North Island Hector’s Dolphin: Where’s the action?

IT HAS BEEN KNOWN for several years now that the North Island Hector’s dolphin, a genetically distinct subpopulation of the rarest marine dolphin in the world, was in strife, but little has been done.

Independent scientists in Auckland (Scott Baker and Franz Pichler) and at Otago (Liz Slooten and Steve Dawson) and their students have studied the dolphins a bit but funds have been scarce. DoC has been underfunded and has not given the animal priority for management despite its responsibilities under the Marine Mammals Protection Act.

The Ministry of Fisheries, which has strong responsibilities under the Fisheries Act 1996 to ensure that adverse effects of fishing on the aquatic environment are avoided, remedied and mitigated, has done virtually nothing. The Fisheries Ministry has mandatory statutory obligations, in making decisions about fishing and sustainability, to take into account the maintenance of biodiversity and the viability of populations of associated or dependent species in the long term. It has not delivered on these obligations in this case or many others.

The population of the NI Hector’s dolphin is so small that it is increasingly hard to make accurate population estimates: but what is agreed is that the population is small. It has been estimated that only about 100 individuals remain though the level of confidence in this figure is low – it could be less, it could be more, but not more than 250. It seems that the animals’ range has shrunk quite dramatically. They could be from Whanganui to north of the Kaipara Harbour, but may have shrunk in range to north of New Plymouth (Mokau) past Waikato Heads to the Kaipara. Genetic work by Auckland scientist Franz Pichler shows the biodiversity of the population to be critically low.

The reasons for their decline are not clear – it could be that the population is suffering from pollution, from the effects of trawling and from other changes to habitat. In the South Island gill netting has had a significant effect on the Hector’s dolphins. There is also gill netting along the West Coast of the North Island where these animals occur.

It is not unreasonable to imagine that all of these pressures are having an effect. Because nothing is certain there have been calls for more research, for further certainty before any move is taken to ask fishers – commercial and recreational – to desist from gill netting or to take regulatory action to the same effect. The agencies are scared of the fishing industry and scared of the political power of recreational fishers who might take exception to any moves to limit gill netting. The fear of the recreational fishers may be misplaced given the opposition of the Big Game Fishing Council to gill nets.

Concern about the North Island Hector’s dolphin has rumbled and grumbled on for some time: it took Ellie Dickson, an Otago post graduate student, to ignite this concern into a major public campaign. In a petition circulated by email, Ellie and student colleagues called on the previous Minister of Conservation, Nick Smith, to take urgent action. Now that the government has changed, the new
Minister of Conservation, Sandra Lee and the new Minister of Fisheries, Pete Hodgson, have inherited the problem caused by years of inaction by Smith and the previous Minister of Fisheries, John Luxton.

Both DoC and the Ministry of Fisheries have significant responsibilities under their statutes to take action. DoC however has been axious to firm up the research on the state of the population and the reasons for the decline before taking action because of the beating by fishing interests it got when it introduced a marine mammal sanctuary around Banks Peninsula to prote: South Island Hector’s.

DoC has tried to engage fishers in applying “pingers” devices supposed to warn the animals of the gill nets. There is controversy over these pingers though and significant doubts as to their effectiveness. DoC has clung to these as a potential solution. These are not known to have been trialled in the North Island.

The Ministry of Fisheries has largely ignored its responsibilities under the Fisheries Act to maintain biodiversity or associated or dependent species. This generalisation holds for most – but not all - of the decisions made since the passage of the 1996 Fisheries Act.

ECO supports Ellie and her friends in their campaign to protect Hector’s dolphins and is grateful for their work. Forest and Bird too has long campaigned for the animals’ protection. We find it hard to believe that most recreational fishers would want to keep on using gill nets if they knew that this could help tip these rare and engaging animals into extinction. One problem is that the animals are now so rare that even very occasional drownings in set nets – say just once for each fisher in their life time - could accumulate into enough drownings to extinguish the species.

There are some who see the population as so damaged already, so close to extinction, that they think we should not try to take management measures to protect them, especially if there are a dozen or so gill netting commercial fishers who would have to find new fishing methods. This refuge of pessimism then allows some to suggest that we should regard the North Island animals as doomed and allow them to vanish.

Ellie and ECO believe that people have a moral duty to try -and that the Ministry of Fisheries has a legal duty to do so under at least 4 sections of the Fisheries Act 1996. We think that the commercial and recreational gill netters should switch to long lining for fish instead of gill netting - bottom trawling is too damaging to the sea floor communities. DoC also has responsibilities under the Marine Mammals Protection Act.

-Cath Wallace

Action:
Please write to the Minister of Conservation, Sandra Lee, and Minister of Fisheries, Pete Hodgson asking them to take action to protect Hector’s dolphin. Sign the petition supporting protection of Hector’s dolphin. Copies of the petition are available from ECO.

Chris Beeby Dies in Geneva

All of us in ECO and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, ASOC, who worked with or against Chris Beeby, lawyer and diplomat, liked and respected him. He apparently died in his sleep in Geneva where he was working as a senior legal arbiter on a dispute at the WTO. He was only 64.

Our high esteem of Chris survived despite our prolonged difference of opinion on the value of the Antarctic Minerals Convention, the negotiation of which he ably chaired from 1982 to 1989. We explored and opposed the idea of rules for mining and instead worked for rules to ban mining and to provide permanent environmental protection.

Chris rarely took our criticisms of the work he did as a personal attack though he came to believe our opposition to his work cost him professionally. He remained friendly and at times during the negotiations as they moved about the Antarctic Treaty countries, he used his influence to ensure that non-governmental organisations retained access to the margins of the negotiations.

New Zealand has lost a very distinguished legal mind and diplomat, someone who, in his time was a considerable alpine climber. His stamina at negotiations was astounding.

Chris worked on many international legal matters during his career: the Law of the Sea, UN matters, nuclear disarmament and nuclear testing, the Rainbow Warrior settlement. He had some truly frightening times during his ambassadorship in Iran when New Zealand’s apparent assistance to US diplomats held hostage made him a target of revolutionaries. His last posting as ambassador was to Paris.

Wellington being what it is, we also know some of his close friends, colleagues and family – we sympathise with their loss. For all our differences with him, we too share that loss, wish it were not so, and thank him for the fine legal contribution that he made, albeit misdirected on the Antarctic Minerals Convention.

-Cath Wallace

* 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.
Call for immediate end to Buller Overcut

Native Forest Action 13 March 2000

STATE OWNED enterprise Timberlands West Coast Ltd is hurriedly felling rimu in Buller forests before the government implements policy to end all native logging on public land.

The ‘Buller Overcut’ is unashamedly referred to as ‘unsustainable’ by Timberlands and involves the extraction of all ‘merchantable’ rimu. Timberlands are currently logging in the 6,400 hectare Orikaka Forest in the Buller Gorge.

A Department of Conservation assessment of Timberlands native forests was released in its entirety under the Official Information Act in February. It describes 60% of the forests, including Orikaka and other Buller forests, as having high conservation value and 33% as having medium conservation value also worthy of protection. The government stated that many of Timberlands’ native forests are of National Park quality and are equally deserving of protection. Orikaka is no exception and has good numbers of kiwi, kaka, kakariki, giant carnivorous snails and several other threatened species.

Before Timberlands started logging Orikaka late last year about 80% of the forest was unlogged. In three to four months Timberlands have reduced this to approximately 60% unlogged. This demonstrates Timberlands’ lack of genuine concern for conservation values and conflicts with their claim of ‘world leadership in sustainable forest management’. The vast majority of Timberlands’ rimu comes from the ‘unsustainable’ Buller Overcut. Native Forest Action and other conservation groups have requested that the government end the Overcut immediately and to also end the so-called ‘sustainable’ rimu logging in Okarito and Saltwater forests as soon as possible.

The West Coast Accord provided for the Buller Overcut to continue until sufficient plantation timber became available.

For some time now there has been sufficient plantation pine ready for harvest on the West Coast and there is a shortage of experienced loggers in the region. Together with the economic development package promised by the government in exchange for ending the logging, this means there is no legal, moral or economic reason for the Buller Overcut to continue.

The public voted overwhelmingly for parties that promised to stop native logging on public land and the government stopped Timberlands’ massive beech logging plans from proceeding immediately after it took power. The government urgently needs encouragement to stop the Buller Overcut immediately. Otherwise in a few months’ time there will be no rimu left to save in forests like Orikaka.

Write to: Hon. Pete Hodgson, Minister Responsible for Timberlands, Parliament Buildings, Wellington; fax 04 495-8449; email: phodgson@ministers.govt.nz

Strategies for Environmental Gains

ECO Annual Conference
25-27 August 2000
Tahunanui Beach, Nelson

The urgency of issues like climate change, deforestation and pillage of the oceans, have not diminished despite more than 30 years of campaigning in Aotearoa/New Zealand. There are many options to tackle environmental issues, with new technologies and approaches emerging all the time. However, there is little agreement on what are the most effective ways of addressing the need for environmental change.

At the 2000 ECO conference we will focus in on developing effective strategies to promote sound environmental management. It will be an opportunity to hone skills, analyse and debate issues of corporate and political power and learn from our collective experiences.

We will be bringing together people working on environmental issues from all over the country to discuss these issues. There will be workshops, debate, and case studies looking at campaigns in the Nelson region. Speakers will include campaigners, commentators and politicians.

The conference is a opportunity to step away from the day-to-day battles, and issues of survival, to reflect on creating the world we want. This year’s conference is intended for members of environmental organisations and other citizen groups.

Set in the well equipped 54 hectare Tahunanui Beach Holiday Park, the conference venue is a short walk from Tahunanui Beach and numerous other attractions. Onsite accommodation is priced starting from $22 per night.

For a copy of the registration pack please contact the ECO office, or to view the program visit the ECO website: www.converge.org.nz/eco
Biodiversity Emphasised

BIODIVERSITY is a hot topic for the Government in March with the release of two reports related to biodiversity occurring or anticipated.

The long awaited Biodiversity Strategy, which was held up by the previous Government, is expected by the end of the month, and 'Bio what?', a report looking at protection on private land under the Resource Management Act, was launched on 9th March.

The Biodiversity Strategy should clearly outline the commitments of the new Government to biodiversity. ECO is hoping to see recognition of the need for increased funding for biodiversity protection and increased emphasis in the marine environment.

The 'Bio what?' report was released by the Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs, in the Waikato. Prepared by a taskforce established by the previous Minister for the Environment, Simon Upton, the report looks at measures under the Resource Management Act to protect private land.

The report suffers from the weaknesses typical of the previous Government’s approach to environmental issues: dependence on voluntary measures and accords to solve the problems.

Although the report does have the rudimentary elements of a national policy statement on biodiversity the report focuses mostly on other mechanisms including a proposal for a national accord. Anyone with experience of accords would realise that such a proposal has a high probability of failure. For example, while the NZ Forest Accord has had positive results, it has not all been plain sailing and it only works because there are benefits for all signatories – conservation groups supported plantation forestry while the forest companies gave up clearing indigenous vegetation.

The number of different interests that would be required to get a national accord in place would make the process unworkable and shift the focus away from the urgent need for a national policy statement.

Regional and district councils have been crying out for many year for clear national direction under the Resource Management Act. The previous Government refused to develop national policy statements apart from the mandated NZ Coastal Policy. The new Government’s parties have manifesto commitments to prepare national policy statements. A biodiversity national policy statement could be in force by the end of next year.

ECO urges people to read the 'Bio what?' report and when it is released, the Biodiversity Strategy. Write directly to the Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs, with your thoughts on a national policy statement on biodiversity under the RMA. Contact Marian Hobbs at: Parliament Buildings, Wellington (no stamp required), fax 04 4958467 email mohobbs@ministers.govt.nz

The Advisory Committee will receive submissions on the preliminary report until 16 June, 2000 at National Policy Statement - Biodiversity Ministry for the Environment PO Box 10-362, Wellington

IUCN World Conservation Congress 2000, Amman, Jordan

IUCN's World Conservation Congress, expected to be the biggest environmental gathering ever to be held in the Middle East, will be held in Amman, Jordan from 4-11 October 2000.

This important event will bring together our State and non-governmental members, Commission networks and partners in order to set the Union's focus for the first years of the new millennium.

The theme of the Amman Congress is "ecospace", a term indicating that environmental protection at various geographical scales is a prerequisite for the social, economic, and even political security of people. Redefining the frontiers of conservation will address the problem of the current inadequacy in social and spatial organisation for environmental management, involving knowledge, empowerment, and governance at global, national, and local levels. It will link ecosystem conservation with the need to stem the global loss of biodiversity, and thus build on IUCN’s traditional strengths in species and protected areas.

ECO, as an IUCN member, has been invited to participate, and hopes to attend subject to raising funds for travel and accommodation.

For more information see: http://www.iucn.org/amman/index.html
One Experience with the RMA

IN 1997, the Buller District Council advertised a block of recreation land for sale by its legal description. As the public had no idea where the land was, no objections were received.

Council then decided in secret to sell the land to Talleys for a fish offal plant. People only found out what was going on when council advertised resource consent applications from Talleys Fisheries. The land was designated "recreation; public open space" in the old Transitional District Plan. However, there being no such zoning in the Proposed Buller District Plan, this changed to 'rural'. People still thought rural was safe, the pony club being occupier at the time. Under the RMA, Talleys applied to build the offal plant as a discretionary activity. There were 45 supporting submissions, 110 against, and one neutral - a sign of the high level of public interest in Westport.

The commissioners, Tony Hughes-Johnson QC and John Clayton of West Coast Regional Council, turned down the discharge to air, discharge to water, and the land use consents. They granted a water permit for a new bore. Most objectors supported an offal plant somewhere else, but not in one of the town's prime recreation areas. It's an area of quiet open space lying near the Buller River mouth and a popular beach, with beautiful views of the mountains.

On July 3 1998, Buller Conservation Group (BCG) received a copy of the new application which was basically an amended version of the first one. The changes were: the use of a biofilter to reduce smells instead of chemical scrubbing, recycling water so less fish waste is discharged directly into the Buller River, and moving the discharge point upstream. This time Talleys went round the pubs with a form submission for people to sign. Consequently 279 generally supported and 124 opposed. At the hearing, 27 spoke in opposition and five in support (four of whom were involved in fishing).

The new commissioners, John Lumsden and Michael Garland, allocated only two days to hear all submitters. At first they were reluctant to assure workers who could not be there during the day that they'd get a chance to speak later. They seemed to treat the applicant (Talleys) with respect, and objectors with bare tolerance, making us wonder if their minds were already made up. As one submitter started to talk, a commissioner said he hoped she wasn't just going to repeat what others had already said. In reply she asked if she was allowed to speak or not. He did allow her to continue.

In November 1998, all consents were granted. BCG appealed, as did Yvonne Scarlett and 60 others. Talleys applied to have us struck out as we'd left one sentence off our appeal notice. Being an incorporated society, BCG members could not be individually liable for costs in the event of a loss. Talleys obtained a copy of our accounts showing a balance of $64,94. Consequently they applied for security of costs whereby we would be instructed by the court to deposit a certain amount of cash before we could be heard. The District and Regional councils, whose decision we'd appealed, supported Talleys application. In the court, Judge Skelton asked if Talleys shouldn't be supporting the councils rather than the other way around, seeing the appeal was against the councils' decision. It illustrated to us how subservient the Councils' had made themselves to Tally's.

During afternoon tea, the lawyers for both councils hurriedly drew up their own applications for security of costs - BDC $40,000, WCRC $30,000, and Talleys $30,000-$50,000, making about $120,000 in total. Yvonne Scarlett's group withdrew about this time, for fear Yvonne could lose her house and all possessions. We stated that if security of costs were awarded, our financial position meant we would have no option but to withdraw, having no corporate backers or sugar parents. The judge adjourned the hearing to Christchurch and I drove over to attend. With our bank balance now $53,97, there was not much in the kitty for Talleys. We suggested they carry their own costs, as we intended to.

The judge ruled we had a valid appeal, but ordered security of costs of $16,000. This forced us to withdraw. All this happened without us getting a chance to put our case in the Court and have it judged on its merits. BCG has since decided the Environment Court is not where we wish to spend our time and energy. Our media release made the observation: "If this is democracy in action, then we can't afford it. We don't believe councils in particular should be discouraging community participation by seeking costs... We are left wondering just what steps private citizens can take against unwanted developments which compromise our physical and social environment, and are forced on us by corporate and local body bully-boys."

In March 2000, Talleys began building the offal plant – an eyesore in a public park.

-Pat McNamara, secretary, Buller Conservation Group

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New Zealand National Conference and Major Organic Millenium Event
19 - 20 May 2000
at UNITEC Campus,
Auckland Soil & Health Association
In association with UNITEC
www.organic2020.org.nz
Marine Management Reform needed: PCE

IT IS NOW OFFICIAL: "The sustainable future of our marine world remains in great peril. The Quota management system is inadequate, our ignorance great, our research too little, our rate of exploitation excessive."

So says the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE), Morgan Williams, in his report Setting Course for a Sustainable Future: the management of New Zealand’s Marine Environment, printed in December 1999 and launched January 2000.

More caution, more research and more recognition of the role of Maori in the stewardship of the marine environment are also called for in Setting Course.

The same fragmented patchwork of legislation and agencies that deal with the sea as ECO has deplored is noted by the PCE, who recommends that there be a taskforce created to reform marine management. Its first task would be building consensus and engaging with the public’s values and aspirations.

Says the PCE: “A major re-crafting of our thinking, policies and legislation is needed to reflect this. The values and fisheries management systems that permitted the desecration of Spirits Bay in Northland, and the ongoing demise of orange rougby stock and ecosystems such as seamounts, are simply not good enough to meet New Zealand’s needs in the first years of the 21st century” (preface).

If you want to know what the marine debate is all about, reading the PCE’s report – along with ECO’s newsletters – is a good way to parachute into the issues (see box 1 on page 7 for a list of key recommendations). The report is leavened with case studies and stories so it is interesting as well as being informative. There are a few minor mistakes – and some areas of gullibility on the part of the PCE who seems to have fallen for the full PR story on the Golden Bay scallop management. Some locals will undoubtedly be fuming at that.

Overall though, the PCE and his team have gathered together a useful account of issues in marine environment, the law, agencies and players in marine management and the need for far reaching reform. ECO is glad that at last it is not only environmental non-government organisations who are calling for change.

We recommend that the government commit itself to a three year reform programme to be spearheaded by a task group reporting to senior ministers and the Prime Minister. Essential will be on-going consultation with the public to elicit our values and aspirations, followed by the development of a series of discussion papers with working groups and other consultation mechanisms. Policy development should then culminate in policy papers and ultimately new law and administrative forms.

Pete Hodgson, the man with many Ministries, has been given the task of developing and managing the reform. Carolyn Risk, a senior manager at the Ministry of Fisheries, is to be seconded to the Minister’s office for this purpose. It has been made clear that this reform will not be run by the Fisheries Ministry, despite Mr Hodgson having Fisheries in his clutch of portfolios. His other relevant portfolios are Science and CRIs. Ms Risk will have the task of achieving liaison between the various interested agencies.

The Minister of Conservation, Sandra Lee, has also welcomed the PCE report, particularly the call for a revision of the Marine Reserves Act. Preliminary work to enable this review to occur has already begun.

The full PCE report and a summary is available online at: www.pce.govt.nz/ or on request from: The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, PO Box 10-241, Wellington, ph 04 471-1669, fax 04 495-8350, email pce@pce.govt.nz

The recommendations are these:

- *To the Ministers of Environment and Fisheries*: urgently review the adequacies of the Resource Management Act, the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, the Marine Farming Act and the Fisheries Act to ensure that the sustainable management of coastal and marine ecosystems occurs in a more integrated manner.

- *To the Minister of Conservation*: give high priority to the review of the Marine Reserves Act 1971 to widen the purposes for which protection of marine areas may be established.

- *To the Ministers of Conservation and Fisheries*: give high priority to the identification, and protection, of a representative selection of seamounts where these are not yet affected by fishing pressures. In order to fill critical gaps in the ecological information needed for management, investment in ecosystem level research should be increased.

- *To the Minister of Research, Science and Technology*: better reflect New Zealand's national and international public good obligations, by increasing Crown investment in marine and coastal ecosystem sciences.

The most important recommendation is:

- *To the Prime Ministers*: establish a Coastal and Oceans Task Force for the purpose of developing a strategy comprising firstly, goals and principles, secondly actions and policies for the future sustainable management of New Zealand's marine environment.

The Task Force should:

- be administered by an agency independent of any particular government ministry or department;
- be adequately resourced (both funds and expertise), and have the powers and authority to examine the many complex issues thoroughly and be able to recommend clear courses of action;
- be representative of all key stakeholders, selected through a cross-party process;
- recognise the diversity and range of values, expectations and rights in New Zealand's marine environment;
- address the complex, inter-connectedness of marine and coastal ecosystems by adopting a systems approach;
- have a limited life-span (for example, two years) to achieve its work; and
- be required to report to the Prime Minister.

The Task Force should examine the critical issues affecting the marine environment and address issues in the following areas:

- appraisal and improvement of our knowledge of the marine environment;
- development of practical ways for the full continuum of rights to be taken into account in management;
- assessment of the adequacy of legislation and policy to achieve sustainability and biodiversity objectives; and
- evaluation of marine and coastal management systems and agencies, and the strategic opportunities for effective structures.

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**Success:**

**Minister stalls Fisheries Research Take-over**

ECO is delighted that the Minister of Fisheries, Pete Hodgson, has declared a one year-plus moratorium on allowing the fishing industry to take over the handling of research needed for the Minister's decisions under the Fisheries Act 1996.

This is a significant change in the direction vigorously pushed by the Ministry of Fisheries and his predecessor, John Luxton, who wanted to allow fishing industry representatives to “direct purchase” this research instead of the Minister commissioning it. In announcing the halt to such “direct purchase” or passing responsibility for research from the Minister to the industry, the Minister observed that “Direct purchasing carries a fundamental risk. Put simply, those who purchase research have an ability to influence it”. Regrettably the Minister has not ended the practice completely – rather he has said that he is suspending it for at least one year, possibly more.

This leaves the non-industry research providers still vulnerable to threats from the industry that if they do not conform in various ways to industry interests – including not speaking out – they will in future suffer loss of contracts. This existing phenomenon is one of several reasons ECO and the Marine Sciences Society hoped that such “direct purchase” arrangements would be completely terminated.

The newly released Ministry of Fisheries draft “Fisheries Services Plan for year ended 30 June 2001” contains provision for the Ministry to continue to “outsource” fisheries management and research services. Thus we may be seeing no more than a postponement. It is clear that some in the Ministry and industry are still determined to prevail over the Minister's well founded doubts.
Adverse Fisheries Audit Report Buried

ECO it seems, now keeps respectable company: none less than the Auditor General. The adverse report on the Ministry of Fisheries had nothing to do with embezzling.

Instead, the Auditor General examined the “Information requirements for the sustainable management of fisheries” – and found the Ministry profoundly wanting.

The Auditor General is painfully polite in his criticisms – yet the message is clear. It was largely missed though, because the criticisms were buried in section 5 of Report of the Controller and Auditor-General: Fifth Report for 1999. As if that bland title was not enough to deflect interest, the Report was tabled at the very end of the Parliamentary session last year, just before it rose for Christmas. Most of the press missed it, as did almost everyone else.

ECO has long registered our concerns about the Ministry of Fisheries’ failure to ensure that information on the effects of fishing on the aquatic environment was available. We have deplored the cut backs of fisheries research during the 1990s. We have noted that the Ministry spent millions of dollars pursuing its own policy objective of handing fisheries management to the fishing industry instead of doing the work on the impacts of fishing on the aquatic environment that the Fisheries Act obliged it to do. We are now not alone.

The Office of the Auditor General (the “Office”) examined the information available for 44 of the 257 fishstocks and noted that those 44 stocks represented 60% by value of the total caught. It concluded that for 31 of those fishstocks “there are significant gaps in the information required by the Act….” The Office also stressed the need for the status and uncertainties about fishstocks to be more clearly spelt out in Ministry reports.

On the aquatic environment the Office stressed the requirement for consideration of the environmental principles, noted recent projects done or commissioned (mostly because of pressure from ECO and Forest and Bird, we might add), but said that the Ministry had not done enough. The report says “we believe that the Ministry needs to perform more work to meet the aquatic environment requirements of the 1996 Act.” It goes on “the Ministry has been slow to commit resources to meet the environmental principles of the 1996 Act given that it had been aware of those principles and their implications for some time.” (p53)

We say not slow, but glacial, and we would add that much money was instead spent by officials to help the industry achieve its goals of taking over fisheries management servicing. The senior officials at the Ministry and the former Minister ignored our protests and simply refused to attend to their legal obligations.

On aquatic environment research, the Office notes “the trend of decrease in the annual research budget this decade from $22 million in 1991 to $13 million in 1998. In view of our other findings we think that trend is a matter of concern.”

After noting that the 1999-2000 research is budgeted to increase, the report records deadpan that only $481,445 is scheduled to be spent on aquatic environment research, little or none of it at sea. We might add that much of what has masqueraded as environmental research has actually been projects on fish diseases and the like and have not been about protecting non-commercial species or the aquatic environment impacted by fishing.

The good news is that the new Minister, Pete Hodgson, seems determined to shake the Ministry up and make it do what the Act says it must. The Ministry itself is lumbering into reorganisation mode. As is we write about elsewhere in this issue of ECOLink, the Ministry is even full steam ahead trying – very belatedly – to understand the 1996 Fisheries Act. Somewhere out in 2001 it plans to start implementing the 1996 Act.

The Recommendations of the Auditor General are that the Ministry:

- ensures that all information on the status of fishstocks clearly specifies the level of uncertainty in that information;
- recognises and addresses the level of uncertainty of the status of the fishstocks in its annual research and management documents;
- ensures that information is collected that will allow the fishstocks to be utilised to their potential (i.e. maximum sustainable yield);
- give greater priority to fulfilling the environmental requirements of the 1996 Act;
- continues to work with the Ministry for the Environment on the Environmental Performance Indicators Programme;
- ensures that research funding does not overlap and avoids duplication of research by continuing to work co-operatively with other research funders; and
- recognises in its budgeting the research required to fulfill the environmental principles of the 1996 Act.”

It is impossible here to do justice to the Auditor General's Report - you can find it on the Web at www.maq.govt.nz or in bookshops that supply.
Greening the Ministry of Fisheries?

Criticisms of the Ministry of Fisheries' failure to interpret or implement the environmental provisions of the Fisheries Act 1996 and its failure to do other things required of it by that Act seem finally to be having an effect.

The combination of the concerns of ECO, Forest and Bird, the Marine Sciences Society, the Auditor-General and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment seem to have become a force for change. With the essential element of a new and environmentally aware Minister, Pete Hodgson allowing the alchemy to occur, the Ministry seems finally to be getting busy on the environmental front.

The Ministry is embarked on a project to develop and debate position papers on the meaning of crucial sections of the Fisheries Act 1996 and to find means of implementing the requirements. Now the Ministry has people furiously writing about the meaning of the Act and it estimates that by 2001 it may be able to implement it. It also wants to develop a new Environmental Management Strategy.

The churlish amongst us might think that five years later is really rather a long time since the passage of the Act to be getting round to implementing it – for all that it is welcome at last. This is a project that the Ministry began some years ago and then allowed it to lapse because money and people were diverted internally to the projects to allow the industry to take over the supply of fisheries management services. These projects continue and have been allocated a lot of money in the new funding proposals.

For the future, the Ministry and other agencies propose new environmental initiatives which we expect to be part of a bid for funding in the 2000/2001 Budget. The package is for marine biodiversity and biosecurity funding – some new, some repackaged from elsewhere. A marine biodiversity database and baseline information is planned, including information on the Ross Sea, Antarctica. Identification of threats to marine and coastal biodiversity, marine Biodiversity Strategy implementation, and education is included in the bid. So too is establishing a more representative range of marine reserves, and work on an Oceans Strategy. (Source: [Draft] Fisheries Services Plan for the Year Ended 30 June 2001 and Business Plan for 2000-2003, Ministry of Fisheries, Wellington, c 10 March 2000 pp74-77).

Standard Ministry funding categories show some proposed changes: Fish stock research is proposed to increase by $3.4 million. It is proposed that there will be some funding for developing ecosystem approaches to fisheries management – but only $122,000 is proposed for this compared to $2.631million for work to establish aquacultural and recreational fishing rights. Significant funding is proposed for Ministry input into work by other agencies – but funding for the Ministry to have input into marine reserves reform could be counter productive to environmental protection given the opposition to several marine reserves that the Ministry has had in the past.

There is a $600,000 bid for work on the effects of fishing on the aquatic environment, and other extra environmental projects planned which together top $1m. Considering that the fishing industry takes gross revenues of about $14 billion per year and does a lot of damage, this remains inadequate. (Source: Fisheries Services Plan for the Year Ended 30 June 2001 and Business Plan for 2000-2003, Ministry of Fisheries, Wellington, c 10 March 2000, pp 31 & ff).

The proposals are being consulted on and are subject to amendment.

Squid fishery closed again

The Minister of Fisheries closed the Auckland Islands squid fishery in early March after the threshold for New Zealand sea lion deaths was reached.

This is the fourth time in five years that this has happened, but this year a new record was achieved. The fishery was only open five weeks, the shortest time ever.

Despite rhetoric to the contrary and claims that it would miss out on millions of dollars worth of catch, the fishing industry caught about half its quota. Its 2000 catch equaled the average catch for the last 10 years. Squid stocks are very variable and last year only three percent of the quota was caught.

In the last 20 years the fishing industry has drowned over 2000 sea lions which are ranked internationally as a vulnerable threatened species. Two years ago the sealions suffered a epidemic which killed around 50 percent of that year's pups. The long term effects of the epidemic will not be known for several more years.

This year there were further trials of a marine mammal exclusion device. This device may or may not prevent sea lions being drowned. Despite public claims from the industry that the device is proven this is not the case. Further work is needed to determine whether the animals are deflected out of the net alive, or a mortally wounded or are dead.

This device should also be trialled in the hoki fishery which kills over 1000 fur seals annually. The industry has so far been reluctant to trial this net in non-squid fisheries.

To protect the Hooker's sealions conservation groups are calling for the current marine mammal sanctuary to be extended out to 100 km to create a trawler-free zone around the Auckland Islands.
Parliamentary Watch

NO NEW environmental legislation has been introduced since the election of the new Government in November.

The Government has yet to indicate how it is going to deal with a range of important legislation:

• **Resource Management Amendment Bill**: ECO is proposing that most of this Bill will be withdrawn by the Government and instead replaced by provisions that enhance the Resource Management Act rather than reduce community involvement and environmental protection. The provisions that include historic places in the RMA should be strengthened and passed.

• **Forests Amendment Bill**: This Bill proposed by the previous Government would open up exports of indigenous woodchips, entrench the unsustainable forestry of Timberlands and not improve the public processes under the Forests Act. ECO is calling for most of this Bill to be dropped and the Government review the effectiveness of the application of the Act to private land. The public processes in the Forest Amendment Bill are practically non-existent and have never been used since the Bill was passed in 1993.

• **Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Bill**: Submissions have yet to be called on this Bill. The provisions of this Bill were cooked up after secret discussions between Cabinet Ministers in the previous Government, ERMA and chemical industries. The Bill contains a mixture of technical changes, but also changes that will reduce public involvement in hazardous substances management (eg clause 8). The Bill puts back the implementation of the hazardous substances provisions of the HSNO Act for at least another year.

• **Legal Services Bill**: Since the election ECO has made a submission on the Legal Services Bill. ECO will be looking to see how the parties forming the new Government will fulfil their commitments to introduce environmental legal aid. Under the heading of "mediation and litigation" in its Environment Policy Labour committed to: "remove the barriers to public participation by ensuring that environmental and community groups will be eligible to apply for a capped legal aid fund at an Environment Court hearing, as well as eligible applicants. Labour will develop criteria against which the validity of applications will be assessed.

The Alliance’s Local Government Policy committed under the heading Resource Management Act to: “resourcing community groups so that they can participate much more fully in resource consent and planning hearings.”

Environmental groups, as part of the Vote for the Environment Charter proposed a fund of $5 million/year to ensure adequate legal, expert and research assistance for environmental cases.

• **Future legislation**: ECO expects to see Bills being introduced this year to amend the Reserves Act and later in the year the Marine Reserves Act. A discussion paper on changes to the Marine Reserves Act is expected to be released in April or May.

WWF Open Craigieburn Environmental Centre

A PARTNERSHIP between the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Christchurch College of Education has led to the establishment of an environmental education centre.

A programme of environmental education outside the classroom is being offered that addresses the needs of classes through a cross-curricular approach.

The recently appointed Environmental Education Teacher, Toby Johnson, will work with staff from the Canterbury Regional Council, Christchurch City Council, Craigieburn Environmental Trust, and the Department of Conservation.

Teachers will be offered assistance and guidance in the implementation of the “Guidelines for Environmental Education in New Zealand Schools”. A programme of lessons and activities has been developed focusing on major environmental issues in Canterbury based around the Craigieburn E.C.

One programme, the “Coast to the High Country”, aims to help students develop environmental awareness and sensitivity, as well as to build knowledge and understanding of the impact people have on the environment. The “Coast to the High Country” is a three day field trip, which includes two nights at the Craigieburn Environmental Education Centre. The journey to and from Craigieburn provides an opportunity to investigate topics such as meatworks effluent discharges at the Waimakariri River Bridge, an ancient Pa site and wetlands at the Kaiapoi Pa and wind-induced soil erosion and soil monitoring at Eyrewell Forest.

The services of both the Craigieburn Environmental Education Centre and the Environmental Education Teacher are available for shorter programmes, or to help with existing teaching programs. Further information is available from Toby Johnson: ph 03 348 2059, email toby.johnson@ccce.ac.nz.

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Energy efficiency - deja vu

Recommendations contained in the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's recently released report Getting More From Less create a powerful sense of deja vu.


The need to address progress on energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives in New Zealand is pressing. As Morgan Williams stated when launching the report, "...inefficient energy use has environmental consequences and affects our economic competitiveness. The amount of benefit New Zealand gets from each unit of energy places us a lowly 17 out of 22 OECD countries".

Findings are critical of the National government, as is noted in the report "...since 1997 there has been a trend of reducing Government commitment and funding of energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives".

There are signs that the current government will overturn the National government's weak record. The Labour/Alliance coalition government's first budget is expected to contain increased funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority.

Responding to the launch of Getting More From Less Energy Minister Pete Hodgson commented that "The Government will consider in detail its response to the recommendations but I expect many of them will be met by the policies we are now putting in place. Others will make a very constructive contribution as we consider how to improve New Zealand's energy efficiency and uptake of renewable energy sources".

This position is consistent with Labour's pre-election energy policy. In this policy it was stated EECA's "...function will be widened to involve more policy analysis and more advocacy, including the development of strategies under the Energy Efficiency Act". Labour committed itself to providing Government leadership in the energy efficiency field.

Prior to the election there was clear support from Labour for the passage of Jeannette Fitzsimmons' Energy Efficiency Bill. It is expected that this will be returned to the house for its final reading on 22nd March. Changes to incorporate recommendations made by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment are expected to be included in the Bill.

Commenting on the launch of Getting More from Less Greens co-leader Jeannette Fitzsimmons stated that the "...Energy Efficiency Bill sets out a framework which makes it possible to implement all of the recommendations that the commissioner makes. I hope that his next report card in three years time will reflect the positive moves in energy efficiency that my bill will introduce".

A summary of the report is available online at: www.pce.govt.nz or contact PO Box 10-241, Wellington, ph 04 471 1669, fax 04 495 8350, email pce@pce.govt.nz.

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's report: Getting More for Less

Recommendations cover all aspects of energy efficiency and renewable energy, including:

- formal establishment of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority with government support, adequate funding, a legislative mandate and expanded policy role
- preparation of a national energy efficiency and renewable energy strategy using a consultative process
- improved departmental and inter-departmental processes for the assessment and reporting on the environmental impacts of energy use
- establishment of a monitoring framework for the energy sector
- introduction of minimum energy performance standards
- annual reporting by government agencies on the energy efficiency of their operations
- investigation into how research into renewable energy could be improved
- investigation of energy savings in the transport sector
- report on the potential role of consumption and pollution-based taxes and incentives to address the environmental and economic impacts of energy use.
Agenda 21 in Wellington and the UK

Two recent reports highlight the lack of progress with the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in New Zealand.

Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment investigator Phil Hughes undertook a study tour to the UK in November 1999. In his report on the tour, "Local Agenda 21 in the United Kingdom: a review of progress and issues for New Zealand", Hughes outlines the degree of uptake by councils of Local Agenda 21, presents some case studies and summarises relevant government policy.

Key factors influencing progress with Local Agenda 21 in the UK include: central government support and leadership, identified local champions, a number of small central and local government partnerships, formal commitment by councils to LA21, availability of a vast array of guidance material, regular surveys of progress and considerable networking. A summary of the report available online at: www.pce.govt.nz/ or contact P O Box 10-241, Wellington, ph 04 471 1669, fax 04 495 8350, email phil@pce.govt.nz.


Recommendations cover the need for the Wellington City Council to shore up its commitment to and understanding of citizen participation, for ways to be found to involve key stakeholders, and for resourcing to be found for participation. There are also lessons for the design of any future citizen participation exercises.

A copy of the research findings is available online in the other papers section of the Local Government New Zealand library (www.localgovtnz.co.nz), or contact the author care of the ECO office, email: sblyth@paradise.net.nz.

Celebrate International Earth Day's 30th Anniversary

A series of events are being planned around the country to celebrate International Earth Day 2000 on 22nd April. The date differs slightly from when celebrations will occur internationally on 22nd April, the recognised date for Earth Day, as allowance was made for this year's combined Easter and Anzac Day holiday.

The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society is coordinating events around the country. These include a treasure from trash day, tree plantings and working bees, a poster competition, and talks. Details are available on the Forest and Bird website: www.forestbird.org.nz/.

With the support of local environmental groups and Government bodies, Wellington will be the scene for the highest level of activity in New Zealand. A range of static and interactive displays are being planned for Civic Square, which will form a focal point for conservation and environmental groups. There will also be a fun day at the Karori Sanctuary for the Kiwi Conservation Club/Panda club, tree planting activities on Tinakori Hill, and an "open day" at Red Rocks/South Coast. The NZAEE are looking into an Earth Day School Art display, details have yet to be confirmed.

Earth Day Background

Earth Day has enjoyed increasing levels of world-wide support since its original conception in 1969.

Former Senator Gaylord Nelson, who is the credited founder of Earth Day, believed the only means to bring about change to educate the Government and society was to think up some dramatic event that would focus national attention on the environment. In 1963, he persuaded President Kennedy to give national visibility to environmental issues by going on a nationwide conserv on tour. Limited success was muddled by this endeavor and it wasn't until 6 years had passed did the idea for Earth Day occur to Gaylord Nelson.

In 1970, the inaugural Earth Day took place with an estimated twenty million people participating in peaceful demonstrations across the US. The common link between these people, who represented all ages, creeds and cultures, was the shared belief in demonstrating their concern for the state of the environment and the need to bring environmental issues into the political arena.

Twenty years later Earth Day expanded to the International community. On the 20th anniversary, Earth Day was celebrated by more than 200 million people in 141 countries.

International Earth Day 2000 stands to have the greatest representation ever through an estimated 500 million participants.

For groups in Wellington if your group is interested in having a display or in planning an event you can contact either Carol Knutson, ph 04 385-7374, email c.knutson@wn.forest-bird.org.nz, or Lynda Sutherland, ph 04 385-7545, email lcs@reddishell.co.nz.
Unusual Antarctic Lake Needs Protection

Lake Vostok is a large unusual lake found beneath about 4km of ice under the East Antarctica ice sheet. The lake is about the size of Lake Ontario being 250km long and 50km wide, with depths ranging from 500 to 10m.

The overlying ice provides a continuous climatic record of about 400,000 years, although the lake may have been isolated for a much longer time.

Lake Vostok is to Antarctica what Antarctica is to the rest of the planet: remote and pristine. It also stimulates obvious interest in the scientific community due to its unknown or undescribed features: the lake may be on an active tectonic rift, may contain a sedimentary record of the Earth’s climate, may be a new habitat with unique geochemical characteristics, and may contain life.

NASA, the US space agency, wants to use Lake Vostok as a test bed for technologies it hopes to use in outer space - on Europa, one of Jupiter’s moons. Supported by some Antarctic scientists, it wants to drill into the Lake.

For other scientists, as well as for the environmental community, this poses many problems. The operation risks contamination and possibly destruction of Lake Vostok’s unique features, in particular, any microbial populations that may exist. This could lead to a loss of opportunity for later research. A further consideration is whether such a natural treasure - particularly in an area such as Antarctica that is designated as a specially protected area - should be put at risk at all.

The Lake’s wilderness values, including the fact that it is surely one of the most pristine ecosystems on Earth, and its value for future generations, need to be considered. Since there are 60-80 smaller sub-glacial lakes in Antarctica, there are good arguments that one of those should be drilled first. In addition, there are sound reasons to support other sub-glacial research projects in the Antarctic. This is particularly true given that many scientists would not choose Lake Vostok as a priority research area. However, there are no funds available for these other research projects, which could provide important information with far less risk.

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition, of which ECO is a member is pushing for a Comprehensive Environmental Evaluation under the Protocol of Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. ASOC believes that drilling should at the very least be postponed for an indefinite period - perhaps for several generations - so that alternatives can be considered.

Multilateral environmental agreements to be reviewed

The Controller and Auditor General is auditing four multilateral environmental agreements (MEA) adopted by the New Zealand government.

The primary objectives of the review are to determine whether an informed and consultative decision-making process was used leading to the acceptance of agreements, and secondly, to determine whether NZ is meeting the MEA obligations that were agreed to at ratification and subsequently. A report is expected to be made to Parliament later in the year.

The agreements being studied are:

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, RAMSAR.
- Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC).
Biosafety protocol agreed

The Biosafety Protocol under the Biodiversity Convention was agreed to by countries in Montreal in February.

The agreement to the protocol is a major advance in the control of the movement of genetically engineered organisms between countries.

The negotiations were concluded despite strenuous efforts by the Miami Group of Countries, which includes USA, Australia and Canada, to undermine the protocol.

The Protocol is not perfect. As with any international agreement is obfuscates or fudges many of the difficult or contentious issues. For example it does not cover products derived from living modified organisms (eg processed food) nor pharmaceuticals for humans covered by other international agreements.

The Protocol’s objectives include incorporation of the precautionary principles as the basis for decision-making on the movements of GE organisms, including commodities. Articles 10(6) and 11(6) include “the lack of scientific certainty... shall not prevent [countries] taking a decision...in order to avoid or minimise such potential adverse effects”. The inclusion of the precautionary principle in clear language was a major victory for the majority of the world’s governments.

The protocol is not meant to be subordinate to World Trade Organisation rules but the relationship is only included in the preamble to the Protocol. Time will tell how high this provision is interpreted or whether GE products will end up being determined by WTO disputes panels rather than parties to the Biosafety Protocol. As the Protocol is the most recent and relevant agreement it should give it some pre-eminence over WTO rules.

The main focus of the protocol is the introduction of procedures for advanced informed consent of the country which the GE material is being exported to. This arrangement is similar to the international agreement on prior informed consent for hazardous substances in international trade.

Welcome to ECO's new executive officer

There have been some changes in the ECO office, with the departure of Joe Buchanan, and appointment of Lynda Sutherland as ECO's Executive Officer.

Lynda joined ECO in early January, and has been rapidly finding her feet ever since. Prior to her appointment Lynda managed the WWF volunteer programme, worked extensively in the catering industry and has been developing her environmental knowledge and management skills through a B AppSc at the Open Polytechnic. She brings great enthusiasm to ECO, and is strong in administration, and volunteer and financial management. No doubt most of our supporters and members will get to know Lynda as she maintains regular contact with you. If you’re in town, pop in and introduce yourself.

After two and half years at Joe Buchanan decided it was time to move on. His tireless efforts for ECO will be long remembered. Not only did he manage the office, but also was an expert event organiser, caterer and printer. We especially appreciated his input into our campaigning work. We wish Joe the best with his travels, and future activism.

ECO looks forward to the Government taking early steps to ratify the Biosafety Protocol as part of measures to implement a moratorium on the field trials and release of genetically engineered organisms.

For further information on Biosecurity and alien species:

www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/pubs/policy/invasives - IUCN Invasive species guidelines

www.issg.org - IUCN's Invasive Species Specialist Group, includes a good set of links.

www.maf.govt.nz - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries official line on biosecurity.


www.aqis.gov.au - the Australian view which includes a ballistic water management strategy

Valuing Volunteers

The Lottery Grants Board has set up a special $500,000 Fund in recognition of the United Nations International Year of Volunteers 2001.

The Fund is open to non-profit-making community groups for "one-off" projects happening because of the Year and which fall into one of the following categories:

- promotion promoting the range of volunteering opportunities
- facilitation - creating avenues for volunteers' development and skill enhancement

For further information on funding criteria and application forms please ring 0800 824-824. Applications close on 26 July, with funds distributed at a meeting on 26 October.

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Conferences
Welcome to the Future: NZ Planning Institute Conference 17-20 May 2000, Christchurch

This year's theme, 'community participation, biodiversity and urban sustainability', papers include urban sustainability indicators, livable cities, road reform and consent processes. More information is available online at www.conference.canterbury.ac.nz/planning/ or from The Conference Office, Centre for Continuing Education, Canterbury University, Private Bag, Christchurch, ph 03 364-2524, fax 03 364-2057, e-mail planning@cont.canterbury.ac.nz

Organics 2020, 19 - 20 May 2000, Auckland
Themes: shifting to an organic nation by the year 2020. A realistic action plan for the whole organic movement. Organised by the Soil & Health Association in association with UNITEC. More information is available online at www.organicso2000.org.nz or from Organics 2000 Conference, PO Box 8038, Symonds Street, Auckland, ph 09 528-1073, email soil@health.pl.net

Treaty Conference 2000, 6 - 8 July 2000, Tamaki Makaurau/Auckland
Treaty communities are coming together to affirm the Treaty of Waitangi and explore the future of Aotearoa. The conference will bring together those who are working to integrate the Treaty in their sectors, organisations and communities. Further information is available online at: www.treatyconference2000.org.nz or from The Treaty of Waitangi, PO Box 11-964, Wellington, ph/fax 04 385-2537, email can@actrix.gen.nz

Making Cycling Viable - NZ Cycling Symposium, 14-15 July, Palmerston North
This 2-day conference will address how cycling can be promoted in New Zealand. It is organised by ECO member Cycle Advocates' Network. Papers will be called for shortly. More information is available online at: www.kennett.co.nz/can/ or from the Cycling Advocates' Network, PO Box 11-964, Wellington, ph/fax 04 385-2537, e-mail can@actrix.gen.nz

Wired Government
All Labour cabinet Minister press releases and speeches are available free to the public via email.

The public listserver sends the releases to individual e-mail addresses providing recipients with the same material sent to newspapers and other media organisations and posted on the Executive Government website. To join any of the lists go to: www.executive.govt.nz/lists/index.cfm

Individuals can send e-mail to Ministers using the public e-mail addresses published on the Cabinet's website: www.executive.govt.nz. Following are the email addresses of the environment related Ministers:

- Rt Hon Helen Clark pm@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Jim Anderton dpm@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Dr Michael Cullen mcullen@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Phil Goff pgoff@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Sandra Lee slex@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Jim Sutton jsutton@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Pete Hodgson phodgson@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Dover Samuels dsamuelz@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Marian Hobbs mhobbs@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Mark Gosche mgosche@ministers.govt.nz

Ministers Outside Cabinet

- Hon Judith Tizard jtizard@ministers.govt.nz
- Hon Phillida Bunkle pbunkle@ministers.govt.nz

Nominations for Green Ribbon Awards wanted
The Minister for the Environment has called for nominations for the annual Green Ribbon Awards. This year there will be up to five awards, which will be made for activities connected with: business and Industry, Rural, Community and Local Government, Maori, and Education.

The awards are given to recognise outstanding contributions by individuals, organisations or businesses to addressing New Zealand's environmental problems. Nominations close 22 April. Information is available from: www.mfe.govt.nz/management/awards/greenrib.htm, or PO Box 10 362, Wellington, ph 04 917-7400, fax 04 917-7523, email jo.watt@mfe.govt.nz

Conservation Board Vacancies
Nomination for positions on the 14 Conservation boards close on 14 April with the Minister of Conservation c/- DoC, PO Box 10-420, Wellington. The Conservation Boards have a critical role in the management of conservation land and threatened species. Board members represent a range of interests and expertise including nature conservation, natural earth and marine sciences, recreation, tourism and local community including tangata whenua of the area.

For further information on the process for nomination to conservation boards contact the Department of Conservation or look at the DoC website www.doc.govt.nz. ECO welcomes proposals for conservation board members.
Submissions

- Tainui Region Tuna Management Plan (Draft) submissions close on Friday 7 April 2000
- DOC: Draft Conservation Services Plan 2000/2001 submissions requested by 10 April
- Environment Waikato: 2000/01 Draft Annual Plan. Submissions by 12 April
- MAF: Biosecurity Consultative Forum, Risk of Gypsy Moth entering NZ via used cars. Comments sought by 30 April

Briefings to the Ministers

After each election government agencies provide new Ministers with a briefing about its work and pressing issues. Briefings can be requested from the Minister in question, or some are available on the Internet. Following is a list of environment related briefings:


- I would like to support ECO by:
  - subscribing as a 'Friend of ECO'
    - $35p.a. (incl inc.) 'Friends of ECO' receive this quarterly newsletter, mailings and invitations to ECO gatherings.
  - subscribing as a sustaining 'Friend of ECO'
    - $112.50p.a. (incl inc.)
  - subscribing as a corporate 'Friend of ECO'
    - $500p.a. (incl inc.)
  - subscribing as a student 'Friend of ECO'
    - $20p.a. (incl inc.)
  - making a regular automatic payment
    - send me a form and details today.
  - contributing services or goods:

  □ making a donation (donations over $5 are tax deductible)
  $25 □ $50 □ $100 □ $

  • Total enclosed: $

  VISA payment:
  Cardholder name:
  Expiry date:
  Signature:
  VISA card number:

Sent by ECO
P O Box 11 057
Wellington
Aotearoa/New Zealand