

were marginal for production but of undisputed conservation value;

- Wetlands on Okiwi came to DoC because of their value for brown teal.
- Eyre-Cainard was split with DoC getting 20,000 hectares of the mountainlands containing rare plants and the soil and water protection zone while Landcorp got the 10,000 hectares predominantly used for farming.
- Wild duneland on South Kaipara head (near Muriwai beach, Auckland) came to DoC in acknowledgement of their wetlands, wading bird habitat and outstanding landforms.
- Most of the West Coast Accord boundaries were reinstated to ensure that DoC got most of the virgin forest areas.
- Natural areas on the Wharekauri Crown land block on the Chatham Islands were either allocated to DoC or protected by legal covenant.
- The 3,000 hectare Mangaone shrublands and forest adjoining the Urewera National Park were reallocated to DoC and shrubland and forest on the nearby Ohuka and Waihi North blocks protected by covenant.
- Boundary readjustments were made in the Nelson region with approximately 30,000 hectares of beech forest reallocated from Forestry Corp to the North West Nelson and Mt Richmond Forest Parks while shrublands in Golden Bay also come to DoC.

The last major contentious land allocation decision was made on 9 June 1988. Cabinet ended more than two years bitter debate by allocating 23,000 hectares of the Dean, Rowallan and Longwood forests in Western Southland to DoC. This included all the virgin forest areas. 10,000 hectares of heavily cutover forest is to be offered for sale to Forestry Corporation who have tentatively indicated they are not interested in it.

The great Crown land carve-up is still incomplete but the bulk of the division of New Zealand's former 13.5 million hectares of Crown land – a staggering 52 per cent of the country – is over. The Department of Conservation will now be the guardian of about 30 per cent of New Zealand's land area. Should the Waitangi Tribunal find in favour of a claimant over land sold to the corporations, the Crown will implement the Tribunal's recommendation. That came about as a consequence of the Maori Council's High Court injunction and the subsequent Court of Appeal ruling. This legal review was a quite separate process from the administrative review we initiated.

Our debate with Forestry Corporation and Land Corporation was often bitter and intense. Property rights issues will always be so. Nevertheless all the members of the Public Lands Coalition acknowledge the enormous contribution of staff of the Conservation Department – spearheaded by Alan Ross, John Halkett and John Holloway; Landcorp staff, particularly Graham Grant, and Forestry Corporation staff led by Peter Berg as well as Survey and Land Information staff and Environment Ministry staff who chaired the negotiations.

We also appreciate the Government's belated recognition of the interest and role of



the public. The process initiated by Geoffrey Palmer found a champion in his Associate Minister Philip Woollaston, appointed in mid-1987 after the election. He insisted throughout on sticking to allocation criteria and on involving public interest groups in direct negotiations to resolve issues. His fair-handed approach resulted in resolution of the debate.

Challenges Ahead

Negotiations are still continuing on safeguarding public access rights across lands scheduled for sale to the corporations. A formula has also been developed which guarantees access reserves called marginal strips alongside rivers, lakes and the sea coast on corporation land. Further areas of Crown land have been identified which have yet to be allocated. We are now making submissions on those areas which total several hundred thousand hectares.

The Government has also ruled that asset allocations to other State Corporations should be subject to the allocation criteria developed by the Technical Advisory Committee. Both Telecom and Electricorp have co-operated with this ruling. Important Telecom conservation land in the Awarua wetlands near Invercargill, the Makara coastline near Wellington and at Warkworth in Northland will be protected. Riverbeds, river margins and wetlands formerly controlled by NZ Electricity Division will also be protected and not sold to Electricorp. Another major challenge ahead is the Government ruling that the land assets of the Railways Corporation should also be sieved to identify conservation lands deserving protection. Many wetlands, estuaries and native forest remnants come into this category. This exercise will yet again test the skill and enthusiasm of our members throughout the country.

The other allocation issue still unresolved is the future of 311,000 hectares of



Russell State Forest (foreground), the largest remaining area of regenerating kauri forest, was first allocated to Forestcorp, then Department of Lands and finally the Conservation Department.
Photo: Mark Bellingham

In June 1987 Deputy Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer (left) accepted the voluminous report from the Public Lands Coalition which turned around the course of land allocation in favour of conservation and recreation. Representing their respective organisations were, from second to left, Gerry McSweeney (Forest and Bird), Bryce Johnson (Acclimatisation Societies) and Hugh Barr (Federated Mountain Clubs).

former state forest south of the Cook river in South Westland. The Government would do well to learn the lesson of the Crown land carve-up debate. The New Zealand public will not accept the privatisation of public lands with high natural value.

The most important lesson is the need for continuing vigilance by non-government conservation and recreation groups.

While conservationists welcome the Department of Conservation, this issue well illustrates the limitations of a Government agency. A ministerial ruling requiring secrecy can severely inhibit the activities of a Government agency but not those of public interest groups. A partnership between DoC and non-government groups can be a formidable combination.

Looking to the future, the same partnership which secured protection for New Zealand's publicly-owned natural lands will now be needed to ensure that DoC is adequately financed in order to safeguard the lands it oversees. Our support for DoC is vital for its survival.

I wish to pay tribute to all the members of the groups that make up the Public Lands Coalition. In particular outstanding efforts were made by Mark Bellingham, Bruce Mason, Kevin Smith, Alison Davis, Sue Maturin, Hugh Barr and David Henson.

West Coast Forest Accord

In November 1986 this accord was signed between Government, the Conservation Movement and the timber industry. It finalised the production protection split of North and Central Westland native forests and largely ended twenty years of intense public debate.

Two-thirds of the lowland forests were given protection and a third zoned for sale to the Forestry Corporation to enable it to meet legal sawlog commitments and to provide the basis for a small scale sustained yield beech scheme. Although minor debates continue on some boundary definition, the Accord remains intact today.