

1950
NEW ZEALAND

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND SURVEY
**PUBLIC DOMAINS AND NATIONAL PARKS OF
NEW ZEALAND**
(ANNUAL REPORT ON)

Presented to Both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

SIR,—
Department of Lands and Survey,
Wellington, 19th September, 1950.
I have the honour to submit herewith a report on the public domains and national parks of the Dominion for the year ended 31st March, 1950.

I have, &c.,

D. M. GREIG,

Director-General of Lands.

The Hon. the Minister of Lands,

REPORT

PART I PUBLIC DOMAINS

As at 31st March, 1950, the total number of public domains administered under the provisions of Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928, was 850, covering a total area of 81,583 acres. Fifty-two of these domains are controlled by various Commissioners of Crown Lands, 304 are administered by local authorities acting as Domain Boards, and the remaining 494 are under the control of local Boards.

During the year 10 new domains, comprising a total area of 122 acres, were reserved and brought under the provisions of Part II of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928. Additions totalling 1,148 acres were also made to 42 existing domains.

I am pleased to report continued public interest in domain lands and also acknowledge further generous gifts of suitable areas for domains by various citizens and organizations. Voluntary efforts of several communities for extensive development of domains in their districts are noteworthy features.

Domain Boards throughout the Dominion continue to do excellent work for the conservation and improvement of lands under their control. The efforts of members of these Boards in instituting and fostering development schemes and encouraging others to help bring such schemes to finality is commendable and has resulted in the provision of further first-class sports areas and open spaces which fulfil a long-felt want.

The recreational requirements of some districts have not as yet been met, though the local Domain Boards have drawn up improvement programmes and in quite a few cases have partially completed them. The delay in finishing these jobs is due to continued shortage of essential materials and labour. With what resources are available good work has been done.

Assistance from the money appropriated for the purchase and improvement of domain lands has been applied for on a Dominion-wide basis, and, whenever warranted, grants or subsidies have been made available to applicant Boards. That full value for funds provided has been gained I have no doubt. It has been a feature of most of these applications that the public of the particular locality has either subscribed generously to the projects or else has given free labour.

I have commented in previous years on the increased use of domains for camping purposes, particularly in seaside localities, and I feel I must further remark on this feature, which bears directly on changing conditions under which the public enjoys its leisure. The development of motoring, together with the improvement of our highway system, has meant that at week-ends and holiday times the car-owner is able to travel appreciable distances from his home, and a demand has arisen for provision of short-term accommodation facilities at beaches, fishing-pools, and like attractions. The motor camp, which provides a good tent site or a cabin, fresh water, ablution blocks, and like conveniences, has been developed to meet this demand. It is fortunate that public recreation areas were provided over past years at the majority of the places I mention, and the development of camping areas has naturally followed. Not all our attractive beaches have

suitable camp-sites in public ownership, and we are trying to acquire further areas, and appreciate the willingness of various public bodies in fostering the idea. Domain Boards which now provide motor camps have in many cases been obliged to increase camp-sites and attendant facilities to meet the demand, which will increase further now that the petrol situation is easier.

The following new domains have been constituted during the year :—

Ngunguru Domain, area $1\frac{3}{4}$ acres, is on the east coast about 16 miles north-east of Whangarei. It is to be developed for a children's play area and for sports purposes.

Albany Domain, area $9\frac{1}{4}$ acres, is about 10 miles north of Auckland. It was formerly owned by the Albany Fruitgrowers' Association in trust for a show-ground and had been used for that purpose and for general sports gatherings. Further recreational facilities are required at Albany, and the former owners agreed to the vesting of the area in the Crown for a domain so that it could be improved and controlled by a local Domain Board, which has now been appointed.

Karapiro Lake Domain, area 44 acres, is close to the Karapiro Dam about 6 miles south-east of Cambridge. The domain was acquired to provide a lakeside recreation area at this popular spot, and it has already been improved to give facilities for viewing and fostering aquatic sports as well as for a picnic area. The rowing events for the recent Empire Games were controlled from the domain, which was also an excellent vantage point for spectators.

Pahoia Beach Domain, area 2 acres, situated on the Tauranga Harbour about 11 miles north-west of Tauranga, is a seaside picnic area and fronts a popular sandy beach.

Te Rahu Domain, area $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres, about 3 miles from Te Awamutu, is a former school-site and is adjacent to an area already used for recreation and is being developed to provide further sports facilities for the district.

Rangiohia Domain, area $7\frac{1}{4}$ acres, situated 15 miles south of Hamilton, is also a former school-site and has been used by the residents for sports purposes and on it is also built the public hall for the district.

Kopua Domain, area $28\frac{1}{4}$ acres, is situated at Raglan, and was donated many years ago to the local body for a camping-ground. It has been improved for this purpose and is now required for general recreation as well as for a public camping area. The local body has transferred the land to the Crown for a domain, and a local Domain Board has been appointed to control it and is proceeding with an improvement scheme.

Himatangi Beach Domain, area $16\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is at Himatangi, 14 miles south-west of Palmerston North and on the sea-coast. The area has been used for many years as a public parking-place and picnic spot. A local Domain Board has been appointed to control the domain and has already commenced to effect improvements and provide necessary amenities.

Birchfield Domain, area $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres, is 13 miles north-east of Westport, and was purchased by the people of the district and handed over to the Crown for domain purposes. It is used for general recreation and is under the control of a local Domain Board.

Upper Moutere Memorial Domain, area 5 acres, is 22 miles west of Nelson, and was donated by the local residents, who are active in improving it for recreation and have commenced the re-erection of a hall. The domain is under the control of a local Board.

Additions to existing domains were made as follows :

| Land District. | Domain. | Area Added. | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|----|-------|
| | | A. | R. | P. |
| North Auckland | Takapuna | 0 | 3 | 11.2 |
| | Paihia | 10 | 1 | 9 |
| | Mount Albert | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | Mount Roskill | 0 | 0 | 38 |
| | Motutara | 1 | 3 | 11.3 |
| | Okaihau | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| | Mercer | 12 | 0 | 23 |
| | Selwyn | 0 | 2 | 17.6 |
| | Patumahoe | 7 | 0 | 32 |
| South Auckland | Ohinewai | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| | Ngaruawahia | 0 | 1 | 32.01 |
| | Horo-horo-Ngakuru | 0 | 0 | 27 |
| | Tui Park | 7 | 3 | 22 |
| | Katikati | 6 | 2 | 26 |
| | Whangamata | 0 | 3 | 24.6 |
| | Hamilton | 0 | 0 | 13.6 |
| Gisborne | Titirangi | 52 | 1 | 2.2 |
| | Patea | 6 | 1 | 8.4 |
| Taranaki | Kumeroa | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | Clive Grange | 46 | 2 | 19 |
| Hawke's Bay | Woodville | 14 | 1 | 21.5 |
| | Manuui | 1 | 1 | 36.1 |
| | Pohangina Valley | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| | Paraparumu Beach | 7 | 3 | 3.16 |
| Marlborough | Kaikoura | 0 | 1 | 6.6 |
| | Hector | 10 | 1 | 16 |
| Nelson | Waimangaroa | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| | Westport No. 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Canterbury | Parnassus | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| | Coes Ford | 8 | 2 | 35 |
| | Little River | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| | Springston | 0 | 1 | 0.7 |
| | Pioneer Park | 584 | 2 | 0 |
| Otago | Pounawea | 0 | 0 | 24.92 |
| | Omarama | 11 | 3 | 20 |
| | Naseby | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| | Hawea | 85 | 2 | 26 |
| Southland | Croydon Bush | 202 | 3 | 36 |
| | Lumsden | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| | Riverton | 0 | 1 | 20 |
| | Oteramika Centennial | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| | Gore | 3 | 1 | 5.9 |
| Total area added to forty-two domains | | 1147 | 3 | 34.79 |

The reservation over five small areas of the Paraparumu Beach Domain totalling about $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres was revoked. These five pieces of land were either too small or useless for recreation purposes owing to their swampy condition. Two areas of domain land, totalling 32.76 perches, in Wellington City were handed over to the City Council, one as a pleasure-ground and the other for a street. These areas lie just outside the wall of Parliament House grounds at the junction of Lambton Quay and Molesworth Street. The small area of 2.35 perches has been in use as a street for many years, and the larger area of 30.41 perches has been maintained in lawn by the Council over a long period. The Parnassus Domain, 84 miles north of Christchurch, area about 6 acres, was poorly sited for recreation and it was exchanged for a more suitable and similar-sized area near the township. The titles to the Little River Domain were put on a proper basis, and an area of over 4 acres which for about fifty years had been held by the Domain Board as

trustees though not included in the domain was so included. The Gore Borough Council was, at its own request, divested of $3\frac{1}{4}$ acres of municipal endowment, and this area was added to the Gore Domain so that it may be developed for a playing area.

During the year, at the request of the residents of the localities concerned, the names of the following domains were changed :—

Wahi Takaro Domain (35 miles north of Christchurch) changed to Amberley Beach Domain.

Hatea-arangi Park Domain (at Tokomaru Bay) changed to Hatea-arangi Memorial Park Domain.

Greenwich Square Domain (Otago) changed to Waihola Domain.

PART II—NATIONAL PARKS

As there are now under consideration proposals to stimulate the tourist traffic to the Dominion and also to revise and improve the laws governing the administration of our national park areas, I feel that I should bring under notice the views of the Department on various points concerning the control and use of these important national reserves.

It may be interesting in the first place to consider just what a national park is in the general scheme of things. In some countries a national park is treated as a reserved area in which the natural features and the flora and fauna are preserved strictly without any interference by man. The purpose of such parks is almost purely scientific and only properly qualified persons are allowed to enter them. In other countries a national park is regarded as a wilderness area set apart for preservation as nearly as possible in its natural state, but made available for and accessible to the general public, who are allowed and encouraged to visit the reserve. In such an area the recreation and enjoyment of the public is a main purpose ; but, at the same time, the natural scenery, flora, and fauna are interfered with as little as possible. Such a reserve should contain scenery of distinctive quality or some natural features so extraordinary or unique as to be of national interest and importance, and as a rule it should be extensive in area.

Our New Zealand parks, with possibly one exception, come within the second description. They are Crown property held in trust for the benefit of the people. They comprise reservations of virgin country, the main principle underlying their control and management being that of preserving them, as far as is humanly possible, in their natural state, while at the same time providing adequate facilities for the public to visit and enjoy them and to receive in full measure the inspiration and benefits that mountains, forests, lakes, and rivers have it in their power to give. The exception referred to is Peel Forest, which is a very much smaller reserve than the others. It is nevertheless a charming area representative of the lowland forest that once covered portions of the Canterbury Province, and has given enjoyment and refreshment of spirit to many thousands.

EXTENT OF NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL PARKS

It is probably not generally realized how well endowed New Zealand is in the way of national parks. Tongariro contains 150,000 acres, Egmont 79,000 acres, Abel Tasman 37,600 acres, Arthur Pass 146,000 acres, Tasman Park and adjoining reserves 135,000 acres, and Fiordland over 2,400,000 acres. The total national park area is a little over 3,000,000 acres, or roughly $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the total area of the Dominion.

CONTROL OF THE PARKS

The Tongariro, Egmont, and Peel Forest Parks are controlled by Boards appointed under special Acts—viz., the Tongariro National Park Act, 1922, the Egmont National Park Act, 1924, and the Peel Forest Act, 1926, respectively—while the Abel Tasman and Arthur Pass Parks are controlled by Boards appointed under Part III of the Public

Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928. Other parks, such as the famous Sounds or Fiordland and the magnificent Mount Cook reserves, are not controlled by Boards, but are under direct Government control. The Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928, was a consolidation and revision of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908, and its amendments, together with a new Part (Part III) dealing specially with national parks. Prior to 1928 there were no statutory provisions (with the exception of the special Acts relating to Tongariro, Egmont, and Peel Forest) dealing specifically with national parks, and those parks in respect of which a special Act had not been passed were subject to the general law relating to public reserves contained in Part I of the Public Reserves and Domains Act, 1908. However, Part III of the 1928 Act for the first time gave general authority for the creation and protection of national parks and the appointment of controlling Boards. The provisions of Part III were applied in the cases of the Arthur Pass and Abel Tasman Parks, and unless and until superseded by new legislation, will be used in any future cases.

MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS

Where there are special Acts, the membership of the Boards is to a great extent determined by the statutes. Thus, under the Tongariro Act there are nine statutory members, including the Minister of Lands, the Director-General of Lands, and a member appointed from time to time by the Royal Society. Under the Egmont Act the statutory members are the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Land District of Taranaki, and two persons appointed from time to time by each of the North, South, East and West Egmont local committees. The committees referred to are nominated by the local bodies of Taranaki, and assist the Park Board in the control and supervision of the park. Under the Peel Forest Act the statutory members include the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Land District of Canterbury. Boards appointed under Part III of the general Act of 1928 consist of such persons as the Governor-General in Council thinks fit to appoint. Endeavours are made to see that the Boards are as representative as possible, and special attention is paid to the representation of the mountain and alpine clubs. One difficulty encountered has been in the tendency towards large memberships. At present the Tongariro Board may consist of eighteen members (the actual membership is fifteen), while the Egmont, Abel Tasman, and Arthur Pass Boards have eleven, thirteen, and ten members respectively. There is no particular merit in having such large memberships, and there is a growing conviction that smaller Boards would be more efficient. This point will be fully considered in the event of any new legislation dealing with national parks being introduced, and here it may be mentioned that a Bill to replace Part III of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928, and the special Acts dealing with Tongariro and Egmont has been prepared and is now being circulated amongst Departments, scientific bodies, and other organizations interested in national park affairs. The existing statutes are in need of some overhaul in the light of present-day knowledge and requirements, and it is desirable in the interests of sound administration that there should be one general law governing the administration of national parks.

POWERS OF BOARDS

Very extensive powers of control and management are vested in National Park Boards under the special Acts and the general law. Generally speaking, the Boards are charged with the duty of maintaining, preserving, and improving the areas placed under their care, and so to administer them that they are available, subject naturally to any necessary restrictions, to the fullest possible extent for the recreation and enjoyment of the general public. Commercialism has no place in the setting-aside of the national parks, and but little in their administration, although the park Boards are empowered by statute to themselves establish or provide, or assist in the establishment or provision

by persons or companies of huts, hostels, accommodation-houses, &c. ; and they may let or lease any such buildings, or lease with the consent of the Government sites for such buildings.

The public have free right of entry to the national parks.

There are alpine and mountain club huts on some of the parks, and applications by clubs for sites for such buildings are willingly granted by the Boards, subject to reasonable conditions.

The Boards are not allowed to fell or to authorize the felling of any native trees without the approval of the Governor-General in Council.

Camping is allowed in the parks under proper conditions. By-laws on this subject usually provide that persons wishing to camp in a national park shall apply to the Ranger or Secretary for assignment to camping-sites, and that campers shall pay such fees or charges as may from time to time be fixed by the Board concerned.

FINANCE

The question of finance is rather a difficult one. In the case of Peel Forest certain local authorities are entitled to representation on the Board, provided they make a small annual contribution to its funds : but in the case of the other Boards their funds consist of

- (a) All moneys accruing in respect of the parks, penalties, fees, &c.
- (b) All moneys from time to time appropriated by Parliament for their purposes.
- (c) All moneys from time to time contributed to the Boards by local authorities out of their general funds.
- (d) All other moneys received by the Boards from any source, including rents derived from leases and tenancies.

The Boards have borrowing-powers, subject to the approval of the Government Loans Board, for the purpose of carrying out park improvements, and they may pledge as security for any loan their funds, property, or revenue. This does not permit of the pledging of any land comprised in the parks as part of the security. The park lands remain vested in the Crown as permanent reserves.

Grants by the Government from time to time for the development of the parks are provided by way of direct appropriation out of the Consolidated Fund. Any grants by local bodies are made out of their general funds provided by way of local rates. There are no fixed annual grants or subsidies either out of Crown or local-body revenue, although an endeavour is being made in the case of Egmont, where there are special problems connected with the preservation of the forest on Mount Egmont, to provide for a fixed annual grant by the Government, subject to certain contributions to be made by the local authorities of the district. There is, however, a growing realization that the national parks are properly the concern of the State.

NEW PARKS AND ADDITIONS

It is probable that additions will be made from time to time to existing parks, and that new ones will be created. Land may be purchased for national park purposes, and under Part III of the 1928 Act the Governor-General in Council may constitute as a national park any land coming within the following classes :—

- (a) Land purchased for the purpose.
- (b) Crown land subject to the Land Act, 1948.
- (c) State forests subject to the Forests Act, 1949.
- (d) Public reserves subject to Part I of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act, 1928.
- (e) Public domains subject to Part II of the last-mentioned Act.
- (f) Scenic reserves subject to the Scenery Preservation Act, 1908.

Considerable areas of State forest and scenic reserves were included in the Arthur Pass and Abel Tasman Parks under these provisions, and further areas of State forest have recently been added to the Arthur Pass Park. Close co-operation is maintained between the Lands Department, the Forest Service, and other State Departments in matters concerning the protection of high country and bush preservation in general.

In South Westland there are many scenic reserves of extensive area, some of them being practically of national park status. For instance, the Westland glacial scenic reserves, which include the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers, cover an area of over 187,000 acres. These and other reserves in that district provide the foundation for the constitution at an appropriate time of a national park of outstanding scenic interest.

ACCESS, ACCOMMODATION, ETC.

Accommodation for tourists and others visiting the national parks is provided principally by the Chateau on the lower slopes of Mount Ruapehu, the mountain hostels on Mount Egmont, the Hermitage at Mount Cook, and the Milford Hostel at the head of Milford Sound. The Chateau, the Hermitage, and the Milford Hostel are conducted by the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, while the Egmont hostels are operated under franchise granted by the Egmont National Park Board. There is also on the shores of Lake Te Anau (the gateway to Fiordland) an hotel operated by the Tourist and Health Resorts Department. There are motor roads to the Chateau, the Egmont hostels, and the Hermitage, and roads to facilitate access to snowfields and skiing-grounds. The road from Te Anau to Milford Sound via the Eglinton and Upper Hollyford Valleys, the Homer Tunnel, and the Cleddau Valley is not yet fully completed throughout its full length. There are numerous tracks throughout the parks, the best known one being the celebrated Milford Track, running from the north-western shore of Lake Te Anau across the granite mountains to Milford Sound. Camping-grounds have been provided in various places, although nothing elaborate has so far been established in that way. However, it is probable that camping-grounds will be extended and improved before very long.

VALUE OF THE PARKS: THEIR APPEAL TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND THE TOURIST FROM OVERSEAS

No attempt is being made here to describe the natural wonders of the parks and the remarkable and varied nature of their scenic quality. It is felt that to do so in any adequate manner would require separate and lengthy treatment. For present purposes it may suffice to say that they are of immense value not only as climatic and water-conservation reserves, but also as reservations of extensive tracts of virgin country providing for the rest, recreation, enjoyment, and inspiration of the people. Their æsthetic and spiritual values cannot possibly be set down in mere words. They appeal to the adventurous spirit of the tramp and the mountaineer; but no less strongly to those who find rest and refreshment of spirit in quieter contemplation of nature's intricate pattern of mountains and glaciers, forests, lakes and rivers, and the majestic sounds of the sea. Their influence on tourist traffic to and within the Dominion has been, and will no doubt continue to be, immense. Their attractiveness to visitors from overseas can probably be increased in various ways; but it must always be kept in mind that nothing should be done that might prove detrimental to the natural features of the parks. These great national reserves should be so administered and maintained as to be preserved, as far as possible, in their natural state. Native plant and animal life should, as far as possible, be preserved, and introduced plant and animal life should, as far as possible, be exterminated. Reasonable development of the parks for recreation purposes must take place, but should be undertaken only in conformity with the principles stated. There should, however, be ample scope for development over the years.

More mountain huts of harmonious design, better facilities for the use of skiing-grounds, &c., more walking tracks and signposts, well-equipped camping-grounds in suitable and favourite sites, and more and better hotel and hostel accommodation (not always necessarily in the parks themselves) suggest themselves for consideration and early action if possible.

PROTECTED AREAS WITHIN SOUNDS (FIORDLAND) NATIONAL PARK

The recent rediscovery of the takahe in part of Fiordland National Park has aroused widespread interest in the Dominion and overseas. It was necessary to take speedy legislative action to give special protection to the bird. Special legislation was drafted and passed in December, 1948, setting apart a special area of 438,000 acres within the boundaries of the park. The special area lies generally between Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau and the mountain summits to the west. The Milford Track area is not affected. To the special area entry is permitted only by means of permits: but every endeavour has been made to avoid any undue interference with the tourist traffic on the lakes. Blanket tourist permits have been issued to the principals of the Fiordland Travel Co., which carries many people across Lake Te Anau to visit the caves on the western side, and special arrangements have been made in the case of certain persons who own holiday houses and have launches on the lake. The aim all through has been to cause the minimum of inconvenience, subject always, of course, to the overriding necessity of ensuring adequate protection for the takahe. The Tourist and Internal Affairs Departments, both of which have permanent officers stationed at Lake Te Anau, are co-operating with the Lands Department in the administration of the special legislation.

OTHER RESERVES OF INTEREST TO TOURISTS

Apart altogether from the national parks, there are throughout the Dominion many hundreds of scenic reserves, many of them of outstanding charm and interest. Reference has been made earlier to the large scenic reserves in the vicinity of the Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers. There are other important scenic reserves throughout Westland, and in most other parts of the Dominion as well. Those along the Wanganui River and in the Buller Gorge come immediately to mind, while Trounson Kauri Park, near Dargaville, should by no means be forgotten. Special attention has been and is being paid to the setting-aside of adequate reserves along important highways and tourist routes. Reserves have been provided, for instance, on the Catlins-Waikawa Road in South Otago, the Blenheim-Nelson Road, the Greymouth-Westport Coast Road, the Haast Pass Road, the Lewis Pass Road, and many others, while action is well in hand for the acquisition and reservation of adequate strips of bush land along the new Taumarunui-Tokaanu Road.

Other reserves such as the great Waipoua Kauri Forest in North Auckland, the thermal reserves of the Rotorua district, the Waitomo Caves reserves, and the bush reserves at Waikaremoana and Morere add considerably to the great charm of the Dominion as a land for the tourist and the lover of nature.

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