

No land to be removed from Schedule 4

20 July 2010 - Energy and Resources Minister Gerry Brownlee and Conservation Minister Kate Wilkinson announced today that the government has decided not to remove any land from Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act for the purposes of further mineral exploration or extraction.

Source: Beehive

Mr Brownlee said he had always made it clear the government was undertaking a genuine consultation process and had not made up its mind on any of the matters prior to the eight week discussion period which began on March 22.

The government received 37,552 submissions on its discussion paper titled Maximising Our Mineral Potential: Stocktake of Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act and beyond.

"The vast majority of submissions were focused on the proposal to remove 0.2 per cent of land from Schedule 4 to allow for wider mineral prospecting on those sites," Mr Brownlee said.

"Most of those submissions said we should not remove any land from Schedule 4. We heard that message loud and clear.

"From my perspective this has been a valuable exercise. I suspect few New Zealanders knew the country had such considerable mineral potential before we undertook this process, and I get a sense that New Zealanders are now much more aware of that potential and how it might contribute to economic growth.

"Essentially the discussion process identified where the minerals industry can and can't go. As many people have pointed out, around 85 per cent of the country is not protected by Schedule 4, and a great deal of that land has mineral potential.

"New Zealanders have given the minerals sector a clear mandate to go and explore that land, and where appropriate, within the constraints of the resource consent process, utilise its mineral resources for everyone's benefit," Mr Brownlee said.

The government has also decided to undertake a significant aeromagnetic survey of non Schedule 4 land in Northland and on the West Coast of the South Island to learn more about which areas have the highest concentrations of valuable minerals.

"I am delighted to announce that the aeromagnetic survey in Northland will be conducted as a partnership between central government and the various agencies of local government in Northland.

"It is our expectation that when that data becomes available there will be an escalation of mineral exploration and extraction in those areas, which will be of benefit to the economies of both regions."

The technical exploration process will also make a major contribution to public good science by identifying and de-risking a range of hazards associated with soil and rock instability, which will assist with management of earthquakes and landslides.

Ms Wilkinson said the government had agreed to continue with its proposal to add 14 areas totalling 12,400 hectares of land to Schedule 4.

In addition, in the future all areas given classifications equivalent to current Schedule 4 areas, such as national parks and marine reserves, will automatically become part of Schedule 4.

"We wanted to allay the fears of some submitters that the government may consider allowing mining in national parks in the future by taking this possibility off the table. This is an added layer of protection for New Zealand's most highly valued conservation land," Ms Wilkinson said.

The discussion paper suggested the establishment of a conservation fund where a percentage of the royalties from mineral extraction on Schedule 4 land would be paid to the Crown for conservation purposes.

"In the circumstances this is considered redundant and therefore won't proceed," Ms Wilkinson said.

Finally, the discussion paper proposed that application of access arrangements for Crown land for mineral development be considered by both the land holding Minister and the Minister of Energy and Resources, as opposed to the present practice of being considered by the land holding Minister only.

The government has decided to amend the protocol so that both land holding Ministers and the Minister of Energy and Resources will now need to sign off on applications for access arrangements to Crown land for mineral developments.

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