



*Above: The watering place at Ship Cove, visited by Lieut James Cook on his voyages of exploration, was once part of the now-defunct Marlborough Sounds Maritime Park. A substitute reserve status which could acknowledge the national conservation values of coastal areas here, in the Bay of Islands and Fiordland, has yet to be developed.*

*Left: This valley in the South Island high country shows the contrast of managed pasture with natural landscapes. Most of the high country is presently Crown leasehold land but the ongoing process of tenure review is leading to a division of land-holding into Crown conservation reserves or freehold farmland. The process will produce potential high-country reserves, notably absent from the present park system.*

Abel Tasman National Park, and the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Bill. Both pick up on major conservation issues in the protection of land and waterways in unconventional ways, thus raising wider questions.

How should we preserve the foreshores of other coastal reserves, and islands; and what of the possibilities for marine reserves? If the Abel Tasman foreshore is worthy of national park status what of the waters of Fiordland, with their outstanding wildlife and wilderness values?

Again, if the management policies of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park are to be driven, as proposed, by a forum of local body politicians, officials and Maori, what then should be the future management and protective status of other former maritime parks? Should we now be assessing the waters and public lands in the Marlborough Sounds and the Bay of Islands, as potential national parks or reserves, or support some political forum

to get regional interests working together for their better preservation?

In some places, national park investigations have not been started because the local political climate is such that there is little prospect of success. On such grounds, officials refused to include the mountains and forests inland from Westport in the formal investigations for the Kahurangi National Park, lest opposition de-rail the process for the rest of the park. Yet times change, and with the successful transformation of the Haast area in South Westland, from a wholly extractive economy to one where tourism based on protected lands brings new business, it is possible that attitudes in the Buller region may in time come to recognise the potential of tourism based on national parks.

It is already time to look at the national park potential of the Haast forests, south of the Cook River, an area of lowland podocarp and beech forest recognised in 1989 by Unesco as having World Heritage

values. By definition this is a place so special that it deserves protection as part of a natural area of international significance, but in the hierarchy of New Zealand public lands it has only the lowliest protective status — stewardship land.

The Haast forests received their international status as part of Te Wahi Pounamu/the Southwest New Zealand World Heritage Area, which extends a blanketing coat of protection over a vast area of the South Island, including the national parks of Fiordland, Mt Aspiring, Westland and Aoraki/Mt Cook. Previously managed by the old Forest Service, the Haast forests obviously had the necessary values to meet international criteria, providing a coastal fringe of swamp forests, longshore dunes, and sweeping vistas up into the mountain fastnesses of Mt Aspiring and the Southern Alps.

While conservation was unpopular in southern Westland 10 years ago, the remarkable success of tourism in giving a new heart