New Zealand’s deadly legacy

THE GOVERNMENT is about to make its most important decision on the future of toxic waste policy in years. Commerce Minister Max Bradford is set to decide whether or not to issue an export permit allowing six regional and district councils to export 110 tonnes of highly toxic organochlorine pesticides for incineration overseas.

The outcome will have major implications for cleaning up toxic waste and contaminated sites as well as New Zealand’s clean green export image overseas.

The six councils want to export unwanted waste pesticides for incineration in Europe, probably in the Netherlands. Instead of disposal by incineration, which creates toxic dioxin emissions and contaminated ash, ECO argues that councils should wait until next year when safe alternative treatment and disposal technologies are expected to be available in New Zealand.

If Max Bradford issues an export permit it will be a slap in the face for the environment. Legal advice supplied to Greenpeace shows that it would also be a breach of the Basel Convention on Hazardous Waste which obliges countries to set up safe treatment technologies to deal with their own wastes within their own borders and minimise transboundary movement of such wastes.

"Exporting banned toxic pesticides for incineration overseas is the shortsighted, dirty option", says ECO executive member Michael Szabo. "How can New Zealand claim to be a clean green exporter if it exports its toxic waste problems overseas?"

Exporting the wastes for incineration would undermine efforts to set up safe disposal technologies in New Zealand because it would reduce their economic viability. An Australian company, ADI, and a New Zealand company, United Environmental Ltd, want to set up facilities which are capable of treating both toxic wastes and the thousands of contaminated sites around the country.

In 1996 the Ministry for the Environment and council officials involved in this issue assured ECO that they would opt for ADI’s system or a similar process to treat these pesticides.

The ADI and United Environmental systems are the front-runner technologies for cleaning up toxic wastes such as these pesticides along with a former pesticide formulation site near Mapua which is the most contaminated site in the country. Since 1996 the government has dragged its feet and has still not resolved the Mapua issue or liability for orphan sites.

For the sake of avoiding the short-term costs of storage, the consortium has made up its mind and opted for incineration. As an interim solution ECO wants them to apply for the Ministry for the Environment’s sustainable management fund for extra money to pay for storage instead.

The danger is that the government will fudge over Mapua and issue an export permit. Then New Zealand is much less likely to develop a sound system for toxic waste which is desperately needed because most of New Zealand’s annual 8.5 million tonnes of hazardous waste is currently discharged to rivers and coastal waters, or poorly managed leaky landfills.

The Tasman District Council have said they are prepared to contribute several million dollars to a clean up at Mapua. But the price tag is likely to be more like $15 million.
lion. ECO is calling on the government to set up and use a clean up fund based on a levy raised from sales of toxic chemicals. This levy would also act as an incentive to reduce the use of toxic chemicals.

If the government agrees to provide funding, a clean up unit could be set up near Mapua and the site excavated and treated. This or other units could then move around the country to clean up the many other contaminated sites such as the Waipa sawmill and Southland’s dieldrin dumps.

The 110 tonnes of unwanted pesticides is only the tip of the iceberg. Informed estimates predict that there is still over a thousand tonnes of organochlorine pesticides, PCBs and related wastes still to be collected or treated, as well as thousands of tonnes of contaminated material from pulp mill sludge dumps and timber treatment sites which also requires treatment. The number of sites could run to ten thousand, according to a 1992 report prepared for Ministry for the Environment.

If the pesticides go overseas for incineration and the government refuses to help fund the Mapua clean up then no safe disposal technology is likely to be established here. That way New Zealand’s environment – and our health – will end up paying the cost.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

- Write to Prime Minister Jenny Shipley urging the government not to issue an export permit and to fund a clean up of Mapua. Write to Jenny Shipley, Parliament Buildings, Wellington (no stamp required), fax 04 473 7045, email: prime.minister@ministers.govt.nz
- Write or fax your nearest regional council (Bay of Plenty, Auckland, Waikato, Southland or Hawkes Bay or Tasman District Council) urging them not to export unwanted pesticides for incineration.
- For more information contact Michael Szabo at Greenpeace: ph 09 630 6317 or fax (09) 630 7121.

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**ECO needs your support**

1999 is a busy year for ECO. We are getting organised to give environment issues a high profile prior to the election, as well as continuing our work on key campaigns.

To undertake this work we need your support. Please send ECO a donation today (all contributions over $5 are tax deductible). We encourage our supporters to make a monthly pledge by automatic payment (it has the advantage of being paper free) – contact the ECO office for more information.

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IN JANUARY, Native Forest Action and the Buller Conservation Group launched a petition calling for the protection of West Coast forests balanced by a development package for the west coast region.

In late January NFA, BCG and Forest and Bird blocked the four mile road leading into Charleston Forests (see photo). Eight people were arrested. In February two NFA campaigners locked on to a logging helicopter, preventing it from leaving the ground. The helicopter was employed by Timberlands to remove logs from the forest. Seven people were arrested.

Also in February, Auckland NFAers carried out an ethical shoplift, taking a coffee table and some magazine racks from Danske Mobler. The items were delivered to the local police station as stolen heritage.

A Fighting Fund has been set up to support arrested activists. Please send donations to: NFA Fighting Fund, PO Box 836, Nelson.
Majority oppose RMA proposals

We consider the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) does not need the wholesale changes that are proposed here... it is our view that they will do nothing but add costs to the process, add delays and result in a loss of faith by all those involved with the RMA that it will be administered fairly and in the public's and environment's interest.

-- Brookfields Lawyers, Auckland

OVER 700 submissions were received by the Ministry for the Environment in response to the Proposals for Amendment to the Resource Management Act 1991. An analysis of submissions on five of the key proposed amendments has found widespread opposition to the changes.

There is a very clear message from submissions that there is strong support for the RMA. Any changes which undermine the Act will be strongly opposed.

Legislation amending the RMA is now scheduled to be introduced into Parliament in April. ACE will be campaigning to ensure due weight is given to submitters' views before any Bill reaches the House.

The analysis summarised below -- carried out by Action for Community and the Environment (ACE) -- found the majority of submitters saw the proposals as heavy handed and misguided. Many believed the changes would significantly increase costs and undermine both public participation and environmental protection.

Key findings show:

- Contestable consent processing
  Three-quarters of submitters (75%) opposed the proposal to introduce contestable consent processing. There were strong concerns that the proposal would increase the costs of obtaining a resource consent and significantly reduce the quality of consent processing. Just 10% of submitters backed the amendment.

- Limited notification of resource consent applications
  Only a third of submitters supported the proposal to limit notification of resource consents applications. The majority strongly opposed the proposal, concerned it would drastically reduce the opportunities for public participation in resource consent processes.

- Removing the requirement to make all decisions on consent applications subject to Part II (sections 104 & 105)
  There was little support for removing the existing requirement to make all decisions subject to the purpose and principles of Part II of the Act. The majority of submitters opposed the proposal and believed the principles of the Act should apply to all decisions.

- Changes to section 32 -- Duties to consider alternatives, assess benefits and costs, etc.
  The majority of submitters believed the proposed changes to section 32 would create a major barrier to the introduction of new rules to protect the environment. Most felt the changes went far too far and would make it extremely difficult for councils to establish any rules at all.

- Reducing the role of regional councils
  Almost three quarters of submitters (73%) opposed the proposals to reduce the role of regional councils. Regional councils were widely seen as playing an important role in coordinating regional resource management, fulfilling key functions not carried out by district councils.

The rule changes appear to benefit applicants at the expense of submitters. That is a fundamental shift which in the company's view should require a deliberate decision by Parliament to create an inherent bias in the Act.

-- Retail Holdings Ltd, Auckland

The following table shows the percentage of submissions opposing and supporting the proposals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Conditional Support</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contestability</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Notification</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to ss 104 &amp; 105</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to ss 32</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Regional 19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To help with the campaign or to obtain a copy of the analysis of submissions, contact ACE, P O Box 11-057, Wellington or email jessica.aco@wwf.org.nz. Copies of the analysis are available free however a contribution to cover costs would be appreciated.

Minister responds...

THE SUGGESTION that only those submissions on the RMA amendments received before Christmas would be given full consideration, as reported in the December 1998 ECOLink, has drawn a firm rebuttal from the Minister of Environment Minister, Simon Upton.

Responding to the "Stop Press" article (December 1998 Ecolink) Simon Upton remarked in a letter to the editor that all submissions are being read and analysed which will be fed into the Cabinet decision-making process.

He notes "I have a copy of all 740 submissions and am personally reading as many submissions as I can. I have gone to considerable lengths to make the review process as open and iterative as possible. It would be extraordinary if I was now to ignore comments and submissions I invited. I would be most surprised if anyone who has followed the process closely considered it to be anything other than frank, sincere and fully participatory."
Fisheries budget again ignores legal obligations in favour of handover to industry

IN FEBRUARY ECO again pressed the Ministry of Fisheries to stop ignoring its legal obligations to future generations and the environment and to put serious work into implementing the Fisheries Act. We were told that the Ministry has refocused its priorities and that we would see this when its annual draft budget was released to stakeholders.

The document, the "Proposed Nature and Extent of Fisheries Services for the 1999/2000 Financial Year" is deeply disappointing though it does suggest some extra spending on research relating to the environmental impact of fishing.

For the most part though, it simply misclassifies spending on other matters and pretends that it is spending on environmental matters. The processes of considering sustainability limits on fishing and developing research proposals are both cut savagely while lavish amounts of money are to be spent on the Minister's pet project of parceling out fisheries management to the industry.

An example of the deliberate mis-classification of projects is the policy output of "Evaluating sustainability outcomes." The innocent might think this was about considering whether fisheries management was environmentally sustainable. Nothing of the sort. All the spending under this heading is "to compile data to monitor and evaluate commercial fisheries policy in respect of economic outcomes."

There is to be lavish spending on the Fisheries Bill policy work and implementation of the rights based framework. There is to be $2.7 million spent on this: compared with only $0.032m ($32,215) on developing environmental indicators using a mere 0.16 full time equivalent person.

Most of the work foreshadowed on international agreements is to be devoted to protecting New Zealand commercial interests. There is no allocation for environmental protection work.

There is no sign of any systematic attempt to develop and implement systems for the assessment of the impact of fishing on the marine environment: Squid fishery interactions with Hooker's Sea Lions is the only project. There is no provision for Geographic Information Systems, environmental assessment or impact assessment.

The Ministry clearly realises that what it intends to be doing will be contentious and thoroughly unpopular. It has budgeted a massive $688,252 to drafting responses to letters received by the Minister: this is more than 20 times what it intends to spend on marine ecosystem indicator work!

Fisheries Research planning is not to have any stakeholder input this year: they intend to develop ideas all themselves they say. More likely is our view, they simply intend not to do it, and instead to leave it to the industry.

Last year, the Ministry's proposals lacked any coherence with the requirements of the Fisheries Act. ECO and Forest and Bird, in consultation with the Marine Sciences Society, developed projects to match the Act's requirements. Some of these have survived into this year's research portfolio proposals. It seems likely that the industry will try to kill off some of these as we get closer to final decision making.

For research straddling the two financial years to September 2000, $569,000 is foreshadowed for research into the aquatic environment. This is better than previous years but remains tiny by comparison to the $28 million proposed for the total research budget. It is pathetic in relation to the need of the aquatic environment (an area 15 times the land area of New Zealand) and the amount of impact on it by the $1.4-1.6 billion per year taken by the commercial fishers alone.

Last year we criticised the Ministry for allocating only $4,000 to policy work on the needs of future generations. This year that output class has vanished altogether. The Ministry seems to have decided that kowtowing to the industry and handing over the apparatus of fisheries management and data to the industry is far more important than discharging its statutory responsibilities under section 8 the Purpose of the Fisheries Act.

What you can do:

- Write to your local newspapers, to politicians and raise the subject on talkback radio. Challenge the takeover of fisheries management by the industry and reject the Ministry's deplorable priority setting.
- ECO would appreciate offers of legal assistance to challenge the Minister in court for the severe mis-allocation of resources that this budget, like the last one, represents. If you can't afford legal advice we suppose the next recourse is the ballot box.

Ngati Kuri Support Mataitai Reserve for Spirits Bay (Piwhane)

NGATI KURI, Tangata Whenua for Spirits Bay (Maori name Piwhane) and Tom Bowling Bay, at a hui at Te Hapua on 6 March agreed, without dissent, to ratify a Trust Board proposal that a mataitai reserve be instituted at Piwhane and the adjacent Tom Bowling Bay. Maori customary fishing regulations would be used to effect this. The proposal is to give the bays measure of protection and to provide that any exploitation is sustainable. Their concern is with the impacts of bottom trawling and dredging on the marine invertebrate communities in the bays.

Ngati Kuri hope that this will protect the bays sufficient to maintain the populations of marine invertebrates, the fishing potential and any future benefits from bio-pharmaceuticals. Before a mataitai reserve can be established consultation with various parties and other procedures must be followed. Thus, for protection to be meaningful, a closure of the affected area by the Minister of Fisheries under the Fisheries Act will still be needed while the mataitai reserve is pending.
Fisheries Bill Changes to be secret

AFTER several attempts, ECO finally persuaded the Ministry of Fisheries that the Fisheries Amendment Bill went far beyond even the sweeping devolution powers approved by the Cabinet. The Bill allowed for the devolution to fisheries quota owner associations and only these industry bodies any of the powers, duties and functions of the Minister and the Ministry of Fisheries Chief Executive Officer except for the enforcement powers of fisheries officers.

In December 1998 ECO tried several times to get the Ministry senior officials to focus on our concerns. They simply denied that we had a point. Finally, at a meeting in February, officials accepted the points raised by ECO and admitted the Bill went too far. The Minister now admits this as well but says changes will be introduced via a departmental submission to the Primary Production Select Committee. This means that you and I and other submitters will not see what the proposed changes are.

The apparent intention of the Minister is to have the Bill changed so that the Minister’s functions cannot be devolved and that certain CEO functions also cannot be devolved. We have challenged the Ministry to say what can be devolved but they will not say. Nor will they reveal what will be on a list of CEO functions not to be devolved.

ECO remains extremely concerned at the prospect of fisheries research and management, including fisheries management planning, being handed over to the fishing industry. We are also deeply concerned at the intention to allow the fishing industry to collect, manage and store the data recording the catches and the amount of fishing effort. This data is absolutely essential for the management of the quota system, and any manipulation or contamination of it would damaging.

- Please write letters about your concerns about the Fisheries Bill to both Labour and National MPs. Write to Jenny Shipley and to Helen Clark (c/- freepost, Parliament Buildings). See ECOAction December 1998.
- Copies of the ECO submission on the Fisheries Bill are available to ECO member bodies, please ask Joe Buchanan at the ECO office. This can be sent to you as an e-mail attachment, or a copied for a small charge.

Illegal vessels still plague southern ocean

DESPITE the talk and some action by members of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) illegal fishing in the Southern Ocean continues to occur.

In early March the Greenpeace vessel, Arctic Sunrise, tracked down an illegal longline fisher operating in French fisheries zone around the sub-antarctic islands of Kerguelen. The vessel was not flying its state flag or displaying its name, home port or call sign. The vessel is believed to be the Belize registered Salvora. The boat was arrested last year for illegally fishing inside the Australia fisheries zone around the sub-antarctic islands of Heard and MacDonald. Following arrest the owners of Salvora forfeited a bond of over $1.2 million and its fishing master was fined over $100,000.

France has caught and prosecuted over 10 longliners for fishing illegally around Kerguelen and Crozet. Despite this over 60 vessels have been reported fishing illegally in French waters.

In addition to the decline in toothfish numbers it is estimated that around 100,000 seabirds are drowned annually on longline hooks in the Southern Ocean. Many of the albatross and petrel species are threatened with extinction if this fishing continues unabated. At the same time as Greenpeace was catching up to the Salvora, New Zealand fishing vessels returned from fishing for toothfish in the Ross Sea.

CCAMLR states must do more to stop the illegal trade. CCAMLR have yet to apply a fisheries certification regime and enforcement measures which will squeeze out illegal fishers, many of which operate via companies in CCAMLR member states. CCAMLR states also need to look at other measures so as to seize the assets of companies and owners who fish illegally in the Southern Ocean.

Patagonian toothfish (Dissostichus eleginoides)

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Ministers still to OK Monsanto genetically altered foods

IN FEBRUARY the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Authority (ANZFA) "approved" the sale in New Zealand of food containing genetically altered cotton and soya beans. The final approval has yet to be given, with Health Ministers from Australia and New Zealand meeting in April to consider the issue. ANZFA received applications from Monsanto in March 1997 for changes to the food standard regulations to allow the sale of glyphosate tolerant soya beans. In April 1997 Monsanto applied for amendments to allow oil and linters from genetically altered cotton to be sold in food. Cotton seed oil is used in various foods such as frying oil, mayonnaise and salad dressings. Linters are removed from cotton seed during processing and the cellulose from them is, according to ANZFA, "used as high fibre dietary products, sausage casings and viscosity enhancers in products such as ice cream and salad dressings."

The soya beans are able to tolerate use of extra herbicide glyphosate (favoured by Monsanto since it sells this herbicide under the label "Roundup"). The cotton has a resistance to lepidopteran insects using proteins from soil bacteria. When ingested by the insect, the insect dies.

ANZFA is primarily an Australian organisation. It consists of a board, called the Authority, which makes recommendations to a Council of Ministers on the basis of information supplied by applicants and vetted by the staff of ANZFA. The Ministerial Council consists of the Health Ministers of the seven Australian states, the Federal Health Minister and the New Zealand Minister of Health (Wyatt Creech). The Authority is established by Australian Federal law, the Australian New Zealand Food Authority Act 1991, and by part 2a of New Zealand's Food Act 1991. These acts spell out the composition of the Authority and its purpose and criteria. As of 23 December 1998, it had eight members, five from Australia and three from New Zealand. The expertise of these people is mixed, some being academics, some food technologists, some political and/or with food industry experience. The New Zealand based members are John Potter, from Nestlé; Alison Holst, broadcaster, writer and nutritionist; and as a special purpose member Owen Symmans, a member of the Officials Committee on Food Administration and Strategic Development Manager for the NZ Dairy Board.

The special purpose he is on the Authority for is the harmonisation of NZ and Australian food standards. The Authority itself is designed primarily for Australia; thus it is required that there be a person with a good knowledge of the food regulations systems in Australia and of consumer rights and policy in Australia. The two proposals to amend the food regulations to allow these foods to be sold here are open for submission until 31 March. The Authority's own consideration of the applications did not involve any independent studies, rather, it only undertook a desktop assessment of the applications. The applications are to amend the regulations to allow the sale of genetically altered foodstuffs—not to allow genetically modified cotton or soya beans to be grown here. That is already happening in the case of soya beans. The Environmental Risk Monitoring Authority, ERMA, considers applications to grow genetically modified organisms. Genetically altered foods have to be labelled as such only if "they are substantially different from conventional foods." ANZFA's is supposed to base its recommendations on scientific evidence. The Authority seeks submissions both on scientific grounds and other grounds from the public. ECO has a copy of the Australian acts under which the Authority operates, the Guidelines for the Safety Assessment of Foods Produced Using Gene Technology and the summary account of the applications and the assessments.

- RAGE, Revolt Against Genetic Engineering, is working on this and other genetic engineering issues. RAGE can be contacted at: PO Box 1109, Hastings; phone 06 870 0920, fax 06 8709923, or e-mail: rage@xpc.org.nz
- Green MP Jeanette Fitzsimmons is also campaigning on this issue, contact her at Parliament Buildings, freepost Wellington, or phone 04 471 9999.
- You can send submissions to ANZFA at PO Box 10559, Wellington 6036. For further information from the NZ office of ANZFA: phone 04 473 9942, fax 04 473-9855, or e-mail nz.reception@anzfa.govt.nz – they do not accept e-mail submissions.
- Write to the Minister of Health, Wyatt Creech, as he and the other Health Ministers will be making the final decision, contact freepost Parliament Buildings, Wellington, fax 04 471 2936 or email: deputy.prime.minister@ministers.govt.nz

Genetic modified food extended

The Ministry of Health is giving submitters 5 days to comment on a proposal to extend the deadline within which genetically modified food must be approved and further relax the criteria. This change is in spite of an acknowledgement that there may be up to 500 products containing genetically modified food of which only 2 have been assessed (see above).

This process breaches the requirement in the Food Act for consultation and goes against commitments by the Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley, to label genetically modified food.

The Health Department is seeking views for the Minister – Continued on next page
Draft Biodiversity Strategy released

ON 20TH JANUARY the government launched its Biodiversity Strategy in response to commitments made in the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity agreed to at the Rio Earth Summit. Conservation groups are concerned that the Strategy is too weak, and will not achieve its objective of halting the current trend of continued indigenous biodiversity loss.

As the report notes: “In the last 700-800 years humans and their accompanying pests have made extinct:

- 32 percent of indigenous land and freshwater birds;
- 18 percent of seabirds;
- 3 of 7 frogs;
- at least 12 invertebrates such as snails and insects;”
- 1 fish, 1 bat and perhaps 3 reptiles; and
- possibly 11 plants.”

In an effort to establish a stronger agenda for action Forest and Bird, ECO, Federated Mountain Clubs and Greenpeace have prepared a Biodiversity Charter which promotes concrete measures to conserve New Zealand’s unique biodiversity.

The goals suggested in the draft Strategy (pages 14-17) show a limited horizon and while they might prevent further extinctions, they would allow the loss of further natural habitats and leave only “representative populations.” Options 4 to 6 (pages 16-17) are contrary to the provisions of the Biodiversity Convention and should not be included in any consideration by government. What is required is the restoration of natural habitats and efforts to move species to a non-threatened status.

Appendix 1 of the Strategy sets out three options for a national policy on biodiversity under the Resource Management Act. The only option likely to provide significant benefit to biodiversity is that of a broad national policy statement therefore it should be supported. This could be modelled on the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement which has helped to provide an integrated and consistent approach to regional coastal plans and management.

Information on extra funding required to reach the unambitious goals in the Strategy is detailed in Appendix 3. The basis for the costing differences in option B and C are not explained in the report but indicate that at least an extra $36-$47 million per year is required. This is a relatively small sum when you consider the it is less than the current spending on the New Zealand tourism board and the cost of one frigate would pay for over 10 years expenditure.

-- from previous page

Of Health Tuariki Delamere. Amongst the weaker criteria is to allow genetically modified food if the “[Australia-New Zealand Food] Council has not become aware of evidence that the food poses a significant risk to public health and safety.” This proposal puts the precautionary approach on its head and puts the onus on the Council to investigate a product rather than the applicant to prove it is safe. This is likely to breach section 10 of the Australia-New Zealand Food Authority Act.

- Write to the Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley, Parliament Buildings, Wellington complaining about the ridiculous time period and criteria which are being considered.

In the marine area there is some acknowledgement of the problems of commercial and recreational fishing. However, the need to address the overlapping and disorganised nature of marine management especially beyond the 12 nautical mile limit is not given priority. Nor are the problems of the limited focus of the Marine Reserves Act and the absence of wider marine protected areas legislation. The application of the precautionary principle to marine management, including fisheries, is not a priority.

Major omissions in the report include:

- the need for new threatened species legislation. This could be modelled on the Australian and New South Wales Threatened Species Act;
- the option of New Zealand claiming ownership of its biodiversity to prevent it being owned offshore. An example of such a claim is that by Queensland State Government;
- the need for marine pest management strategies;
- the role of government in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean – especially the Ross Sea and the Ross Dependency which New Zealand claims;
- important international treaties which New Zealand is not a member, e.g. the Bonn Convention on Highly Migratory species which would help protect our albatross and petrel species.

The Biodiversity Group of the Department of Conservation/Ministry for the Environment are running regional meetings through regional councils or local conservation groups. Contact ECO or the e-mail address below for details.

You are encouraged to write a submission. This is an important opportunity to influence the priority the current and future government places on protecting New Zealand’s unique biodiversity.

- Submissions close on 16 April with: Biodiversity Strategy Project, PO Box: 10 420, Wellington; phone 04 471 3225; fax: 04 471 3026; or e-mail: biodiversity@doc.govt.nz
- More information, including copies of the Strategy, is available on the Strategy website: www.biodiv.govt.nz

Convention on Biological Diversity – key articles

Article 6 of the Convention requires states to “develop national strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity”. The convention defines biological diversity as including “diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems”. Biological diversity then include genetic diversity as well as ecosystem diversity.

Sustainable use is defined in the convention as “use of components ... in a way or at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline in biological diversity.” This then include loss of genetic diversity.

Article 8 sets out the obligations of states to conserve indigenous biodiversity. This includes “promote the protection of ecosystems, natural habitats and the maintenance of viable populations of species in natural surroundings.”

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Sharon Beder exposes corporations' anti-environmental tactics

IN LATE January Dr Sharon Beder, associate professor in science and technology studies at the University of Wollongong and author of Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on the Environment, warned a packed public meeting in Wellington about the tactics being used by corporations to challenge environmental change.

In New Zealand to address both the Engineers for Social Responsibility and IPENZ conferences, Dr Beder discussed her recent research and knowledge about the sophisticated techniques being used around the world by large corporations.

At the heart of her findings is evidence that corporations spend billions of dollars a year in the effort to reshape public opinion and influence politicians to oppose environmental reforms. Corporations use specialised public relations firms to set up groups which promote the corporate agenda but pose as public interest groups.

These 'astroturf' groups are set up to convince politicians that there is widespread opposition to environmental reforms.

Dr Beder noted that a method being used by corporations with increasing prevalence to discourage community action is taking out strategic lawsuits against public participation, or 'SLAPPS'. The actions are often not intended to get to court, let alone win—they are primarily designed to intimidate individuals or groups taking action on environmental issues by the threat of a lawsuit and the costs involved.

The example of the debate on global warming was put forward to illustrate how corporations often operate. Using the reasoning that all that is needed to keep people from taking action is to be unsure of the seriousness of the problem, corporations with a stake in the issue turned their efforts to nurturing public doubts. By supporting and strongly promoting the few scientists who said global warming was not a danger, companies were successful in making it seem as though the scientific community was unsure of the threat of climate change, discouraging many countries and individuals from demanding immediate action on the issue.

At the end of the talk, many in the audience posed the question, "What can we do?" Obviously, there are no easy answers, but Dr Beder mentioned three ideas.

She said that the environmental movement needs to be more strategic and develop a broader approach rather than always being reactive. In fighting small battles, it is difficult to win against the well-funded efforts of corporations. Rather, it is necessary for the movement to take a big picture view and aim for fundamental social and political changes.

Secondly, she stressed the importance of education at the community level, so that people are more aware of the real state of environmental problems and will not buy in easily to the propaganda or easy solutions proposed by corporations.

Thirdly, she said that exposing and drawing attention to the strategies used by corporations will make the public and politicians more aware of the truth behind biased think tanks, artificially created grassroots groups, corporate-based public-interest groups, and other such methods.

Despite the challenges, an ECO member ended the evening on an encouraging note, saying that the environmental community must be doing a good job, otherwise corporations would not put so much time and money into fighting environmentalists' efforts.

A comprehensive bibliography is available on Dr Beder's website (www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/sbeder/), including electronic copies of the following recent articles: 'Ecological Double Agents' (Australian Science, Vol. 19, no 1, February 1998), 'Climatic Confusion and Corporate Collusion: Hijacking the Greenhouse Debate', (The Ecologist, forthcoming), 'Public Relations: Role in Manufacturing Artificial Grass Roots Coalitions', (Public Relations Quarterly 43(2), Summer 1998). She can be contacted at: sharon_beder@uow.edu.au

Global Warming

1998 was the warmest year this century and possibly the warmest year this millennium. Changes to climate are impacting on the ecology and weather of the planet.

While New Zealand has suffered droughts and heavy rainfall events, coral reefs have suffered from elevated temperatures which has been linked climate change. Increased sea temperatures have caused severe bleaching to occur. The result is dead or damaged corals.

According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) coral bleaching was observed in over 60 countries in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Caribbean, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Many of these areas reported that 100 percent of corals had been bleached.

More than 70% of corals died off in a major part of the Indian Ocean from southern India to Kenya, while coral deaths reached over 80% in places off Tanzania.

According to a recent report in the journal Geophysical Research Letters 1998 may be the warmest year of the millennium. Researchers from the University of Massachusetts and University of Arizona using tree ring and glacial ice core data have already established that the 1990s as the warmest decade since the start of the millennium.

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IN RESPONSE to the threat of climate change the Government have released yet another discussion paper to seek public input into the options for New Zealand. Whether action will follow is open to question. One of the options proposed in the Climate Change: Domestic Policy Options Statement would see no action until 2008. This is about the sixth discussion paper since the signing of the Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992.

As the report notes the “Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change has calculated that to stabilise concentrations at 1990 levels, global carbon dioxide emissions would need to be cut more than 60%, methane by 15 to 20% and nitrous oxide by 70 to 80%. The Kyoto Protocol emission reduction target of an average of 5% for Annex 1 Parties [OECD countries including New Zealand] will, therefore, only go a small way towards stabilising concentrations.”

New Zealand’s commitment as agreed to in the Protocol at the Kyoto climate summit in 1997 was a derisory stabilisation of emissions at 1990 levels by the years 2008-2012. This compares with reductions commitments for the United States of 7%, the combined European Community of 8% and Canada and Japan of 6%. Originally the government committed to reduce greenhouse gases to 3% below 1990 level just prior to the signing of the protocol in 1997. Minister for the Environment Simon Upton’s commitment to reconsider the target did not take place in 1998 as promised.

The three key options included in the Domestic Policy Options Statement are:

1. a long term commitment to a domestic trading system starting in 2008;
2. a pilot emission trading system for large energy and industrial processing sector (about 50% of all CO2 emissions) starting in 2000 prior to full trading in 2005, with a low-level carbon charge (only $5-10/tonne) for the rest of the sector e.g. transport.
3. a low level carbon charge (only $5-10/tonne) from 2000 prior to the implementation of full trading regime in 2008 (or earlier).

In addition, the report suggests complementary measures that could be used. These include the use of the Resource Management Act, energy efficiency measures including that provided by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (ECCA) and road management and pricing.

Option 1 is not a credible response as it fails to meet the commitment in the Kyoto Protocol for countries to show action by 2005. Options 2 and 3 offer some action now but option 3 is more achievable in the short and medium term.

The report fails to acknowledge the real world problems of introducing a tradeable permit system. New Zealanders only needs to look at the problem with the fisheries quota management system to realise that any system takes time to establish and there are some difficult issues that need to be sorted out. These include:

- who will permits be allocated to. Options include current polluters, so-called grandparenting of permits, tendered out to highest bidder, or a mixture. Another option is allocation to the public at large on the basis that a clean air and stable environment is a public good;
- Treaty of Waitangi implications if a permit regime creates property rights; obligations;
- absence or delay developing an agreed international permit trading system until 2000 to 2001 which would delay the New Zealand system.

To make some urgently need progress New Zealand should introduce a significant fiscally neutral carbon charge (at least $30/tonne). From previous macroeconomic analysis best results are achieved if the charge is offset by a reduction in GST.

Complementary measures should include:

- national policy under the Resource Management Act;
- passing of Jeanette Fitzsimson’s Energy Efficiency Bill which is currently before the Transport and Environment Select Committee;
- protecting indigenous forests and other important reservoirs of carbon e.g. soil. This should include stopping Timberlands West Coast logging indigenous forests. Given the international debate over implementing the Kyoto Protocol it is important that New Zealand sends a clear direction of action both domestically and internationally.
- Submissions close on 16 April 1999; post to the Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10-362, Wellington; fax 04 917 7523 or e-mail: climatechange@mfe.govt.nz. A copy of the statement is available from the Ministry, or downloadable from: www.mfe.govt.nz/new/index.htm
- Submissions on the Technical Design of a Carbon Charge or a Domestic Emissions Trading Regime for Greenhouse Gases also close on 16 April.

ECO is organising an Autumn speaker series in Wellington, beginning with Peter Barnett speaking on searching for clues to climate change in Antarctica. Peter Barnett, Professor of Geology at Victoria University, is the chief scientist in charge of the international team undertaking ice and rock core drilling in Antarctica to investigate the planet’s history of climate and sea level changes.

- Professor Peter Barnet, Wednesday April 28, 5.30PM, Turnbull House, Bowen Street, Wellington.

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Energy efficiency review

THE PARLIAMENTARY Commissioner for the Environment is undertaking an investigation into energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives in New Zealand. The review was requested by the Transport and Environment Select Committee which is considering the Energy Efficiency Bill.

The review includes an overview on environmental issues associated with the Bill, an analysis of issues raised in submissions and attendance at hearings and meetings of the Committee. The report should be released in June.

- For more information contact: Phil Hughes, c/o P O Box 10 241, Wellington, ph 04 495 8353, fax 04 495 8350, e-mail: phil@pce.govt.nz
Stop the Bloodshed in Nigeria

Up to 240 people have allegedly been killed for demanding compensation for the environmental destruction caused by oil exploration.

A NEW emergency has broken in Nigeria in the past weeks after the military government started an indiscriminate repression of a youth movement fighting for its rights to clean air and clean water which have been polluted by multinational oil corporations.

Up to 240 people have allegedly been killed by military repression, which has received little to no coverage in the international press. After 40 years of environmental devastation in the Niger Delta, military dictatorships and atrocious human rights violations, this is yet another example of how oil interests try to suffocate the legitimate demands of the people.

In December 1998, a minority ethnic community called the Ijaw launched “Operation Climate Change,” a non-violent campaign to pressure oil multinationals to cease their oil operations until the environmental pollution and compensation for local communities was sufficiently addressed.

On December 30th a State of Emergency was declared in the State of Bayelsa, while scores of troops were deployed in the region. The repression that followed may have killed up to 240 people, according to some reports. Villages were subject to raids and individual Ijaws have allegedly been stopped and assaulted in the streets.

Some oil companies have been accused of aiding the repression. According to some reports, military used Chevron owned helicopters and speedboats to attack two villages in Ijawland and killed at least two people on January 4th 1999. If confirmed, the episode would follow the activists killed on May 28th 1998 by soldiers hired by Chevron when they cracked a peaceful demonstration against the environmental destruction caused by the company. You can help stop the bloodshed.

The oil companies must hear from you if we are to get the Nigerian dictatorship to listen to the pleas of the Ijaws, to stop the killings, and to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Niger Delta.

PLEASE WRITE to at least one of the following CEOs of the multinational oil companies, and demand:

1. That they immediately shut down their flow stations, oil wells, and gas flares and begin discussions with the people to avoid unnecessary conflict;
2. Do all in their power to encourage the Nigerian military to peacefully resolve this crisis in dialogue with the true leaders of the oppressed ethnic minorities.

- Shell International Petroleum Co. Ltd., Shell Centre, LONDON SE1 7NA, e-mail: customer.c.custumerservice@ ope.shell.com
- Kenneth T. Derr, Chairman and CEO, Chevron Corporation, 575 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94105-2856, USA; Phone: 001 415-894-7700; Fax: 001 415-894-0593; e-mail: chevronweb@chevron.com
- Lucio A. Noto, Chairman and CEO, Mobil Corporation, 3225 Gallows Road, Fairfax, VA 22037, USA; Phone: 001 703-846-3000; Fax: 001 703-846-4669; e-mail: customer_relations_ffx@email.mobil.com

SeaViews Proceedings

The printed copy of proceedings of the successful 1998 Seaviews: Marine Ecosystem Management Conference is now available. The electronic version has run into a glitch and is taking a little longer. Copies of the paper copy can be obtained for $35 from the ECO office. It is a fascinating read containing both good science and good analysis, robust debate and suggested ways forward. Thanks to Joe and Sam Buchanan and the Sea Views team.

1999 ECO Conference

ECO WILL be holding its 1999 Conference 9-11 July in Wellington. It will an important conference as we work to ensure that environmental issues are given a high profile leading up to the election.

At this stage the venue has not been confirmed but this will be notified as soon as we know this. We would welcome suggestions for speakers and topics, and offers of help to assist with organising. Please contact the ECO office if you can help.
New Zealand Trust for Conservation Volunteers

THIS TRUST was launched by David Bellamy at a meeting in Auckland in March. The trust is presently recording information on individuals interested in volunteering, groups interested in taking on volunteers and details of projects requiring assistance. The trust is linked to similar British and Australian trusts.

Contact the secretary, Valerie Cowperthwaite, P O Box 8038, Symond Street, Wellington, Phone 09 528 1013, e-mail valerie@mentora.co.nz

Vote for the Environment

PREPARATIONS to push the environmental agenda in the election are underway. National environment organisations are co-operating to develop a Vote for the Environment campaign. At this stage organisations contributing to the campaign are Forest & Bird, Greenpeace, Federated Mountain Clubs, and the NZ Council for Outdoor Recreation along with ECO. A Vote for the Environment campaign has been organised for the past three elections.

Preliminary efforts are focusing on the development of a policy charter. As well as the charter the campaign will look at other activities and strategies to raise the awareness of environmental issues. If you would like to be a part of the campaign, and make contributions to it, please contact the ECO office.

Green web pages

* [www.converge.org.nz](http://www.converge.org.nz)
  A New Zealand community oriented network providing on-line communications and publishing to community groups. This site has links to many environmental groups.
* [www.converge.org.nz/rage](http://www.converge.org.nz/rage)
  The site of Revolt Against Genetic Engineering: information on GMOs in New Zealand and information on the group.
* [www.converge.org.nz/nfa](http://www.converge.org.nz/nfa)
  Native Forest Action’s web site. Information on campaigns, background information and contacts.
* [www.sustainable.wellington.net.nz](http://www.sustainable.wellington.net.nz)
  Wellington based network of sustainably motivated organisations and interest groups. This site has links to a huge number of other sites.

Climate change sites

* [www.climatenetwork.org](http://www.climatenetwork.org)
  The site of Climate Action Network, still under construction but has information and contacts for this international network of groups concerned with climate change.
* [www.greenpeace.org/~climate](http://www.greenpeace.org/~climate)
  Greenpeace International’s climate change site.
* [www.isis.ca/linkages/climate/](http://www.isis.ca/linkages/climate/)
  Large amount of information on international climate change negotiations.
* [www.toowarm.org/](http://www.toowarm.org/)
  The United States’ Sierra Club’s climate change site.
* [www.foc.co.nz/cgi-bin/climate/climate-home.pl](http://www.foc.co.nz/cgi-bin/climate/climate-home.pl)
  Friends of the Earth International’s climate change information page.

CommunityNet Aotearoa website

A NEW website has been launched to help make the internet more accessible to community organisations, and act as a source of information useful for running groups.

The website designed by and for community groups contains information about running community organisations, links to sites of interest, a community events board and a discussion forum. Developed in partnership with the Department of Internal Affairs, the trust is being set-up to govern the website.

For more information: CommunityNet Aotearoa, c/- National Operations Team, P O Box 805, Wellington; email: information@community.net.nz; or visit the site at www.community.net.nz

Petrina Grube: a visitor from the USA

ECO is grateful for the services of Petrina Grube, who has decided to gain experience by working gratis for ECO for 6 months. She started in late January and will be with us until June. She has a degree in political science and has worked at the East Bay Regional Park District in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has an interest in the environment and wants to combine exploring how policy is made with her interest in getting to know environmental issues and getting to know New Zealand. If you would like to host Petrina when she travels, please let us know.

Upcoming submissions

(details available from the ECO office)

* Australia New Zealand Food Authority: Standard on Irradiated Food, submissions by March 26
* Ministry of Fisheries – Tairui Tuna Working Group: Public discussion on review of Eel (Tuna) fishery management incorporating Tairui Rohe: Submissions by March 31
* Local Government 2010 Foresight Project: Submissions by March 31
* Border Control Review: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of New Zealand’s Border Control Machinery: Submissions by March 31
* Environmental Risk Management Authority: Proposed Fees and Charges for the Provision of Services by ERMA under the HSNO Act: Submissions by April 2
* Department of Conservation: Nature and Extent of Conservation Services (Fisheries) White Paper, Submissions by midday, April 6
* Department of Conservation/Ministry for the Environment: Draft Biodiversity Strategy – Submissions by Friday April 16
* Ministry for the Environment: Climate Change – Domestic policy options statement – Submissions by April 16
* Ministry of Transport: Better Transport, Better Roads, Submissions by April 30
* Department of Conservation: Te Urewera National Park Management Plan review. Suggestions or requests for meetings by May 31.

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RMA proposals protest

IN JANUARY ECO exec members joined Ac-
tion for Community and the Environment to
protest proposed changes to the Resource
Management Act. Protesters in hard hats and
tool belts staked out an area of the lawn of the
former Broadcasting House site next to Par-
liament Buildings, and erected a sign announc-
ing a “Subdivision Bonanza” promising “No
Public Consultation, Minimal Environmental
Controls, Heritage Destroyed and Planning
Approval Side-stepped—if changes to the Re-
source Management Act proceed.”

Spokesperson Cath Wallace said “already
95% of resource comments are processed
without any public notification. If these pro-
posals go ahead, applications for develop-
ments like this could be processed by private
consultants with no public consultation.”

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