

Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to our 8th edition of Hancock Forest Views, a newsletter to help keep you informed of what is happening in Hancock Forest Management (HFM) forests. This edition includes a range of topical articles from each of our forest regions. We hope you find the newsletter interesting and welcome your feedback.



N Z Forest Accord 20 Year Anniversary Celebrated

After decades of wrangling between commercial forest owners and environmental groups, the New Zealand Forest Accord was signed on 14 August 1991. This important document aligned conservation groups and foresters on the contentious issue of protection of indigenous forest and was a significant landmark in the evolution of land use in NZ.

The Accord formally recognized two fundamental principles. The first acknowledged the important heritage value of native forests and forest owners committed not to clear native forests to establish plantations and further, to protect remnants of indigenous vegetation within their plantations. For their part, conservation signatories acknowledged that sustainably managed commercial plantation forests provided environmental benefits and were an essential source of perpetually renewable fibre and energy, offering an alternative to the depletion of natural forests.

On 29 October 2011, many of the signatories re-convened at Te Papa in Wellington in a ceremony to mark the 20th anniversary of the signing of the NZ Forest Accord.

Kevin Hackwell (Forest & Bird) and Peter Berg (NZ Forest Owners' Association) both spoke and confirmed that the Accord is alive and well and that the 20th anniversary was well worth celebrating. Several of the Accord signatories were present (Molly Melhuish, Barry Weeber and Dr John Begg). The late Kevin Smith's son and daughter planted two Kaikawaka (*Libocedrus plumose*) trees in the Te Papa 'forest' to mark the occasion.

The signing of the Accord heralded a spirit of constructive cooperation between environmental groups and the forest industry, and pointed to a brighter future for that most natural and renewable resource, wood.



Kevin Hackwell, Advocacy Manager for NZ Forest & Bird Protection Society and Peter Berg, President of the NZ Forest Owners Association, at the celebration of the 20 year anniversary of the NZ Forest Accord signing.



Forest Stewardship Council

In December HFM underwent its annual Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification audit. HFM's operations in New Zealand have been certified by FSC since 2004. FSC is an independent not-for-profit organisation based in Germany, founded to promote the responsible management of the world's forests. FSC certification is a means by which consumers, forest investors and stakeholders can be confident that forests are being responsibly and sustainably managed.

FSC is run through a democratic multi-stakeholder process to develop appropriate standards and requirements to ensure certified forests are managed in a sustainable manner. All forests certified by FSC must comply with an international set of Principles and Criteria, along with a range of supporting guides and procedures that apply worldwide. The requirements of FSC cover the full range of forest management including compliance with the law, environmental requirements (water quality impacts, soils, biodiversity, chemical use etc), social requirements (worker rights, indigenous peoples rights, stakeholder and community benefits etc), alternative benefits of the forest (beyond core forest products), and sound and economically viable forest management practices.

At the time of writing the audit has only just been completed and we await the audit findings early in the new year. As required by FSC the audit report will be available on the website of our auditor Scientific Certification Systems. www.scscertified.com/nrc/forest_certclients.php (search under Australia/New Zealand). HFM's next FSC audit will take place in December 2012.

FSC NZ National Standard Progress

Under the FSC process, the intent is that each country develop a 'National Standard' that provides local interpretation of the international FSC Principles and Criteria, taking into account the circumstances in that particular country. The process to develop a National Standard is developed by a local Standard Development Group representing all interest groups. In New Zealand the process to develop a standard commenced way back in 2000 with a Standard Development Group made up of four 'chambers' representing maori, social, environmental and economic interests. The process ground to a halt for a number of years due to lack of agreement on some key issues. However in 2008 the parties again got around the table, and after several years deliberation agreement was reached on the content of a Draft NZ FSC standard in February of this year.

This standard has been submitted to FSC head office for review and approval.

More information about FSC can be found at www.fsc.org.



A pair of adult Whio on the Pungpunga River, Waituhi Forest.



Raukawa kaumata blessing adze found on a replanted site, Kinleith Forest.

2011 Planting Season - 4.4 million trees planted

The 2011 planting season was completed over the period from early May through to the middle of September and utilised 4.4 million trees. As usual, the bulk of these were Radiata pine but 139,000 Douglas-fir were planted on some high altitude sites in Taumata Central and 6,300 Macrocarpa seedlings were planted at Woodhill Forest to provide shelter to Radiata pine from salt-laden winds.



Focus on wetland management in Central Region

Under our FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification, a key requirement is that forest managers protect and manage remnant indigenous vegetation under our management. As part of our plantation forest estate HFM manages just under 38,000ha of 'reserve' predominantly made up of indigenous forest remnants that were reserved at the time of planting, but also further areas that have been retired after harvesting. FSC requires that the forest manager undertakes an assessment of all reserves to identify the values present, any threats to those values, and where necessary implement active management to protect those values. Reserves are also classified according to their ecological significance. This information is used both in planning of forestry operations around the reserves, and to assist in prioritising reserve areas for active management as part of HFM's annual reserve restoration programme.



Manual willow control in the Waihou wetland, Kinleith Forest.

HFM has now completed restoration work over approximately 125 ha of wetland's in Kinleith including a large scale project in the Opareiti wetland with funding assistance from the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust.

Over time the goal is to restore the health of the wetland network throughout the forest to improve habitat values, and enable the native wetland species to thrive.

In two of our more significant wetlands at Opareiti and Lake Rd we have also established an ongoing program of animal pest control to protect populations of a range of species inhabiting the wetlands, including fern bird and spotless crane. Possums, rats and mustelids have been the primary targets, with pest control ably carried out by the Kinleith possum trappers, making an interesting diversion from their usual possum control duties in the plantation forest.

The lack of land drainage activity within plantation forests compared to neighbouring farmland, and aversion of most plantation tree species to wet ground means that wetlands are typically well represented in plantation forests and in good condition. In Kinleith forest in the Central North Island the reserve assessment identified 80 small wetlands totalling 500 ha, ranging in size and quality from very small willow impacted wetlands up to large regionally significant wetlands of 45ha or more in size.

Restoration of these wetland habitats has been the focus of reserve restoration work in Kinleith. Reserve restoration usually focuses initially on plant pest control with grey willow and blackberry being the most significant weeds present. If left unchecked they eventually take over the wetland choking out indigenous species. Willows have been controlled by a combination of ground and aerial control. Once the willow canopy is removed the indigenous plant species rapidly re-colonise restoring the wetland habitat.



Successful die back of the willow canopy and regeneration of indigenous vegetation following willow control, Mangatapu wetland, Kinleith Forest.



Electric Fishing

As forest managers we are interested in monitoring the effects of our operations. Monitoring is carried out through a range of means but one of the more interesting is monitoring of freshwater fish populations. Virtually all plantation forests contain streams or rivers and the vast majority support populations of a range of fish species. Many of New Zealand's freshwater fish species spend at least part of their lifecycle at sea, and as a result the coastal forests that have streams accessible to the sea tend to have the highest fish populations, typically hosting species such as koaro, short-jaw kokopu, giant kokopu, redbfin and bluegill bullies, torrentfish, longfin and shortfin eel. Sites that are not accessible to the sea such as the Central North Island forests contain a lesser range of species with longfin eel and trout typically being the dominant species present.

Monitoring of fish populations prior to undertaking earthworks and harvesting enables us to identify streams that provide important fish habitat, to identify streams that are particularly sensitive to disturbance. Negative effects to fish populations can occur from creation of fish barriers through poorly constructed stream crossings, prolonged sediment discharges, removal of habitat or increased stream temperatures from removal of riparian shading. Fish monitoring provides information that can then be taken into account in planning of operations to ensure operations are appropriately managed to minimise effects on those species present. Monitoring during and after operations enables us to monitor any changes to fish populations as a result of our operations.

Fish monitoring is carried out using either spotlighting or electric fishing. Spot lighting using a high powered light is used in still water such as lakes and pools during the evening feeding period. Fish species and approximate numbers are identified and recorded. Electric fishing is carried out in running water with runs, riffles or rapids. An electric current is applied to the water which temporarily stuns the fish enabling them to be captured in a net and identified.

In addition to the information being used in-house the data is input to the National Freshwater Fish data-base providing information that builds up a picture of the distribution of fish throughout New Zealand.



Electric fishing with Torere landowners in the Eastern Bay of Plenty

Fire Season 2011-12

The 2011-12 Fire Season commenced on 1 October and will run for 6 months through 30 April 2012, during which time anyone wanting to light an open air fire is required to have a permit. Permits are also required for a range of so-called "hot jobs" including gas cutting, grinding and welding. Fire permits are issued by the relevant Rural Fire Authorities (RFA). Each RFA operates under the control of the National Rural Fire Authority, a division of the New Zealand Fire Service.

During the Fire Season, the local fire danger is re-assessed daily and the status is conveyed to forest managers and the public.



One of the most effective means of communicating the local fire danger is the familiar "grapefruit" signs you will have seen posted along State Highways alongside our forests throughout the country.

There is more science than art involved in determining what the fire danger level is on any particular day. Remote automatic weather stations, located throughout the country, measure and record a range of parameters, including rainfall, temperature, wind speed and humidity. This information is transmitted daily by radio to a central computer which calculates local danger ratings and communicates these to forest managers who change the signs accordingly.

During times of peak fire danger all non-essential access to the forest is restricted, including temporary stoppage of recreational activities. These access restrictions are aimed at reducing the risk of fire and protecting the safety of forest users. At these times all crews working in the forest are instructed to stay on high alert and regular inspections are carried out by our staff to ensure the necessary equipment is in place.

If you do see a fire, smoke, or any suspicious activity, a call to 111 will prompt an immediate response.