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YELLOW-BROWN SANDS VOLUME

"COASTAL RESERVES IN WELLINGTON LAND DISTRICT"

FROM:

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TO:

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The Wellington Land District stretches from Wellington City North to Patea Borough along the west coast of the North Island. However for the purposes of this paper only that portion between the Manawatu River and the Whangaehu River will be discussed being a good sample of the overall coast and bordering a continuous stretch of yellow-brown sand country. This coastline will be referred to as the "study area" in this report.

The dictionary defines a resource as something that lies ready for use. Resources may be intangible (cultural, intellectual, aesthetic) or tangible (financial, natural), but they must be valuable in satisfying or providing for some human requirement. Their volume varies with time, place and individual preference. In this context the recreational resources of the study area are considerable, being both of tangible and intangible value to the users. The entire coastline of the study area is composed of a wide flat beach, adjacent shallow seas, backed by extensive dunes. This pattern is broken only by a few major river estuaries, themselves the focal points for recreation and beach settlements. This physical pattern when added to a climate of hot summers and moderate winters allows for the full range of coastal recreation activities. The only limiting factors being access to the coastline, the lack of blocks of land dedicated to recreational pursuits and a high wind factor which causes rough seas and blowing sand which in turn limits some uses to sea such as boating and skin diving and picnicking and camping on lands in unsheltered areas.

The aim of a coastal reserve investigation is to assess the resource of the study area and provide adequate access to and along the coastline as well as blocks of land for general public use. Another function is the reservation of areas of scientific, historic and scenic attraction along the coast for preservation against other land uses. As will be shown later in this paper this second function is very difficult to enact because of the physical nature of the coast.

Pressure for coastal recreation in the study area has led to the establishment of beach settlements at the mouth of the Manawatu River-Foxton Beach, the estuary of the Rangitikei River - Tangimoana and Okanagan and the estuary of the Turakina River - Turakina Beach. Not surprisingly these settlements lie along or at the ends of all major paved public roads leading to the coast. The one exception to river mouth settlement is at the Whangaehu River where no public road reaches the coast. Himatangi Beach Settlement is not located at a river mouth but is at the end of the only other paved road to reach the coast and is adjacent to a major stream outlet. Whether the road caused the settlements or the settlements the roads is no longer an issue though any new road may lead to pressure for beach subdivision. This can be planned presently by zoning areas for or against such a use on district schemes thus removing historical precedent.

Given the physical and settlement pattern described above the first concern of the coastal reserve investigation is to provide adequate coastal recreation lands for each beach settlement. This has usually already been done when the settlements first developed but additions may now be needed to cover increased use and types of recreation. The next function of the investigation is to provide negotiable access along the entire coastline. This can take the form of an easement of right of way or a foreshore reserve of enough width to enable a walker to move along the coast regardless of tidal or storm conditions.

On this type of coast there is little or no limitation to access and general agreement with private owners or Government agencies is universal. Only the use of the beach adjacent to the Raumati Bombing Range is subject to controls for obvious reasons. On eroding coastlines dominant north of the study area some provision for access below and above the cliff is necessary and some other techniques are more practical in that set reserve boundaries would be continually changing.

The final function of the coastal reserves investigation is to analyse various areas for scientific, historic, wildlife and scenic attractions along the coast so that they can be preserved and identified. Quite often one or more elements are present in conjunction with the dominant features e.g. a swamp having scenic, biological and wildlife values. The management and detailed study of these areas occurs usually after reservation takes place. This situation can prove frustrating as scientific finds may require extensions to a reserve that could have been handled more easily at reserve designation stage. However because of time lag, finance budgets and inadequate initial professional data no other course is possible except the boundary being fixed at acquisition or management stage. There is however, usually enough time between designation and purchase (if needed) to fill in many gaps in data.

In the study area it was recognised early that the reservation of all major river estuaries was necessary as they contain a high degree of importance for marinelife and wildlife supported by a unique and limited ecosystem. Thus reserves would be proposed to cover both banks of all major rivers so as to ensure adequate control of estuary recreation and subdivision so as to preserve and manage the recognised values therein. It is important that substantial areas of both banks be included in actual reserve not only for management reasons but the channels are ever shifting and may, if too narrow an area is reserved, move into lands of other tenure and function. There is again universal recognition of the importance of estuaries for recreation and wildlife and most are already in public ownership for flood control purposes. It is only left to then win agreement on a proper dual control to ensure all resources are properly managed by responsible agencies to allow for recreation.

The situation changes rapidly for special feature reservation when moving away from estuaries to general sand country along the coastline. Conflicting land use ideals rather than universal agreement becomes dominant. If for example a proposal for a biological or geological reserve is presented to the Department, consideration must be given as to whether the features identified for reservation will unduly effect adjacent land use, to what extent, as well as what means can be initiated to safeguard these other land uses should reservation be considered desirable or possible. How these various features arrive at a position of reservation is a matter of interpretation of numerous Acts, rarity value, public and private pressure and the nature of the feature.

In the case of reservation over extensive mobile sand dune country any reservation that requires that natural processes be unhampered would meet with considerable opposition from agricultural, afforestation, sub-divisional or even other reserve (e.g. wetlands) land uses. Thus it has been extremely difficult to make a case for reservation of any kind over sand country if the reservation does not offer the possibility of control or stabilisation of the

dunes. In the case of historical, archaeological and geological features control of shifting sands is mandatory to preservation. The same is not true of scenic and biological reserves. It must therefore be decided by "a greater good" based on public pressure, cost and damage to adjacent lands and cannot be subject to a pressure group demand who may be suspect by virtue of their interest. Though certainly not fool proof this lengthy process has had remarkable success along the coast. It must be briefly mentioned that adjoining these coastal reserves a certain amount of ocean bed should be included. This has yet to be scientifically studied and no legal mechanism exists to extend current boundaries seaward. Therefore no specific areas are recommended for inclusion with foreshore reserves at present but the idea remains important.

In summary the Coastal Reserves pattern for the area of coast from the Manawatu River to the Whangaehu River should include: one, a block of recreation reserve at each major access road and beach settlement, these being pressure points for use; two, continuous legal access along the entire coastline; three, appropriate reservations of a dual nature over the estuaries of all major rivers; four, special reservation over any wildlife, historical, scenic or archaeological features outside the estuaries if such reservations is in the public interest; and five, that a large area of sand dune country, being partially in a natural state, be reserved for general recreation as an example of "type" of terrain provided safeguards of adjacent land uses are recognised.

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