

# South Westland – options canvassed

In February last year a forum was staged in Hokitika to present the findings of the South Westland Management Evaluation Programme and to discuss suggestions for future land-use prospects south of Westland's Cook River (see Vol. 32(1):13-14).

Subsequently Government directed the Secretary for the Environment, Roger Blakeley, to convene a working party to pick up where the South Westland study left off and to make recommendations on the future use and management of the State forests beyond the Cook. Roger Blakeley's working party consists of representatives from relevant government agencies, the West Coast United Council, environmental, community and industry groups. This diverse assemblage has the task of reaching agreement for the allocation and future use of the region's extensive forest tract. They are to take into account the impact and opportunities for the regional economy and other resources including minerals, timber, agriculture, nature conservation, tourism, recreation, fishing, sphagnum moss gathering, community services and infrastructure, and are required to report back to Government by December 15, 1988.

These deliberations are designed to allow Government to make informed decisions on the allocation of areas of State forests in South Westland to either the Department of Conservation or to the Forestry Corporation. The working party's brief includes a requirement to consider the effect of possible decisions on other resources within forest areas, such as minerals or fresh water fishing, and within the context of other regional opportunities such as tourism or agriculture.

A public discussion document has now been released by the working party. It is based upon the resource data gathered during the management evaluation exercise supplemented by information gathered at a series of public meetings held in the region under study.

The public discussion document outlines three options for the future use of the more than 300,000 hectares of native forest in the region – two protecting the area and one allowing for some timber production. The essential differences between the three strategies are:

## Strategy 1 – Permanent Reserve

This strategy suggests that all the State forest lands be given national park status or a similar high level of protective status.

## Strategy 2 – Forest Park

This strategy suggests that all State forest land and other Crown land with primarily conservation values should become the South Westland Forest Park. It would have conservation park status under the Conservation Act 1987 and would be administered by the Department of Conservation. The park would preserve the nature conservation, historic and archaeological values of the area. As well it would generally enable continuation of activities such as white-baiting, sphagnum moss harvesting, river flat grazing, commercial and recreational hunting, tourism and recreation. Timber production would not be permitted.

## Strategy 3 – Mixed Sustained Yield Timber Management and Protected Areas

This strategy suggests that the State forests in the study area would be allo-

cated for both production and protection. Those areas allocated for timber production would be offered for sale to the Forestry Corporation and would be managed on a sustained yield basis. The remaining State forest areas, set aside exclusively for protection, would be allocated to the Department of Conservation. Out of a total area of 72,000 hectares of lowland State forest, potentially suitable for timber extraction, 39,825 hectares would be allocated for timber production. The estimated sustained yield from that area is 48,500m<sup>3</sup> per annum.

Either of the first two strategies appears to have the broad support of environmental and recreational groups. The third option is likely to be supported by the West Coast local bodies, the local sawmilling industry, and community groups.

J.C.H.

## Forest and Rural Fire Association of New Zealand Inc.

With the demise of the New Zealand Forest Service imminent, the Senior Fire Control Officers' Conference in Auckland in mid 1986 passed a resolution to the effect that an Association should be established to look after the interests of rural fire control in New Zealand.

It was thought that all the good work done by the Forest Service in the areas of standardization of fire equipment, the establishment of minimum specifications for that equipment and the maintenance of necessary testing standards would be lost when the new Corporation and departments were formed. In addition, it was pointed out that urban fire services had organizations which looked after the interest of their members but no such national organization had ever existed in this country to which rural fire officers could belong.

Over a period of several months a constitution was developed by those who had attended the Auckland Conference (all of whom became founder members of the Association). The main objectives were to improve the effectiveness of rural fire fighting in New Zealand, make decisions on the specifications of rural fire-fighting equipment, organize the standardization of fire equipment for the benefit of all rural fire authorities, encourage good training and safety procedures, disseminate information to members, encourage improved educa-



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tional qualifications over the whole field of fire prevention and control, present the concerns of members to Ministers, MPs and others as thought necessary, appoint working parties and do whatever the Association thought necessary to achieve objectives, etc.

Full members could be enrolled following written application by anyone with an interest in the objectives of the Association and acceptance of the appli-