

The top priority for Marshall is to ensure endangered species receive adequate protection.

"It's absolutely vital that we have got the resources to undertake successful recovery programmes and I'm very pleased we have got some assistance (from sponsors) to enable us to do that," Marshall says.

In the woodchip debate of 1989/90, Marshall stood out among National MPs in supporting a ban on the export of native woodchips but failed to convince his Cabinet colleagues who have recently unleashed a further 12 years of woodchipping in Southland's beech forests. He will not be drawn on whether rimu, totara, kauri or matai logs should be exported, but says National is starting out with "a clean slate" on native forests. Decisions on whether native forests will be protected through special forest legislation or under the Resource Management Act will be resolved by a committee headed by Environment Minister Simon Upton.

He feels the Treasury argument – that if you want to save something then you have to pay for it – is untenable, because "the cost will be impossible to meet. It would also elevate the value of land which people have no intention of milling at the present time. I think that it's a very short sighted policy."

Marine conservation is an area of Marshall's responsibility where he is certain to become involved in contentious decisions, with an increasing number of marine reserve proposals coming through in the next few years. However, he appears to be looking for-

ward to the challenge, and prior to the election promoted a marine park for the inner Hauraki Gulf. He is looking forward to two proposals – Kapiti and Cathedral Cove – "coming across his desk" shortly.

As for controversy, he points out that, in the legal sense, land conservation has a 100-year start on marine conservation.

"We are lucky in New Zealand because our population is not large and a lot of reserves were established when there was no population pressure. We are only just getting to grips with establishing conservation principles in areas where there are lots of other values and lots of other uses."

As one example, Marshall cites the plan to dump 10 million cubic metres of dredgings from Waitemata Harbour into the Hauraki Gulf. "Frankly I'm not impressed" is his reaction to the move by the Auckland Port Authority which is being forcefully opposed by Forest and Bird.

Marshall's responsibilities extend beyond conservation to science and agriculture, for which he is associate minister. He sees the combination of these portfolios as logical because of the important linkages between them, weed and pest management, for example.

As a farmer he has faith in the sustainability of New Zealand agriculture, stating that New Zealand farmers use "less fertiliser and fewer pesticides than anywhere else in the world."

Prior to the election doubt was expressed about the potential for the National Party to

green itself. Evidence for this view could be found in National's response to the Vote Environment questionnaire: many of the 100 questions were "passed" and a minority were answered in the affirmative.

However Marshall puts the party's poor performance in the survey down to a lack of adequate information.

"Take CO₂ emissions. We have in fact put in place a more rigorous programme of CO₂ emissions than the previous administration had. That is because on becoming government we had access to more information and we were able to make a decision in a rational way without being pressured into it," he points out.

While at present the jury may be out on National's commitment to the environment – three months is hardly long enough to judge – the verdict is more positive for the new minister. Personable and sincere, Marshall's gained a reputation in Opposition for his genuine concern about environmental issues and open consultation with environment groups. A former minister in the Labour administration agrees with the widely held description of Marshall but warns "just wait until he gets clobbered by National's caucus", a number of whom have reputations for their strong pro-development views.

However, environment groups will be hoping that Marshall does not become merely sidelined as National's green conscience but wins the support of his colleagues for the crucial conservation challenges of the 1990s. 🐦

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