

Kia ora and welcome to the 21st edition of Hancock Forest Views, a newsletter prepared by Hancock Forest Management New Zealand Limited (HFM NZ) to keep our stakeholders informed of what is happening in our forests. We hope you find the newsletter interesting and welcome your feedback.

Managing our forests during the COVID 19 outbreak

Every year throws up its challenges, but it's fair to say that 2020 will be one that we won't forget! For the forest industry, our roller coaster ride started earlier than most with challenges from the start of the year. A combination of high log prices leading into 2020, the US China trade war and the impacts of the COVID 19 outbreak in China in early 2020 led to both unprecedented log stocks in China and rapidly falling export demand. As people may have seen in the media, this led to harvesting crews in some parts of the country halting work in early March, well before the lockdown started in NZ.

HFM NZ's clients have been long term suppliers of logs to NZ based processors, with over 50% of our total harvest volume sold locally. Due to this strong domestic customer base, we managed to keep all of our harvesting crews operating consistently through this period. This came to an end with the announcement of a full NZ lockdown to level 4 on 25 March.



HFM NZ forester Dean Henderson negotiating the challenges of working from home under lockdown!

This sudden announcement gave us just two days to prepare to be locked down at home for at least a month. Our staff and contractors had the challenge of having to shut down harvesting, earthworks and forestry operations at short notice. A particular concern was what would happen in the event of a major storm, given our inability to access the forests under lockdown. At

that point we didn't know how long the lockdown would last or what the weather might throw at us during that time, so installing robust water controls was a particular focus. Possible disruption to our winter planting programme was also front of mind.

As for all New Zealanders HFM NZ staff rapidly adjusted to working from home and a new life involving a lot more video conference and email communication and juggling family commitments around work. The only people active in the forest during the lockdown were security patrols, who reported a particularly busy time keeping the forests secure from a wide range of unauthorised activities!



Logabull Crew 43 implementing social distancing protocols during their lunch break

Thankfully the weather gods played their part with very settled weather over the lockdown. The forestry crews were able to return to work on 28 April with the move to Level 3 – a great relief to all.

In anticipation of a return to work, efforts were focussed on establishing industry COVID 19 protocols involving physical separation and hygiene measures. Hats off to all of our contractors and their staff who following the disruption of a 5 week shut down, efficiently implemented the new COVID restriction measures and got everyone back to work safely and with minimal disruption.

Clearly the COVID 19 ride is not yet over, with every week bringing new challenges. Here's hoping for a slightly less eventful second half to the year!



Hochstetter's Frogs in Waikawa Forest

Hochstetter's frog is a primitive frog native to NZ, belonging to the same ancient order of frogs as the endangered Archey's frog, Hamilton's frog and Maud Island frog. Hochstetter's frogs were once widespread across NZ but are now found only in the upper half of the North Island. They are semi-aquatic, living in damp habitat around small upper catchment streams.

HFM NZ has known populations of Hochstetter's frogs in a number of our forests, including Waikawa Forest in the Eastern Bay of Plenty. When planning for harvest in Waikawa, protection of Hochstetter's frog populations was a key consideration. Frog surveys carried out in the past by Department of Conservation (DOC) had confirmed frog presence in a number of gullies in the forest.



Typical Hochstetter's frog habitat in native riparian areas in Waikawa Forest following harvest of the surrounding pine plantation

A management plan was developed with advice from DOC staff. All past areas of confirmed frog habitat were surveyed prior to harvest, along with other gullies with potential habitat in the forest. Locally based

contractors, Tuhoe ki Apanui, carried out all of the surveys. To date, 45 frogs have been identified through survey in the margins of 25 upper catchment streams.



A Hochstetter Frog in a stream in Waikawa Forest showing both their very small size (the pine needle gives a sense of scale) and their excellent camouflage

This includes both populations previously identified by DOC and additional areas identified through our surveys. In Waikawa the frogs were predominantly located within native riparian margins, therefore the key consideration for harvest was to minimise disturbance to these areas. Minimising soil disturbance above these areas was also critical to avoid sediment discharges that could impact frog habitat.

Harvesting contractors Gibbs Logging went the extra mile while harvesting to protect frog habitat as far as practical. The final part of the management plan was to modify the replant boundaries to increase buffers around the frog habitat areas. All of the confirmed frog habitat has been mapped in our GIS mapping system for future reference.

Repeat surveys are planned on completion of replanting to confirm we have achieved our goal of protecting the frog population through the harvest cycle.

The great Kinleith Forest clean up

In our last issue we included an article on our planned 'Kinleith Forest clean up' to coincide with Keep NZ Beautiful week. Over a period of two weeks in September 2019, HFM NZ Central Area staff and contractors were encouraged to clean up illegally dumped rubbish from around Kinleith Forest.

This turned into a collaborative event as HFM NZ's efforts were boosted with help from Oji Fibre Solutions and the Tokoroa Country Women's Institute. The South Waikato District Council generously arranged for free dumping and their contractor DG Solutions donated their time to open the landfill gates just for the clean up.

HFM NZ staff and contractors got right behind the initiative with most crews cleaning up forest entrances in the vicinity of their work sites.



BR Harvestings Crew 3—winners of the crew clean up challenge



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In total, over six tonnes of general waste was collected and taken to the Tokoroa landfill, along with a significant volume of scrap metal, whiteware, tyres and other waste that was separated and recycled.

Sadly, illegal dumping is an ongoing challenge in our forests with no end to the problem in sight but the clean-up was a great way to make a visible difference.

A big thank you to all who took part and the South Waikato District Council for their support. The Kinleith clean up is set to become an annual event in the HFM NZ Central Area calendar to play our part in combatting the issue.



HFM NZ contractor Sean Clarke donated his time and truck to load and transport rubbish to the Tokoroa Landfill.

NZ Association of Resource Management conference

For three days in October 2019, 180 delegates from around the country, representing every regional and unitary council in New Zealand, descended on Northland for the annual New Zealand Association of Resource Management (NZARM) conference.

The conference, hosted by Northland Regional Council, was themed around 'Change at pace and scale' with a focus on the looming changes to freshwater management and how we must adapt to climate change.

The event included a range of speakers, workshops and field trips around the region. HFM NZ hosted delegates in Ngati Hine Forestry Trust's forest land managed by HFM NZ, for the second day of the conference.

The fieldtrip provided delegates the opportunity to learn about recent advancements in the industry including close up views of a self-levelling cable assist tree felling machine in action. The group visited the worksite of Stokes Logging where a designated area had been set up to allow all them to safely watch the cable assisted harvester in action on an adjacent steep slope.

Machine operator Joe Te Waki was rather surprised to be greeted by a spontaneous round of applause from the

crowd as he stepped out of his machine after his demonstration!

Stokes Logging and HFM NZ staff spoke to conference delegates about forestry in Northland generally and advancements in technology and safety in the industry. Biodiversity management and regulatory developments were other topics of discussion on site.

Well known Northland soil scientist and NZARM member Bob Cathcart also presented to the group. Bob noted that when the Ngati Hine forests were established in the 1980s the underlying soils were heavily podzolized by historic kauri forests which acidify the soils and strip nutrients, eventually killing the kauri forest itself and leaving poor growing conditions. Bob noted that one rotation of pine trees has improved the drainage and nutrient characteristics of the soils allowing for broadleaf species to now establish. This in turn provides further options for the landowners for future crops.

Feedback on the forestry field trip was very positive with the delegates particularly enjoying being able to see the latest harvesting technology in action.





Waituhi whio recovery project

For the past 10 years HFM NZ has run a whio (Blue Duck) recovery project in Waituhi Forest near Taumarunui. The project was initially set up with funding assistance from DOC, Horizons Regional Council and Genesis Energy, to establish and maintain a trapping network along 5km of the Pungapunga Stream in Waituhi Forest. Predator control is carried from August when nesting typically starts through until through the chicks have fledged in February or March.

Local farmer Geoff Marshall has been involved from the outset, maintaining the extensive trapping network and

undertaking annual population surveys. Geoff has an additional connection to HFM NZ — his son Will owns



King Country Logging and undertakes harvesting for HFM NZ, including the harvest of Waituhi Forest.

Each year during the breeding season Geoff undertakes the population survey with his trained German Shorthaired Pointer Britta, to check on whio numbers and breeding success. This year's population survey was carried out a little later than usual in January, with Britta sniffing out five adult pairs and three individual whio, some of which were possibly recently fledged chicks.

Adult whio pairs typically inhabit approximately a 1km stretch of river as their home range. Once the juveniles can fly, they move out of the area to take up residency on their own stretch of river. The objective of the project was to improve breeding success on the stretch of the river to repopulate habitat in the surrounding DOC estate and we remain committed to this goal.



Geoff Marshall and his trained whio dog 'Britta' in action on the river

Northland teachers forest visit

Recently HFM NZ had the opportunity to host 23 high school career advisors to hear about the forest industry, with help from Summit Forest New Zealand and Rosewarne Cable Logging.

The group visited a cable harvesting site in Pipiwai Forest in Northland to discuss career paths in forestry. Topics of discussion covered technology, skills, the personal attributes needed to be successful in forestry, typical incomes, training and future skill needs, environmental and health and safety management and wood supply.

The group was amazed to hear that of Northlands annual harvest of 4.4 million tonnes of logs, 1.8 million (41%) is processed locally - a good opportunity to dispel the 'all logs are exported' myth that continues to prevail in the north.

HFM NZ staff enjoyed sharing their knowledge of our great industry and the career opportunities that are

available. Feedback received from the High School career advisors was very positive, with many commenting how surprised they were by the diverse range of job opportunities that are present in the forest industry.



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