Snakes and ladders on the Resource Management Bill?

IN MAY the Local Government and Environment Select Committee, chaired by the Greens' Jeanette Fitzsimons reported back to Parliament on the RMA Amendment Bill. Marian Hobbs, Minister for the Environment, has welcomed the reported back Bill.

The good news is the Committee has rejected the majority of the changes aimed at reducing public participation pushed by the former National Government. One of the key changes thrown out was limited notification - rejected by the Committee out of concern it would reduce public participation.

These changes resulted in the majority of the Committee members:

• Rejecting limits on public notification, the non-council processing of resource consents, and direct referral of resource consent hearings to the Environment Court.
• Retaining non-complying activity status, the Board of Inquiry process for national policy statements, the presumption against subdivision, and the definition of "environment" and "amenity values".

To clear up the relative responsibilities of regional and district councils, the Select Committee has added an obligation on all councils to "maintain indigenous biodiversity" and for regional councils "to maintain and enhance ecosystems in water bodies and coastal water".

Since the Committee released its report, opponents of public participation have been pushing hard for limited notification and other changes to be put back into the Bill before it is passed by Parliament.

Now for the bad news

Since the Committee released its report, opponents of public participation have been pushing hard for limited notification and other changes to be put back into the Bill before it is passed by Parliament. "Anti-RMA" stories have been appearing in newspapers and on television – and it is probable government ministers will be getting told the same stories.

In response to lobbying from industry groups the Government has established a special Cabinet Committee to review the RMA and local council performance. The Committee members are: Marian Hobbs (Environment Chair), Jim Anderton (Economic Development), Michael Cullen (Treasurer), Sandra Lee (Local Government), Paul Swain (Commerce), and Margaret Wilson (Courts).

Anderton and Swain are being advised by the Ministry of Economic Development, an agency hostile to the RMA. Anderton has repeatedly made statements questioning the Act over the past six months. This committee will make decisions on any changes to the RM Bill before it is passed. These decisions are likely to be influenced by the impending report of the Business Compliance Costs Committee.

The Business Compliance Costs Committee was established by the Minister of Commerce (Swain) to inquire into the costs of business compliance and it will be raising concerns over the RMA as part of its report to be released at the end of June. This Committee has been lobbied by industry groups opposed to the RMA and public participation. There is no one on the Committee who has any resource management experience.

—Continued over page

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We can expect the Committee to question public notification and public involvement in the RMA, and delays at the Environment Court. It is unclear whether the Committee knew that less than five percent of consents are actually publicly notified and only a small proportion of these end up in Court.

To help prevent these negative changes being put back on the table, probably by means of a supplementary order paper introduced when the Bill is debated in Parliament, government MPs and cabinet ministers need to hear our voices now. The Bill is expected to go through its final stages in early July so it’s vital you take action today.

**Action:**

Please write to the Prime Minister and Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs, supporting
- the Resource Management Bill as reported back by the Select Committee;
- more resources for the Ministry for the Environment to assist councils implement the Act in a consistent way and develop national standards and national policy statements.
(Mail is free post, Parliament Buildings, Wellington; email hclark@ministers.govt.nz, mhobbs@ministers.govt.nz).

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**Oceans Policy consultation hits the road unheralded**

**THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION** on the public’s views and values on oceans has begun with virtually no publicity and in a self-defeatingly abrupt and unheralded manner.

It was only Friday 22 June that ECO received word of meetings beginning on 25 June in New Plymouth and following through to Wanganui (26 June), Palmerston North (27 June) and Tauranga (2 July) and so on through the country.

The consultation and indeed the whole Review is in jeopardy because of this lack of notice. Most meetings are being hosted by district councils, not the most accessible nor most friendly venue. The whole process is suffering from lack of proper publicity, lack of political and media profile and a time line ludicrously condensed.

The squeeze can partly be explained by government’s decision to stay with the same deadline for reporting to Cabinet in September despite three months being lost as the composition of the Oceans Policy Ministerial Advisory Committee was wrangled over.

The full schedule of public meetings, all from 5.30-7.30pm is, is available from the ECO office.

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**Buller River Water Conservation Order**

**A WATER CONSERVATION ORDER** for the West Coast’s Buller River and catchment will come into force on 21 July.

This order comes 14 years after the application was originally applied for under the Water and Soil Conservation Act. This is the eleventh water conservation order and the second under the Resource Management Act.

The order places restrictions on damming of certain waterways, and on alterations to the quality of the waters included in the order. The purpose of a water conservation order is to recognise and sustain waters that are considered to be outstanding as a habitat or fishery, or for scenic, scientific or recreational values.

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**Environment Centre Funding**

IN MAY the government announced funding to nine environment centres throughout New Zealand.

The first funding round was significantly over-subscribed with the Ministry for the Environment receiving 21 applications for funding. Of the initial $300,000 available, the nine successful applicants will receive between $10,000 and $50,000.

Money has been allocated to support both existing centres, and to establish several new centres. Centres to receive funding include the Far North Environment Centre, the Christchurch Environment Centre, the Dunedin Environment Centre, and the South Coast Environment Centre (Riverton). New centres will be established in Northland, Nelson, Tauranga, Raglan and Invercargill.

ECO applied for funding, in conjunction with the Wellington Peace and Environment Centre, NZAEE, and the Sustainable Wellington Network. Although not successful, the groups have been asked to resubmit their application. We’ll keep you posted on progress.

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**Wellington Peace and Environment Centre**

**Street Appeal 20 July 2001**

**Collectors needed urgently**

Contact the ECO office on 385 7545 or email eco@reddfish.co.nz for details

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**Disclaimer**

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this publication, ECO, its Executive and Editorial Staff accept no liability for any errors or omissions. Views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the policy opinions of ECO or its member bodies.
Protection of Timberland’s Forests Welcomed

THE TRANSFER to protected status of the West Coast forests formerly held by the state owned logging company, Timberlands West Coast has been warmly welcomed by ECO.

Congratulations go to Helen Clark, Pete Hodgson and Sandra Lee and all the others in government who have done the right thing here, for the environment, for the future and for New Zealanders. It has been as plain as day for years that logging native forest was a fool’s game and it is great to see sense prevail.

We need to recognise too, all those people, many within ECO member organisations, from Native Forest Action to National Council of Women, who have worked in many different ways for this protection. We pay particular tribute to those environmentalists on the West Coast who have often been put under severe personal pressure for their views.

The Government’s decision follows the report of the Independent Panel of Experts (Bruce Hamilton, Mike Harding, Les Molloy, Gerry McSweeney and Bruce Watson) which recommended the allocation of the 150,000 ha of Timberlands native forests to the Department of Conservation.

The proposals to be implemented by Government include:
- Addition of 14 areas to Victoria Forest Park;
- Six new and 18 additions to ecological areas;
- Two new scenic reserves and five additions to scenic reserves;
- One new scientific reserve;
- One new wildlife management area and five additions to wildlife management areas.

The Minister of Conservation, Sandra Lee, has asked the New Zealand Conservation Authority to approve the addition of some areas to current national parks: Kahurangi — including North Karamia forest; Paparoa — including the forests near Charleston; Westland/Tai Pouinti National Parks — including Saltwater and North Okarito forest.

The panel recommends a new Maruia-Waiau National Park which would include Lewis Pass National Reserve, Maruia Valley Beech forests and upper Waiau Valley. This will require public consultation and submissions at a future stage.

In addition, there will be investigations into proposals for a new Kawakariri Conservation Park, between the Kahurangi National Park and the lower Buller Gorge, and a new Mawhera Conservation Park in the lower Grey Valley.

A decision to add the magnificent Waggon Creek area to Paparoa National Park is deferred subject to a review of limestone resources in the Westland area. This review is to be undertaken by the Department of Conservation and Ministry of Economic Development and to be completed by early 2002. We should remember Jacques Cousteau’s caustic comment when he learned NZ’s mining companies wanted to mine these limestone cave areas — many of which contain fossils of long lost species. “There’re not many other countries that would put their museums through the mincer”.

The first batch of 46,000 ha will be transferred to the Department of Conservation on 1 July 200+1. The final gazettal will occur on 1 April 2002, the day after Timberslands is required to stop logging indigenous forests. For more information see the DoC website (www.doc.govt.nz).

Cath Wallace

Making Waves: Community and the Environment

ECO Annual Conference – Fri 24-Sun 26 August 2001
Quaker Settlement, 76 Virginia Road, Wanganui

The community and the environment will be the focus of the ECO annual conference 24-26 August in Wanganui (not Palmerston North as previously advertised). The conference will examine how the community can, and is engaging with, and about the environment through direct conservation efforts on land and on the coast; partnerships for conservation and the environment; the RMA, and the local body elections. We will have a special session on oceans and on fisheries, on community and non-governmental input into the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio 10 years on), and on the local responses to globalisation. We hope to span urban, rural and marine issues.

The conference will be a mix of open sessions and ECO-only workshops. We plan not only to work but to have entertainment and to have a short field trip or two.

The conference begins on Friday afternoon and continues through to Sunday afternoon. See you there.

For further information, contact Ross Gardiner (Conference Organiser), ECO, PO Box 11-057, Wellington, eco@reddish.co.nz, 04-385-7545.
Marine

Ministry of Fisheries Snubs Nose at Law

THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES REFUSES to investigate the environmental impacts of trawling or dredging in its annual “Sustainability Measures” round.

Instead it intends to allow continued trawling for orange roughy and other species, including on hitherto untrawled seamounts, even though the Aquatic Environment Working Group (AEWG) has noted that damage from trawling can be expected.

The Ministry pretends that closing 19 seamounts out of over 600 is a “precautionary approach” and that it is enough simply to close those seamounts and to allow the rest to be trawled. We disagree. We think that the report of the AEWG and the international literature are inconsistent with the Ministry’s approach. We think Peter Hodgson, Minister of Fisheries, needs to get busy and take control of his Ministry’s approach to fisheries management. So far he has taken a disappointingly “lands off” position: though the Purchase Agreement between himself and the Ministry requires them to manage fisheries using an ecosystem approach.

Under the Fisheries Act 1996 anyone performing any duties, powers and functions, in relation to utilisation or sustainability of fisheries resources must consider three environmental principles. These relate to maintaining populations of associated and dependent species, maintaining biodiversity and protecting habitat of significance to fisheries management (section 9). The Act also requires that “any adverse effects of fishing on the aquatic environment” be avoided, remedied or mitigated (s8).

The Ministry has refused to even put on the Sustainability Decisions Round agenda any of the proposals that ECO and Forest and Bird asked for. Amongst these, it refused to agenda the request we made for consideration of the environmental impacts of trawling and dredging.

We say that the Ministry is failing in both its legal and moral duty and that the Minister should call the Ministry to order. Failing this, we will be left to consider a full-scale public campaign against NZ trawl caught fish and/or legal action to take the pathetic and contradictory advice by the Ministry to Court. Anyone wishing to help ECO take the Ministry to court or who wants to help with an international campaign is invited to contact ECO.

Meanwhile, don’t eat trawl caught fish such as orange roughy, hoki, oreo, hake, ling, red cod, and snapper. Pass it on. Paste it onto any website that you can. Write your letter of protest to Peter Hodgson, Minister of Fisheries, Parliament Buildings, Wellington or Pete.Hodgson@parliament.govt.nz and send us a copy at ECO (ph/fax 04 383 7545, PO Box 11-075 or eco@reddfish.co.nz).

Cath Wallace

International NGO Community calls for a moratorium on toothfish fishing

NEW ZEALAND MUST RETHINK its strategy for marine management in the Ross Sea and the Southern Ocean in light of fishing pressure and illegal, un-regulated and unauthorised (IUU) fishing.

To control illegal fishing ECO and other Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) member bodies are calling for a moratorium on all fishing throughout the Southern Ocean. This moratorium would ensure a breathing space to close down illegal operators, stop fish populations from collapsing and allow wider political consensus among Antarctic Treaty partners on how to manage Southern Ocean fisheries.

It is ECO’s view that New Zealand’s commercial toothfishing interests are being placed above all other New Zealand interests in the Ross Sea, Ministry of Fisheries and Foreign Affairs and Trade proposals will probably lead to more countries wanting to fish in the Ross Sea.

In the last year three countries fished in the Ross Sea for toothfish: New Zealand, South Africa and Uruguay. More are expected if the Antarctic marine fisheries convention (CCAMLR) accepts the New Zealand proposal.

From CCAMLR’s own reports from last year, the level of illegal toothfish fishing has increased and now around a third of the catch in the Southern Ocean is illegal or unauthorised. In addition this fishery is killing between 25,000 and 70,000 albatross and petrels annually.

In an effort to respond to environmentalist’s concerns, CCAMLR introduced a documentation scheme that requires fishers to demonstrate fish is legally caught before it can be landed. But the catch documentation scheme (CDS) to limit illegal fishing has too many loopholes, such as the:
• dependence on the statement of the ship’s master, rather than verification;
• potential for fake catch documents. For example, Uruguay has admitted that some of its documents have been forged;
• differing levels of CCAMLR member-state commitment to the CDS;
• refusal of key non CCAMLR states to apply the CDS eg China – which is inter alia the primary processing state for Japanese toothfish;
• weak application of CDS by new or non-CCAMLR member-states which have agreed to work with CDS (eg Mauritius and Namibia).

Please write to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Phil Goff, calling for a moratorium on toothfishing in the NZ position on fisheries management in the Ross Sea and the rest of the Southern Ocean.
Hoki goes under

DESPITE gaining a highly controversial green tick the hoki fishery is in a sorry state. Doubts about the suitability of the Marine Stewardship Council certification in March 2000 of hoki, have been further emphasised by the latest hoki stock assessment.

Although certification is supposed to assure consumers that the hoki fishery is sustainable, there is strong evidence that the fishery is not being sustainably managed. Certification of hoki has been formally challenged by Forest and Bird with the support of ECO.

Hoki is caught by trawlers in spawning aggregations on the West Coast of the South Island and in Cook Strait, and at other times on the Chatham Rise and south of South Island. The target minimum biomass is 43 percent of the Western stock, and 37 percent for the Eastern stock. Current total yield is estimated at 142,000 tonnes compared to the current catch of 250,000 tonnes.

The latest hoki stock assessment has been publicly released. According to the assessment:

- Western stock - The [NIWA] MIAEL results indicate the stock is currently at about 38% of its virgin size; at current catch levels the estimated risk that the stock would go below 20% of its virgin size in the next five years is 63%.
- Eastern stock - The [NIWA] MIAEL results indicate the stock is currently at about 21% of its virgin size; at current catch levels the estimated risk that the stock would go below 20% of its virgin size in the next five years is 62%.

This assessment vindicates ECO's concern over the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) giving hoki a green tick. ECO has formally supported the complaint by Forest and Bird against the certification.

There is in adequate information about excessive catch, seal and seabird drowning and damage to seafloor dwelling animals to indicate that the hoki fishery does not meet the MSC criteria and should not have been certified. ECO asked that this certification be reviewed and rescinded.

ECO awaits the response from MSC and the certifier SGS. The appeal mechanism however seems highly defective. The certifier reviews the complaints themselves: there is no independent review. The MSC seems incapable of giving a clear account of either the process or the timetable for this – though the latest email suggests it will not be before September.

Fisheries Environmental Management Strategy and Environmental NGOs

THE MINISTER OF FISHERIES, Pete Hodgson, has agreed to a proposal by Jeanette Fitzsimons of the Green Party that environmental non-governmental groups be able to bid into a fund of $50,000 for input into the Ministry of Fisheries' Environmental Management Strategy (EMS).

Only environmental organisations with a demonstrated interest in fisheries issues are being invited to bid for the money and they must be able to demonstrate their capacity to be representative of environmental stakeholders within their membership or more broadly. The funding is one-off and is for the financial year 2001/02.

ECO is considering making such a bid, probably in consultation with the Forest and Bird Society. We are interested in hearing from our member bodies whether they have anyone who could help work on this project. Contact Cath Wallace by email (Cath.Wallace@vw.ac.nz) for more information on this opportunity.

The Environmental Management Strategy being developed by the Ministry of Fisheries has been delayed by restructuring within MFish. The official purpose of the EMS is to "provide the vision and co-ordination necessary for MFish to achieve effective and meaningful improvements in managing the environmental impacts of fishing and to ensure MFish meets the relevant obligations under the Fisheries Act 1996 and other relevant legislation."

ECO welcomes the attention to the environment that this EMS signals but we are concerned that various other more vigorously pursued initiatives undertaken by the Ministry are proceeding without regard for the EMS and that they may compromise it. An example is the Fisheries Plans and the work on defining and allocating rights to fisheries extractive users.

The preparation and consultation on the draft EMS is scheduled for July-December 2001 with implementation in 2002 and thereafter.

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**GOVERNMENT**

**Environmental Priorities: shift in direction?**

**THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, Hon Marian Hobbs** laid out her and the government's environmental priorities in early June 2001. ECO is pleased to see the big picture being given some attention, and the focus is shifting from perpetual monitoring and technical assessment to an action oriented approach. Of course, we all know deeds speak louder than words.

Although signalling a change in direction, the priorities are underpinned by reliance on the market and business knights in green armour to lead the way to sustainable development. It is questionable the degree to which ecological imperatives will constrain economic activity. Leadership is referred to, but regulation, targets and timetables are not.

A noticeable omission is any reference to marine or oceans policy issues. A clear explanation of why this is the case has not been provided.

ECO had some difficulty interpreting a number of the sweeping statements. For instance, Ms Hobbs has indicated that it is necessary to streamline rules and regulations but was not specific about whether this meant amendments to the RMA. The Minister has not ruled out a Supplementary Order Paper, which could be used to reintroduce some of the National-Act government’s amendments.

The Minister’s statement included the following text. The full text can be found on www.executive.govt.nz under ministerial speeches.

“I am pursuing six broad objectives...:

- To motivate and empower people to own the problems and the solutions
- To reduce risks to people and the environment
- To promote environmentally friendly economic growth ie “decoupling”
- To cement a close working relationship with local government and iwi
- To forge a strategic alliance with clean, green business to promote sustainable development
- To streamline rules and regulations (without compromising the above).

... “My approach is partnership underpinned by strong government leadership. It is not a return to centralisation.

“The previous government had a “level playing field” approach, whereas I am looking to tip the playing field in favour of clean, green business. I am also saying that we need to move beyond the “end of the pipe” mentality to policies that decouple environmental damage from economic growth. What do I mean by “end-of-pipe”? At the moment we look at the effects of the discharge instead of examining whether we should have the discharge itself.

“This government’s four highest priority issues are:

- **Climate change**: taking actions to support the government’s commitment to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol; developing environmentally sustainable transport and energy options.
- **Genetic Modification**: creating and implementing a long term strategy for GM following the report of the Royal Commission;
- **Hazard and waste reduction**: making HSNO work, and tackling existing contamination; implementing a new strategy to move New Zealand towards zero waste.
- **Protecting biodiversity, air and water**: setting national standards and promoting their uptake; working with industry sectors including the dairy industry; promoting more efficient use of water resources through guidance and assistance; developing national policy and support for action at the local level.

“In the longer term I have asked the Ministry to review four strategic areas over the next year:

- **Performance and monitoring**: I want to know how we monitor environmental results and performance of local and central government agencies with the aim of providing incentives to councils and other agencies to meet the government’s overall environmental objectives;
- **Community action**: I will review how we promote environmental awareness and action in the community; so that we can set up new long term communication and education programmes.
- **Business innovation and bio-economy**: I will create new approaches to business environmental innovation and seek alliances with key sectors who are willing to embrace sustainable development; (ie the dairy industry)
- **Environmental legislation and institutions**: I want better integrated waste and hazardous substances management under RMA and HSNO (and I am willing to go “up the pipe” to achieve this rather than stick slavishly to environmental effects); reduced litigation and alternative dispute resolution; new mechanisms for promoting national policy, consistency and standards; and alternative institutional models that will improve capacity and leadership at the national level.
Government: Mid Term Report Card

IN THIS REPORT CARD, we assess the government’s performance mid-way through its term. We assess its performance against the Key Commitments that ECO and other organisations put in the Vote for the Environment Charter 1999, the set of policies that we chose as key elements.

As this is only a mid-term assessment there, and the government still has another 18 months or so to go in this Parliamentary term, it is too early to come to a conclusion on all aspects of progress. However, in some cases, we think the continuing environmental damage is so serious that urgent action is needed now.

Protect from logging the 130,000ha of West Coast rainforest in Timberland’s West Coast.

This promise is nearly done and earns special credit for Ministers Pete Hodgson & Sandra Lee, and for dedicated work by John Blinco and critical support from Helen Clark. Jim Anderton and Michael Cullen nearly wrecked it. The price of $120m is ridiculous. They lost full marks for not ceasing logging immediately. Great to see the land now being transferred to DoC.

Increase baseline DoC funding by $200 million over three years.

Funding has been increased via the Biodiversity and Biosecurity packages but this is a long way short of the $200 million increase in baseline for DoC that we hoped for.

Replace the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry with a Ministry of Biosecurity, including MAF Quarantine, and a Ministry of Food. Reallocate MAF’s residual functions to the Ministry for the Environment (sustainable land management and indigenous forest management) and the Ministry of Commerce.

The government has not elected to establish a new Ministry. However, considerable effort has gone into developing a Biosecurity Strategy and more funds have been targeted at biosecurity initiatives, the most obvious being border checks to prevent foot and mouth entering the country.

Shift the emphasis of taxation away from expenditure and jobs and instead onto charges for environmentally damaging activities.

The government has not directly addressed this issue but instead has asked the very conservative Tax Review 2001 group to look into it. Only the carbon charge has made it into the interim report, but the Report is lukewarm. The government has not done it but also has not ruled it out.

Adopt a 20% or greater cut in 2008-12 greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels.

The government has included greenhouse gas responses as one of its four main priorities. It is focussing on the transport sector and energy efficiency measures in the Green’s Jeanette Fitzsimons’ Energy Efficiency Act, but it has not taken any more systemic approaches such as a greenhouse gas charge.

Introduce a significant fiscally neutral carbon charge at a rate greater than $50/tonne of CO2.

The government has kicked the issue to the Taxation Review 2001 Committee which it is using to avoid action this Parliamentary Term. At best it has not yet ruled it out. The government instead seems to be caving in to the polluters who want tradable rights -- with windfall gains to polluters if these permits are issued to polluters according to their pollution history.

Provisional D for procrastination and lack of commitment to a greenhouse gas charge.

Establish a five-year moratorium on the field testing and commercial release of genetically engineered organisms while a comprehensive review and assessment of the long term effects and risks is undertaken.

We got the Royal Commission but not the five year moratorium. Government Crown Research Institutes have led the fight against the moratorium.

D for the lack of a moratorium, B+ for the Royal Commission. Marks lost for poor process.

Phase out chlorinated PVC Plastic, chlorinated solvents and the small number of anti-sapstain and timber treatment chemicals still in registered use by December 2002.

Phase outs have not been achieved but the government has signed (but not yet ratified) the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Agreement. The intent is positive, we are now waiting for action.

Oppose the amendments to the Resource Management Act which restrict public participation or weaken environmental assessment provisions.

The reported back Bill from the Environment and Local Government Select Committee (chaired by Jeanette Fitzsimons) drops most of the pernicious National-Act led changes to the RMA. The danger now is that the Ministerial Committee on the RMA chaired by Environment Minister Hobbs will introduce a sneaky Supplementary Order Paper to re-introduce National-Act ammendments. Hobbs is under pressure from Jim Anderton, Michael Cullen (Finance) and Paul Swain (Minister of Economic Development) to sacrifice
communities and the environment to business interests. Other Ministers on the RMA Committee may oppose this and Helen Clark is usually good on environmental issues. Labour, the Alliance and the Greens all promised to oppose the amendments – any backtracking will be a major betrayal.

No Grade at this stage: write your letters now. Could be an A or a D

Reform the management of the marine environment with the aim of establishing a Ministry of Marine Environmental Management with integrating legislation to achieve comprehensive management of the marine environment consistent with the United Nations Law of the Sea, the UN Fisheries Agreement and the Convention on Biodiversity.

The government has announced an Oceans Policy process lead by a Ministerial Committee chaired by Pete Hodgson. Consultation on the public’s aims and values for the sea is about to begin. The process has three stages but this first important public consultation phase is being rushed because of delays in appointing the Ministerial Advisory Committee which was set up to run the consultation. The Oceans Policy secretariat seems underpowered. Despite budgetary allocations for the Oceans Policy review (about half what is needed) the government has not given this process the profile it deserves.

An A for potential but in danger of becoming a D unless it is given more profile urgently.

Retain government control and administration of fisheries management, research and enforcement, including the preparation of sustainability plans, fisheries research for the purposes of the Fisheries Acts and the catch and effort data bases, rather than devolving these functions to the fishing industry.

Government control of research has been temporarily retained but the corrosive effect of industry expectations that they will in future run research has remained. Scientists – for instance at NIWA – remain under strict management controls to gag them from commenting on the fisheries management significance of their work least it offend the future paymasters.

Most of the administration of the quota registry has been handed over to an industry company, FishServe, but catch and effort data has been retained by government.

Despite strong environmental concerns, Minister Pete Hodgson seems content to allow the Ministry of Fisheries and the industry to pursue devolution largely uninterrupted.

Provisional D - could be rescued to a C or even a B but could well decline to an E.

Introduce requirements for environmental and impact assessments for fishing and include a requirement for the Minister of Conservation’s concurrence with any measure (including a decision to have no measure) to protect marine life from the impacts of fishing.

Environmental assessments are implicit already in the Fisheries Act 1996 Environmental Principles (59), but the Ministry has refused to undertake any assessment of the impacts of trawling or any explicit environmental impact assessment. The Minister has not insisted on this either.

A modest amount of resources has been put into an Environmental Management Strategy and $50,000 allocated for input by environmental groups. The work on the environmental management strategy may be compromised by a lack of input by people with a background in environmental impacts and planning background and by work underway on Fisheries Plans and rights assignments to fishers. Needs much more careful thought and Ministerial oversight.

There have been no moves to require the concurrence of the Minister of Conservation despite DoC being the putative owner of the seabed (subject to Treaty claims of course). This may be considered as part of the Oceans Policy reform.

Tentative mark: a mix of Ds and Bs.

Provide safe refuges for marine life and enhance sustainable fisheries management by establishing marine protected areas including protecting 5% of New Zealand’s marine area as no-take marine reserves by 2002 and 20% protected by 2010.

No more marine reserves have yet been gazetted since this government took the reins. The New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy provides for work to develop a strategy for establishing a network of marine reserves and protected marine areas and a target of 10% protection of NZ’s marine environment by 2010. Pedantic officials are trying to reinterpret this language to restrict it to 10% of our Territorial Sea (out to 12 nautical miles) instead of both the Territorial Sea and the area beyond to the 200 nautical mile limit (ie the EEZ). Conservation Minister Sandra Lee is keen to see more marine reserves but obstacles from some iwi and the Ministry of Fisheries have been thrown in her path.

B for the policy review; E for new marine reserves.

Resolve Treaty of Waitangi grievances by using productive Crown resources (eg SOE land and other resources) in the settlement of Treaty claims.

Conservation land should only be used in special circumstances (eg urupu and notable pa sites).

We have not been able to determine this – nothing dramatic has happened in this area, but government policy is similar to this apart from the use of productive resources.

Maintain and enhance public foot access to the public conservation estate and along the coast and waterways including the Queen’s chain.

We are not aware of any incursions on public access. There has been some extra funding for DoC structures.
Heading to Johannesburg

IF THE OCEANS POLICY consultation leaves a lot to be desired, Marian Hobbs’ and the Ministry for the Environment’s consultation with the public seems well organised and well prepared. The contrast between the two consultations is striking.

The Minister for the Environment is reaching out to the public to find out what people think about NZ’s environmental record. The Ministry for the Environment will report to the Rio+10 Summit and preparatory meetings. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, being held in Johannesburg September 2002, is the follow-up meeting to the Rio Earth Summit (or UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED, as it is properly known).

The NZ Report is due to be tabled in January 2002. The Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Biodiversity Convention were two legally binding conventions from Rio. As well, there was an Agreement on Forestry Principles, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the multichapter Agenda 21 (an agenda for the 21st Century).

The Ministry for the Environment has developed several materials for the consultation, including a website questionnaire, a questionnaire packaged with a six page information folder, and a kite folder of sheets on a range of background issues.

The information provided tells people what the process is and how it links to the Rio+10 and some background material on the environment. We do worry however that the form used for consultation could bias results, in that one table asks people to rank priorities and yet leaves marine issues and fishing off the list – except to the extent that they are covered under “protecting biodiversity” and “clean beaches and coastal water”. Oceans and deeper sea are not mentioned.

The deadline for input is July 9. The website is www.mfe.govt.nz, then look for what’s new and then for rio. The international website is www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm The Ministry can also be contacted for more starter packs and response forms at (04) 917-7493 or 04-917-7253.

Environment CEO Resigns

The chief executive of the Ministry for the Environment, Denise Church, is stepping down in August to give priority to her two-year-old daughter. Denise has been CEO of MFE since 1996.


Ms Church has recently been appointed to the board of Landcare, the CRI providing research and services in conservation and sustainable land management land.

The deputy head of the Ministry, Lindsay Gow, will be the acting chief executive. The process for appointing a permanent chief executive will begin shortly.

Government Spy Agency gets its Act

THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS Security Bureau (GSCB) is to have its own Act.

The GCSB is the government spy agency that is linked to the USA, UK, Australia in the Echelon spy system which monitors via a huge privacy invading scanning system the phone calls, emails, faxes and other electronic communication of most of us.

The system relies on key words as well as the names of selected people and organisations to home in on communications. The Bill would allow computers to be searched and would compel internet providers, telephone providers and others to allow government taps into their systems.

The Echelon system, exposed by Nicky Hager, has caused outrage in Europe but has been largely and lazily shrugged off here. The Bill would only allow targeting of foreign organisations and people, including however any international organisation. Any UN organisation, any international conservation or environmental organisation and anyone communicating with them would be covered. It has also been shown by Nicky Hager that the members of the Echelon system spy on each others nationals and then pass the information back as a means of getting round the laws protecting nationals from being spied on by their own governments.

Submissions are open on the Government Communications Security Bureau Bill until 30 June 2001.
Boycott Mobil

IN MARCH, GEORGE W. BUSH tore up the Kyoto Protocol, the only international treaty to prevent dangerous global warming. This was just the policy that Mobil was lobbying for. Mobil (known as Exxon/Mobil in the United States) is the largest publicly owned fossil fuel company on the planet, and they are spending billions of dollars on exploring for more fossil fuels, such as oil, coal and gas.

Two thousand five hundred of the world’s experts on global warming (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) agree that global warming is already happening and burning fossil fuels causes global warming. They have predicted more severe storms, droughts, up to 6-metre rise in sea levels, glacial and polar ice melt down. This will lead to massive ecological, economic and social disruption.

Mobil, however, disagrees with the world’s experts, by claiming that the science of global warming is not certain enough. If we do not urgently cut our use of fossil fuels and start down a renewable energy pathway, we risk irreversible global warming.

Six things to think about before buying Mobil products:
1) Mobil pretends that global warming is not happening even though they are a major cause of it. Mobil belongs to a US lobby group, which spent over $16.8 million in a PR campaign to undermine the Kyoto Protocol.
2) Mobil is running a public relations campaign which tries to position the company as being clean and green and caring for future generations. However, if they cared about future generations they would spend their profits on clean renewable energy such as wind and solar energy, rather than more fossil fuels.
3) Mobil refuses to invest in clean, green energy and instead spend all their money on dirty oil and gas. By comparison, Shell and BP will invest $1200 million each over the next three years in green energy projects.
4) Mobil is the biggest oil company in the world - $42.5 billion in profits in 2000. If anyone can afford to help stop global warming, it’s Mobil.
5) Mobil spent over US$1 million on George W. Bush’s election campaign. As soon as George W. Bush became president, he said that the United States would pull out of international agreements to stop global warming – exactly the policy that Mobil have been lobbying for.
6) Mobil is poised to spend billions of dollars on future fossil fuel exploration and is lobbying to open the Arctic Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration.

Visit: www.stopmobil.net

Mobil refuses Auckland Regional Council

The ARC has discovered that oil companies are able to reduce the sulphur levels to 1000ppm for Auckland, at a cost of less than one cent per litre using existing technology. This voluntary reduction would remove about 1000kg per day of particulate matter from the air that Aucklanders breath.

As of 15 June, Caltex, BP and Shell have agreed to the lower sulphur levels. Mobil has refused.

Visit www.arc.govt.nz

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Maximum sulphur content permitted in diesel (ppm)

Kyoto Protocol does not need the US

EVEN WITHOUT THE US, the Kyoto Protocol could come into force. All it needs is countries responsible for 55 percent of greenhouse gas emissions to ratify the agreement.

This could mean a combination of the European Union countries, Russia, and Japan. European leaders have reaffirmed their commitment and so have other countries including New Zealand.

This is not the first convention that has been ratified without US involvement or coming to the party once the convention is in force. This happened with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Biodiversity Convention that has been ratified by over 100 countries apart from the US.

New Zealand should go forward with proactive measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make early progress on ratifying the Kyoto Protocol.
NEW ZEALANDERS have suddenly come face to face with the stark reality that we have unacceptably high levels of dioxins in our bodies.

The story of dioxin contamination in New Plymouth from the former Ivon Watkins Dow (now Dow Agrosciences) chemical factory, together with the leaked government report which warns us that we have high levels of dioxins, makes for grim reading.

Dioxins, one of the most toxic chemicals known to humans, are known to cause cancer, birth defects, and are associated with diabetes and motor neuron problems to name just a few of the health effects.

What is the government doing?

New Zealand has never had standards to limit the amount of dioxins being pumped into our environment.

This government is now proposing standards and policy to protect our health and environment. However the challenge for the government is not just to allow dioxin contaminating industry to continue to emit dioxins, albeit to a certain standard, but to make good its commitment to the ultimate goal of eliminating dioxins.

This means that dioxin contaminating sources must be phased out. For example the chlorine bleaching of pulp for the paper industry must change to oxygen bleaching technology, the incineration of medical, quarantine and hazardous waste must change to clean technologies. There must be an urgent programme to clean dioxin and organochlorine contaminated sites. Any clean up must be total, so that the toxic chemical is effectively destroyed, not just transferred from one place to another.

Strong Treaty to eliminate dioxins

The nations of the world agreed in Johannesburg last December to a strong international treaty to protect the environment and people from chemicals which are toxic, long lived and build up in our bodies, such as dioxins.

One of the most significant outcomes from Johannesburg is the agreement to aim to eliminate all twelve of the dangerous chemicals (the dirty dozen) targeted by the toxics treaty, including dioxins. The world has also agreed that, in order to work towards dioxin elimination, there is a need to replace materials, products and production processes which create dioxins, with non dioxin polluting substitutes.

Of great importance for future generations was the agreement to “turn the tap off”, ie to stop producing dangerous chemicals like the dirty dozen. It was also agreed to take a precautionary approach to these kinds of chemicals.

Finally, it was agreed that the developed world must substantially fund the developing world to ensure that poorer nations can also work towards a toxic free future.

“It is encouraging that these chemicals, which are wreaking havoc around the world, are to go. This is a significant step towards a toxic free future, but there is still a lot of work to be done to make it effective. The foundations have been laid, but the real work starts now,” said Sue Connor (Greenpeace).

1 The report is now on the Ministry for the Environment’s website: http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/waste/oc Nes.htm

2 The dirty dozen which are all organochlorines are: dioxins, furans, DDT, dieldrin, aldrin, polychlorinated biphenols, heptachlor, mirex, hexachlorobenzene, chlordane, toxaphene, endrin. For more information see the Greenpeace website at www.greenpeace.org.nz

What you can do about dioxins

- Buy and grow organic food.
- Avoid or reduce animal fat in your diet, especially while pregnant or breastfeeding, as dioxins and furans and other toxins accumulate in fat. This means no or less fatty meat, and fatty dairy products, like butter, cream and yellow cheese.
- Detoxify your body. This is especially important for women before each pregnancy, but avoid doing this during pregnancy and breastfeeding. If you are older you are more likely to have more toxins in you. Fasting on vegetable juices, following an exercise programme, taking certain herbal supplements and megadosing with vitamin C are common ways of detoxifying. It is better to fast under the guidance of a practitioner versed in nutrition such as a naturopath.
- Write to the Minister of Health and the Minister for the Environment asking them to act on eliminating sources of dioxins in our food and environment. Ask them to ban the manufacture and use of 24D in New Zealand, as well as other pesticides which are contaminated with dioxins and furans.

Alison White

Outlaw Deadly Dioxins

Soil and Health, Pesticide Action Network and Greenpeace have formed a coalition to cooperatively work towards ridding New Zealand of dioxins. To join the outlaw dioxins campaign and receive regular updates and info: email outlawdioxinsnz@egroups.com or call 0800 22 33 44, or write to Outlaw Dioxins Network, Private Bag 92507, Wellesley Street, Auckland

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GENETIC ENGINEERING

GE - Public Demand or Industry Imposition?

WHILE I AWAIT the findings of the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification I find myself pondering over how much has changed in terms of economic theory.

When I was at university in the 1970’s we studied supply and demand. Demand from consumers led to business producing goods and services to meet that demand and prices were fixed according to the product’s scarcity. A lot of demand for a scarce product meant higher prices. As prices rose then demand would fall and eventually a balance would be gained.

Today’s markets are touted as being ‘free’ and yet, in many instances, we have big business using public relations and advertising firms to create demand.

No to GE Cotton

INDIA, one of the world’s leading cotton growing countries, has decided not to allow the commercial growing of genetically engineered (GE) cotton thereby maintaining the country’s GE free status.

The decision was made in mid-June by the Indian Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). It is a significant set-back for Monsanto, whose local partner, the seed company Mahyco, had hoped to introduce the so called Bt Bollgard cotton for commercial production across up to potentially 8.5 million hectares. Monsanto’s Bt cotton would have been the first GE crop to be commercialised in India.

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The Indian authority ordered an additional year of field trials for the GE cotton to be conducted under an independent supervision of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The authorities concluded that the data provided by the companies Monsanto/Mahyco was not sufficient as their field trials were not conducted during a normal cotton season, and therefore, no valid information on the crops performance could be determined.

This is particularly true in the case of Genetic Engineering (GE). In New Zealand polls have shown that a majority of people do not want GE in their food and yet we have business interests, for example the Dairy Board spending up $150 million on research into Genetic Engineering.

At first we were told the genetically engineered cattle would produce better meat. Next the idea of using milk to produce pharmaceutical proteins found favour with the industry officials and we were told repeatedly that the proteins could be helpful in finding a cure for MS sufferers. There is very little scientific evidence for this. Anyone pointing this out was automatically labelled as anti-progress and insensitive to MS sufferers.

In the New Zealand Herald, industry leaders are quoted as saying, “A lot of breakthroughs might end up giving us the ability to produce cows with different kinds of milk - designer milks for particular uses, so there are certain cows whose milk is used for cappuccinos and other cows made for special cheeses.” There is absolutely no evidence of public demand for this. It is not something they want.

Ninety per cent of our milk products are exported. Overseas, consumers are even more adamant about not accepting GE in their foods. In Britain and Europe, in Japan and Thailand for instance there is very strong resistance to GE products and a great demand for organic produce. Despite this, the Dairy Board has put aside $150 million to be spent over five years on GE research. They plan to contract out to NZ universities, crown research institutes and seed companies. Once this money is spent, they will want to recoup it and the advertising companies will be employed to work on creating a demand. Little of this PR will be based on sound science.

The recent announcement about the creation of Global Co will give us new leadership. It will also concentrate decision making into fewer hands. Those few at the top will make decisions that will influence the future direction of the New Zealand dairy industry.

Now would be the optimum time to write to the new management and let them know your concerns about the use of this largely untested technology. You could point out the contradiction between Anchor’s recent announcement that it is going GE Free and the Dairy Board’s funding of GE research, especially into the production of designer milks etc.

Berylla

Thumbs up for Possum Fertility Control?

A NATIONWIDE SURVEY by Landcare Research has shown that overall, the public approves of the development of a fertility control for possums.

The survey also shows that men are more enthusiastic about possum control in general than women.

This information was gathered from 1000 people via telephone. On the basis of this information research will be undertaken to use GE methods to 'solve the possum problem'.

However, ECO wonders just how informed those who responded were about what is involved in GE and the possible dangers inherent in the process.

ECO also wonders, how the use of GE in this way will be perceived by the rest of the world. How will our “clean and green” image be affected. Australians may fear it’s impact on their endangered possum population.

For more information, or for a copy of the preliminary report, contact Roger Wilkinson, Sociologist, Landcare Research, Lincoln, ph 03 325 6701 x3818, or WilkinsonR@landcare.cri.nz

GE-FREE NZ - It's NOW or never

A community creates change

Pauatahanui Inlet is a nationally significant estuary just north of Wellington in Porirua City. It has very high natural values and is also important for its contributions to our fisheries, its aesthetic values, and the recreational opportunities it provides.

The Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet was established 10 years ago after concerned locals agreed that the Inlet had been neglected and was under very real threat. There had been extensive subdivision and land ‘terraforming’ adjacent to the Inlet and significant visual discoloration after rain had been observed. There were very few fish being caught. The eelgrass beds were diminishing. Deltas were being built up at stream mouths.

A major environmental assessment of Pauatahanui Inlet had been undertaken by the DSIR in the 1970s and Guardians decided to replicate one of the studies, a cockle count, to determine whether there had been any change to the health of the Inlet in the intervening years. Our research revealed that cockle numbers had halved. The Inlet was indeed under threat.

Guardians had three major objectives: to encourage an integrated approach to management by the five major statutory players; to encourage and conduct research; and to educate people about the values of Pauatahanui Inlet.

Since the initial cockle count, Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet have run two more cockle surveys (another is due at the end of this year), published an education kit, run a ‘drains to streams’ campaign, established a web site, held public talks, organised clean-ups, supported an exhibition at Pataka (the Porirua museum), and run an annual photo competition. We have also made numerous submissions on annual plans and resource consent applications.

In the early 1990s we had also unsuccessfully tried to get support for an integrated approach to the management of the Inlet. However, with a new Mayor elected to Porirua City in 1998, we tried again. This time, politicians and staff at Porirua City Council and Wellington Regional Council heard our message.

In May 1999 all the statutory management agencies (WRC, PCC, DOC, MFish and Transit, together with Forest and Bird) met with Guardians to discuss the threats and issues. It was agreed that an integrated approach, based on a shared community vision and action plan, and led by an advisory group with the WRC, PCC and community representatives would be undertaken. The community representatives included the Guardians, Residents Associations, Federated Farmers, Ngati Toa, developers, and later, recreational users.

Developing the Inlet’s Action Plan

A draft vision and identified key issues for discussion with the community at public meetings and numerous sector consultations. Submissions on this draft plan were invited, including a hearing process. The final plan was adopted by the WRC and PCC, and formally launched with a symbolic tree planting by agency representatives and Ngati Toa in November 2000.

The WRC committed $40,000 for each of the first three years to implement the plan. Porirua City Council also committed $40,000 but this is not guaranteed beyond the current year.

Since then, the advisory group has been working to develop structures to ensure the Action Plan is implemented. Councils and Government departments have agreed to set up a technical interagency management group (which includes Ngati Toa), and a community trust to ensure that the action plan is implemented.

Pauatahanui Inlet Advisory Group: behind the scenes *

Reflecting on the process of developing such an action plan, it is salutary to note at this point that the community members of the advisory group have put in hundreds of voluntary hours into the development of the Plan.

The situation was complex – because of the mix of agencies, having both rural and urban environments (the rural being both large farms and lifestyle blocks), and a range of recreation uses (some in groups and others as individuals). It was also complex because of the weight that some people put on the visual surrounds of the Inlet without recognising the use of the land affected.

The advisory group comprised members with different interests and different perspectives. But we considered it really important to bring in all parties early on to get buy-in from the whole community. At our meetings there was vigorous debate at times, some of which was not necessarily easy. But we have come through it all talking to each other, and respecting the various perspectives.

We chose a non-statutory path to develop the plan. Education is a key component of the Action Plan as a means to the outcomes sought. This is education not just of the communities, but also the management agencies.

The Plan is a work of pragmatic compromise. It is not about locking up the catchment of the Inlet. It recognises that people live, work and play in the area and those activities are valid and need to be recognised. At the same time, the plan vision statement very clearly states that the integrity of existing ecosystems will be protected, and wherever possible, degraded ecosystems will be restored.

We have endeavoured to hear views from all of the community – across the spectrum – and come up with a plan that will enable the Inlet to survive as well as life continuing around it. What we have achieved through this plan is a significant advance on where we were this time two years ago.

A watching brief

Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet is now keeping a watching brief on the management agencies and the new Trust. Only when we see the action plan being actively implemented by all parties will we feel confident to put a tick against the first of our objectives.

The Guardians’ website is at www.converge.org.nz/gopi/

*based on speech notes of author and Lynette Wharfe, Federated Farmers

by Christine Jacobson, Chairperson Guardians of Pauatahanui Inlet

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INTERNATIONAL

A Snapshot of China

Before going, I had for some reason a belief that the people of China were not very interested in the environment, but soon realised how ill-grounded that belief was. From the bottom up to the very top there is a constant emphasis on the need to be aware of the impact of human activity on the environment.

An example of the former was a campaign initiated by the All China Women’s Federation to strengthen healthy ethics at home. This involved (among other things) encouraging environment-friendly lifestyles, calling on women and their families to plant trees, use mulch films correctly, classify rubbish for recycling and other such simple things.

Each day we were supplied with the English-language newspaper China Daily and in every issue there would be at least one article dealing with some aspect of the environment. Television programmes of an informative and educative nature were frequent (TVNZ could learn a thing or two about programming from the Chinese), and the information would often deal with what was happening with respect to the problems of water pollution, erosion, the diminishing water-table in the drought-prone north, air quality around the cities, and so on.

We saw lots of things that were in one way or another remarkable. Relatively recently, apparently, the decree was made that trees would be planted, for a variety of reasons, such as aesthetics, erosion prevention, and addressing climate change. The decree had been acted upon promptly, for all along the sides of the roads, in parks, around factories and schools, lining the boulevards of the new Beijing, there were trees in their thousands. The Chinese don’t have any qualms about planting quite large trees, for there is plenty of labour available to do the work of propping up every tree with bamboo poles lashed into place with vegetable fibre cord, and to water them daily until they become established.

In the places we visited gardens, parks, plant-filled borders, and, in the wetter south, rooftop gardens and window-boxes were flourishing. Despite the fact that China’s cities are multi-milled, it is still very much an agricultural country, and outside of the urban areas almost every square centimetre was being used to grow something. The soil must be extremely fertile, even after millennia of cultivation, for there was no indication of soil impoverishment.

Cycling enthusiasts in NZ would be delighted at the provisions made for this form of transport in the cities. On each side of the streets were bicycle lanes, and every now and again was a specially designated parking area, where scores of bikes would be lined up. Not state-of-the-art bikes, but filthy old bangers, most of them, and commonly owned, so that anyone wanting to get somewhere quickly could just pick one up and use it, leaving it at another park when finished with.

One wet morning we set off in our minibus for the day’s activity, and found that the rain does not deter the cyclists from getting to work; a river of them in kaleidoscope colours flowed alongside the road, each one wearing a rain cape of some bright hue.

Despite the reliance on bicycles, it would be silly to imagine that motor vehicles are not used. They are, and the cars are mostly large models; for some reason there didn’t seem to be many small cars. There were lots of buses, well-patronised; and in Guangzhou, in the south, motor scooters to some extent replaced bicycles.

As a result of the use of motor vehicles, and because of the industries in the cities, there is a fair degree of air pollution, noticeable as a haze on a sunny day. We were interested to note that the weekend edition of the “China Daily” published air pollution indices for the previous week in its major cities, with a description of what the pollutants were. The rivers we saw looked none too clean, but for different reasons. The Pearl River in Guangzhou is grey probably due effluent, while another smaller river in the south was yellowish as the result of erosion further up.

It was not until the very end of the trip that we saw things that really excited me. International Children’s Day was on Friday 1 June, and in the Guangdong Province where we happened to be at the time, the theme adopted was being in touch with, and caring for, Nature. When we went to Dinghushan Biosphere Reserve, these students were separated into groups and led off by troubled-looking scientists, to learn about the history, biology, geology and so on of the reserve.

This reserve was worth taking seriously, for it was the first of its kind to be established in China. The reserve is a national park where scientific research has been going on for decades, initially to determine the geology, the distribution of flora and fauna, and the weather patterns, but more recently to trace the impact of human activity on the natural ecology.

Later in the day we again took part in a family activity, this time at an ecological park (what we would call an organic garden). Here, kindergarten children and their parents had gathered to be organised into activities that emphasised caring for nature. It was good to see children joining with their parents in doing simple things such as watching birds, butterflies, and ducks swimming on the pond. More seriously, the children were learning through games to classify rubbish for recycling, and to distinguish between what is rubbish to be thrown out, and what can be re-used.

On our last morning, a trip to a garden had been arranged, and this was interesting to a Wellingtonian, for it was similar to our Botanical Gardens, both in layout and in concept. A new part was being developed at the top of a hill, and there was a newly planted grove of what I am sure were young rimu trees! This could indeed be the case, for in a cool house in another part of the garden, amongst orchids and bromeliads, stood a lonely tekoteko atop a plinth. Attached to this was a plaque stating this was a gift from Wellington, NZ, to its sister city Guangzhou!

What we saw of China was only a small part, but that the people are truly concerned to ensure that they pass on to those who will follow them a China that is not degraded and depleted, could not be doubted.

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Tax and Charities under review

THE GOVERNMENT has released a discussion paper reviewing the tax status of charities.

The proposals include option to:

- update the legal definition of charities;
- improve the accountability of charitable organisations;
- raise the maximum tax rebate on donations from $500 to $600;
- make trading organisations owned by charities subject to income tax in the same way as businesses;

- clarify that charities and non-profit bodies can claim GST input tax credits in relation to all their activities except for the sale of donated goods and services and other exempt supplies.

The discussion paper focuses on classic charities and does not consider the needs of environmental or community groups as charities or not for profit organisations.

Copies of the discussion paper can be found on the IRD web site: www.ird.govt.nz.

Submissions should be made by 31 July with the General Manager, Policy Advice Division, Inland Revenue Department, PO Box 2198, Wellington or emailed to policy.webmaster@ird.govt.nz.

Ecopolitics XIII

November 29 – December 2, 2001 Christchurch

A CALL FOR PAPERS, WORKSHOPS AND PARTICIPANTS

ECOPOLITICS is back!

This biennial conference for everyone in New Zealand and Australia who is interested in political ecology returns to New Zealand this year, with a three day conference in Christchurch. Please note the dates now – November 29-December 2, 2001. For further information on the conference (and offers of papers or workshops) please e-mail Christine Dann – christine.dann@clear.net.nz or write to P.O. Box 46, Diamond Harbour 8030. The theme of the 13th conference is ‘Green Governance’ and keynote speakers (among whom Robyn Eckersley, Jim Falk, Jeanette Fitzsimons and Rod Donald) will examine attempts to bring the basic principles of ecological and social sustainability into economic and political decision-making at the global, national and local levels. Papers and workshops on this theme and/or other ecopolitical topics welcomed – the deadline for abstracts or proposal outlines (to the addresses above) is August 1.

Information to Motivation: State of the Environment Conference

How do you successfully take the message about the state of the environment to the public and get them to feel motivated rather than demotivated by the information?

This question was addressed by a range of overseas and local speakers at a recent Ministry for the Environment organised conference in Wellington. The conference had some good speakers with truly useful advice but the overwhelming local and central government focus became stifling.

The Minister for the Environment laid out what she said were the government’s main priorities – after an absurdly contrived welcome to the stage by Ministry staff dutifully letting off party streamer bombs.

Some of the papers and discussions were genuinely illuminating and you can access the proceedings of this conference minus the enforced jollity and at times rather nasty m.c. at www.soeconference.govt.nz

Government and Community Partnership review continues

THE GOVERNMENT has released the report of the Community and Voluntary Sector working Group.

The Government is currently considering the report of the group chaired by Dorothy Wilson and what recommendations to make of the second stage of the process.

The report includes the following recommendations on:

- the Treaty of Waitangi and Crown/Iwi relationships;
- developing a participatory style of Government;
- review of the administration of Government funding for community organisations;
- ensuring the viability of umbrella and strategic collective groups within the social services sector;
- building capacity of government agencies to better engage with community organisations.

Copies of the report can be obtained from the Ministry of Social Policy, Private Bag 39993, Wellington or from their website www.mosp.govt.nz

Conservation Week

St Pauls, Wellington

WELLINGTON CATHEDRAL of St Pauls is again hosting displays of peoples’ concerns for and involvement with the natural world or the human environment.

Conservation Week runs from 6 - 12 August, but the displays will be in place for a further week. Groups are invited to display their material.

Also during Conservation Week, the Cathedral will be hosting a series of lunch-time talks. these will have an ecological theme. For further information contact Ted Abraham, email t-j.abraham@xtra.co.nz
Submissions

• MFISH: Review of Sustainability Measures and other Management Controls for the 2001-02 Fishing Year, Initial Position Paper, submission date 16 July.

• MAF: Codex: Information on analytical methods for consideration by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Analytical Methods of the Ad Hoc Task Force on foods derived from biotechnology (CL 2001/18-FBT), comments by 24 July

• DoC: Hector's dolphin and Set netting Canterbury Area - a paper for public comment June 2001, submissions due by 25 July

• MFISH: Sustainability measures and other management controls for the 2001 - 02 fishing year in the southern scallop fishery (SCA 7), submissions due by 27 July


• IRD: NGO Charitable Tax Status, submissions due by 1 August 2001.

• WCPA (IUCN): WCPA Draft Strategic Plan, comments by 31 July 2001


• Oceans Policy: closing date for submissions is 17 August 2001.

• Local Government of New Zealand: Review of the Local Government Act, comments 30 August 2001

• DoC: Te Urewera National Park management Plan, written comments by 7 September.


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   $112.50 p.a. (+GST inclusive).

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   $20 p.a. (+GST inclusive).

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