

RECENT EVENTS

NZ environmental administration review

Where we are at

Since the last report on the reorganization associated with the review of environmental administration in New Zealand progress has tended to be mostly in the area of filling positions in the new organizations. Legislation in some relevant areas has also proceeded further and the target completion date of March 31, 1987 seems likely to be achieved.

Forestry Corporation

The Forestry Corporation invited applications for around 700 positions at the beginning of November. At time of writing all the senior positions had been filled along with over 200 other middle management positions. Target date to complete recruitment of salaried staff was the end of January 1987. The State Owned Enterprises Act 1986 was passed by Parliament immediately before the Christmas recess and the Forestry Corporation was to be incorporated before the end of January 1987 also.

The Act identifies the status, operating and reporting requirements for State Owned Enterprises. Modifications to the State Services Conditions of Employment Act 1967 have also been introduced into Parliament, and these identify employment policies Government has identified for its SOEs. This amending legislation is also scheduled for passage before March 31, 1987.

Peter Berg

Update: Department of Conservation

The full report promised in the November issue was perhaps premature. The Department, like other new agencies, is still very much in its gestation; birth is forecast for March 31 next.

The past two months have been remarkable for the progress made on filling the 1200 staff positions finally approved by Cabinet, some of which are notified elsewhere in this issue.

The division of land between DOC and the Corporation is now practically complete, the major issues still in doubt being Molesworth Station and the Western Southland beech forests.

The Committee established under the chairmanship of the Secretary for the Environment (Dr Roger Blakeley) has reported to Government on the disposition of State forest in Westland north of the Cook River and has recommended covenants, subsequently approved by Cabinet, on the

indigenous production forest land proposed for the Corporation. These covenants require sustained yield management (after current commitments expire) and re-establishment in indigenous forest.

It is not clear how these covenants will work in practice; they mark a radical change in forest management in New Zealand, and are worthy of the Institute's scrutiny.

The number of staff positions approved were significantly fewer than the number estimated to be employed in, or supporting, 'DOC' functions from the existing organizations. The major reductions have been expected in servicing activities such as building, engineering and telecommunications where DOC will have to 'buy in' services which, within Lands and Survey and NZFS, were 'in house'.

During the past two months a battle has been fought for the approval of regionally based fire control staff to add to the two originally approved for DOC. This argu-

ment has been won and DOC now has a reasonable staff base from which to develop its responsibilities as the largest single fire authority in the country.

Finally, the DOC Bill was introduced into Parliament in mid-December. Submissions to the Select Committee close on February 13 next. As many members as possible should read and consider the Bill which may prove contentious. Although it drastically reduces the broad powers available under the Forests Act, some would argue to the point where the capacity of land managers to respond flexibly to management issues within a conservation ethic has been negated.

There remain others whose view of DOC is that its managers and Minister should have their responses to such issues spelt out in legislation. This camp will endeavour to tighten the Bill still further.

John Holloway



MUSICAL CHAIRS

for forest folk



By the time the restructuring of the Forest Service is clarified in April 1987 a minority of staff will have the same jobs as they had, or be living in the same locations as they were in 1986. Up to half of them either will be employed outside the forestry sector or will not be employed at all. A majority will have had to shift their households.

Wage workers and contractors will suffer less disruption than staff. Current figures show that about 20 percent of 1986 Forest Service wage-workers and contractors will be without jobs in the forest sector in 1987, but there are now indications that political measures will be taken to reduce this impact on wage-workers. A fascinating reversal of the old myth that Forest Service staff jobs were secure!

Table 1 provides an estimate of the net reshuffling and loss of jobs going on by region. Great care should be taken in interpreting this table because of the limited reliability of some of the information that went into the preparation of it. The table was derived largely from publicly available lists of employment. Other data were derived using comparative techniques, but there are many uncertainties about key assumptions. These include the fact that no adjustment has been made for seasonal labour fluctuation, normal attrition, or the employment of people from outside the Forest Service in the new State forestry organizations. Other features deserve attention. Although table 1 groups contractors with