangorewa and Kaharoa, solely for protection and recreation (similar to Ru-

ahine, Tararua, Haurangi, Lake Sumner and Craigieburn). They acknowledged that even this was insufficient to satisfy the public's demand for complete protection requiring an Act of Parliament for revocation. Therefore the Authority also recommended a general legislative change to the Forests Act.

Now this must be contained in the Conservation Act which is to replace the Forests Act. Instead at the time of writing we have a mish-mash of vague terms and, adding insult to injury, a provision for planting of exotics in ecological areas. To those of us who still fume at the sight of 10m to 20m native trees felled to make room for blackwoods in Rotoehu Forest this is totally unacceptable.

The only solution seems to be to ignore the new legislation and the environmental reorganisation and have the Kaimai-Mamaku forests and all their satellite forests protected under the Reserves Act as a National Reserve, with revocation only by Act of Parliament. We also desperately need incentives to protect private land at least equal to those available to clear private forests.

The chill of autumn matches the chill of dismay felt here at the lack of hope offered in the draft Conservation Bill for the Kaimais.

The mushroom clouds of N.Z. Forest Products burnoffs on Galaxy and Omanawa Roads still deepen the sunsets and fire our determination to keep on fighting. Will this be the last "winter of our discontent"? 🌲

Resource material

NPRA Report February 1984 A guide to Kaimai Mamaku Forest Park 1st edition 1983 Fauna Survey Unit Report No. 37, Wildlife Service, by A.J. Saunders

EDITOR'S UPDATE

The Conservation Act which became law on 1 April substantially revises the prescriptions for Conservation Parks contained in the earlier Bill criticised in this article. Parks must now be managed so their "natural and historic resources are protected."

This is a marked improvement but still has problems:

- * because "natural resources" include **all** plants and animals, protection may inadvertently have been conferred on possums, deer and even exotic blackwoods — all unwanted in the Kaimais.
- * The definition of protection still allows for resources' "augmentation, improvement or expansion" so unwanted blackwoods or kauri beyond its geographic limit could still be planted in the Kaimais as provided for in the current management plan.
- * the powerless advisory committees have been perpetuated unchanged without the policy formulation role sought by conservation groups.

National Reserve status still remains the most attractive option.