



# Global Nonviolent Action Database

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## New Zealanders prevent opening of national parks for mining, 2010

**Time period notes:** *Plans to potentially explore minerals in protected lands were put forward on August 2009 but the leaked document in March 2010 included vast tracts of high-value conservation lands that prompted public debate about government mining proposals.*

14 March

2010

to: 20 July

2010

**Country:** New Zealand

**Location City/State/Province:** Auckland; Nationwide

**Location Description:** *Biggest protest took place in Auckland but protests also took place nationwide notably in Nelson and Wellington*

**Goals:**

Retraction of plans to open up high-value conservation land to mining

## Methods

### Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support › by Sierra Club to John Key in opposition to government mining proposals
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › by Greenpeace and Forest & Bird against government mining proposal
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions › criticisms of the government's mining proposal by the Institute for Policy Studies
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- Other... › Leakage of government's mining proposals by Forest & Bird

### Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches › by Labour and Green Party
- 002. Letters of opposition or support › by IUCNNZ to Key protesting government mining proposals
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

### Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches › by celebrity Robyn Malcolm
- 004. Signed public statements › by Wright criticising government mining proposals
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 018. Displays of flags and symbolic colors
- 036. Performances of plays and music
- 039. Parades
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Methods in 4th segment:**

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Methods in 5th segment:**

- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

**Methods in 6th segment:**

**Notes on Methods:**

In conjunction with these nonviolent methods of protest, the groups against mining used a variety of methods including public debates and feedback forms on the mining proposal to express disapproval.

## Classifications

**Classification:**

Defense

**Cluster:**

Environment

**Group characterization:**

- Ordinary citizens nationwide
- Policy Analysts
- environmental groups

## Leaders, partners, allies, elites

**Leaders:**

No clear leadership but Forest & Bird initiated the major outflow of campaign energy by leaking government documents.

**Partners:**

Forest & Bird, Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, Green Party, Coromandel Watchdog, Federated Mountain Clubs, Environment and Conservation Organisations of Aotearoa New Zealand (ECO), (all the organisations above together formed a canopy group called 2precious2mine), Sierra Club, Institute for Policy Studies,

**External allies:**

Jan Wright (Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment), International Union for Conservation of Nature New Zealand Committee (IUCNNZ), Zoological Society of London, Auckland Zoo

**Involvement of social elites:**

Phil Goff (Labour Party leader) and eight members of his caucus, Five members of parliament (Green Party), Lucy Lawless, Robyn Malcolm, Madeleine Sami (all actresses).

## Joining/exiting order of social groups

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

- 2precious2mine
- Sierra Club

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

- International Union for Conservation of Nature New Zealand Committee (IUCNNZ)

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

- Five members of parliament (Green Party)
- Jan Wright
- Lucy Lawless
- Madeleine Sami (all actresses).
- Phil Goff (Labour Party leader) and eight members of his caucus
- Robyn Malcolm

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

- Auckland Zoo
- Zoological Society of London

**Groups in 5th Segment:****Groups in 6th Segment:****Additional notes on joining/exiting order:**

Opposition political parties (Labour and Green) as a whole were supportive of the campaign from the beginning.

**Segment Length:** 21 days

## Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

**Opponents:**

New Zealand government (Prime Minister John Key; Cabinet minister Brownlee)

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**

Small scale counter-protests

**Campaigner violence:**

Not known.

**Repressive Violence:**

Not known.

## Success Outcome

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**

6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**

0.5 points out of 1 point

**Growth:**

3 points out of 3 points

**Notes on outcomes:**

Brownlee announced that the government would instead run aeromagnetic survey to explore mineral potential. These lands however did not include the high-value conservation lands originally contested by the protesters.

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Prime minister John Key and his National Party emerged victorious in the election of 2008 against the incumbent Labour Party on promises to revive the struggling economy. In August 2009, his Energy Minister Gerard Brownlee hinted at changes to the Crown Minerals Act, which protected conservation lands from mining. His speech also included possible plans to allow mineral exploration in lands overseen by the Department of Conservation. Public interest in these proposed changes were low. On 14 March, Forest & Bird, an environmental organisation, leaked government intention to allow mineral exploration in 7058 hectares of high-value conservation land. These lands were formerly protected under Schedule 4 – a segment of the Crown Minerals Act that designated the highest-valued lands. The lands to be opened up included national conservation parks on Great Barrier Island and the Coromandel Peninsula. The Labour Party denounced the plans as “lunacy,” and the Maori community also expressed concerns that their rights under the Treaty of Waitangi would be violated.

NGOs and citizens alike also acted against Brownlee’s plans. Both Greenpeace and Forest & Bird criticised the government’s plans in a press release. Sierra Club sent a letter to Key imploring him to reconsider plans to open up national parks for mining. Geoff Bertram of the Institute of Policy Studies found that the minister’s plans would not profit New Zealanders in any meaningful way. He, like many others, pointed to the damage that the mining operations would bring to the “100% pure” image of New Zealand. Environmentalists formed a canopy group, 2precious2mine, to protest the government’s plans and organised rallies around the country, and in Wellington, activists and ordinary people came out into the streets and parks with banners and signs to express disapproval against the mining proposals. On top of these nonviolent means, the campaign against mining also utilised public debates and meetings with public officials. The Key administration attempted to pacify the public with assurances that explorations would be strictly overseen to minimise environmental degradation.

New Zealanders were not satisfied however. The International Union for Conservation of Nature New Zealand Committee (IUCNNZ) wrote a letter to the prime minister and protesters continued to hold rallies around the country. On 24 April, protesters in the 2precious2mine coalition held a rally in Nelson. Labour and Green Party officials gave public speeches in the protest. Polls held on 28 April indicated that 68% of the public was against mining on Great Barrier Island.

Protesters came out in greatest force on 1 May. Between 20,000 and 40,000 people participated in The March Against Mining in Auckland. The New Zealand Herald evaluated it to be the biggest protest in New Zealand since the march against genetic engineering in 2001. Prominent officials such as Phil Goff, the leader of the Labour Party and Members of Parliament joined the march, along with celebrities such as Robyn Malcolm and Lucy Lawless. Jan Wright, the Parliamentary Commissioner on the Environment reported that the government had failed to justify mineral exploration against the opening up of the national park. The government responded that explorations needed to be made first before they could assess the complete economic gains from mining.

The public and the NGOs maintained pressure through rallies in front of the national legislative building (The Beehive) for example, but the numbers were not as big as the march in Auckland. The campaign also concentrated efforts in advocating against mining. The government had set up feedback systems for proposed changes to Schedule 4, and by the time the submission closed, the government had received 37,552 submissions from 5234 unique individuals and organizations. After deliberations, the government finally announced on 20 July that it was abandoning its mining plans. Brownlee commented on the amount of feedback submissions received, and stated that “we heard the message loud and clear.” Instead, the government would conduct aeromagnetic surveys. The mineral exploration conducted would not include high-value conservation lands such as Great Barrier Island and Coromandel Peninsula. The National Party announced that the public discourse had exposed New Zealand’s interest in mining to boost the economy, but the opposition derided the failure as another ill-conceived economic plan.

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**Additional Notes:**

Between 20 000 and 40 000 people marched in Auckland on the 1st of May to protest the government mining plans. This was the biggest demonstration that New Zealand had seen since the march against genetic engineering in September 2001.

**Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:**

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