

Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to Hancock Forest Views

Welcome to our 9th edition of Hancock Forest Views, a newsletter to help keep you informed of what is happening in Hancock Forest Management (HFM NZ) 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.

HFM NZ Northern Area Team wins 2012 Ballance Farm Environment Award

Many people will be familiar with the Ballance Farm Environment Awards, a national award system run by the NZ Farm Environment Trust with the goal of promoting sustainable farming practices to protect and enhance the environment.

This year HFM NZ was encouraged to enter the Awards for the Northland Region by Northland Regional Council. Whilst forestry is not often referred to as 'farming', the Awards organisers explained the intent is that the awards are open to all forms of productive rural land use. Judging took place over two separate visits, including time in the office interviewing staff and reviewing systems and a site visit to 2 of our Northern forests - Ngunguru Forest and Maungatapere Forest.

Our Northern Area team was delighted to receive the 2012 Water Quality Enhancement Award sponsored by Northland Regional Council. This award recognises the progress that the land manager is making to enhance and/or protect water quality and biodiversity values in the water that flows through and from their property. Judges take into account progress towards limiting sediment input to water through forest management and fertiliser application practices as well as sound riparian management during road construction and harvest operations.

The judges commented that the forests they visited 'demonstrated outstanding examples of land use and land management systems carefully matched to the class of the land, and execution of best practice'. They were impressed by the quality of planning, consent compliance and attention to detail evident, especially during harvest. The judges went on to say that HFM NZ has 'an inspiring level of planning, recording, reporting and therefore ability to communicate past, present and future operations to all stakeholders'.

HFM NZ Northern Area Manager Andrew Widdowson commented that the HFM Northern team as a whole was delighted to receive the award which is recognition of the professionalism and capability of HFM operational staff, forestry contractors and their operators in achieving sustainable environmental best practice.



HFM NZ Northern Area Manager Andrew Widdowson, receiving the Ballance Farm Environment Award from Northland Regional Councillor Tony Davies-Colley.



Discussion on site during judging



Protected native riparian area in Maungatapere Forest following harvest.



Planting Season 2012

HFM NZ staff and contractors are nearing the end of the 2012 planting season which runs from May through until early September. This year HFM NZ will plant just under 5 million trees, all of which are replanting of existing forestry sites following harvesting. The bulk of the planting is radiata pine, along with some minor areas of Douglas fir on higher altitude sites in the Central North Island.

HFM NZ has also established 22 trial blocks of a cypress species, Oven's Cypress, on a range of sites around the country. HFM NZ is part of the industry research group Future Forests Research which includes a 'diversified species' project stream – investigating the potential of a number of different tree species to be improved for growing commercially in New Zealand with the goal of reducing reliance on radiata pine.

The research project streams include NZ natives, redwoods, cypress and eucalypts. The HFM NZ cypress trial plantings will demonstrate cypress performance across a range of sites in the estate to provide practical information about the suitability of different sites for cypress species.



Monitoring stream recovery following a major storm event

In an earlier edition of Hancock Forest Views we featured an article about a PhD study being carried out in Houputo Forest by Dr Brenda Baillie of Scion, to better understand the impacts and benefits of woody debris in streams. Part of that study was to monitor sections of streams to compare the health of sections containing woody debris to those without. A key finding of the study was the benefit of woody debris in providing habitat for native fish and in-stream species.

By chance, a very intense storm event hit Houputo Forest in April 2011 in the area of Brenda's study shortly after she had completed her PhD fieldwork. The 1 in 100 year storm caused significant erosion in the area and very high water flows reamed

out many of the stream channels. Given that Brenda already had excellent baseline data for these stream systems from her PhD study, she saw the opportunity to carry out a further study to monitor the rate of stream recovery following storms. Brenda has developed a 3 year monitoring programme to look at the rate of recovery of both the stream (including habitat and bed form) as well as the recovery of riparian vegetation.

Monitoring the recovery of native fish populations in these extremely modified catchments will be a major element of the programme. Woody debris and the channel bed form are important in providing suitable in-stream cover for both fish and macro invertebrates. The rate of recovery within small channels is unknown but with storm cycles apparently becoming more common, Houputo Forest provides an excellent location to understand how



SCION staff -Tony Evanson and Brenda Baillie carrying out in-stream wood monitoring in a stream in Houputo Forest

the more extreme impacts of nature will affect the plantation environment and the expected recovery time.

The initial post storm monitoring was carried out in March 2012 and involved electric fishing to determine what species and how many individuals are making use of the modified habitat. The size and location of woody debris is measured along with the rate of recovery of riparian vegetation – a critical component for controlling sediment movement and providing shading for the creeks.

The further study is being funded by SCION and HFM NZ in partnership with Bay of Plenty Regional Council, PF Olsen Ltd and Rayonier NZ Ltd.



Upper catchment valley floor with all woody debris removed during April 2011 storm.



Nelson harvesting contractor's innovative harvesting solutions

Nelson based harvesting contractor Dale Ewers is a man on a mission. Dale and his wife Christine run three associated businesses in Nelson - Moutere Logging (which operates 5 crews in forests managed by HFM NZ), The Loggers Shop, and DC Repairs. Dale has been harvesting in the Nelson area for many years and is passionate about improving health and safety in his business. Harvesting trees is a hazardous job and statistics show that one of the jobs leading to the most injuries is 'breaking out' for cable logging – the men out on the hill chaining up logs to the hauler cables to be extracted. Whilst improvements in safe work practices and strict communication protocols between the breaker outs and hauler operators has reduced the number and severity of incidents over the years, there is no getting away from the fact that working around fallen trees and wrestling with heavy chains on steep, debris covered slopes is hazardous work.

Dale was motivated to develop a harvesting system to remove the need for men to be located on the hill. Whilst grapple systems were already available, Dale found they had many short comings, so he set out to design and build his own through his forestry equipment maintenance business DC Repairs. The result is the Falcon Forestry Claw – a hauler grapple remotely operated by the hauler operator sitting in his cab, using a high tech camera mounted on the grapple to enable the hauler operator to see the logs he is collecting. Unlike many conventional grapple systems, the Falcon can be used to pick up logs remotely from areas that are out of sight to the hauler operator without the need for a spotter.

Although Dale's goal for the system was focused on safety, Dale notes a range of other benefits. Whilst the grapple extracts smaller pay loads than a conventional chained system, the significantly faster turn around has enabled the system to achieve very competitive extraction rates with fewer staff. The smaller payloads have in turn led to reduced breakage resulting in less harvesting slash left on the hill. Removing men off the hill has also removed the need to allow sufficient room on the landing site to land 2/3 of the length of the log onto the landing in front of the hauler (a safety rule to avoid logs sliding back down the slope). This in turn has meant the hauler can sit further forward on the landing, increasing the amount of 'lift' as the logs are dragged up the slope - reducing erosive force on the slope. The carriage can even be fitted with an infra-red camera and flood lights allowing night time log extraction.

With the Falcon Claw now in production, DC Repairs are starting to supply the carriage to other forestry contractors with the possibility of exporting in future. Dale can already see other possibilities for the technology, from a dedicated slash removal machine to mechanized tree falling. Dale's goal is full automation to remove men from the danger zone on the hill. 'When we get to a zero accident rate and can keep it at zero – that's when we will be happy. That's what motivates us'.

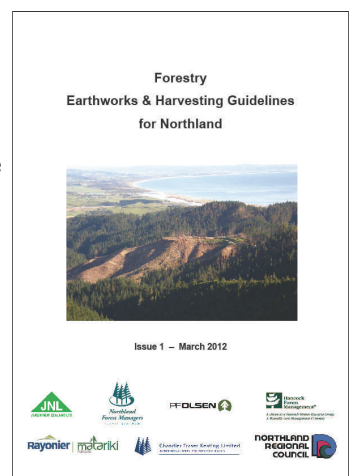


The Falcon Forestry Claw in action extracting logs off the slope

Launch of the Northland Forestry Guidelines

In August 2012 the Northland Regional Council and the Northland forest industry held a launch of the new 'Forestry Earthworks and Harvesting Guidelines for Northland'. The guidelines are the culmination of a collaborative process by the Council and industry representatives over a number of years and are intended to provide practical guidance to forestry managers and machine operators undertaking plantation forestry activities in the Northland Region. Guidance is provided on key aspects of road construction, water crossing and harvesting, with numerous photographic examples of good and poor practice aimed at those carrying out operations on the ground.

HFM NZ Planning and Engineering Manager Geoff Gover who was heavily involved in development of the guidelines explains 'the key goal of the guidelines was to achieve consistency across the industry and promote best practice to ensure a high standard of environmental compliance. The guidelines are intended as a resource not only for the larger companies, but in particular the small woodlot operators who often don't have the same level of systems to ensure compliance'. Following the launch, the next steps are to take the guidelines to those working in the field, through targeted training days and presentations to farm foresters in the region.





Motorcycle Trail Bike Riding in Kinleith Forest

Our forests all over the country are used for a wide range of recreational uses and in many cases innovative small businesses and recreation groups have developed to support these activities. Forest Trail Events based in Tokoroa is one such business and is run by husband and wife team Sean and Adele Clarke. Forest Trail Events has now been running motorcycle events in Kinleith Forest for over 25 years.

Sean has been racing cross country and enduro events for most of his life and the forestland around Tokoroa where he lives offers the best riding opportunities you can get. He has won 12 National enduro titles plus 2 gold medals and 2 silver medals at the ISDE (International Six Day Enduro). An enduro is the equivalent of a car rally, but on motorcycles and with a lot less road!

The ISDE is held in a different country each year and in 2006 Sean and Adele organised the ISDE when it came to NZ. They hosted 600 riders from 33 countries in the 6 day event, in which they covered approximately 200km per day in Kinleith Forest and surrounding farmland.

Annually, Forest Trail Events organises about 10 events in the forest attracting around 1000 different people to the area to ride in the forest. They hold regular trail rides that consist of a marked course up to 35kms long where riders can ride at their leisure. In conjunction with the trail rides, they also hold cross country races and endurance events where riders ride a similar course, but are timed to the second.

Over the last couple of years Sean has also been running guided motorcycle trail rides. These are more personalised rides with only 20 riders at a time and offer more places to go and a chance to appreciate the great views that are on offer around the area. HFM NZ supports the use of the forest for these controlled events attended by many enthusiasts, often including family groups. It is our view that well organised events in the forest are safer and allow us to share our resources with local communities. They also remove the temptation for people to attempt to access the forest to undertake recreation illegally.

Forest Trail Events constructs and maintains purpose built motor cycle tracks in the forest and more recently has extended this aspect of their business, using the same machinery for undertaking forest track maintenance for HFM NZ.



Sean Clarke of Forest Trail Events competing in an Enduro race in Kinleith Forest



The start of an Enduro race at Tar Hill, Kinleith Forest - a closed section of old SH1