

Project “Destroy the Waitaki” Meets Strong Opposition

By Cath Wallace
ECO

Using a tactic of corporates who lack moral capital, Meridian Energy has swung its PR campaign into full gear. Soft-sell TV advertises its investment in new generating capacity from “renewable” sources with a backdrop of wind turbines. It does not mention that its six-hydro station plans to divert 73% of the water in the Waitaki River would straight-jacket New Zealand’s biggest braided river into canals that would obliterate whole farms and substantial elements of the riverine ecosystem.

Water quality on the remaining river would be substantially compromised by microbial contamination and ecosystem damage from the construction, channelling, dewatering. There would be immense damage to the natural, amenity, recreational and cultural qualities of the river. The local community would be fractured and those unlucky enough to live at Kurow and other places close to the construction would live for years with noise, dust, heavy machinery and violence to their landscape and immediate surroundings.



Photo: “The delicately braided lower Waitaki River which would be forever changed by Project Aqua”; © “Waitaki First Inc.”

Meridian is using the tactics that gold mining companies have used: offering low levels of compensation to residents and trying to bind them into agreements with gagging clauses before the full extent of the damage is appreciated by some locals.

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ECO Annual Conference
“LINKS AND CONNECTIONS:
LAND, AIR, WATER AND COMMUNITY”
18-20th June 2004
Living Springs
Governors Bay
Christchurch

Key issues like New Zealand’s energy future - Project Aqua, environment and local government, marine management

Check ECO website for more details as they develop

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Meridian is also trying to drum up a sense of “crisis” – a well-known device for achieving government action and policy change. The “crisis” is the gap between electricity demand and supply, with the rapid decline of Maui gas, predicted increases in GDP and little sign of serious commitment by the government to major energy efficiency efforts – though Energy Minister Pete Hodgson has done much more than his predecessors.

The present government has inherited years of inaction – during the 1980s and the 1990s. The “hands off” anti-planning stance of the National government during the 1990s was neatly summed up by then Energy Minister John Luxton, who at a meeting of the Energy Advisory Council at which all present beseeched him to develop a National Energy Plan under the Resource Management Act, recoiled, rejecting the suggestion with “No, that would be Stalinist planning”.

The government’s uncritical adoption of a 4% growth rate of GDP, its decision to allow hugely electricity hungry activities such as GRD Macraes gold mining and its sluggish response to pleas for restructuring of the Wholesale Electricity markets so that there are both incentives for conservation and rights to sell back to the grid, means it is now struggling to bridge the excess of demand over supply.

The government’s response to the political cost of the year 2000 and 2003’s power outages and brownouts during the dry winters, to Environment Canterbury’s failure to do any water allocation plan, its own and previous government’s failures to promote energy efficiency, has been to reach for the “Think Big” manual.

The Resource Management (Waitaki Catchment) Amendment Bill contains serious erosions of the public’s

rights to make informed submissions, to have full and true appeal rights. The Waitaki Bill attempts to set up a Board that would hear submissions on a framework for water allocation (to make up for Environment Canterbury’s failure to develop a regional water plan) and a Panel that would hear submissions on particular water consents. Using the euphemism of “streamlining” the RMA’s provisions, particularly for the Environment Court, various rights and protections for submitters would be removed. Unworkably and unreasonably, the government expects submitters to make submissions on the water takings consents before the Water Allocation Framework has been established – an impossible position.

The Bill is written so that the Minister has extensive powers: to appoint the supposedly independent Board and Panel, to determine the procedures and processes of each and to provide them with information. ECO hopes that the Local Government and Environment Select Committee will strip the Bill of these assaults on the RMA and the Minister’s power grabs.

ECO understands that the Ministry and Minister for the Environment have come up with similar processes for the consideration of roading and that it is the Ministry of Transport which is defending the public’s rights.

It is regrettable that the Ministry and Minister for the Environment have seemingly lost sight of the Ministry’s origins in the efforts of environment groups who fought for environmental administrative reform in the 1980s and a firm statutory basis for consideration of environmental matters and due participatory processes. It is regrettable that the Ministry and Minister Marian Hobbs are now so cavalier with such hard-won rights.

ENGLISH FILM MAKER FRANNY ARMSTRONG VISITS NEW ZEALAND

Franny Armstrong never expected to be a chip off the old block. She wanted to be a drummer in a band, and spent six years in the music world. Then she read about a trial and the world changed for her. A burning desire to champion the little people being sued by McDonalds for libel fused with the knowledge of filmmaking that had osmosed to her from her filmmaker father, and *McLibel* was on the way. Three years later, in August 1997, the documentary appeared, the inside story of England’s longest running court case. For six years the postman and the gardener stood their ground against the arsenal of weaponry that could be directed against them by the international corporation. The film never got onto mainstream television in England, but has been seen nevertheless by more than ten million viewers around the world, through a variety of media, and at many festivals and community screenings. People in Peru, Slovenia, China and Turkey, as well as in New Zealand, have all seen “*McLibel*.”

Franny’s second major documentary film “*Drowned Out*” appeared in 2002, once more to great critical acclaim. The villagers in the Narmada area of Gujarat in India objected to the options for relocation offered to them by the powers-that-be that planned and built the dam across their valley. They wanted to stay where they were, and did so, despite the rising water level. Franny stayed with them, filming the



unfolding drama, despite difficulties with language problems, rain, illness, solar battery chargers and police arrests. The 75-minute film was recently runner-up for

Best Documentary at both the One World media awards and the San Francisco International Film Festival. These things have been said of it: “a masterfully crafted study of a stand-off between the powerless and the powerful,” and “a film of enormous heart, grit and insight that is both taut political essay and enormously moving plea.” Franny’s films are produced through *Spanner Films*, an independent TV production company based in London, which Franny founded in 1999.

ECO is organising a Film Evening / Fundraiser at the **Paramount, 25 Courtenay Place, Wellington, on Sunday 28th March, at 5:30 pm** (a commercial rate will be charged for entry, with discount for students) during which Franny, who is now in New Zealand, will be present in person at a showing of one or both of the above films. A gifted and experienced speaker, she will be prepared to answer questions at the function. **For more information call Elizabeth at 476-9809 or Kate at 385-7545 or check www.spannerfilms.net**

Chris Carter Caves into Coal Mine

By Cath Wallace

ECO

Conservation Minister Chris Carter has become another fossil fool, succumbing to pressure from others in Cabinet to approve the Pike River coal mine application for an access way over Conservation land and mining of coal under the Paparoa National Park.

The Ministers decision ignored the advice of officials and agreed to the mine on the basis of a derisory compensation package offered by the company. The company is offering around \$110,000 annually for conservation projects.

The process by which the Minister decides whether or not to allow mining concessions on Conservation land is deeply flawed: there is provision only for the applicant to make submissions. Those who want to see the conservation values protected are reduced to the sidelines, with no formal process to consider views other than those of the Department and the applicant.

The Minister has caved in to pressure from other Ministers, from West Coast business interests and from the mining company.

Though the Minister is claiming that the conditions for mining are tight, and damage will be avoided, this is unlikely to be the case. Already Solid Energy's coal mining does much damage to the environment on the Coast, with Westport resident Pete Lusk a regular chronicler of the pollution of streams and other coal mining damage.

The damage expected from the coal mine will be several fold: the access road of 12 kilometres, much of it over conservation land will provide a highway also for weeds and pests. The coal mining is very likely to cause cave-ins and "glory holes" as the mined land collapses. Waste rock will have to be dumped. The coal is to be slurried down valey, dewatered and then trucked out.

The damage will continue as the coal is eventually burned, causing localised pollution and further concentrations in the atmosphere of greenhouse gases – with their attendant climate-destabilising effects.

Labour have yet to implement its 1999 or 2002 conservation policy on mining on conservation land. This policy includes a public process for assessing mining activity on conservation land. Currently miners have a privileged access regime under the Crown Minerals Act. It is about time the Government acted to change that.

Greenpeace criticised the decision as being completely inconsistent with their commitments to doing something about climate change. Coal burning emits more carbon dioxide than any other fossil fuel and carbon dioxide is the major cause of climate change.

"Giving the go-ahead for the Pike River coal mine whilst Pacific Islands like Kiribati begin to go under the sea and New Zealand is battered with extreme weather events costing the country multi-millions in clean-up makes no sense at all," said Vanessa Atkinson, Greenpeace climate campaigner.



Photo: © Nick Bishop

PIKE COAL MINE – UNDERMINING CONSERVATION LAND

By Eugenie Sage

Forest and Bird

Conservation Minister Chris Carter's decision to allow the Pike mine on conservation land has scant regard to the sorry environmental record of West Coast coal mining. Problems include subsidence and landslips, ongoing water pollution, and failures in rehabilitation.

The Fletcher Creek coalmine on conservation land near Reefton is a disaster zone. Significant breaches of water right conditions have caused water pollution. Waste rock has slumped into a stream and continues to erode. Poor sediment control, and gorse and weed spread have increased the mine's impacts.

Former Conservation Minister Helen Clark approved this controversial open cast mine in 1988, subject to "appropriate safeguards". One was that restoration occur progressively, as the area was mined. That has not happened. Attempts at replanting have failed dismally.

The \$35,000 in bonds is inadequate to cover rehabilitation costs. A Department of Conservation (DoC) report estimates the cost of earthworks, just to stabilise the site, at \$400,000.

The Pike mine will produce 80 times more coal than the mine at Fletcher Creek and has the potential to cause significant environmental damage.

A DoC report said the Pike mine was inconsistent with both the Conservation and National Parks Acts, the purposes for which the land is held, and two current management plans.

The Minister's decision shows a misplaced optimism in the Pike River Coal Company's (PRCC) claims of being able to establish New Zealand's second largest coal mine with minimal impacts.

The company operates no other mines, and much of its project planning has been conceptual with limited environmental assessments and technical investigations.

On the eastern side of the Paparoa Range, north east of Greymouth, Pike Stream is a peaceful, wild and yet accessible forested valley. The rimu and beech forests in the upper catchment have never been logged. Tall trees shade

deep pools favoured by trout fishers. Great spotted kiwi, kaka, and kakariki (parakeets) occur in the valley.

Bulldozing an 11 km access road and pipeline corridor (much of it on conservation land) up the valley will involve forest clearance, major earthworks and at least five bridges. The route traverses some steep slopes and, where it is close to Pike Stream, there is a risk of slips and spoil in the river.

The obvious presence of the access road, the mine facilities area, sizeable waste rock dump, and noise from mining activities will mean the valley will no longer provide the remote wilderness experience for tramping, camping, fishing and hunting that it does now.



The waters of Pike Stream are pristine, reflecting its intact catchment. Mining discharges will pollute both Pike Stream and Big River which drains into the Grey River. The mine will also reduce summertime flows in Pike Stream by a third to provide water for high-pressure hydraulic mining and to slurry the coal down the valley in a pipe.

Acid mine drainage is a significant pollution risk. This occurs when sulphide-bearing minerals (such as pyrite) in coal measure mudstones or coal oxidise releasing sulphuric acid, killing fish and other aquatic life.

Tunnelling into the mountains, mining is proposed underneath a dramatic sandstone escarpment on the crest of the Paparoa Range which forms the boundary between conservation land and Paparoa National Park. Mining here could cause cracking and slumping of the escarpment. This would permanently damage one of the park's outstanding natural features.

tween 200 and 300 ha. on the crest of the Paparoa Range and in the steep headwaters of Pike Stream is at risk of surface cracking, landslips and subsidence. Air ingress after ground cracking risks underground fires that have been impossible to contain in some other mines.

Further south along the Paparoa Range, major landslips have been associated with the Strongman Mine near

Greymouth. In 1998 one such landslide dumped more than 300,000 cubic metres of material in Ten Mile Creek after underground coal mining came too close to the surface. Unacceptable blasting practices caused a further land and rockslide in 2002, blocking the stream and creating a new lake.

If the Pike mine causes similar damage, the company's proposed spending of around \$110,000 annually on conservation projects is meagre compensation.

Despite abundant examples of mining's impacts, there is no public consultation by the Minister or DoC about whether mines such as Pike are appropriate on public conservation land.

Current legislation gives mining a privileged position, compared to other commercial activities such as tourism and grazing concessions. DoC generally notifies these, invites submissions and organises a hearing, and thereby allows the public to contribute to the decision making process.

There are 75 approved mining licences and mining access arrangements affecting around 9,000 ha of conservation land on the West Coast. The public has been shut out of DoC and the Minister's decision-making process on all of them.

Labour needs to implement its 1999 and 2002 election policies to tackle this inequity, and to ensure adequate protection from mining for lands of significant conservation value.

Solid Energy Proposes New Open Cast Mine

The windswept headwaters of the upper Waimangaroa River, north east of Westport, are a highly distinctive West Coast landscape. The vegetation is diverse with tawny tussock, stunted beech-podocarp forest, and sparsely vegetated rock pavements. Botanist Dr David Norton has described the area as containing "the best remaining examples of nationally unique coal plateau landscapes and the plant and animal communities that characterise these landscapes."

Notwithstanding these values, much of the Buller coal measure plateau remains unallocated Crown land or coal reserve. Little is protected as conservation land.

Solid Energy's proposed 256 ha. Cypress mine threatens some of the best parts of the upper Waimangaroa valley, including much of an area recommended for protection in a comprehensive DoC scientific report. Several threatened species occur here, including great spotted kiwi, and a giant land snail *Powelliphanta patrickensis*, confined to the coal plateau.

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Coal is one of the most environmentally damaging forms of energy. Mining it often destroys special habitats and creates ongoing water pollution problems, while burning it causes air pollution and contributes to climate change. It is a dinosaur fuel.

Greenpeace has estimated that the 650,000 to one million tonnes of coal extracted annually from the Pike mine would produce 2.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. Coal exports from the Cypress mine would compound this. Both mines are inconsistent with Government's commitment, as a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, to do something about climate change.

The Minister's decision on Pike suggests a focus on jobs and economic development, regardless of the potential environmental costs. Government can avoid repeating this mistake with the Cypress mine.

Solid Energy is a government company, just like Timberlands West Coast. Directing it to halt work on the Cypress mine would help implement Labour's policy of "economic growth that is sustainable and in harmony with

our unique environment."¹

Coalmines such as Pike, Cypress and Fletcher Creek, represent unacceptable losses in the integrity and healthy functioning of special natural areas. Being serious about biodiversity protection requires a much stronger commitment to safeguarding our astonishingly varied and beautiful indigenous plants, wildlife, and landscapes.

Eugenie Sage is regional field officer for the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

¹ www.labour.org.nz

Conservation Land too Precious to Mine!

Mohaka Water Conservation Order Finally Approved

The Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs, has finally agreed to place a water conservation order on Hawke's Bay Mohaka River.

The Order was originally applied for in 1987 by the predecessor of the NZ Fish and Game (the Acclimatisation Society). A decision from a special tribunal recommended that a water conservation order be placed on the river in 1992.

The order will protect the outstanding characteristics and features of the upper part of this wild and scenic river above the State Highway 5 bridge as well as the Mokouui Gorge and tributaries of the Mohaka River. The values protected include the spiritual, cultural, recreational and scenic values of the river such as white water canoeing, rafting and trout fishing.

The Minister acknowledged that a water conservation order was the most effective way of ensuring the unique characteristics of the river are available to future generations. Water Conservation Orders are provided for under the Resource Management Act and they are the strongest form of legal protection available for rivers and lakes.

"This Water Conservation Order will give the Mohaka River the status of a national park and this will protect the River's amenity values for the whole community from dams, pollution and irrigation schemes," says Bryce Johnson Fish & Game's Director.

Another Water Conservation Order that is also awaiting gazettal is over the Motueka River. This was applied for 14 years ago and recommended to proceed last year. The Minister for the Environment has yet to indicate when a decision will be made on this river.

MOLESWORTH TO BE TRANSFERRED TO DOC

The Government has agreed to transfer the Crown's largest high country property to the Department of Conservation. Molesworth covers over 180,000 ha of mountains, rivers, wetlands, lakes and tussock grasslands. About 7000 cattle graze on about a third of the station, which had been administered by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) as a Crown special lease.

Public access had been restricted to this large area of Crown land. Currently, less than fifteen per cent of the station is permanently open to the public.

Molesworth is one of New Zealand's five hotspots for biodiversity. A high proportion of species in the area are found no where else in the world. The area includes over 77 plant and lizard species that are threatened with extinction, including one plant species that only exists at Molesworth.

From July 2005, management of Molesworth will transfer from LINZ to the Department of Conservation (DOC). The station will be declared a reserve and more conservation, recreation and historic heritage preservation will be integrated alongside the existing farming operation. Landcorp, which has run Molesworth's farming operation to date, is expected to renew its lease to continue farming the station.

The Minister of Conservation said about 47,000 hectares of Molesworth will be designated as conservation zones immediately, and DOC will step-up an intensive programme of pest and weed control to restore them.

ECO welcomed the decision to protect Molesworth and looked forward to a speedy discussion of the management plan for the area.

KI UTA KI TAI

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

By John Kenderdine
Far North Environment Centre

“Integrated Catchment Management” is the term used to describe the work of a diverse number of community organizations working throughout the country on sustainable land management. It is also called “Restoration Ecology.” The New Zealand Landcare Trust coordinates the work, funded by the Ministry for the Environment’s Sustainable Management Fund. Most of the groups involved seem to have evolved independently as a result of local community concerns about the health of catchment environments such as high country streams, rivers, estuaries, harbours and the seabed.

The boundaries between iwi, councils, communities and ecological areas are often crossed, which can lead to complications that the groups are often not initially equipped to handle, but networking with other groups can often provide answers to common problems and inspiration on how to find alternative solutions.

The work is often educational, as in the programmes run by the “Whitebait Connection” in Northland and “Waicare” in Auckland, both of which take children to look at the health of streams based on the invertebrate life present. Other groups struggle to solve problems such as how to cope with runoff from contaminated sites, polluted stormwater and sewerage overflows.

Recent advances in mapping techniques have provided a convenient planning tool that allows people to obtain maps of specific catchment areas of interest. One of the most impressive of these is the Whaingaroa Catchment Plan which illustrates the work of the Whaingaroa Harbour Care Group, a Raglan based organization that is now inspiring other groups around the country.

On January 28th of this year, well over one hundred people from all over the Far North turned up at the Matai Aranui Marae in Whirinaki on the Hokianga Harbour to hear Fred Lichtwark talk about the success of the

Whaingaroa Harbour Care programme. Will Stensness, a local kayaking tour operator, concerned about the state of the water in the Hokianga Harbour and its impact on local communities and businesses, was prompted to invite Fred to come north and tell the Far North community how the Whaingaroa Harbour Care Group had worked to clean up a polluted and fishless harbour, and about the amazing results they have achieved in only eight years. When they started it took on average eighteen hours to catch a fish, but now, 500,000 trees and some 300 kilometres of fencing later, that average is down to two hours for a fish.

Fred gave us some history : the group was initially formed after a public meeting had been called to see what



could be done about the parlous state of the harbour. Silt runoff was the major problem, best controlled, they decided, by planting stream banks and harbour edges with colonising native plants. So, they started growing the trees in their own back yards, the idea being to just do it, and not wait for any official recognition or funding. Six thousand trees were planted in the first season and then the challenge was to set up a nursery, find funding and decide how to manage it all.

They now have a nursery turning out close to 100,000 plants a year and backing from Environment Waikato and their District Council. They plan next to present to the Minister of Fisheries

their Fisheries Management Plan for the harbour. This is a remarkable case of a local community making its own decisions about what is good for their area, and so far it looks like a win/win solution for everyone. All the farmers in the area now support the scheme and are busily planting up their stream and harbour margin, since they have found that their farming enterprises benefit from practising the principles advocated. There is something like a 20% increase in production, even though they are effectively running their animals on a smaller area. What happens is that, kept out of the salt marshes, streams and ponds, the animals now drink only unpolluted trough water, leading to their better health, higher production and lower vet bills, and in addition, no fertiliser is wasted on land with low productivity.

Other benefits include elimination of animal losses in wetland bogs; a feed of fish is much easier to obtain; local commercial fishers have helped to design the fisheries plan to establish what they consider to be a sustainable catch; whitebait catches which were half a cup a day are now more like half a bucket a day; surfers no longer report sea ulcers; biodiversity has increased; ecotourism opportunities have opened

up, and so on, but the lesson seems to be not to look for someone to blame for the mess things are in, but get together and work for a local solution decided on by the local community.

There is a strong possibility that Fred will be available to speak about the Whaingaroa Harbour Care Group’s activities to other interested community groups if they get the funding they have applied for.

Anyone interested can contact: NZ Landcare Trust, 07 858 3725; e-mail nick@landcare.org.nz

Or The Far North Environment Centre, 09 408 1086; e-mail ecocentre@xtra.co.nz



PROFILE OF FRED LICHTWARK, WHAINGAROA HARBOURCARE



Nick Edgar of Integrated Catchment Management was interested to find out what got Fred into the conservation field, and recorded the conversation he had with him.

Fred told him that after leaving school he had become a farm cadet, then a farm manager, but after a motorbike accident he had to change direction, and ended up as a river guide. Fred began river guiding in New Zealand, but took him to Australia, Papua New Guinea and the US as well. Upon returning to New Zealand he became a commercial fisherman on trawlers out of Raglan, then turned to working for the Ministry of Fisheries and Health Waikato, collecting shellfish samples for toxin testing. Working with fish alerted him to the poor state of Raglan Harbour. The fishery was sick and a risk to human health, and the fishing was poor. River guiding had taught him that land use could seriously impact on the environmental quality of neighbouring waters, and he realised that this was the case in Raglan Harbour. Wanting to do something about it, he called a public meeting in Raglan, and the result was the establishment of Whaingaroa Harbourcare.

Whaingaroa Harbourcare was formally set up in 1995, but for about two years previously there had been much discussion and decision-making amongst those concerned. Fred contends that his interest in the matter is purely selfish, for he wants to be able to catch healthy fish and shellfish when he retires. He was born in Raglan, and his parents and grandparents before him. His great-grandfather, who had farmed on Mount Karioi in Taranaki, moved to Raglan many years ago. The names of many of Fred's family are on the War Memorial in the town, and for him with

so many family associations it is home. He feels responsible for ensuring that the harbour is the way he wants it to be.

The work on the project is too rewarding to become boring. It may not bring in money, but money is not needed when what you want is to catch your own fish in the harbour. The physical work is healthy, and the landscape is better than an office, he believes.

Nick asked if Fred enjoyed working with the community. He diplomatically replied that the community is pretty diverse, and there is a need to be a politician sometimes, but on the whole feelings are positive. At the start, the District Council was suspicious, but the relationship is now a partnership.

What was one of the funniest things that had happened to him, working in the area? Fred answered that getting stuck in the mud in the boat out on the harbour while Nick was with him was quite the funniest thing, and it was the one and only time it had happened. And a highlight of the project? Its whole success. No noticeable results were expected to be seen for about fifty years, but in fact, in fewer than ten years huge changes for the better have been seen. Fred thinks that the rest of New Zealand must take note of this, and get going on similar projects in other areas, if the work is needed. He finds it rewarding when older people, who can remember how it used to be long ago, and commercial fisherman who benefit from the changes, comment positively about how good the fishing is now. Another positive thing is seeing the benefit to young people, referred by the Justice Department for community service work, who have learned to take pride in a job well done. They have taken ownership of the trees they planted, and as a result have a respect for and pride in their patch of land.

There is a threat to the continuation of the group and its work, and that is lack of money. However, so much tree planting has been done on the harbour margins and along the streams that flow into the harbour that soon there will be no more to do. It is hard to believe.

As well as the improvement in the fishing, there have been other desirable changes. Many more birds visit now, and

although a true picture is hard to draw owing to the fact that migratory patterns vary, it is certain that there are greater numbers of Royal Spoonbills and other wading birds. Tuis, pigeons and pukekos live in the Wainui Reserve, and the whole area is transformed into a wildlife corridor, with plenty of fantails and warblers in evidence. Lots of lizards have been noticed too.

Mick asked if schoolchildren had been involved in the project. Fred affirmed that since the beginning of the project, all seven schools in the catchment area had been involved, with the children helping to monitor cockle populations and water quality, to plant trees, to restore wetlands and propagate native plants. Busloads of children from other places come too, to learn from what has been done, and to help in the work.

Fred intends to stay in Raglan, and will continue his association with the restoration work, along with other committed people. He feels, however, that the majority of the time spent is by just a few people who volunteer their service. His opinion is that the government, if it were serious about sustainable environmental management, would be investing a lot more money to help local people along.

Despite the success in Raglan, Fred has no wish to spend time chasing funding for any other catchment. "Think global, act local" – and he's from Raglan. He has worked for his own patch, doing something that was decided by the whole community. Had they not wanted it, it would not have happened. It would have been nice to have more money, to make things easier, but he would not have done differently

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ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



Photo: Maiki Marks speaking about "Environmental Education" at ECO Conference 2003

Education for sustainability has grown out of the environmental education movement, which in turn emerged from increased international concern about environmental issues during the 1970s. More recently, education for sustainability has promoted the need for education in general to examine critically the dominant culture that has fostered current practices such as unsustainable economic growth and consumption patterns.

The following general principles are currently being developed and implemented in schools. - Lifelong and meaningful connections are made to practical experience. - The process of learning is critically reflective and involves emotionally engaged learning. - Problem solving is student centred and grounded in practical action. - A central aspect of education for a sustainable future is to challenge past world ideas of stability.

We live in a complex world that is still poorly understood.

Minister Makes Right Decision Saving Mt Burnett's Endangered Species

The Minister of Conservation, Chris Carter has finally declined a request to bulldoze a mining road across a nationally significant piece of conservation land on Mount Burnett in Golden Bay. The decision was overshadowed by the Ministers decision to grant consent to the Pike Coal Mine.

Mt Burnett is a completely unique environment. The type of shrubland and forest growing on Mt Burnett's dolomite rock exists nowhere else in the world. This includes plants and a snail (*Powelliphanta*) who's global population is limited only to Mt Burnett, as well as many other plants that the Department of Conservation lists as threatened with extinction. About 60% of the endemic Mt Burnett stunted forest have been wiped out since mining began in 1959.

The 4 ha section of conservation land was sought for the expansion of a dolomite and rock quarry run by OMYA (NZ) Ltd.. The quarry spans over 128.7 hectares of Mount Burnett on the fringes of Kahurangi National Park. OMYA Ltd is a 100% Swiss-owned multinational.

The decision has been welcomed by the Dolomite Action Group. Action Group spokesperson Dean Baigent-Mercer said botanists have named two species (*Myrsine argentea* and *Carex dolomitica*) that only live on Mt Burnett and believe there may be more.

"Apart from all the scientific facts and figures, Mt Burnett is a really amazing place where thin gnarled trunks of wind shorn trees zigzag up from fins of dolomite marble. It is better than anything shown in Lord of the Rings," says Baigent-Mercer.

As we seek understanding of a complex and changing world, the education we offer must shape social change, not just follow it, and it must teach social responsibility. Education for a sustainable future needs teachers who are social drivers, not followers. We must see ecological literacy as a core competency.

Future curricula will ensure that ecological literacy is available for all. Studies will be problem-based and have no unique right answers. The curriculum approach will be multi-disciplinary and take into account a range of cultural perspectives. LEARNING, not teaching, will be emphasised, with learning experiences grounded in practical experience.

The second Environmental Education conference, "Partnerships for the Planet," organised by the New Zealand Association for Environmental Education, was held from the 14th to the 17th January 2003 at the Christchurch College of Education. The aim was to build on the success of the inaugural conference, held in January 2002 at Waikato University. The 2003 conference highlighted the benefits of working together for the well-being of our environment.

Papers reflected a range of working partnerships along with results of research and evaluation, and offered useful tools and resources to share with participants.

Keynote speakers were Stephen Stirling, a founder member of the Bureau for Environmental Education and Training, who works as a consultant with academics and NGOs, Jeanette Fitzsimons, Morgan Williams, Heidi Mardoa, Daniella Tilbury, Charmaine Pountney and representatives of Youth Partnership, a group which includes students, Department of Conservation personnel and an educator.

Maiki is one of seventeen regional environmental facilitators throughout the country. She works in Northland.

The Minister has stated that in making his decision he concluded that the inconsistencies between the application and the objectives of the Conservation Act under which the land is held, the various purposes for which the land is held and the relevant management plans that apply over the area are sufficient to outweigh the partial safeguards and the compensation being offered by the company.

The company had offered a compensation package in which 14 ha of its current mining licence, also containing the rare plants, would have been voluntarily set aside from any mining in return for the area applied for. But the company is not actually planning to mine this area until after its mining licence (ML32-1871) expires in 2006.

For more info on the OMYA and their activities internationally see *Vermonters for a Clean Environment* at www.vce.org

LEGISLATION:

RMA (Climate Change) Bill

Parliament has passed the Resource Management (Climate Change) Bill. This Bill removes the power of Regional Councils to consider the effect of climate change when making rules in regional plans or determining air discharge consents. At the same time it also requires councils to have regard to the effects of climate change, the benefits of efficient energy use and the benefits of renewable energy.

The Bill was opposed by National, ACT and NZ First in part due to their opposition to the Government ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and partly their opposition to the Resource Management Act.

The Bill add three new principles which decision makers "shall have particular regard to" in section 7:

"(ba) the efficiency of the end use of energy."

"(i) the effects of climate change:

(j) the benefits to be derived from the use and development of renewable energy."

Renewable energy has been defined to include "energy produced from solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, and ocean current sources".

While removing the power of councils to control greenhouse gas emissions for climate change, a move opposed by environmental groups, the provisions do allow national standards to be used to control emissions. The Government has yet to indicate whether it will enact any national standards on these matters.

Fisheries Amendment Bill Passed

Parliament has passed the Fisheries Amendment Bill (No2) which gives the fishing industry a credit of \$24.1 million from the current cost recovery regime for fisheries management. The arrangement was based on a negotiated settlement between the Ministry of Fisheries and Seafood Industry Council.

The Bill arose from a failure of the Ministry of Fisheries to sort out under-payments and over-payments arising from the cost recovery regime since 1995. If these payments had been sorted then the Crown would have been liable for only \$2.9 million.

The Ministry of Fisheries collect these levies on behalf of the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Conservation (Conservation Services Programme). These levies cover part of the cost of research, enforcement and management undertaken on commercially caught species.

The projects are agreed through a process involving all groups interested in fisheries management but the allocation of costs only involves commercial fishers and the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Conservation. ECO is concerned that this process is not transparent and the fishing industry exert great influence on the projects and management subsequently approved and undertaken.

Aquaculture Moratorium Extended

Legislation has been passed to extend the current moratorium on new applications for marine farming. The Resource Management (Aquaculture Moratorium Extension) Amendment Bill extends the moratorium until 31 December 2004.

The Labour Government has indicated that it intends to introduce legislation to set up the new aquaculture management regime once the foreshore and seabed debate has been resolved. The Bill was generally opposed by National and ACT.

At this stage it is doubtful that the extension will give sufficient time for:

- the foreshore and seabed issue to be resolved;
- enact legislation to change aquaculture management;
- regional councils to implement changes to coastal plans to establish aquaculture management areas.

The framework for aquaculture management is still being developed and there has been little consultation with environmental groups or the public. So far consultation has involved the aquaculture industry and local government. It is time that the Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry for the Environment undertakes wider consultation.

Hazardous Substances Amendment Passed

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (Transitional Provisions and Controls) Amendment Bill has been passed. This Bill amends a number of the transitional provisions in the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act that relate principally to hazardous substances management.

So far only 10,000 of the estimated 80,000 hazardous substances available in New Zealand have been registered under the 1996 Act.

The Bill also improved the enforcement provisions of the Act.

PASS IT ON!

When you've finished this issue of ECOLink why not share it with someone else? You could give it to a friend or workmate, leave it in the dentist's/bus station/doctor's waiting room, give it to your local library or reading room.

HELP ECO GO AROUND!

Ministerial changes

The Prime Minister, Helen Clark, announced two significant changes to environmental portfolios in February. Pete Hodgson, Minister of Almost Everything, lost the portfolio of Minister of Fisheries and gained the transport portfolio.

Chief Government Whip, David Benson-Pope, became the new Minister of Fisheries and the Associated Minister for the Environment in charge of the Resource Management Act. The exact delegations from the Minister for the Environment, Marian Hobbs, that Benson-Pope will undertake have yet to be announced.

Mr Benson-Pope is the Dunedin South MP and has not been a member of the Local Government and Environment Select Committee nor the Primary Production Select Committee. A key test in fisheries will be whether he can avoid capture by his officials who are intent on giving a greater role to the fishing industry through fisheries plans and research planning. The key challenge for environmental groups will be to ensure the Ministry of Fisheries finalises a strong environmental strategy and implements it. This strategy has been sidelined while the Ministry deal with the scampi inquiry.

Waitaki Bill Submissions Have Been Heard

The Resource Management (Waitaki Catchment) Amendment Bill is due to be reported back from the Local Government and Environment Select Committee on 22 March (see cover story).

The Minister, Marian Hobbs, is seeking nominations for board and commissioners prior to the legislation being passed.

National's Environment spokesperson, Nick Smith, has commented that for the Waitaki "a rushed decision will be a

poor decision." Dr Smith has said that National is supporting three changes to the legislation:

"1. The criteria under the Resource Management Act for Project Aqua must be the same as for any other river in any other part of New Zealand. (The special legislation alters the criteria to require greater emphasis to be given to national benefits).

2. The decision-making body must be truly independent of Ministers who, as Meridian Energy shareholders, have a clear conflict of interest. (The special legislation sees the Commissioners and Board appointed by the Minister and serving at her pleasure).

3. Appeal rights to the Environment Court on Project Aqua should be the same as for any other resource consent. (The special legislation truncates appeal rights, on the basis of saving time.)"

These changes would be a major improvement to the Bill. ECO believes that further changes should be made to require regional councils to develop catchment plans for all rivers.

New Select Committee

A new select committee has been established to hear controversial legislation on the foreshore and seabed. The Committee, Fisheries and other Sea-related Legislation Committee is chaired by Labour's Napier MP Russell Fairbrother. The Committee is also to hear submissions on the Maori Fisheries Bill which implements the fisheries allocation mechanism proposed by the Te Ohu Kaimoana (the Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Commission) to implement the 1989 and 1992 Maori fisheries settlements.

The Committee membership is: Larry Baldock (United), Russell Fairbrother (Chairperson) (Labour), Phil Heatley (National), Nanaia Mahuta and Mahara Okeroa (Labour), Hon Richard Prebble (ACT), Hon Dover Samuels (Labour), Hon Georgina Te Heuheu (Deputy Chairperson, National), and Metiria Turei (Greens).

GOVERNMENT TO FOCUS ON WATER

Representatives from environment and conservation groups have been invited to take part the government's Water Programme of Action.

ECO has been invited to send a representative to the environmental forum and our Maori members are also attempting to get representation on the Maori forum.

The Water Programme of Action will examine the cultural, economic, environmental and social aspects of water and initially consists of three strands covering:

- water allocation and use
- water quality
- water bodies of national importance.

Within these strands, projects will:

look at how to manage water allocation and factors affecting water quality and how to get the best balance;

determine what the national interest in water is and how to get the best results from this;

identify the water bodies of national importance;

develop ways to get sustainable and fair results.

Falling under the Sustainable Development Programme of Action, it is coordinated by the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

You are welcome to feed your views to the ECO representative, email eco@reddfish.co.nz.

More information is available at <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/water/prog-action/index.html>. If you want your group to be represented directly, email elizabeth.eastmure@mfe.govt.nz.

Sir Peter Elworthy: Farmer, Statesman, Businessman, Free Marketeer, Environmentalist

Sir Peter Elworthy died in Wanaka on 11 January 2004: suddenly while on holiday. Tributes flowed from across the spectrum: farmers, farmer-politicians, the Sustainability Council, the Greens, Labour Agriculture Minister Jim Sutton and National Party leader Don Brash – who called him a friend and confidant. His farm and home were in South Canterbury where he farmed high country, worked as a company director, and director of the Reserve Bank, various trusts and other entities and pursued various activities innovative for their time, from deer farming and flower cultivation to irrigation. He was president of Federated Farmers in the 1980s.

Harry Broad, former editor of *Straight Furrow*, the Federated Farmers' newspaper, called him a statesman and noted his "quiet, diffident, courteous courage" during the 1980s. He in turn stood up to Muldoon and supported the Rogernomic policies of deregulation and opening up of the New Zealand economy. Though part of the South Canterbury high country squattocracy,

he and wife Fiona, were not the kind to take to mindless conservatism. On the contrary, they were innovators, entrepreneurs and lively minded folks who were interested in the world and concerned about the environment. Peter, while empathising with farmers would take flack and front up to disgruntled farmers who rejected the policies of subsidy removal. Later, as chair of the irrigation company whose Opuha Dam collapsed, he worked doggedly to relieve the damage and losses.

Peter Elworthy saw the sense in the need to protect the environment and as a farmer leader gave support to ECO and our campaigns to give land owners more say over lands wanted by miners. He and Fiona hosted a garden party to raise funds for Antarctic conservation and latterly, he chaired the Sustainability Council in its campaign against the liberation of genetically altered material from the laboratory.

Sir Peter was as close as New Zealand gets to aristocracy – but he



Photo source: www.agscience.org.nz; article by Harry Broad "The Passing of a Statesman: Peter Elworthy"

lacked pomposity or elitism. He had a mischievous sense of fun and was as happy discussing the Gaia hypothesis or monetary policy as he was in talking farm matters or plotting the downfall of the fertiliser cartel and establishing Ravensdown Fertiliser company. We regret Sir Peter's death and share the loss with Fiona and their children, the farming and agriculture community and those opposed to the release of genetically engineered organisms.

Peter Winter, Environmental Champion, World War Two Escapee, dies.

Dairy farmer, tenacious fighter for the environment, and multiple escapee from wartime internments, Peter Winter of Waitara has died. The New Zealand environment is served throughout the country by local residents like Peter: vigilant, committed and determined to protect the environment. Peter's determination and lack of acquiescence to authority in the wrong were hallmarks of his life. He did not suffer fools and his independence of thought and refusal to give in to those who liked to pull rank were some of his most endearing and enduring traits. During World War Two he escaped detention as a prisoner of war 9 times – and he endured many hardships. His contempt for the lethal stupidity of allied wartime military commanders was only matched by his determination not to be held against his will.

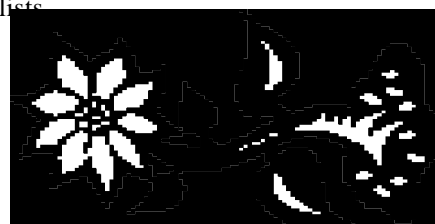
He farmed in north Taranaki and served the environment in many capacities: the epitome of a local watchdog who also grasped the global and national contexts. He chaired North Taranaki Forest and Bird, was an activist in the anti-"think big" campaign and took on a series of large multinationals who sought the wasteful exploitation of

Taranaki oil and gas, and others who in various ways polluted or damaged the local environment.

In combination with other tenacious protectors of the environment in the district, such as photographer Fiona Clark, Peter Winter continued protecting the environment for decades. Together, Peter and Fiona formed a formidable team that mobilised others in the area and gave those who expected rural Taranaki to be a pushover some rather unpleasant surprises.

Peter Winter was sometimes ill, sometimes bitter about the continued assaults on the Taranaki environment: but he did not quit and for decades continued to defend it.

We mourn his passing, salute his courage and tenacity and share his loss with his family, Taranaki community and environmentalists.



REPORTING NEW ORGANISMS TO MAF

The Biosecurity Amendment Bill, introduced to Parliament in August 2001, was passed in July 2003. A new section 44 "General Duty to Inform" states that "Every person is under a duty to inform the Ministry, as soon as practicable in the circumstances, of the presence or what appears to be an organism not normally seen or otherwise detected in New Zealand."

TO REPORT: Use MAF's existing exotic and disease reporting hot line 0800 809 966

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ECO, PO Box 11 057, Wellington.
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