



Rates rebate helps save forest

New Zealand's largest city, Manukau City, has granted all landowners a 75 percent rebate on native bush on their land. This follows recent controls on clearance of native forest on private land.

Most of the city is rural, containing many magnificent totara and taraire forest remnants and the Hunua Ranges. The rating rebate for ARA forests in the city includes part of the Hunua Ranges, where a small kokako population survives.

Manukau now joins a growing group of local authorities which are assisting landowners to protect our heritage. Their actions are commended.

Takahe impasse to clear?

By October the Conservation Department would like to release into the wild some of the juvenile takahe they have been raising at Burwood Bush near Lake Te Anau. This would form the basis of a second wild population in Fiordland and provide a safeguard should any mishap befall the 200-strong Murchison Mountains population.

However, as readers will recall (see *Forest & Bird* November 1986), the Deerstalkers Association has claimed that the release will be illegal, since under the National Parks Act no animals can be introduced into a Wilderness Area. The area where the flightless birds are to be located – the Edith and Glaisnock catchments – are in a Wilderness Area.

The National Parks and Reserves Authority has therefore recommended to the Southland National Parks Board that the Edith and Glaisnock catchments be excluded from the Wilderness Area, which will now be expanded to the north to compensate.

The Society is very pleased with the plan. It is vital that the juvenile takahe are given a home in their natural habitat as soon as possible, rather than keeping them at the lower altitude Burwood Bush.

Crown Land carve up

It has been described as the biggest conservation story of the decade; certainly Forest and Bird's head office has never seen members respond in quite the same way as they did to the Crown land allocation issue.

The land carve up was proof that ordinary people are a vital part of decision making in this country. When head office first alerted our 53 branches to what was happening, the response was overwhelming. At nights, weekends, even sometimes by taking time off work, members looked up maps and searched out the areas involved to assess their conservation and recreation value.

This information was relayed back to head office where Bruce Mason, Mark Bellingham, Alison Davis, Kevin Smith and Liz McMillan compared it to the notes they

had. The final document they assembled ran to 200 pages and contained approximately 3000 misallocations covering 600,000 ha.

The Government's response to this was to ask officials from the Conservation Department and the corporations to work out between them the misallocations which were against Government policy and the mistakes (draughting errors etc). A third category involved lands which could not be agreed on. To guide the officials, a Technical Advisory Committee which included Conservation Director Gerry McSweeney, devised criteria for which land should go where.

At the time of writing (late June) officials were dividing up the land once again. The Public Lands Coalition – comprising the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, Federated Mountain Clubs and the acclimatisation societies – will be consulted on all the recommendations of the inter-agency committee, and any it does not agree with will be the subject of a more detailed investigation.

It is to be hoped that by the time the officials have had another crack at the problem that there should not be too many disputed areas left. Past experience, however, does not inspire confidence.

The following is part of a *Dominion* editorial from June 17, 1987:

Land fiasco averted

The Government has been forced to recognise the sad state of the proposed land carve-up that accompanied corporatisation. Inadequate procedures meant that vast areas of land with water and soil, environmental and recreational value were scheduled for transfer to the corporations. Thanks almost entirely to a public lands coalition of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, the Federated Mountain Clubs and the acclimatisation societies, that error has been averted. Now the Government has

quite rightly decided to keep disputed allocations of land under Crown ownership till the issues have been resolved.

A technical advisory group of officials and representatives from the coalition, the Maori community and Federated Farmers has drawn up criteria for solving disputed allocations with Government policy. They discovered areas of pastoral leasehold land, over which recreational permits were held, were scheduled for transfer, contrary to the State Owned Enterprises Act. Now that land will remain under Crown ownership. Likewise, large river beds and a number of other areas will remain with the Crown.

The chairman of the Cabinet committee on state owned enterprises, Geoffrey Palmer, has been generous in his praise of the coalition in presenting "the most comprehensive, thorough and best-researched submission of all". So he should be. The coalition checked every scheduled land transfer against topographical maps and presented it to the Government. This should have been done by the new Department of Conservation, which failed in its task.

The coalition spent about \$15,000 on maps, technical equipment, extra research staff, travelling and printing costs. In addition, six to seven people worked well into the night, seven days a week for six weeks to complete the task. Mr Palmer should demonstrate the sincerity of his praise and ensure the Government reimburse the coalition in full for its time and expenditure.

The coalition has done the job which the Government should have ensured was properly completed by the Department of Conservation. It has saved the Government the embarrassment of the inevitable results of its own inadequate efforts.

It has also saved taxpayers vast amounts of money. Had the scheduled land transfers gone through, taxpayers would have had to pay millions of dollars to buy land back from the corporations. These efforts should be recognised.



The Deputy Prime Minister, Geoffrey Palmer, receives the Public Lands Coalition Crown land allocation submission from Conservation Director Gerry McSweeney, Federated Mountain Clubs spokesman Hugh Barr (back to camera) and acclimatisation societies director Bryce Johnson.