

Hancock Forest Views



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Issue 2 - June 2008

Welcome to Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to the second edition of Hancock Forest News, a newsletter put together by Hancock Forest Management NZ Ltd (HFM) to help keep you informed of what is happening in our forests. This issue contains articles on a wide range of topics from Northland to Nelson. We hope you find them interesting and welcome your feedback on the newsletter or any general issues with our operations.

Planting Season 2008

The 2008 tree planting season is now in full swing. This year HFM contractors will be planting just under 4.7 million trees during the planting season which runs from mid-May through to September. The main species planted is Radiata Pine; however, we will also be planting approximately 460,000 Douglas fir on higher altitude sites in the Central North Island.

Kinleith Forest's Fourth Crop

This winter we reached a milestone with the planting of the first of the 'fourth crop' of plantation forest in the Pinedale block of Kinleith Forest. The Pinedale block in the South Waikato was first planted in 1924. The majority of the block was originally planted in Radiata Pine along with small areas of alternative species that didn't prove as successful.

One of the questions we are often asked is if there is a limit to the number of rotations of trees that can be grown on a site. The long term sustainability of our operations is also a key concern for forest managers. In Kinleith Forest we have a number of permanent sample plots or 'PSP's' that are part of a nationwide network of fixed monitoring sites that have been in place since the 1930's. We also monitor crop inventories to compare tree size at a standard age and monitor any trends over time. Both the PSP's and inventory comparisons consistently show an increase in tree growth in subsequent rotations which has been attributed to a number of factors including improving soil fertility, more favourable climatic conditions and improved tree genetics.



This information gives us confidence that we will be growing trees in Kinleith Forest for many generations to come.

Protection of Archaeological Sites in the Bay of Plenty



The Maungawaru Logging team

Many plantation forests contain archaeological sites from historic occupation by Maori and early European settlers. Protection of these sites is a key consideration when planning and undertaking harvesting and earthworks operations in our forests.

The HFM contractor Maungawaru Logging recently received recognition from the company for the outstanding harvesting results removing trees from kainga sites (living areas) within Houputo Forest in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. The sites, located on a steep ridge above the Motu River, included well defined terraces and food pits from historical Maori occupation. Maungawaru Logging, HFM Staff and the company archaeologist worked together to formulate a detailed harvest plan to allow the trees to be removed while minimising damage to site features.

Over the summer period all of the sites were harvested with pine trees being felled and removed with no damage to the site features.

During the operation the crew also located a new pit and terrace site which have now been recorded by the Historic Places Trust. This was a great result and showed understanding and commitment to environmental and cultural values by the Maungawaru team.



Woodhill Mountain Bike Park

One of the most visited attractions in Woodhill forest is the Woodhill Mountain Bike Park. The park opened in 2000, and has grown at a staggering rate and now sees as many as 4,000 riders visiting every week. Riders of all ages come to use the 120kms of purpose built trails over 450ha of forest, with over 200 man-made and natural obstacles.

Recent developments at the park, including one of the largest dirt jump parks in the country, attract riders from all over the country. The Mountain Bike Park has developed the facilities over the years to now provide complete service to riders including a bike wash, toilet block, Pro Shop, an onsite mechanic and workshop, Coffee Shack and parking for more than 300 vehicles. The area of the mountain bike park is a working forest and from time to time areas of the park are temporarily closed to allow forestry operations to take place, while biking can continue safely in oth-



er areas of the park. The good working relationship between the Bike Park managers and HFM to proactively manage these disruptions is a key aspect to the success of the park.



NZ Bush Falcon Study

Richard Seaton from Massey University has recently completed his PhD study of the NZ Falcon in plantation forests. The study, based in Kaingaroa Forest in the Central North Island, was partly funded by HFM with the aim of better understanding how NZ Falcon utilise the plantation forest habitat.

The NZ Falcon (Karearea) is the only surviving bird of prey endemic to NZ and is classified as a threatened species. Richard's study, which took place over 3 years, involved banding and radio tracking of birds, locating nests, confirming prey species and prey abundance and monitoring nesting success. This data was compared to forestry management data for the area (tree age, herbicide application, management techniques etc) in order to find correlations between forest management and use of the forest by falcon.

The study confirmed that the NZ Falcon are using the plantation forest in high numbers, and are preferentially nesting in post harvest cutover areas, generally within the vicinity of mature plantation edges. The study concluded that plantation forestry provides ideal substitute habitat for the falcon with an abundance of suitable nesting sites, relatively high numbers of prey species and good hunting conditions.

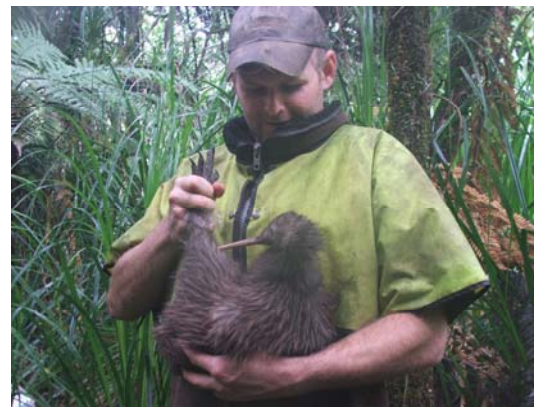
Key recommendations from the study included maintaining a range of tree ages with an ongoing supply of clear fall areas, leaving behind harvesting slash to provide sheltered nest sites and encourage prey species, undertaking predator control and introducing procedures to ensure pre-plant ground based operations do not impact on nest sites – all measures which are entirely compatible with large scale plantation forestry practices. All in all, this was a great outcome and further evidence of the significant biodiversity values in our plantation forests in New Zealand.

Kiwi Health Survey

In our last newsletter we reported on HFM's Kiwi Recovery Project in our Pipiwai and Opouteke Forests in Northland. The project is now into it's fourth year, and this year we carried out a health check of the birds in the forest using a specially trained dog to find the kiwi, and then recording their weight, size, age and assessing their general health. Many birds were found in the Opouteke Forest and all are in good health. Disappointingly, the same success was not repeated in Pipiwai where it is believed that roaming dogs from neighbouring communities are impacting on kiwi populations.

A second part of the monitoring is the annual kiwi 'call count' monitoring which is now also well underway, involving staff, and local volunteers stationed at locations in the forests and recording the number of kiwi calls heard. Monitoring is carried out in May-June when the kiwi are at their most vocal.

The monitoring gives us valuable information to understand whether the predator control work we have been undertaking is improving



HFM Harvest Planner Scott Weston-Arnold assisting with Kiwi health checks.

kiwi survival rates and will be used to guide the ongoing development of the Kiwi Management Plan in the future.



“Share the Road” Campaign in Northland

With the significant area of forests in Northland nearing harvest age, a key area of concern for HFM has been the effect of the increased logging truck traffic on rural communities. To deal with this issue, the HFM Northern Area staff felt that it was important they take a proactive approach working with local communities. Along with initiatives to educate truck drivers, and work with local authorities on road safety, staff came up with the idea of a ‘Share the Road’ campaign to educate local communities to be better able to safely share public roads with forestry road traffic.

HFM staff along with logging truck drivers visited local schools to talk with students and staff and deliver a specially prepared safety education programme that had been developed in conjunction with teachers at Te Horo School. As part of each visit, a loaded logging truck visited the school and students were able to sit in the driver’s seat and identify the driver’s “blind spots” and see the safety equipment fitted in the trucks.

To reinforce the main learning goals, HFM organized a colouring competition with two winners receiving new bicycles sponsored by G C Stokes Transport Ltd. Through the use of school and community notices a guide for driving on roads being used by large vehicles was also sent to the local community surrounding the schools we visited. Staff and contractors have so far visited seven schools with further visits planned in the new term. Working together we hope to keep everyone safer on the roads.



Logging truck driver Murray Croft talking to students at Te Horo School

0800 Log Truck

If you have driven behind a logging truck you will no doubt have noticed the ‘0800 Log Truck’ sign on the rear of the truck inviting you to call a number if you have any comments to make about the driver’s performance. The ‘0800 LOG TRUCK’ compliments and complaints scheme is one of the initiatives introduced by the Log Transport Safety Council, an organization funded by the NZ Forest Owners Association and log truck operators, tasked with undertaking research and development to find solutions to improving the safety of logging trucks on the road.

All calls are monitored by a commercial call centre and the details of the calls forwarded to the transport operator, the Log Transport Safety Council and the company who the trucks are working for.

All log trucks contracted to HFM are required to carry the 0800 LOG TRUCK number. If you see a log truck being driven unsafely or inconsiderately, call the 0800 LOGTRUCK number, identifying the truck number, location and details of your complaint. Conversely if you see a Log truck being driven well, give 0800 LOGTRUCK a call so that the log truck driver receives your positive feedback!

Long-tailed bat study in Kinleith Forest

Auckland University student, Kerry Borkin, is now in the second year of her PhD study, aimed at better understanding the use of the plantation forest by Long-tailed bats. Long-tailed bats are one of two species of bat native to New Zealand, both of which are classified as threatened species.

Kerry’s study, based in HFM’s Kinleith Forest, aims to improve understanding of how bats are using the plantation forest, where they are roosting and breeding, the impact of forestry operations on bats, and potentially the effects of bats on the production forest. Working over the summer months when bats are active, Kerry has been capturing bats using a specialized harp net and tracking them using radio transmitter devices.

The study has confirmed for the first time that the bats are actively roosting and breeding within the plantation forest in significant numbers, with the most common roost sites under the loose bark of dead Radiata trees. Kerry is working with HFM harvesting staff to monitor bat movements when harvesting around roost areas to try to better understand harvesting impacts on bats. It is intended that this information will help Kerry to develop recommendations to forest managers to assist Long-tailed bat populations.

Kerry is very keen to receive any information about bat sightings, particularly in plantation forests. Kerry can be contacted through our Central Area office.





“HUNTS” Course Assisting Goat Control in Nelson

The Hunter National Training Scheme (HUNTS) course is delivered by Mountain Safety Council/ New Zealand Deerstalkers Association instructors and is designed to introduce new hunters to the skills needed to hunt below the snowline. The course includes practical field work, under the guidance of experienced and qualified instructors. HFM were approached by the local HUNTS course coordinator in Nelson Region, who was having difficulty finding a suitable location for the practical component of the course and was being forced to drive his students 1½ hours south of Nelson, to areas around Murchison in order to shoot goats. Goats are a major pest in plantation forests causing damage both to the young crop trees and indigenous forest remnants.

After discussing permits, safety and access issues, HFM gave the green light for the practical portion of the HUNTS course to be carried out in selected areas of forest due for planting. This resulted in a win-win outcome providing HFM with a no-cost solution to a problem that has the potential to cause considerable damage and expense long term.

The HUNTS course has since proved its efficiency, with the removal of a feral mob of goats in the Hira Forest, with plans to utilise them for control work over several other forests. Another long term benefit to HFM is the knowledge that the people who pass through the HUNTS course, will likely one day be permitted hunters within our forest estate. This gives us confidence that we will have well trained and responsible hunters carrying firearms, thus making the forest environment a safer place for all recreational users.



As for the goats, your number is up!

Fire Season 2008

Long dry summers are a fairly routine occurrence in some of our forests regions but this year it was the Waikato region's turn with one of the driest summers on record. This resulted in the fire danger being rated as 'extreme' for an extended period of time from November right through until April. During the fire season the fire danger is calculated daily from measurements of a range of parameters including rainfall, temperature, wind speeds and humidity. These are reported to the public on the fire danger signs you will have seen posted along state highways alongside our forests.

During times of peak fire danger all non-essential access to the forest is restricted, including temporary stoppage of recreational activities. This is essential to ensure protection to the forest and ensure the safety of forest users. At these times all crews working in the forest are instructed to stay on high alert with regular inspections carried out by our staff to ensure the necessary equipment is in place. During periods of extreme risk operations are restricted to the cooler parts of the day.

During one particularly hot week in March, HFM staff responded to three separate fires in Kinleith Forest. One of these occurred at the harvesting operation of Peacocke Logging. Showing just how easily a fire can start when the conditions are right, the fire started from friction between the hauler's wire guy rope and the stump that the rope was tied off to. As a precautionary measure due to the fire danger, the crew had placed fire extinguishers beside the tie off stumps, and were able to quickly extinguish the fire. Thanks to their preparation and quick actions a major fire was prevented.

We're on the web!
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