



# 65 Years of State Forest Recreation

## PART II

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### Recreation: The Equal Partner 1976-1987

The second Forestry Development Conference held in 1974 and 1975 set up a working party to review practical measures which should be taken to facilitate the greater recreational use of State Forest land. Some evidence of public impatience came from the comment of Dr Les Molloy that "with the restrictive legislation it is little wonder that interest in recreational forestry has taken so long to blossom".

Basic policy considerations emphasized by the working party recognized that the demand for recreation would increase and that care should be taken not to over-stimulate such demand; that higher priority should be accorded in management to recreation, including greater use of exotic forests to spread the recreational use from indigenous forests; that forest recreation close to urban areas was in short supply and there was a need to plan for complementary use of different types and tenures of recreational forest areas; and that demands are likely to be strongest around the periphery of forest areas.

An outcome of the conference was major amendments to the Forests Act in 1976, including a change in the functions of the Forest Service to provide for *balanced use* of State forest land including recreational, educational, historical, cultural, scenic, aesthetic and scientific purposes among such uses. The words "not prejudicial to forestry" were removed. In addition to a general tidying up, two new major categories were introduced in "open indigenous State forests" and "wilderness areas". Provision was also made for public examination of State forest park management plans and for objections. Advisory committees, previously legally confined to recreational aspects, had their powers widened to advise on management as a whole.

Also emerging from the conference was a policy for the management of indigenous State forests. Guiding principles were:

"The development of National Parks and State Forest Parks

should be complementary, with pressures on National Parks being relieved by strategically located forest parks and recreation areas within easier reach of growing urban populations.

"Further development for recreational purposes should embrace State forests generally (indigenous and exotic) in a manner which is complementary to that for scenic reserves, other Crown-owned indigenous forests and other indigenous forests under the control of local authorities.

"The development of State forest parks in other areas of State forests should be guided by regional recreational plans reflecting the needs and desires of all sections of the public.

"Rights of entry to State indigenous forests should be as liberal as is consistent with public safety, the safety of the forest itself and the protection of other forest values."

The 1976 Annual Report recorded the increasing use of State forests for educational as well as recreational purposes. The emphases were both on giving an understanding of forestry and forest ecology - exotic and indigenous - and on providing facilities for outdoor education generally. A number of outdoor education centres were developed in several forests over the years, nearly all by the combined efforts of educationists, service clubs, business organizations, volunteer labour groups and forest staff. In most cases a local forest office was on the management committee and forest staff assisted in the teaching programmes.

The needs to assess the needs of recreational users, to better define the resource and to assess user impact were becoming increasingly apparent. A range of surveys in various forest parks was undertaken in 1977. At this time also consideration was given to holding public meetings to discuss forest park management plans, and to calling for public nominations for forest park advisory committees.

A major recreational workshop was

held in 1978, an important component being the recreational aspect of forest zoning. In the department's 1974 draft zoning proposals recreation was dealt with simply as a sub-zone overlaying other more dominant uses. When new and refined zone classes and categories were defined and recognized, recreation (in line with the 1976 Amendment) was elevated a zone class along with production and protection. The subdivision was:

		Wilderness
		Remote
		Experience
Recreation	Extensive	Natural
		Environment
		Amenity
		Recreational
		Hunting
	Intensive	Recreational
		Development

The workshop went on to make a large number of recommendations around the general themes of: clarifying forest recreation policies (a working party was set up to expedite this); undertaking comprehensive recreation planning along with planning for other uses of State forests; widening public entry and public participation in management; providing more training for all forest officers, and initiating research in forest recreation.

Around this time additional specialist staff were appointed and a considerable push was given to training, which widened in scope to place particular emphasis on nature and geological/ecological/processes, archaeology and history and Maori lore. Holiday programmes to cater for this increasing interest, often building on outdoor education with children to reach family groups, commenced in several forests. In later years these expanded and were combined with programmes in national parks and reserves.

Nearly 1.4 million hectares, over 151 State forests, was declared "open indigenous forest" in 1978, providing free public entry on foot. The total area of free entry, including forest parks and recreation areas, covered 65% of all State forest land. The same year a proposal to set aside 83,000 ha as the

Tasman Wilderness in Northwest Nelson Forest park under the new provisions of the 1976 Forests Amendment Act was deferred as a result of public concern over inadequate evaluation of the area's economic resources.

New provisions in the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 were implemented with the establishment of the National Recreational Hunting Advisory Committee (NRHAC) "to foster hunting or shooting in recreational hunting areas", where hunting for pleasure not profit could help to control the numbers of wild animals. The NRHAC advises the Minister on: criteria for selecting recreation hunting areas, balancing between recreational hunting areas and other areas, animal control plans related to recreational hunting, and promotion and encouragement of recreational hunting.

The Minister at that time approved in principle the State forests of Lake Sumner region as a recreation hunting area. Also in North Canterbury, Hanmer Forest, in a popular holiday location, became the second exotic forest park.

Later forest parks gazetted tended to follow the model established with Mount Richmond Forest Park in Marlborough which brought cohesive and co-ordinated management to a group of separate State forests. These include: Raukumara – containing the Motu wild and scenic river and a potential wilderness area; Victoria – bringing together forests in North Westland/Buller; and Northland – grouping a number of isolated kauri forests. Together with the proposed Tongariro (South-West Taupo) and Takatimu (Southland) forest parks the forest park network incorporated virtually all significant blocks of indigenous State forests outside the West Coast.

During 1979 (the silver jubilee of State forest parks), revised and consolidated State Forest Park and Forest Regulations were enacted. The main effects were to widen the types of forests on which advisory committees could advise, including open indigenous forest and recreation areas, and also to allow advice on more than one park and to provide some controls over various forms of vehicular access.

The 1980 meeting of Combined Forest Park Advisory Committee representatives generally accepted the changing views toward management of wild animals within their feral range and to a level which would not conflict with protection values. Disapproval was expressed that areas of special value lacked protection from mining.

In the five years following the 1978 recreation workshop, substantial progress was made in two activities – recreation surveys and development of a recreation policy. The recreation policy

initially arose from calls for a recreation policy for forest parks. It was realized that under the 1976 balanced use requirement there must be an interrelationship with other uses and that the policy should apply to all State forests. In the midst of these activities in the last two years the Minister of Forests and Lands requested an appraisal of the merging of the Forest Service and the Department of Lands and Survey. The greatest benefits (some people thought the only ones) were in the areas of recreation and protection management. Public submissions of concern at the large area of New Zealand under the control of the new department and staff attitudes resulted in the proposal being discontinued.

Surveys of the recreational use of exotic forests were carried out in 1979 and 1980. They showed an extraordinarily wide range of activities including: walking, tramping, jogging, riding, picnicking, nature study, hunting, trapping, fishing, game-bird shooting, orienteering, firewood collection, trail bike riding, car rallying, painting, canoeing, swimming, camping and just driving for pleasure. Most were practised in both State and private forests but there were differences in emphasis. Hunting, trapping and shooting were commoner on State areas, suggesting perhaps that the State was more liberal than the private sector in granting hunting privileges to the public as well as to its own employees. Walking, tramping and picnicking were the most popular activities; the incidence of firewood collection – recreation combining family fun with economic relief – was unexpectedly high as was the use of forests for horse riding and all forms of off-road vehicle driving. As expected, the greatest use and range of activities were in forests close to towns and holiday resorts. Nearly 70% of all forests were regularly used by school parties and about half provided occasional guided tours for the public; the educational as well as the recreational value of exotic forests was apparent.

After five years of consultation the Forest Service Recreation Policy (subtitled Goals and Objectives for Public Use of State Forests) was published in 1983. The major goals of the policy were to:

- allow people to enter and enjoy State forests;
- provide a broad range of recreation opportunities for public use and enjoyment;
- maintain and enhance the landscape where practicable;
- increase public awareness and understanding of forests (their ecology, management and relationship to people) and forestry in New Zealand;
- create forest parks;
- manage wild animals where it is com-

patible with sound land management practices;

- allow new or less common recreational uses in State forests;
- charge for the use of some recreational facilities and services and apply the revenue to management in the forest.

The Forest Service sponsored, with Lincoln College and the Department of Lands and Survey, training on the American Recreation Opportunity Spectrum programme to systematically analyse recreation opportunities, usually on a regional basis, and plan for further developments and management.

Having put much effort into developing its own policy the Forest Service assisted the Council for Recreation and Sport in the development of a national policy for outdoor recreation. The Forest Service gave active support for, and active involvement in, the New Zealand Walkways System. The Forest Service policy was to include Walkways across State forest land when they are an integral part of projects involving a range of tenures. A conflict arose in the Raukumara Forest Park Draft management plan between the proponents of walkways and a wilderness. The Forest Service also supported a National Conservation Order on the Motu River to protect its wild and scenic character, whilst allowing commercial rafting, subject to guidelines. The wilderness was held in abeyance for further study.

Over the early-mid 1980s tourism pressures began to build on State forests, especially forest parks. The 1985 Annual Report stated –

"The Forest Service believes that the management of State forests to meet the tourist demand is entirely appropriate and it is developing the capacity to satisfy the demand. The concept of user pays is being introduced for many facilities when users can be practicably identified."

More attention was given to concession management, often as in the case of skifield and white water rafting, developing policies and conditions in association with the Department of Lands and Survey and the National Parks Authority. Public safety remained a major requirement; as an example an avalanche warning system was developed for Craigieburn skifield.

Outdoor education and summer holiday programmes, together with forest open days, all increased. A series of interpretive map guides showing features of ecological and historical interest were produced for forest parks, one winning a British Cartographic Society award of excellence in small-scale thematic cartography.

Arising from the American recreation opportunity spectrum concepts, the

Forest Service developed and was gradually introducing in selected forest parks and in some regions, a Recreation Operations Planning System (ROPS) and developing from this draft recreation strategies. The system "is providing a good system of managerial control for recreation development and maintenance". (AR 1987) Development of fully integrated plans on a regional basis in Westland and the associated manuals setting out design requirements, largely based on the use of natural timber in structures and signs, won awards.

In 1987 the Minister of Forests, before the departmental re-organization, approved in principle the Tasman and Raukumara Wildernesses as the first two areas set apart under the 1985 Wilderness Policy approved by Joint Ministers.

### Concluding Comments

Six events or periods stand out as pivotal in the history of State Forest recreation:

1. The decision of the Government in 1920-21 to reject Leon MacIntosh Ellis' proposals for "progressive administration by the Forest Service of the national parks, scenic reserves, and other State areas along recreational lines". One can but speculate whether the separation was beneficial in developing separate skills and support networks or whether combination at the beginning would have prevented recreation being perceived for many years as "prejudicial to forestry" and earlier brought to fruition the hopes and expectations now held for the Department of Conservation.
2. The rapid growth during the 1920s and 1930s of organized tramping and climbing clubs, whose members took over from private hunters and trappers the dominant role in forest recreation. They were well organized both at the club level and through their national organization, Federated Mountain Clubs, which body also included many skiers and deerstalkers. They were articulate and made their needs known to what was a generally sympathetic administration. Through their efforts and the ability and experience of their leaders they earned a place in administrative arenas and thus were able to promote ideas, put forward demands, and in general have a major influence on both policy and planning.
3. The trial from 1954 to 1965 of the State forest park concept initially in Tararua Forest and later at Craigieburn. It is fortuitous that during the debate of the early 1950s there was the USFS National Forests model demonstrating so well multiple-use management, a concept Entrican

had promoted immediately on becoming Director. And in addition, the target of public interest, Tararua, did not meet the stringent national park criteria and so clearly needed more intensive management.

4. The environmental movement of the 1970s, which itself may have been a reflection of increasing urbanization and increasing education, resulting in people looking to nature and to their historical roots. It may be that the efforts in the 1950s and 60s in inculcating an appreciation of trees and forests were more successful than expected; certainly people were placing a new value on the diminishing native forest resources. Pressures arose; they culminated in interest groups persuading the Forestry Council and then the Government of the desirability of recreation and other non-productive forest uses being given equal standing under "balanced use" in the 1976 Forests Amendment Act. It should be noted as more than coincidental that similar pressures for recreation on agricultural land led in 1975 to the setting up of the New Zealand Walkways System.
5. The significance of the comprehensive and perceptive recreational surveys of the late 1970s which all indicated a much greater public interest in forest recreation than even the Forest Service had appreciated, particularly for fringe activities. The surveys showed how forest interpretation had become a major aspect of recreation. Interpretation is "revelation by appreciation", and may involve historical aspects, i.e. pre-European archaeology, early settlements, gold rushes, early sawmilling, early afforestation by prisoners and depression gangs and even coastal wrecks; natural history, i.e. geology, ecology, nature protection and principles of forest management; and industrial aspects, i.e. logging techniques and machinery and the place of forest industries in local economies. These aspects of interpretation include important parts of New Zealand's cultural history. The Forest Service contribution in recognizing and interpreting was both innovative and considerable. It was yet one more facet of a very wide recreational and environmental forest policy.
6. The final pivotal point was the 1982 proposal to merge the Forest Service with Lands Department. This brought out into the open the needs for better co-ordination in the management of forests and open lands and for the removal of the many planning, zoning and manage-

ment disparities which arose from tenure and organizational differences. From that moment under the spotlight it was inevitable that any restructuring of the machinery of government in New Zealand would refocus inter alia on this major environmental issue.

The Forest Service contributed much to outdoor recreation in New Zealand not just through the forest park philosophy and administration but also by reason of its pioneering research and its positive and readily intelligible recreational policy. Of most importance, though, were the dedicated staff who served their clients, the public, frequently beyond expected hours and often at some cost to their promotion prospects. They had a deep commitment to their job and they made more important contributions to forestry in New Zealand than they realized. They were among the unsung heroes of the Forest Service.

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