EDITORIAL COMMENT

Biological Resources

This journal has not previously noted the establishment of the Biological Resources Centre (BRC), a body established in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in 1981. This failure is an oversight more regrettable than usual because of the seminal role played by foresters, forest scientists, members of the Institute, and the journal itself in the establishment and recognition of ecology as a formal branch of science in New Zealand. The imperative for the establishment of the centre to bring some co-ordination to the collection, recording and availability of natural resource data is attributable, at least in part, to our profession's failure to follow up the substantial effort of the post-war years in National Forest Survey, Ecological Survey and the High Country Surveys. We must, however, recognise that the need was there, be grateful that the initiative was taken, and ensure that, as a discipline, forest science endeavours to make it work.

The BRC is a consequence of the increasing impossibility for a single man, or even a single group, to monitor the advances in the whole range of natural sciences in New Zealand. It is an inevitable result of our increasing affluence and our concomitant ability to devote increasing resources to the study of nature and natural systems. (While the question cannot be answered, it is reasonable to enquire, in the context of present pressures for the maintenance of large areas of natural systems with minimal cultural interference in perpetuity, precisely what permanent disability has been incurred by the nation by not having had at its command during the settlement and development phase of the past 150 years, the academic resources now largely marshalled on the side of significantly greater emphasis on the virtues of naturalness.)

The objectivenes and functions of the BRC are concisely described in its first annual report.* They cover the area generally of biological information-gathering and research co-ordination, compatibility and adequacy, and the appropriate use of this information in planning and management. Implemented fully, they will represent a significant advance in the determination and

*1st Annual Report, Biological Resources Centre Advisory Committee, Wellington, August, 1982.

application of biological information in the management of land-vegetation systems for whatever purpose. The achievement of the centre in producing, for the first time, a comprehensive mapping series representing the Ecological Regions and Districts of New Zealand provides a consistent national framework for appropriate management of the country's remaining natural lands. It builds in large measure on the pioneering work in forest typing carried out without fanfare over many years by the Forest Research Institute.

Reservation of Natural Lands

The BRC, and its standardised mapping and data management systems, provide a realistic base for a rationalisation of a chaotic reserve system. That representative natural systems should be conserved is now virtually undisputed; that such a system should be managed according to consistent principles and practice is probably also generally accepted, but it can hardly be said that the complicated system of reserved lands of the Crown currently existing fosters that management.

New Zealand has national parks, scenic reserves, nature reserves, wildlife reserves, ecological areas, sanctuaries—a wide range of overlapping and confusing designations of land having essentially similar management objectives. We should seize the opportunity afforded by the current willingness to grapple with administrative reorganisation of land management* to revise our classification. So far as the public are concerned, we need only Nature Reserves, which should have a grading, indicating their relative status in terms of uniqueness, for the use of the managers. Such a system would easily overlay and be compatible with land designations which have a wider management or administrative connotation, such as National park, State forest park, State forest, or farm park.

Wilderness and Zoning

The Department of Lands and Survey and New Zealand Forest Service jointly issued in 1980 a Wilderness Policy, which sets out an explanation of the wilderness concept, criteria for wilderness areas, and principal requirements for their management.

The desire for wilderness, that "out there" lies some area untouched by man to which one can go unhindered and "find oneself", seems to be widespread, at least among the educated

*Ref. *N.Z. Jl For.*, 27 (1): "Whither the Forest Service?".

and articulate élite, the undoubted beneficiaries of industrialisation. As the policy admits, wilderness is a very personal idea, embodying remoteness, challenge, solitude, freedom, romance and empathy with wild nature. Its very existence, let along our personal experience of it, seems to wash from us the strains and stresses which are an inevitable part of modern life.

It is admirable that such a management policy has been derived, but let us not forget two important aspects; first, wilderness is, by its very nature and definition, inaccessible to probably a majority of New Zealanders, and secondly, were it to be accessible, it would no longer be wilderness. It is essentially inegalitarian in nature.

The management paradox is that its very recognition by formal policy, and its designation in public maps and plans contain the seeds of its own destruction. People whose recreational needs *may* have been capable of satisfaction in some other place are attracted simply by the designation. This problem is yet another manifestation of the difficulties which are increasingly arising, as cultural pressures (whether for development or preservation) increase, from the drawing of rigid lines on a two-dimensional, highly artificial representation of a natural system. Not only is it generally impossible to recognise firm boundaries for different management objectives as clearly on the ground as on a map, but man is also part of the natural system, and his perceptions of the system are in large measure a function of the lines which are drawn. The public's concept of a dynamic natural system becomes thus fixed at a given moment in time by simplistic lines reflecting but the integration of social objectives and attitudes, and economic realities appropriate to that time. Humanity being what it is, it becomes increasingly difficult to change the "boundaries" to reflect the changing human condition.

Perhaps there is no answer to this dilemma. It cannot, however, be in the long-term interest of wilderness, or forest sanctuaries, to flaunt their existence.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act (1983)* is an event of significance to all New Zealanders, particularly to members of this Institute, since the largest part of the indigenous forest estate, and about half of the plantation estate, are administered in the State sector. The New Zealand Forest Service has over

*Ref. article in this journal by T. Simeonidis.

many years been remarkably unconstrained by the former Official Secrets Act, and forest management information has been available virtually on demand. Indeed the Forest Service was amongst the first to adopt the procedures of publication in draft of various documents, and the invitation thereon of public comments. The new Act should therefore make little immediate difference, since it provides for constraints on the kind of commercially sensitive information which was anyway subject to control. In the long term, however, the Act will require that a more consistent effort than hitherto be put into public education. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, and the public understanding of forestry and forest management principles is disturbingly inadequate. A much more easily available, and much greater quantity of basic information requires the development of a much greater capacity to understand. In a world dominated, if not essentially run, by the manipulation of lobbyists (from politicians for votes to the manufacturers of breakfast foods), the level of effort and expenditure by the forestry sector in New Zealand in promoting forestry has been inadequate. The Freedom of Information Act will require a better performance.

The Millionth Hectare

During the winter of 1983 New Zealand will establish its one millionth hectare of plantation of introduced tree species. By any standard this represents a remarkable achievement for a small country with an extremely short history. We owe a great deal to both the early foresters who accurately foresaw an impending deficit in New Zealand's wood supply, and the courage of those who, in the 1920s, 1930s, and again in the 1960s and 1970s, built upon the secure foundations of resolved management and planted for export. The current national exotic species annual cut is in the order of 10 million m^3, of which about half is for export in some form. This volume is being sustained largely on the so-called "old crop" resources of the tremendous plantings of the depression years, and can be barely sustained through the lean planting years of the '40s and '50s, to 1990, when the cut can rise again, doubling and trebling by about the end of the first decade of the 21st Century.

The challenge is going to be the harvesting,* conversion (to what product?) and the marketing of this volume. It is a challenge which is being addressed, perhaps thus far in a sporadic and

*See article by W. W. Carson in this issue.

unco-ordinated way: the reconstruction of the Forestry Council; the initiation of studies of utilisation strategies and infrastructure requirements with local government; the inception of a formal Conversion Planning Group at the Forest Research Institute and the intention of the New Zealand Forest Service to prepare and publish on a more formal and consistent basis the projection of volume by wood category arising in each region according to its management strategy. All of these things are made possible by the successful development over the past decade of the modelling tools required. None would have been necessary but for the vision of those who saw, in the juxtaposition of declining world wood resources, the unique combination of qualities of radiata pine and the available land and climate of New Zealand, an opportunity. This generation faces the challenge of capitalising on that vision.

The Central North Island Planning Study (CNIPS)

This major study, co-ordinated by the planning branch of the Ministry of Works and Development, and having input from industry, government departments, consultants and local government, was initiated in mid-1981, and reported to the Minister for Regional Development in April 1983. The study is an impressive piece of work, and is published in a series of technical reports of considerable length*. The study sought

- to compare the national and regional implications of a range of forestry and related transport-servicing development options within the central North Island over the next 25 years.
- to alert government, United Council and forest-related industry to the major investment and other decisions which will have to be taken over the next decade to ensure that forestry and associated service development is in the best interests of all involved.

The study, which calls itself "a strategies planning experiment", reaches the implicit conclusion that the current forest management strategy does not maximise the national or regional benefit. It promotes small-scale (rather than large-scale company or State) forestry; lowland, port-adjacent forests (rather than remote, hill country, and marginal agricultural land afforestation); clearwood (pruned logs) (rather than other silvicultural regimes); sawmilling (rather than reconstituted wood-using industries).

*CNIPS Findings; Project Reports 1-3; Technical Papers 1-10. Ministry of Works & Development, Wellington, 1983.

In reaching these conclusions CNIPS has almost certainly gone beyond the point justified by the standard of the evidence adduced. Forestry is, and must be by its very nature, a conservative discipline. Mistakes can take several rotations to iron out of the system. It would be wrong, therefore, to pursue immediately as absolute truths, applicable in all regions, on all sites, in any stage of industrial development or sophistication, the indications now becoming apparent from the work of the last decade in radiata silviculture, or indeed the financial answers apparent from the economic analyses incorporated in the study.

The forestry profession has a justifiable complaint about the study. It has too frequently used the work of foresters, forest planners, and researchers without adequate acknowledgement, in producing a set of conclusions which many regard as too facile by half. But this criticism is not wholly responsible. Notwithstanding that the study could not have been made at all, had the basic building blocks such as growth models, forest simulation models, economic models, and models of harvesting, transport and processing not already been developed and in use by sector planners, the exercise has been beneficial to the sector.

— Channels of communication have been established with local government.

— The lack of any immediate requirement for infrastructural development in the region has been demonstrated.

— The imperative need for the forestry sector to use its own tools, and publish its findings is now clear.

— A methodology of communication, and integrated planning has been developed.

— And, probably most importantly, the areas of dispute have been identified.

The ball is now firmly in the sector's court. Having failed to communicate its capabilities and plans, the job has been done, however imperfectly, by planners. The lesson is clear. Forestry has major implications for the regions. If forest managers and planners cannot communicate, and devise acceptable policies with regional government and other sectors, then the communication and the policy determination will be done by others, and the results may reflect an inevitably lesser degree of understanding.