

April 1987 onwards. We formed the Public Lands Coalition and challenged all our branches to quickly review the land allocations in their areas. Our members' response was fantastic. People took time off work to pore over plans at Government offices in their districts. We received hundreds of phone calls detailing misallocations.

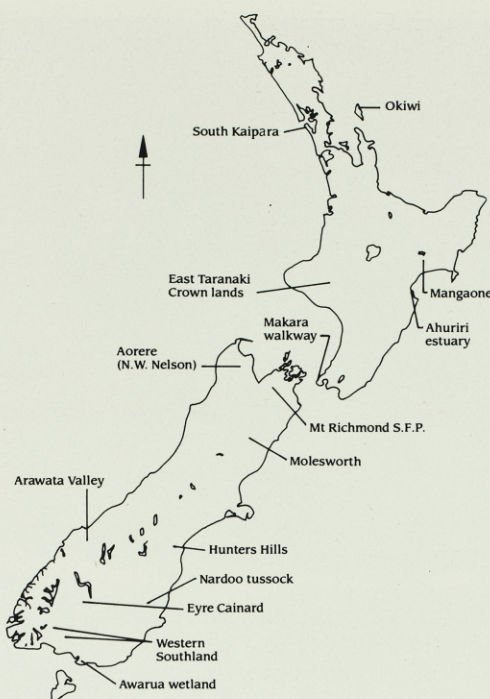
Bruce Mason, researcher for our High Country Coalition, shelved his high country work to review allocations throughout New Zealand. He was joined by all the staff of Forest and Bird, some Acclimatisation Society staff and volunteers from all three organisations. For two months we worked almost continuously. Forest and Bird's Wellington office was overwhelmed by maps and schedules as our team worked up to 16 hours a day, 7 days a week. Cadastral maps for the whole country were traced onto topographical maps. Based on extensive field knowledge of New Zealand, hurried checks with local members, and intuition based on landscape and map interpretations, we prepared our own schedules.

Despite forewarnings, we were not prepared for the scale of land misallocation. We discovered:

- Tens of thousands of hectares of high mountains under recreation permit had been mistakenly mapped for allocation to Landcorp contrary to Cabinet decision.
- National park land had been mapped for sale to the Corporations.
- Vast areas of native forest and shrublands in Wanganui, Taranaki and Nelson were scheduled for sale to Landcorp and Forestry Corp.
- Nationally important wetlands at Kai-maumu, near Kaitia, at Okiwi, Great Barrier Island, around the Piako-Kopua-tai peatdome, on the Chatham Islands, in Westland, and around Lake Ellesmere were scheduled for sale.
- Proposed tussock land reserves in the mountains of Otago and Southland were zoned for sale to both Landcorp and Forestcorp.
- Historic sites throughout the country and even a marae in Northland were scheduled for sale.
- Agreed boundaries defined in the West Coast Accord had been altered so that at least an additional 30,000 hectares of protected virgin beech and rimu forest was mapped for sale to Forestry Corp.

On 12 June 1987 our Crown land catalogue – a 300 page, 2 volume book which listed about 3,000 misallocations totalling 600,000 hectares was presented to Geoffrey Palmer. He also received 260 public objections from throughout the country. Palmer described our book as a "thorough, comprehensive and brilliantly researched case" and in a subsequent *Checkpoint* radio interview, commented that it just proved the value of public input – you could get the public to do your job for you! To his credit, he immediately set up a public review process.

The Public Lands Coalition, Federated Farmers and the Maori people were invited to join Government and Corporation officials on a technical advisory committee which developed land allocation criteria over June and July.



Breakthrough in Allocation Criteria

Able chaired by Denise Church of the Environment Ministry, this committee achieved a breakthrough in land use in New Zealand. In addition to criteria acknowledging conservation, cultural, scenic and recreation values, the criteria required that the corporations also satisfy commercial criteria for allocation. Corporations claiming Crown land were required to demonstrate the likelihood of a commercial return from the land. This could then be assessed against the non-commercial values.

For the first time the shoe was on the other foot. Commercial use of land was not to prevail automatically over non-commercial use. Rather it would have to prove its viability. Subsequently this criterion proved vital in determining the conservation allocation shrublands full of fernbird and kiwi throughout the country – previously allocated to Landcorp as "potentially productive farmland". Equally the miserly \$31 per hectare Forestry Corp was prepared to offer for the virgin forests of Rowallan in Western Southland could be weighed against their outstanding conservation value. For the

previous decade we had argued against Lands and Survey and Forest Service uneconomic bush clearance schemes. At last such schemes were to be subject to economic assessment. Under such judgement, the proposals were shown to be pointless.

In August and September 1987, officials applied the allocation criteria to the 3,000 cases identified by the PLC.

450,000 Hectares Reallocated to Crown

In October, their recommendations were made public. The majority of the contested cases were allocated to DoC. However, in about 40 percent of the individual cases we considered officials had still erred in applying the criteria. We immediately undertook a further intensive review. In the Crown Land Catalogue Stage 2, we detailed and mapped a further 300 cases totalling 150,000 hectares which remained misallocated. Most prominent amongst these were the 33,000 hectare Western Southland Beech forests, the 30,000 hectare Eyre Creek-Cainard mountainlands in Southland, wetlands of Okiwi station on Great Barrier, shrublands in Taranaki, Golden Bay and the Gisborne region and many riverbeds.

From December 1987 to February 1988 we worked with DoC and Corporation staff to try to resolve these outstanding issues. Final decisions were made by the Ministerial Committee on Land Allocation chaired by Philip Woollaston with Fran Wilde MP (Conservation), Peter Tapsell MP (Lands, Forests) and Peter Neilsen MP (Finance). During this period as well as the comprehensive cases from the Public Lands Coalition the Conservation Department and the corporations (17 separate cases were prepared for Eyre-Cainard, 14 for Western Southland), Ministers received thousands of public submissions on land allocation. The Prime Minister received well over 1,000 letters supporting protection for the Western Southland forests alone.

Decisions finally reached by Ministers recognised both the Conservation and Corporation values of the lands and a number of compromises were reached. The majority however favoured the Conservation Department – primarily because most of the lands

High Country Pastoral Leases

The 2.4 million hectares of South Island High Country (10% of New Zealand) under pastoral lease includes high mountains, glaciers, vast natural tussocklands and many rare plants and animals. In February 1986, the Prime Minister assured high country farmers that Landcorp would be sold these leases. We ran a major campaign against this decision over the next 6 months. Finally, in September 1986, the Government decided to retain the leases land in Crown ownership. Landcorp was to manage the leases as the Crown's agent. The Conservation Department was to safeguard conservation and recreation values on the leases.

Government is now pushing for a split of the leases between the conservation and production lands. There are many parts of the leases such as mountain tops which are unsuited for grazing and areas which contain high conservation values that should be allocated to DoC. Equally there are parts which are best suited to intensive farming and could be freeholded. A residue remains of multiple use tussocklands which both Forest and Bird and recreation groups (our High Country Coalition) and High Country Federated Farmers believe should be retained in Crown ownership and managed for conservation, recreation and pastoral farming. Treasury disagrees and wants to sell off the lot! The debate continues.