

Landscape and public policy in New Zealand following legislative reform.

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My agenda

- *Why and how* should landscape be a concern of public policy?
- *How* does this differ across countries and institutions?
- *What* is the current situation in New Zealand following legislative and economic reform?
- *What* lessons can the NZ experience offer?

Content of presentation

- **Landscape as a focus of public policy- a brief historical overview of approaches**
- **New Zealand context and reforms**
- **New Zealand case studies**
- **Emerging challenges**
- **Conclusion**

Landscape as a focus of public policy- a brief historical overview of approaches

Customary management – *local landscape decisions according to established social practice & common law*

Symbolic representation – *use of evocative landscape ideals to direct public and private action*

Public Estate – *incorporation of land into public ownership to achieve particular landscape goals*

Bureaucratic regulation– *control and direction of private actions through statutory process eg Zoning regulations, EIA*

Design intervention-*achieving public goods through direct action*

Commodification – *defining landscape ‘goods’ and the use of market mechanisms and economic valuation to achieve ‘landscape’ goals*

Landscape as a focus of public policy-trends



- *Different approaches and strategies have an optimum operational range in in time and space*
- *Increasingly challenged by many aspects of contemporary globalisation*

The New Zealand “experiment”

- Early 1980s:- Major socio- economic crisis following years of intervention and top down policy
- 1984 Labour government elected
- Radical economic and administrative reform

The New Zealand “experiment”

Removal of agricultural subsidies and most economic tariffs
Break up and commercialisation of state land agencies
Purchaser – provider funding and management model
Privatisation of productive assets
Restructuring of environmental agencies
Radical new environmental legislation

The New Zealand “experiment”

- Resource Management Act 1991
 - ‘Sustainable management of natural and physical resources’*
 - Focus on assessment of effects of land use*
 - Hierarchical policy structure and administration*
 - Devolution of responsibilities “to those closest to the decision”*
 - A presumption that planning authorities must formally (legally) justify ALL policy interventions that constrain private property rights.*

'Landscape' policy in the new regime

Resource Management Act <i>Bureaucratic regulation to 'avoid, remedy or mitigate' effects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Sustainable' and 'integrated' management of biophysical resources• Matters of national importance• Regional Policy Statements• District Plans• Resource consents

Landscape policy in the new regime

- A presumption for protection of “**natural character** of coastal environment” and ‘**outstanding natural features and landscapes**’ from ‘inappropriate’ change



NZ Coastal
Policy
Statement

&

’Outstanding
Natural
Landscapes’

Landscape policy in the new regime

- Site focused **assessment of 'effects'** of development on private land, with performance standards and environmental compensation



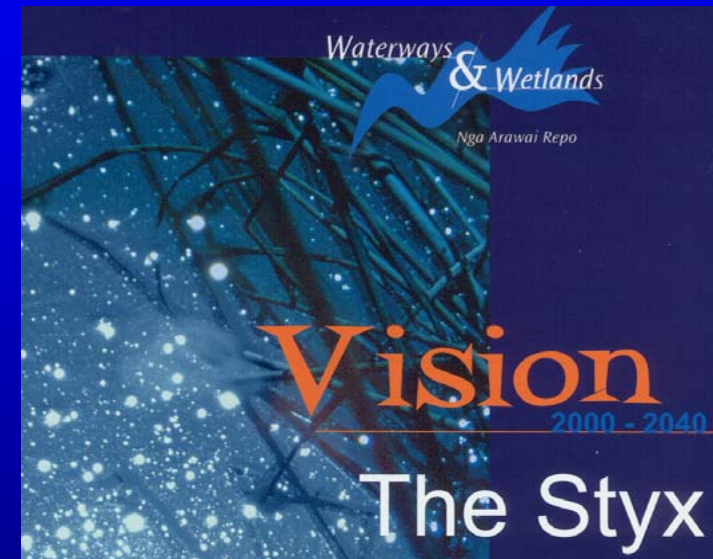
How might development proceed with acceptable effects?

New Zealand landscape policy reform

Resource Management Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•‘Sustainable’ and ‘integrated’ management’ of biophysical resources•Avoid, remedy or mitigate ‘Effects’
Local Government and Public Finance Acts <i>Commodification</i> <i>Symbolic visions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Asset management of public estate•Long term community plans- vision statements

Landscape policy in the new regime

- **Asset management** of publicly owned urban infrastructure, within long term community plans



Images courtesy Christchurch City Council

Landscape policy in the new regime

- **Separation of conservation and production functions** on state owned land, advanced through organisational restructuring and tenure review
- *On the face of it, a regime with fine intentions of environmental sustainability in line with NZ 'clean and green' image*
- *focused upon local landscapes, with high community involvement*

How has it worked in practice?

- **Christchurch City- Urban Growth Management**
- **Canterbury Region – Agricultural Intensification**
- **South Island High Country- Tenure Reform**
- **Christchurch City- Asset Management**

Christchurch urban growth management



Christchurch urban growth management

- 1950s to 1980s Regional Strategy and Green Belt policies contains growth



Christchurch urban growth management

- RMA was introduced by a government with a strong ideological presumption against strategic planning or zoning



*Relaxation of
the 'Green Belt'*

Christchurch urban growth management

- Post 1991 development spreads onto surrounding rural land and hills



Christchurch urban growth management

- Post 1991 development spreads onto surrounding rural land and hills



When combined with cheap imported cars, school zone liberalisation, and a real estate boom, this lead to growing infrastructure pressures & congestion

Christchurch urban growth management

- 2000 onwards calls for new institutions to ‘ensure the long view’
- *Reinvention* of strategic planning

Effects based planning cannot manage cumulative change (PCE 2002)



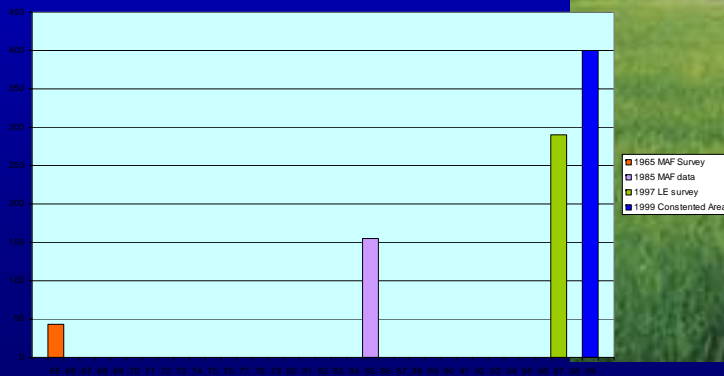
Canterbury Region- Agricultural Intensification

- Under RMA the Regional Council is both strategic planner *and* regulator of water use and condition



Canterbury Region- Agricultural Intensification

- Liberal consents regime during 1990s allowed farm conversion from dryland sheep to irrigated dairy production
- Vertically integrated commodity systems



Water consents 1965-1999

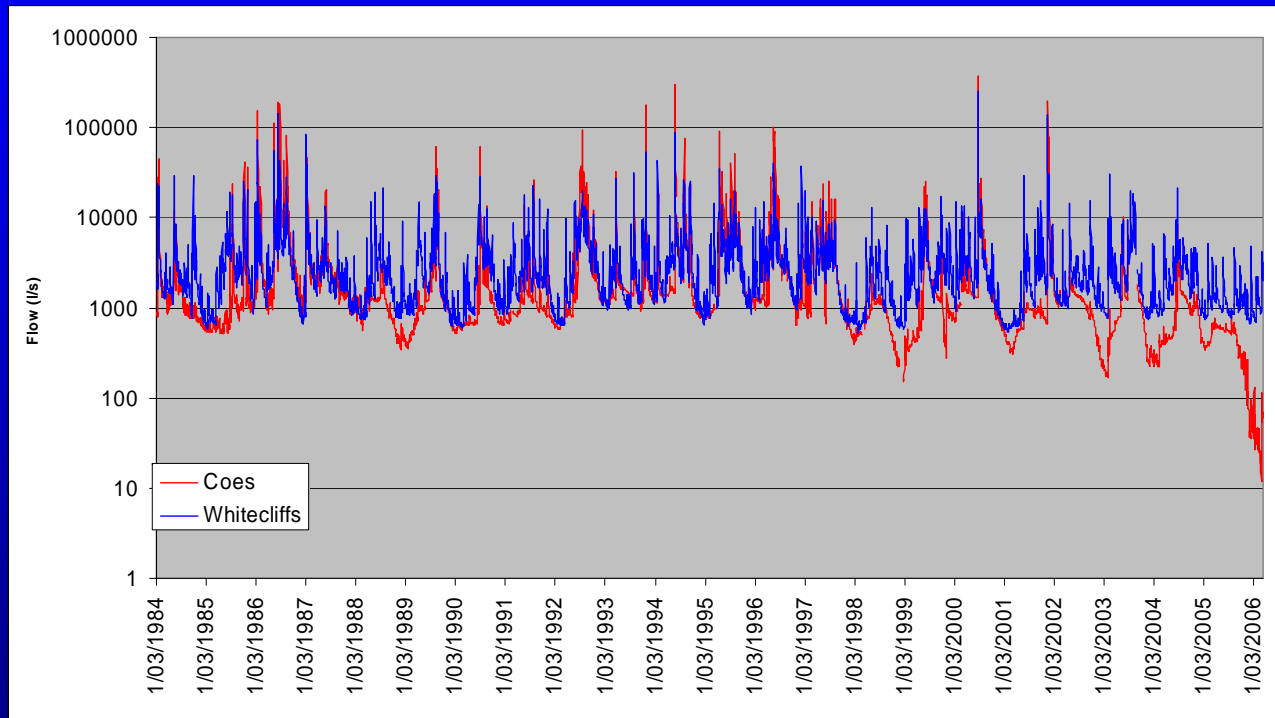
Graph courtesy Dave Kelly NIWA

Canterbury Region- Agricultural Intensification

- Wholesale landscape change with no spatial controls, and few environmental controls



Canterbury Region- Agricultural Intensification



Graph
courtesy
Dave Kelly
NIWA

Recharge and discharge- Selwyn River 1984-2006

Canterbury Region- Agricultural Intensification

- Depletion of groundwater, deteriorating waterways



Canterbury Region- Agricultural Intensification

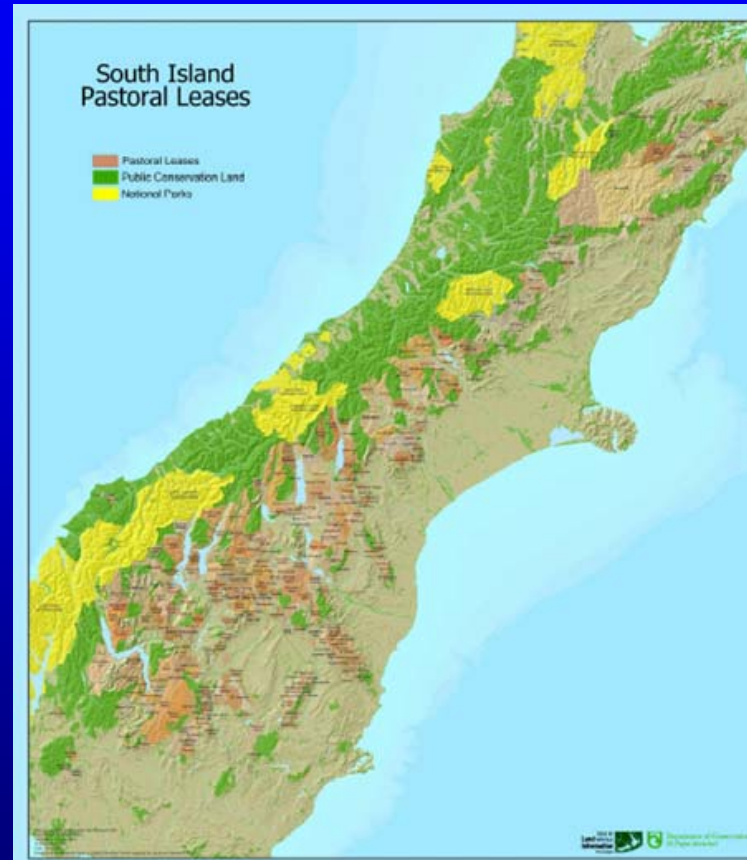
- Belated attempts to re-impose quality standards and restore streams

Local councils lacked capacity, willingness or vision to anticipate and guide the rapid changes due to globalisation



The New Zealand South Island High Country

- **Iconic NZ landscape**
- **Conservation estate plus Pastoral leasehold**
- **Globalisation of economy lead to rapid increase in demand for prime high country real estate**
- **1990s Government adopts a binary zoning that splits pastoral leasehold land between private production and public conservation**
- **Formalised in statute in 1998 as a process of tenure review**



Courtesy Dept of Conservation

The New Zealand South Island High Country

- **Tenure review administered by a Land Information agency**
- **Used external contractors**
- **Advice from Dept of Conservation**
- **Expectation of 'neutrality by state servants**

The New Zealand South Island High Country

- **Audit of tenure review process highlights lack of integrated analysis at local scale (NZILA 2004)**
- **Growing opposition to review from traditional runholders and from recreation and conservation groups**
- **Fulbright fellow Dr Anne Brower challenges equity of process arguing that the public interest is being sold too cheaply [2006]**
- **2006 New government minister calls for recognition of landscape and amenity values**



But the horse has bolted- much prime land has already been privatised

RMA policies were not prepared for the privatisation of land and consequent economic pressures to subdivide

What makes economic and symbolic political sense at a national scale does not make landscape sense at a local scale

Christchurch City- Asset Management

- 1989 Public Finance Act introduced requirement for explicit financial planning for public infrastructure
- CHCH city identified financial opportunity to ‘naturalise’ stormwater drainage



- Stormwater management now forms ‘deep structure’ of new development
- Retrofitted into old neighbourhoods
- Biodiversity , community and recreational outcomes



Images courtesy Christchurch City Council



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Common features of the NZ cases

- The ideology that drove the reforms has led to *a lack of political capacity and commitment* to undertake strategic spatial planning.
- Site specific ‘effects’ based planning is *ineffective* in managing cumulative landscape change. In essence, the system is treating the symptoms rather than the causes.
- Binary policy that separates ‘production’ from ‘conservation’ lands is *antithetical* to an ‘integrated’ regional and local landscape perspective.

Common features of the NZ South Island cases (cont)

- The distribution and deployment of powers and responsibilities within the hierarchical policy system has *not* matched the scale and nature of landscape change resulting from the globalization of the NZ economy.
- Without a robust spatial framework at a regional level to link between scales of action and effect, the hierarchical statutory system has been *disabled*

Common features of the NZ cases (cont)

- Ironically, One of the most successful changes [asset management] was a largely *unanticipated* outcome of a reform of accounting practices, that commodified landscape assets

- **So the results are mixed:**

Effects based planning cannot deal effectively with rapid or large scale change and is vulnerable to globalisation

The lack of political commitment to spatial strategy is proving highly problematic

The system has opened up new opportunities for innovation at a local and site scale

Emerging Challenges?

- The ***BIG GORILLA***- Climate Change

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- Another fairly large primate – **Energy Costs**

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- The extended family - Energy Harvesting and Food Production

Emerging Environmental Challenges

- The ***BIG GORILLA***- Climate Change
- Another fairly large primate – Energy Costs
- The extended family - Energy Harvesting and Food Production
- Political pendulums

Climate Change

- Hotter, drier and more stormy
- Drought, *water disputes*, rural fires, coastal erosion
- Carbon costs are also a major risk for a remote country that relies upon inbound tourism and commodity exports

Are we prepared? No

NZ is a Kyoto signatory but the domestic policy response has been withdrawn due to political opposition

Energy Costs

- Export industries
NZ economy is highly dependent upon cost competitive transport & production
- Domestic transportation
High car ownership, Low popn density, widely spread urban centres
- Domestic heating
Poorly insulated housing

Are we prepared? No. energy policy is disconnected from landscape and land use policy

Renewable Energy

- High potential
- Centralised approach
- Growing public concern and opposition over visual effects of wind farms etc

Political pendulums

- 3rd term centre left government
- Likely swing to right at next election
- Opposition are pledged to 'streamline' the RMA
- **Recipe for a repeat of the 1990s, just as the lessons are being learnt**

Conclusions: some contemporary scale issues in landscape policy

- The NZ reforms have sharpened awareness of the nature of the public interest in landscape
- Approaches to policy that emphasise process need to be complemented with traditional spatial policy regimes.
- Public policy on landscape needs *mixed strategies*- different approaches at different scales but also combined approaches at particular scales.
- Managerialist approaches to policy that emphasise process need to be complemented with traditional spatial policy regimes.
- Capacity and resilience of political and social institutions is critical to the effectiveness of reforms