

DOC senior appointments

The Department of Conservation has appointed 14 new regional conservators and four new Head Office directors. The appointees will be in charge of regions and policy divisions in a new departmental structure which came into being on July 1.

In announcing the appointments, Director-General David McDowell said: "The department has achieved a good mix of experience, enthusiasm and new ideas by combining people from outside the department, existing regional managers and directors and other senior departmental staff in the new team.

"The new organisation will provide a simpler management structure that offers a number of advantages. It will allow the department to do more conservation work more efficiently. It will promote a concentration on the department's operations in the field. And it will provide a stronger, more effective voice for conservation in the regions.

"With some exceptions, the new regional structure confirms to the new government boundaries; so the regional conservators will be able to work alongside the chief executives and staff of the regional councils to ensure that conservation values are an integral part of regional decision making."

NEW REGIONAL CONSERVATORS

Northland:	John Halkett
Auckland:	Graeme Campbell
Waikato:	Gerry Rowan
Tongariro/Taupo:	Paul Green
Bay of Plenty:	David Field
East Coast:	Bruce Jefferies
Hawkes Bay:	John Ombler
Wanganui:	William Carlin
Wellington:	Dave McKerchar
Nelson:	Ian Black
West Coast:	Bruce Watson
Canterbury:	Michael Cuddihy
Otago:	Jeff Connell
Southland:	Kerry Mawhinney

NEW HEAD OFFICE DIRECTORS

Estate Protection:	John Holloway
Recreation and Resource Use:	Alan Ross
Advocacy and Information:	Wren Green
Protected Species:	Janet Owen



Beech Forests

Sir,

As well as the next man I can appreciate the need for Damascene conversions, but Murray Hosking's letter in your November 1988 issue strains understanding a little too far.

The beeches, silver beech in particular, represent a very real possibility, probably the only one in the country, to manage a native species for very high-quality timber production. If silver beech was a European species, it would with its great variety of figure and colour and good working properties rival the local oak, beech and sycamore.

We are blind to this because we are a country brought up on softwoods for utilitarian uses and have a small population which in the past had little use for – indeed ostensibly despised – anything out of the ordinary. The skills did not develop and the market was not there.

As a result, silver beech has been marketed and priced as low-quality rimu, and historic price rules the roost.

There is no doubt at all that according to conventional economic theory all forestry is impossible, and only slips through when overly optimistic models are used. Both Grant and Dangerfield hammered this home on the green side in 1989 when they joined with the Treasury in condemning sustained resource use as opposed to the philosophy of use and move on.

What therefore is impossible for even a fast-growing species such as radiata becomes dangerous anathema when considered for longer-rotation species such as

beech. Radiata may be argued for, but beech (or kauri) imply rejection of the one true and unchanging religion that we have.

The sight of greens and economists in bed together would seem to most people a perversion exceeding any to be found in the most vigorous video, but we have it, and it may perhaps explain the tangle in which Murray finds himself.

Areas of beech proposed for management in Southland covered only a tiny fraction of the species range. The process was a crude one compared with what it might have become, but it represented one of the very few areas in New Zealand where sustained use of a resource (any resource) was being attempted. It represented an attempt to live with a resource rather than to worship or destroy it, and as such of course was heretical and had to be struck down.

The suggestion that management had to go in the face of overwhelming conservation values simply does not wash. It was a mob decision (blue rinse rather than red rabble, but a mob none the less) which at the time it was not politic to oppose. Science, by quantifying possible change, merely made the decision seem respectable.

To talk about a full range of options for the future is stupid when all except the do nothing one are forbidden. Skills and the awareness of possibility will both be lost, in a small way perhaps, but none the less important in a world concerned with the need for conservation but puzzled to find that hijacked by preservation.

But preservation – which requires no sacrifice or personal change from its supporters – is of course a softer option.

**John Purey-Cust,
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New Zealand Forestry

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