

Plans for IYM Activities in New Zealand

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Plans for IYM Activities in New Zealand

New Zealand supports the International Year of Mountains (IYM) initiative led by FAO. New Zealand's participation in the Asia Pacific Forestry Commission has helped facilitate awareness of the organizational activities in this region.

Within New Zealand, many of the higher alpine mountain ranges are contained within national parks and are managed by the Department of Conservation. Numerous lesser ones are contained within regional parks and are managed by

local governments. A large area of midaltitude mountain ranges and valleys is "pastoral lease" land, owned by the Crown and leased in large blocks to pastoral farmers. Because of competition for utilizing the productive value and protecting



the considerable residual natural value (eg, biodiversity and landscape) in these mountains, legislation has been introduced to enable reallocation of such lands to the public conservation estate and to private ownership for farming. Weed invasions and vertebrate pests threaten both natural values and production capacity in New Zealand mountains.

New Zealand does not have distinctive mountain-dwelling communities nor the conflicts involving such communities that exist in some other countries. However, the mountains, including many small peaks and extinct volcanoes, hold special significance for local people and for Maori ancestral linkages.

New Zealand agencies with an interest in the International Year of Mountains program include

- The Ministry for the Environment.
- The Department of Conservation.
- The Ministry of Education.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.
- A number of research agencies.

While no central coordinating committee has been established,

activities are planned to promote the International Year of Mountains. The Department of Conservation will be devoting its annual Conservation Week (5–11 August) in 2002 to mountain awareness under the theme “Our Mountains”. Information and updates will be available online at www.doc.govt.nz.

The Ministry of Education-funded interactive website program, LEARNZ, developed by the Christchurch-based company Heurisko, will use a range of tools to facilitate mountain education in schools. This will include two 3-week-long “virtual” field trips in May and October where pupils will be able to experience, and learn, on-line. Audio conferencing facilities will be available and experts “on tap” to answer questions. The website address is www.learnz.org.nz. Both the above initiatives will provide comprehensive coverage, including geological, recreational, cultural, and environmental aspects. Planning is at an early stage, and it is envisaged that other groups such as research organizations, mountain recreational clubs, and environmental organizations

will be encouraged to develop their own themes and activities.

New Zealand Post is planning to launch a special stamp series featuring 6 New Zealand mountains as part of IYM. Planning for the year is still at an early stage, and it is envisaged that other groups such as research organizations, mountain recreational clubs and environmental organizations will be encouraged to develop their own themes and activities.

Social and environmental research that may make a further contribution is also being undertaken in mountain countries, including one program focused on changing landscapes and biodiversity that has a mountain lands component and employs a participatory approach to land management.

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Tongariro National Park, central North Island, featuring Mt Ngauruhoe, one of three active volcanic peaks in the park, and the Grand Chateau hotel. The central portion of the park was gifted to the people of New Zealand in 1887 by Horonuku, Te Heuheu Tukino IV, paramount chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa. The spiritual and cultural values of the mountains of Tongariro are recognized as being central to the lives of the local *iwi* (people) and are venerated accordingly. The park has been given international recognition with dual World Heritage status for both its cultural and natural landscape values. Balancing conservation values and tourism management is an ongoing issue and challenge for the park, which has over one million visitors annually. The Grand Chateau built in 1929 is also part of the history of this unique area and continues to play an important role in servicing visitors to the park. (Photo by Anne B. Zimmermann)