

Programme now into its fifth year, surveys completed are well behind the target of complete coverage of New Zealand within a decade. Lengthy delays in completion and publication of reports have been common which of course does nothing to foster public relations. The vital implementation phase, regrettably, has been limited by lack of both staff and commitment.

To be fair, the Programme has been severely compromised by the upheaval in the Government's environmental administration. The embryo Department of Conservation, in its first year, has expended considerable effort on decision and policy-making. In the meantime several survey reports completed during the reorganisation period have lain idle. However, action has extended to applying restrictions on certain potentially harmful activities on RAPs identified on Crown pastoral leasehold high country.

These restrictions relate to privileges under Crown jurisdiction and concern particularly burning, oversowing, fencing, tree-planting and any form of earth disturbance. They were adopted as policy by the now-defunct Land Settlement Board and were to apply

between the identification and implementation stages which, at the time, were envisaged to be of only a few months duration. The Department of Conservation has inherited this policy. Given the delays, in some cases over two years, inevitable frustration and disillusionment has resulted, particularly in the rural community. This has placed a severe strain on the Programme's credibility.

Cause for Optimism

As to the future, the creation of a Government conservation advocacy organisation and their apparently clear intention to pursue the PNA Programme, gives all of us some cause for optimism. Furthermore, the Programme was rated among the top environmental funding priorities in the manifestos of both major political parties in the 1987 General Election. We would like to think that this bodes well for its future. The Programme has also been fully supported by the New Zealand Ecological Society and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

The current survey effort by the Department of Conservation is commendable, being several times greater than in the pre-

vious two years. Unfortunately, a claimed lack of funding precludes either active or adequate pursuit of both survey and implementation phases. There is no funding facility for permanent staff, for either survey or implementation, which can consolidate experience gained from earlier work — knowledge continues to be lost as contract labour comes and goes. Obviously there needs to be a major effort in all phases of the exercise to convince the wider community of the efficiency and motives of the Programme and of Government's resolve in it.

The Programme has important long-term benefits for New Zealand and indeed its cost is small compared to the \$1.2 billion currently earned annually in overseas exchange from tourism. After all, tourism depends very largely on those natural resources which the Programme is designed to identify, and conserve. Let's hope the National Parks Centennial year is the time that all parties can come together to make this nationally important Programme effective, to dispel the distrust, and to safeguard for all time an adequate representation of what is distinctively characteristic of this country's natural values. ✎

Conservation Groups and the Public Champion Representative Reserves

While the formal PNA Programme has progressed in fits and starts, there have been significant gains in representative reserves outside of the PNA Programme. This has been chiefly through the efforts of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society coupled also with others such as NFAC, FMC and Acclimatisation Societies in the Joint Campaign on Native Forests and Public Lands Coalition.

Forest and Bird's objects are "to preserve New Zealand's native plants, native animals and natural landscapes". Since 1983, using the ecological regions and district maps as a framework and through extensive field survey work, Forest and Bird staff have successfully championed cases for representative reserves from Kaimaumau swamp in the far north to Masons Bay on Stewart Island. This work was vital as management plans were prepared for State forests and Crown lands by the Forest Service and Lands and Survey. Working with the Society's local branches, our Head Office staff successfully put forward many representative reserve cases. These have been described in *Forest and Bird* journal articles and were the focus of many public campaigns. Protection of swamps, shrublands and forests at Spirits Bay, Karikari Peninsula, Ninety Mile Beach, Waipoua, Russell (Northland), Tongariro, Mamaku and Rangitaiki (Central N.I.), Waitere (Hawkes Bay), Aotuhia (Taranaki), Mana Island, Glazebrook (Marlborough) and pakihi swampland in Nelson and Westland are but a few of these areas which correct major deficiencies in our reserve network.

Through the Joint Campaign we have

also achieved major gains in getting the remaining state indigenous forest in the North Island protected with particularly significant gains at Whirinaki, Kaimai-Mamaku, the Northland kauri state forests and the 79,000 hectare Whanganui National Park.

In the South Island, ecological district characters were crucial in scientific cases for representative reserves put forward by Forest and Bird and NFAC staff for North Westland and the Buller. These culminated in a total of some 200,000 hectares of mainly lowland forest being protected in the 1986 Government-endorsed West Coast Accord signed between conservation and development interests. In exchange some 120,000 hectares of forest — of which more than half was heavily cut-over — was allocated to sustained-yield rimu and beech management.

The carve-up of Crown land between the Conservation Department and Forestry Corporation and Land Corporation in 1987 also provided a vital opportunity to gain representative reserves. The Public Lands Coalition, spearheaded by Forest and Bird, has managed to retrieve from allocation to the Corporations some 500,000 hectares of public land with important nature conservation values. This land will be allocated initially to the Conservation Department as stewardship land but much of it deserves specially protected status as ecological reserves.

Another major debate over the allocation of Crown land will continue throughout 1988 with major implications for our representative reserve network. This involves the 311,000 hectares of former state forest south of the

Cook River in South Westland. The new Conservation Department has backed this stand with a powerful submission arguing the outstanding natural values of the area and the National Parks and Reserves Authority has formally asked the Department to assess the entire area — Fiordland to Westland — for national park status.

Nearly a million hectares — 4 per cent of New Zealand — has been added to the reserve system as a consequence of these efforts. More importantly it has not been more ice and rock. Rather it has been poorly represented shrublands, lowland forest, tussock and duneland. These major gains in achieving representative reserves through detailed research backed by major public campaigns stand in stark contrast to the difficulties experienced by the formal PNA Programme where reserve implementation has to date been disappointing. A strong partnership between scientists and the public is clearly essential if we are to help protect the best of what remains of our natural heritage by the year 2000 to serve the country's needs next century. ✎

Dr Alan Mark, President
Dr Gerry McSweeney, Conservation Director

The Department of Conservation is planning to spend \$3.5 million on the PNA Programme in 1988-89. \$900,000 will be spent on survey, \$950,000 on implementation work (consultation, negotiation) and \$1.65 million on securing final protection — through purchase, lease or other compensation and to meet legal survey costs. We await with interest confirmation of these figures in the 1988 Budget.