

of a regional council, through a regional plan or a permit application. Yet in many parts of New Zealand if forest cover is not required for soil conservation purposes, a landowner can log 100 hectares of native forest without going near a district or regional council for permission.

To enable the fund's resources to be fully effective the Resource Management Act should be amended to require landowners contemplating logging indigenous forest to seek a resource consent from a local authority and any logging to be part of a sustainable management regime.

A MORE COST-EFFECTIVE method of defining covenant boundaries for land registration purposes must be found if a large chunk of the fund's budget is not to be swallowed up paying for survey costs. In 1989 Tasman Forestry decided to protect 16,000 hectares of Bay of Plenty forest including an area of prime kokako habitat. But when DoC and Tasman came to tie up the legal details of the Tasman Accord they found themselves faced with a likely \$40,000 bill for surveying land the company owned to identify the 16 covenant areas. The fund recently agreed to pay the major proportion of these costs.

Some district land registrars are prepared to accept a survey plan of covenant boundaries drawn from an aerial topographic photograph but others require more extensive field work. The issue needs to be worked through with the surveying profession and the Departments of Justice, and Survey and Land Information.

Rating relief for protected land would provide an incentive for many private land owners to retain forested areas, particularly in areas such as Northland and on the East Coast where farm incomes are often low. The recent Rating Powers Amendment Act gives local authorities the option of rates relief but does not go far enough.

"Nobody should be rated on natural habitats or undeveloped and unserviced natural land because you end up with a 1950s reason for clearing forests to pay rates bills," says Kevin Smith.

In the final analysis the fund reflects our continuing, though understandable, preoccupation with forests. However generously the fund committee defines indigenous forest, its mandate does not extend to protecting wetlands, tussock grasslands, coastal dunelands and shrublands in their own right. Applications for funding to protect a "superb"

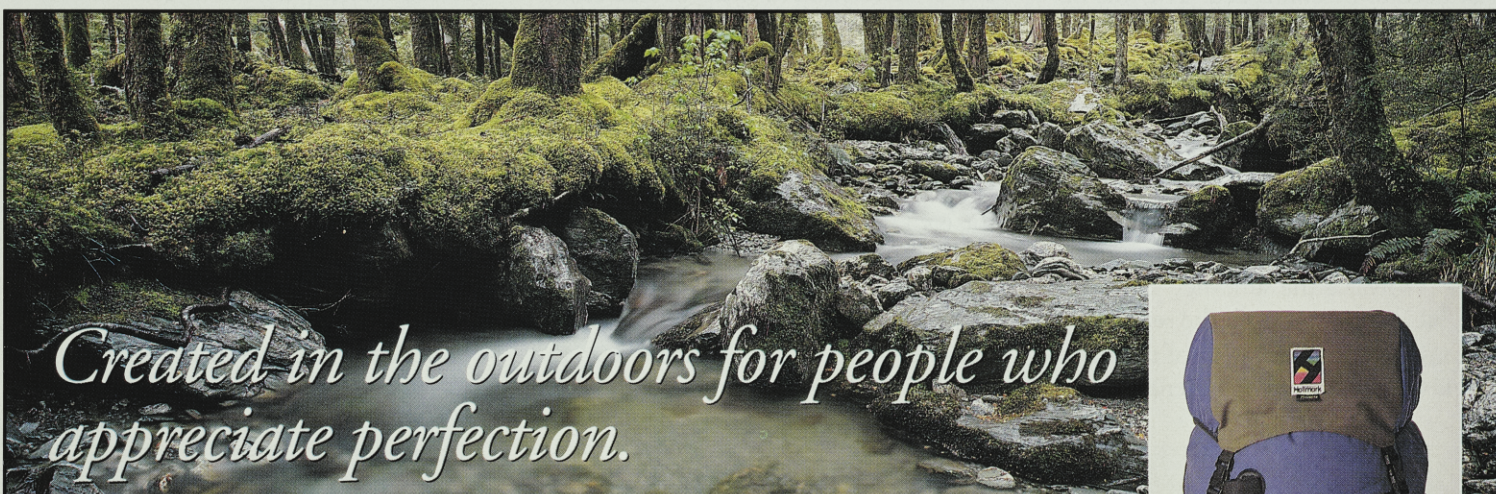
THE CLOSING DATES for applications to the Forest Heritage Fund are 10 February, 30 April, 31 July and 31 October. Application forms and further information are available from Department of Conservation offices or the Secretary, Forest Heritage Fund or the Executive Officer, Nga Whenua Rahui, PO Box 10-420, Wellington. Telephone (04) 471-0726. The address of the QEII National Trust is PO Box 3341, Wellington. Telephone (04) 472-6626.

high country wetland and a coastal sandspit have been declined because of the minimal amount of associated forest.

If the fund's kaupapa and budget were widened to become a Natural Heritage Fund it could help protect the full array of biological treasures on these islands of Aotearoa. ♦



Eugenie Sage is a freelance journalist based in Christchurch.



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