

THE ROLE OF STATE FORESTS IN A NEW ZEALAND WILDERNESS SYSTEM

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In New Zealand there is no real equivalent to the National Wilderness Preservation System of the U.S.A. The American wilderness system is a remarkable entity, spanning national parks, the national forest system, and wild lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Sport, Fisheries and Wildlife. A number of viable and non-viable wilderness areas have been gazetted in New Zealand's national parks (Molloy, 1976), and there is similar provision in the Reserves Act 1977. With the 1976 amendment to the Forests Act 1949, section 63E allowed for the setting apart of any area of indigenous State forest land as a wilderness area. No huts, roads, tracks, etc. (except for wild animal control necessary to maintain the wilderness character), are to be constructed in such areas. The public are to have free access to such areas, and proposals for State forest wilderness areas are to be advertised for public comment.

With the management of wilderness areas possible through three different pieces of legislation and exercised through two separate departments (plus the National Parks Authority), there is considerable potential for confusion to arise through differing standards and interpretations (Molloy, 1978a). Fortunately, both the New Zealand Forest Service (NZFS) and the Department of Lands and Survey have recognised this danger and for the past year have been drafting a joint policy statement on wilderness areas. The policy statement (Anon., 1979) covers the complementary management of the wilderness area and the surrounding "buffer zone"; public notification; criteria for selection; absence of huts, tracks, etc.; restriction of prospecting, mining, and aircraft; airdrops; and publicity.

While the draft joint wilderness policy is an important step in achieving a viable New Zealand wilderness system, a further effort will be required by these departments to achieve the desired complementarity between the components under their respective managements. New Zealand's "de facto" wilderness resource is large, but it is finite, and recently

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TABLE 1: DIFFERING WILDERNESS TERMINOLOGY AND STANDARDS IN STATE FOREST PARKS PRIOR TO 1978 ZONING REVISION

Forest Park	Terminology	No. of Wilderness Zones	Area (ha)	Huts	Track
Kaimai-Mamaku	wilderness areas	2	3 765 (2 495 and 1 270)	No	No
Catlins	wilderness area	none	—	—	—
Kaweka	wilderness area	1	8 000	No	No
Ruahine	wilderness area	1	13 600	(considerable peripheral huts and tracks) Yes	Yes
Coromandel	no development zone	1	2 000	No	No
Tatarua	wilderness zone	2	Areas not given (poss. 15 000 total)	Yes	Yes
Lake Sumner	wilderness sub-zone	1	Area not given (poss. 10 000)	Yes	No
Hauhangaroa- Rangitoto*	remote experience	2	10 780 (2 484 and 8 296)	No	Nc
Haurangi	wilderness area	none	—	—	—

*Proposed State forest park; data from Field and Robinson (1978).

it has been diminishing at an increasing rate, primarily through development for recreational use and wild animal control (Molloy, 1976). During the past 15 years, the catchments of the Taipo, Arahura, Kokatahi, Hokitika, Whitcombe and Waitaha rivers on the West Coast have been fully developed, and this wave of development is now moving further south through the catchments of the Wanganui and Whataroa rivers. In Southland a coastal network of tracks and huts has been developed in northern Stewart Island and along the Waitutu coast of southern Fiordland. This rapid opening up of mountainous State forest has not been accompanied by the preparation of recreational (or any other comprehensive) management plans, a fact decried by the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (FMC, 1977), who are preparing their own recreational plan for the West Coast (Molloy, 1979a).

Even within the national park system, where wilderness has long been established, of the five wilderness zones gazetted to date, three (Te Tatau-Pounamu and Hauhangatahi in Tongariro N.P.; Oteake in Arthur's Pass N.P.) barely satisfy what many would consider to be wilderness area criteria.

In the State forest system, differing definitions and standards have been applied to the zoning of State forest parks since 1976 (Molloy, 1978b). An analysis of the approach to wilderness zonation in the nine draft forest park management plans released for public comment since the 1976 amendment is given in Table 1. It appears that each NZFS conservancy and park advisory committee has made its own interpretation of the zoning policy as it operated at that time (NZFS, 1974). Many of the "wilderness areas" are too small and already too developed or influenced by man to satisfy true wilderness criteria. The intent of keeping some part of a park in a primitive state is laudable, but the zoning approach used tended to water down the standards of wilderness areas which fully comply with accepted criteria. Instead, a simple "non-development" zone was needed in the NZFS zoning (Molloy, 1978a, b), and this has now been adopted by NZFS with the release of a revised system for "zoning and classification of State forest land" (NZFS, 1978). This revised zoning implements the requirement for "balanced forest use" by elevating *recreational use* to a primary level from its earlier position as a secondary use, permissible only when "not prejudicial to forestry" (Forests Act 1949). Furthermore, the simple "non-development" zone is encompassed by the *remote experience* zone, a term first used in the management proposals for the State forests of the Rangitoto and Hauhangaroa Ranges of the central North Island (Field and Robinson, 1978).

TABLE 2: INVENTORY OF POTENTIAL WILDERNESS RESOURCE

<i>Name</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Area (ha) (approx.)</i>	<i>% in State Forest (approx.)</i>	<i>Management Problems</i>
<i>North Island</i>				
Motu	Raukumara Ra.	50 000	80	Hydro; goats; some tracks; huts; minerals
Ruakituri	Urewera N.P.	25 000	10	
Kaimanawa- Kaweka	Headwaters of Rangitikei and Ngaruroro Rs.	59 000	50	Airstrip; safari hunting and tourism
<i>South Island</i>				
Tasman	NW Nelson	80 000	100	Minerals; hydro; tourist roading
Paparoa	Paparoa Ra.	35 000	90	Minerals; forestry
Otehake*	Arthur's Pass N.P.	12 000	0	Animal control; recreational development
Adams	Headwaters Rakaia, Rangitata, Wanganui and Whataroa Rs.	90 000	15	Animal control; recreational development
Hooker	Hooker Ra.	60 000	5	Recreational hunting
Waiototo	Mt Aspiring N.P.	50 000	0	Animal control
Olivine	Mt Aspiring N.P./ Cascade S.F.	70 000	40	Minerals; animal control; tourist roading
Fiordland†	Fiordland N.P.	c. 1 000 000	0	Animal control; minerals
Waitutu	Waitutu S.F. (S. Fiordland)	25 000	100	Recreational development; hydro; forestry
McLellan*	Catlins S.F. Park	12 000	100	Limited buffer
Pegasus	S. Stewart Is.	85 000	10	Fishing; hunt- ing; communica- tion bases for oil exploration
<i>Summary</i>		<i>North Island</i>		<i>South Island (incl. Stewart Is.)</i>
Number of wilderness areas		3		11
Area (hectares)		134 000		1 519 000
% in each island		8		92
% of respective island area (approx.)		1		10
% of total N.Z. area (approx.)				6

*Marginal because of small size.

†For simplicity, the three wilderness areas in Fiordland N.P. are treated as an entity.

It would be reasonable to expect an early revision of the recreational zoning of the State forest parks listed in Table 1, with most of the wilderness/no-development zones becoming "remote experience"; it is difficult to conceive of any of them meeting the standards required for a *wilderness* area, such as the "Tasman wilderness" in NW Nelson State Forest Park.

THE WILDERNESS RESOURCE WITHIN STATE FOREST

To what extent does New Zealand's wilderness resource lie within the State forest system? No comprehensive inventory of wilderness has been published by either NZFS or the Department of Lands and Survey, although the NZFS has made preliminary assessments by conservancy. The only published inventory is that based on some of the preliminary findings of the FMC Recreation Plan (Molloy, 1978a). Table 2 presents a summary of these data, revised to exclude four of the previously listed North Island areas since, on the basis of further investigation, I now believe these do not warrant full wilderness area status. Table 2 shows that only 5 of the 14 potential wilderness areas are predominantly in State forest; only 3 of these (Motu, Tasman and Paparoa) are major wilderness areas. Tasman is the only area already given some recognition for its important recreational/conservation value through its designation as a State Forest Park, although Motu would be within a "Ruakumara State Forest Park" which has been approved in principle. Each of these three areas has admirable wilderness characteristics: each is large, remote, wild and generally unmodified by human influences. However, each is also subject to pressures for commercial uses which could largely eliminate its value as a wilderness area. This multiple-use conflict has become apparent in the postponement of a decision on the NW Nelson wilderness area, and it is likely to arise in any future attempts to achieve wilderness area preservation within State forest (Molloy, 1979b).

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE WILDERNESS PRESERVATION

Considering the government's reluctance to accept the NZFS's West Coast ecological/amenity reserves, as well as the NW Nelson wilderness, the prospects for any major wilderness preservation initiatives in the next few years appear limited. There is in New Zealand no co-ordinated

conservation strategy which seeks to assess, methodically and scientifically, the scenic, scientific and recreational values of the natural New Zealand landscape, rank areas according to their conservation priorities, and allocate resources for their appropriate management and administration; rather the situation is one of fragmentation. There have been joint land-use studies (South Westland) the results of which have been largely unimplemented to date; the National Parks Authority has commissioned studies of potential extensions to national parks (Rakaia/Rangitata; Lewis; Punakaiki/Paparoa) which have not taken into account NZFS interests in these regions; the Commission for the Environment is trying to achieve the preservation of wild and scenic rivers, largely because no other department or authority has overall responsibility for, or interest in, their preservation; and the Queen Elizabeth II Trust is still trying to grapple with its unique role in the conservation of open space. Further, the administrative fragmentation is accompanied by a lack of trained scientists and resource planners to document the resources.

In marked contrast to the fragmentary approach to wilderness preservation in New Zealand are the efforts of the land-administering agencies of the U.S. federal government. In particular, the U.S. Forest Service has just completed the "single largest attempt at evaluation and inventory of federal lands for classification to wilderness ever attempted in the U.S." (Lockmann, 1979). This comprehensive study of the national forest estate was begun in 1977 and was termed the "Roadless Area Review and Evaluation" (RARE II) project. In their June 1978 draft Environmental Statement (USDA, 1978) the U.S. Forest Service evaluated a total of 2686 roadless areas comprising over 25 million hectares of the national forests. Further, to enhance an awareness of the social and biophysical dimensions of wilderness in the minds of the American public, the Environmental Statement was accompanied by 21 separate state and multi-state supplements, with complete lists of all "roadless" tracts (and additional maps thereof).

Clearly the current New Zealand situation indicates the need for the NZFS to institute a similar evaluation of the important wilderness resource in our State forest system. Further, the social and philosophical attitudes of New Zealanders towards wilderness deserve a study in parallel. For wilderness is not just a negative "locking-up"; scientific, aesthetic and recreational benefits also accrue through wilderness designation. "Balanced" State forest use in New Zealand will not be achieved without such an effort.

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