



Speech Notes

HON MAHARA OKEROA

OPENING OF RUATANIWHA NATIONAL PARK

Twizel Thursday 13 July 2006

EMBORAGOED TILL 1pm 13 July 2006

E mihi ana kit e raki
E mihi ana kit e whenua
E mihi ana ki a koutou
E ka mate, haere haere haere
E te rakatirea,
E te takata whenua
E te kaitiaki o te kahui mauka
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa

I am pleased to welcome you all here today, to announce the creation of the Ruataniwha Conservation Park.

This new park provides protection and public access to over 37,000 hectares of rugged mountain country, tussocklands, beech forest and sparkling clear rivers, in the ranges and valleys bordering lakes Ohau and Pukaki.

This park brings together existing conservation areas and new lands that have come out of tenure review and gives them a stronger, more marketable, identity.

The joining together of all these patches of land means they are no longer managed in isolation, but unified together under the umbrella of conservation park status.

As more neighbouring conservation areas are surveyed or negotiated as part of the tenure review of pastoral leases, they will be added to the park. This includes areas close to where we are here, on the shores of Lake Ohau, and as we look over to these lands we can be assured that their future is secured.

The park's name - Ruataniwha - has a strong meaning. It is a name that has been associated with this area for over 400 years, a tale of two brothers passed down through oral traditions.

Such stories link Ngāi Tahu to the landscape of Te Wai Pounamu/South Island. We are grateful to Joe Waaka of Arowhenua Runaka for sharing his whakapapa/geneology with us. This name will serve as an enduring symbol of Ngāi Tahu commitment to conserving areas of high natural and historic values and their commitment to taking an active role in its management.

We are grateful for their support and the support of local people and the wider public, particularly those that made submissions in favour of the park.

With Conservation Week only two weeks away, it is timely to bring your attention to this year's theme - ***Kia ngākau nui te katoa ki te whakarato*** - Conservation is everybody's business.

Conservation is not just the job of the government department that happens to have that name; it is far too important for that.

Conservation is everybody's business. Conservation is critical to our environmental, economic, social and cultural wellbeing. All of us can, and ultimately must, take seriously the role of kaitiakitanga or guardianship of our lands, waters, and native species.

This park opening today is another celebration of community involvement. Conservation, whether it is in biodiversity, recreation or historic work, happens because people want it to happen and are motivated to do good things.

This new park has seen many collaborative efforts for conservation already. Local farmers have been working with DOC to eradicate feral pigs from the Ben Ohau range - for mutual benefit. I thank all of you involved and in particular Tony Allan who has taken a lead role in the project.

The Weatheralls from Lake Ohau Station and Simon Cameron from Ben Ohau Station have been instrumental in developing historic interpretation panels in the Ahuriri Conservation Park. Thanks to you for sharing your knowledge with us all.

Dave Allan from Bendrose Station has been a long-term farming representative and advocate on the recovery group for Kaki, a taonga species.

This very lake that we look out upon is also being actively cared for by some of you here today, who have formed the Ohau Conservation Trust and given up your time to remove wilding pines and briar from the lake's edges.