

# THE GREAT SUBMISSION WRITING EXERCISE

Submission writing, it seems, has been elevated almost to a literary art form by conservation minded New Zealanders, to judge by the latest South Westland exercise.

By deadline time more than 3953 people had put pen to paper and written to Environment Secretary Roger Blakeley, an effort that exceeded even the big campaigns of the late 1970s-early 80s.

If conservationists are jubilant at this massive public response, pro-loggers have cause to be unhappy, knowing that the overwhelming weight of public opinion is to protect South Westland's forests in a national park.

1988 is decision time for the forests. The options are quite clear — either protection or logging. Forest and Bird is committed to protection and totally opposed to logging.

These two options are set to exercise the minds of the Blakeley Committee this year, which is due to report to the Government by December 31. Forest and Bird West Coast field officer Kevin Smith is the conservation representative on the committee.

The Government's 1987 Election manifesto made it clear that the forests have international values and areas set aside for protection south of Fox Glacier would be nominated as part of a South West World Heritage site. At the February launch of the book *Forests, Fiords & Glaciers*, Ministers Philip Woollaston, Helen Clark and Phil Goff reiterated that commitment.

The Department of Conservation has also told Blakeley in no uncertain terms where it stands, with its strong protection message contained in its South Westland submission. Well researched, cogently argued and highly informative, the submission is worth having as a valuable resource document in its own right.

Below are reproduced excerpts from just some of the 3000 submissions supporting protection.

## In Trusteeship

"One reads and hears of New Zealanders bemoaning the actions of other nations who permit, or watch helpless as, white rhinos or orangutangs, tropical forest or mountain scrub are threatened or lost forever. We too have our insensitivities or lack of determination which allow us to destroy parts of our trusteeship which we hold not just for ourselves, but for the whole world. Our record is not an enviable one.

"The forests of South Westland are a truly remarkable remnant, and I cannot over emphasise their world value. Being largely forest-wetland, they are extremely sensitive to

change. The fact that huge areas are inaccessible to all except the most ardent adventurer in no way lessens the arguments for their preservation in as near pristine condition as possible." (Putaruru)

## No Need to Destroy

"Our family immigrated to New Zealand in 1980. In New Zealand we enjoy clean air, clean water, healthy soil free of nuclear contaminants and above all beautiful native forests to which visitors from overseas flock.

"Forests all over the world are being decimated by saws, acid rain or disease. There is no need for New Zealand to destroy the South Westland forests. It is essential that they be preserved as a heritage for New Zealand and the rest of the world." (Invercargill)

## Miraculously Intact

"I have spent all my working life in the North Island and much latterly in Hawkes Bay. Like the rest of the east coast of the North Island, its landscape has been almost totally changed by Europeans anxious to establish pastures and farmlands. How much bush, scrub or wetlands can you find between Palliser Bay and Te Araroa? How many species of native plants, insects and birds have been lost because of such drastic treatment to such a large area?

"To a North Islander it seems miraculous that such a beautiful and unique area as South Westland is still relatively intact right up to the present day. Surely it is obvious to the authorities that the opportunity must be seized and the place preserved as a national park. North Islanders bring to South Westland the sharpest appreciation of its richness as part of pre-European New Zealand." (Napier)

## Employment Prospects

"When I spent a holiday in South Westland in November 1987 I talked to friends there about the plans for future developments. I have listened to many different points of view and understand the reservations some people have about the impact of tourism, its unpredictability and the need for secure employment. In the past the traditional industries of logging, sawmilling and gold mining provided employment and prosperity for the West Coast and there is resistance to any change in this situation. However with careful planning tourism could be developed to cater for people with a wide range of interests. A national park centred on Haast could serve this purpose." (Wellington)

## Unique Heritage

"I think the mountains, rivers and forests south of the Cook are a unique heritage which we in New Zealand ought to treasure and protect just as they are. I think they are a splendid tourist attraction and although there are not many tracks yet, these will surely come with further development. The wildlife too, of kaka, parakeet and whitebait must be protected or it will surely disappear. I hope it will be possible to give this area world heritage status. Sustained yield logging would be a disaster." (Greymouth)

## Large Areas Needed

"I live in Rotorua. Here we are surrounded by radiata pine plantations. There are precious few areas of native bush left, and the fragments are so small that the larger birds like the kokako and kaka have become relatively rare. I want to make the point that it is not only samples of native vegetation that we need protected, but areas large enough to provide habitats in which the more mobile species can thrive. An area like southern South Westland, remote from large centres of population, would be ideal as a national park because of its extent and because of its remoteness."

## Nothing Left to See

"I am only 11 years old and I already see what you are doing to New Zealand. We should protect this plentiful piece of land. Soon there will be nothing left; then where will you be? Tourists will not come to see the white heron or other beautiful animals because there will be nothing left, so be wise and protect what you have left." (Auckland)

## Former Logger

"I consider that this area is a valuable and sensitive natural environment, well worthy of "Conservation Park" or maybe National Park. It would be a crime to log any of it, especially with the present timber glut on the West Coast.

I have spent a number of years in both logging operations and environmental forestry. I have worked in native logging gangs on the West Coast. I am not anti-logging or mining, but their values to our country are short term and only benefit a small, already well-off part of the community. They have their place in areas which have no natural values and can be returned to farmland or exotics." (Greymouth)

## International Submission

"The Directors of Friends of Nature, an international conservation society with members in New Zealand, have voted unanimously to go on record as urging the establishment of a National Park to preserve the native forests of South Westland, south of the Cook River. The remaining wild areas of your country are very special and contain unique flora and fauna.

I have had the pleasure of visiting the forests of Westland on three occasions in the last twenty-five years and I hope these magnificent woodlands will be preserved by the New Zealand government." (Canada)

## Lifeblood of the Forests

"This holiday period we travelled to South Westland to experience the forests and wetlands of that area. As we travelled the path — well worn by many and a growing number of tourists — we were enthralled by the large areas of forest. We experienced driving along roads where kahikatea and rimu touched overhead and where the rain feeds wetlands which keep roadside ditches forever running with water. We were miserable when the days were filled with clouds and rain but realised this was the lifeblood of the forests and wildlife within them. We had a wonderful experience." (Wellington) 🦜