

THE TONGARIRO DECLARATION

A CHARTER FOR NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS -
THE NEXT 100 YEARS

On November 21-22 last year Forest and Bird fittingly held its council meeting at Tongariro National Park. There, the Society launched the Tongariro Declaration, a charter focusing on the next 100 years of national parks. The text of this historic document is reproduced below.

The national council of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand met at Whakapapa to mark the Centennial of our National Park system, which began there with the gift of the peaks of the Tongariro volcanoes to the nation.

While this is a time for celebration it is also a time of considerable concern for the future of our parks system.

Radical changes in public land ownership, its administration and funding, and in our traditional social philosophy has meant that the present and future of the system is not as secure as it should be after 100 years.

Therefore the Council of the Society recommends to the Government the following principles to ensure the adequate protection of these precious lands.

1. That a National Parks and Reserves system is a cultural benchmark of a nation.
2. The natural environment of New Zealand, its wildlife and plants have innate values which places them beyond the exigencies of current economics.
3. This public estate is held in trust for future generations through the system of National Parks and Reserves.
4. Such a system requires absolute protection, excluding the possibilities of pressure for exploitation by mining, development and other private interests.
5. This system requires national funding of a kind which places it beyond the pressures of economic changes and sectional interests, which seek an economic value and return.
6. The opportunity presently exists to

identify the last remaining sectors of unprotected habitats to ensure that this generation will not allow the loss to the world, and all time, of places, creatures and experiences which distinguish New Zealand.

The Society identifies the following specific areas for immediate action to protect our endangered natural estate.

Identity

1. The explicit controls of the National Parks Act are the cornerstone of our internationally renowned parks system. These controls must be retained.
2. The Department of Conservation must create a separate National Parks Division at Central Office.
3. Each National and Conservation Park must be managed as a single entity.

Funding

Funds for National Parks must come from a specific vote so parks do not have to rely on tourism grants or income from concessions.

Wilderness Areas

Wilderness and specially protected natural areas must be maintained or added to with scrupulous protection from concessionaire use and tourism projects.

Public Involvement

Citizen involvement in all aspects of national parks is vital. This involvement through the National Parks and Reserves Authority and Boards has re-

vitalised the profile and direction of our National Parks and protected areas.

New national conservation quangos must not diminish those avenues for public involvement that already exist.

Problems

1. The Department of Conservation should give the indigenous character of our National Parks priority. They should aim to eradicate introduced animals and plants where these threaten to invade pristine areas.
2. Marine ecosystems have not yet been given sufficient high quality protection. Marine areas require urgent assessment for protection with National Park status.
3. There are too many types of protected areas at present. Rationalisation of this unsatisfactory situation, with public input, is urgent.

Scientific Study

The importance of resource knowledge of conservation values of our national parks and reserves requires more emphasis. On-going monitoring must be implemented and maintained on wild animals, weeds, native flora and fauna, as well as tourism and recreational impacts.

Mining

Our National Parks face a major threat from mining companies. Mining threatens to debase the national and international identity of our national parks as totally protected areas.

**Professor A F Mark
President**

That haka is performed by the Tuwharetoa only on very special formal occasions, such as welcoming the Queen to Rotorua. It is a haka which can only be performed by the young and fit, as Huri Maniapoto explained.

"That haka soon eliminates those who cannot jump high! So some of us older people had to bow out to make way for the younger people.

"Those who were performing for the first time in front of nearly 5,000 people had a great sense of pride about what they were doing. For me, the stance of the Tuwharetoa haka group was most impressive and an important part of the ceremony," he said.

The Chateau Tongariro's bowling green was designated as a marae for the occasion, so all the rules of Maori marae protocol

were observed during the formal, hour-long ceremony: complete with karanga, wero (challenge) to the Governor General and Prime Minister, powhiri, waiata and the official speeches.

Then came the grand finale: performances by nearly 1200 school children from six local primary and secondary schools.

The head boy at Tongariro High School, Greg King, was particularly impressed by the performance of children from the National Park Primary School. They mimed the creation story, with the separation of Rangī and Papa and how the world began from nothing.

"It was really good to see Maori and Pakeha joining in as one people. They all got a great sense of pride from participating. You see them mucking around at school, and

then performing the haka. It was an incredible transformation!" Greg exclaimed.

Taumarunui High School pupils enacted a protest against the exploitation of the mountains, telling the people of the Tongariro National Park today and how people are abusing it. Their performance included the erection of a ski tow with skiers tossing away giant-sized rubbish as they went. Cheerleaders scolded them, and told them to take their rubbish away with them.

The formal part of the ceremony ended with everyone singing the Centennial song, reminding everyone that Parks are for People, and that people have a duty to look after their parks. ✎

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