

SAFETY COUNCIL & SAFETREE UNDERWAY

A SAFETY COUNCIL IS BEING SET-UP TO MAKE FORESTS SAFER PLACES TO WORK. THIS WAS A KEY RECOMMENDATION OF THE INDEPENDENT FORESTRY SAFETY REVIEW PANEL THAT REVIEWED FOREST WORKPLACE SAFETY IN 2014.

The Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC) will formally get underway by the end of May. In the meantime an establishment board has been convened, with one representative each from the Forest Owners Association, Farm Forestry Association, First Union/CTU and Worksafe NZ, plus two worker representatives.

“Their role is to agree on the terms of reference for FISC and to hire an independent chair and national safety director,” says FOA technical manager Glen Mackie.

“Once the chair and director are in place, FISC can be convened with the initial members appointed. It will then meet to develop a workplan that is expected to be based on the recommendations of the independent panel. Funding will come from the Forest Grower Levy and from government – ACC and Worksafe.”

Mackie says that while FISC has been under development, safety initiatives that are likely to eventually become incorporated into the FISC workplan have continued.

“*SafeTree*, for example, brings all the safety information that’s out there into one point, so if someone wants to know how to do something safely, they will find it on www.safetree.nz.

“The *Safetree* slogan is *You are the key*. This promotes the message that the creation of a safe working environment is the personal responsibility of everyone in the industry from corporate owners and managers, through to loggers and chainsaw operators. *Safetree*’s focus and content is aligned with the safety review panel’s recommendations.”



Forest Owners Association president Paul Nicholls

ALCOHOL & DRUG CODE NEAR

A new FOA drug and alcohol code is now with the printer. *Eliminating Alcohol & other Drugs from the Workplace* has been fully revised by consultant Sue Nolan.

FOA technical manager Glen Mackie says a template drug and alcohol employment agreement is at the core of the code. This will be available on the FOA website shortly.

Mackie says drug and alcohol testing has been carried out in the forest industry for the last 10 years in an effort to help reduce workplace accidents.

“We recognise that we’re an industry with a potentially high hazard risk for workers and we strive to manage and minimise that risk. In the last 12 months the number of serious injuries and fatalities has dropped significantly due to a number of initiatives, including drug and alcohol testing.”

Hard copies of the policy, as well as an employee leaflet explaining the policy, will be available on request from nzfoa@nzfoa.org.nz by the end of May.

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Forest Owners Association president Paul Nicholls says there were 10 workplace deaths and 169 serious harm injuries in forestry in 2013. This led to the industry establishing the review panel which reported in late October 2014.

“Since 2013, there has been a dramatic turn-round in safety performance. Last year there was one fatality – one too many, but a huge improvement on 10 – and a 25 per cent reduction in serious harm injuries,” he says.

“There are several reasons for this, including increased mechanisation of harvesting and the successful roll-out of a new Approved Code of Practice. But one of the biggest factors will have been the increased awareness of the need for safe work practice as a result of publicity about the terrible toll in 2013.

“As that year fades from memory, it is essential to maintain and reinforce our safety culture, so that our vision of zero serious harm injuries remains at the top of everyone’s mind. For this reason we have deliberately called the new body a ‘council’, to reinforce the status it will have in the industry.”

Nicholls says the industry is totally committed to improved safety and to the review panel’s mantra that “if a job can’t be done safely, it shouldn’t be done at all.”

FISC will have triple the resources that were previously deployed by ACC through their injury prevention programme.



WHY ARE TREES DISAPPEARING?

ON HARD HILL COUNTRY FORESTRY IS MORE PROFITABLE THAN DRY STOCK PASTORAL FARMING, EVEN WITHOUT INCOME FROM CARBON. YET THE AREA OF PLANTATION FOREST IS SHRINKING...WHY?

Put it down to growing unease among landowners about how tomorrow's forestry block will be treated by ever-changing government and regional council policies.

In many other countries the national forest estate is government-owned. That link means the community benefits are recognised more easily by the public and the sector is supported accordingly. There are parallels with our conservation estate which enjoys a public treasure status.

Yet the same valued attributes – fresh water, hunting, kiwi habitat, mountain-biking and so-on –are

also provided by our commercially-grown trees but with the bonus that they also contribute to our wealth as a nation. The ability to soak up carbon is one these attributes but, unlike the others, it has a dollar value, even if the full extent of that value has yet to flow to New Zealand forest owners.

The private forest estate though is not a public utility. If the values the community wants it to provide are not adequately recognised, then the land will be devalued relative to other possible uses. At a certain point the private owner elects not to replant. The trees disappear.



DEFORESTATION SET TO CAUSE ANGST IN PARIS

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NEED TO LIMIT THE INCREASE IN AVERAGE GLOBAL TEMPERATURES ARE NOW UP FRONT AND CENTRAL ON THE WORLD STAGE.

With both China and the United States committed to making significant cuts in their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the heat is going on all countries to do their share. Already Australia's lack of real action has been exposed in world forums. Will New Zealand, with its non-performing ETS, be next?

Later this year a new world order to replace the Kyoto Accord is being negotiated in Paris. All countries who value their international reputation are expected to put meaningful cuts on the table. This puts New Zealand in the spotlight.

Because of our high level of renewable electricity generation, half our emissions come from land use activities, far more than other developed economies. This means that our land-use activities need to play a big part in reducing our GHG emissions. And the easiest and most cost-effective way of doing this is to store carbon in new, rapidly growing forests.

The current government recognised this, setting a target of 20,000 ha of new forest a year, when it launched the revised ETS in 2009. But the reality is that the area of plantation forests, as reported by the Ministry for Primary Industries, fell in the six years 2008 to 2014 from 1.76 million ha to 1.75 million ha.

In other words, instead of New Zealand planting 100,000 ha of new forest since 2009, it has cut down 10,000 ha of forest – a 110,000 ha difference.

This should be of very real concern. In the

2020s there will be a bulge in harvests, as forests planted since 1990 reach maturity. With no significant offset from new planting, forestry will increasingly throw the country's ETS ledger into the red. New Zealand's lack of real action on climate change will then become an exceedingly stark reality.

There are anecdotal reports that deforestation is increasing again. Based on MPI's 2014 NZ forest planting estimates, released in February, there was 3000 ha of new planting and 43,000 ha of replanting in 2014. Based on known production figures and average harvest yields, we know that around 54,000 ha was cleared of trees, suggesting around 10,000 - 12,000 ha were not replanted last year.

Planting more forests and being more creative with forest waste offers the best short term solution for meeting our international commitments to combat climate change. There are upwards of 1 million ha of hill country available for planting these forests. Not only would this help balance the nation's carbon budget and buy time for the rest of the economy to adapt to a low carbon future, it would provide major benefits in terms of erosion control and improved water quality.

But when you are planting trees or building bioenergy plants from forest waste you are making very long-term investments with many risks. The biggest risk – the one that comes each time there is a general election – needs to be eliminated.

There is a growing consensus that once New Zealand has set a binding target for its carbon emissions, the mechanisms under the ETS used to achieve it need to be managed by an agency that is at arms' length from government. The role of the Reserve Bank in controlling inflation provides a good template.

NO COUNTRY FOR GRANDPARENTS

GRANDPARENT IS – OR SHOULD BE – ONE OF THE MOST BENIGN WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

But when it becomes ‘grandparenting’, it takes on a whole new meaning, one that many forest owners and extensive pastoral farmers would like to see gone.

When members of the public rightly complain that they can no longer swim or fish in their local stream or waterway because of nitrogen (N) pollution, councils have to work out how much N the catchment can cope with and then allocate that total to land users. Basically they can do this in two ways:

- Allocate the total evenly across all land in the catchment, or according to its ability to hold N
- Or, they can ‘grandparent’, by allocating the allowable limit to land users based on their current emission levels, possibly with some reductions over time.

In many regions grandparenting has become an unfortunate trend. Why? Because politically it’s the course of least resistance.

But it is deeply unjust. It rewards the polluter and is also contrary to one of the core principles of environmental law: that the polluter should pay to clean up their pollution.

Under grandparenting, intensive land users get the right to continue their existing land-use or to change to something less intensive. In contrast, low intensity land users are effectively locked forever into their existing activities.

A forest owner or pastoral farmer may not wish to convert to an intensive use like dairying, but for so long as that right exists, it is reflected in the value of their land. Take that right away and the value of their largest asset takes a hit. In effect, they end up paying for someone else’s pollution.

This has perverse outcomes. For example, in the Upper Waikato there is a growing awareness that dairy conversions are exacting an unacceptable environmental toll. Even dairy farmer spokespeople agree.

But the suggested remedy, for the council to stop further dairy conversions, is a call to protect the interests of existing polluters. For pastoral farmers and forest owners in the catchment this sends a clear message: get in quick and convert to a high intensity use while you have time.

Hence the widespread land clearance in a catchment that’s already overloaded with N. Expect this to happen in other catchments too, when councils set water quality benchmarks as required under the National Policy Statement for fresh water quality (NPS) that came into force last year.

If our streams and rivers are to remain suitable for swimming, fishing and other recreation, limits on N discharges have to be set. But in the interests of the economy and natural justice, these should be based on the inherent risk of N leaching of particular soil types and the sensitivity of the catchment, not on the current land use.

The FOA believes the answer for most sensitive catchments is to allocate the total allowable nitrogen to all land based on its N holding capacity. Then, after a phase-in period, require all land owners to operate within the limits of their nitrogen discharge allowances (NDAs). This is the only approach that is equitable, ensures long-term sustainability and provides certainty for land users.

On rich alluvial soils, the allocation will typically be higher than on sands, gravels and pumice. But it will still require intensive farmers to monitor their discharges and possibly make significant management changes to keep their discharges within their allowance. Environment Canterbury’s Matrix of Good

Management (MGM) is an example of what this looks like, although it doesn’t as yet include forestry.

The Otago Regional Council has adopted the ‘even allocation by soil type’ approach. It has rigid bottom lines on N emissions and does not allow N trading. In the Lake Taupo catchment, nitrogen was unfairly grandparented and landowners were given the ability to trade N. In addition, a government fund was set to buy up NDAs.

Every catchment is different and there may be other examples where government funding to reduce N discharges to below current levels is justified.

In the FOA’s view none of the regional council models is perfect, nor is there is well-informed public debate on the options. More discussion and analysis of the pros and cons of the various N management policies is needed.

Among the issues that need discussion is N trading. Trading has the potential to establish a price for N discharges that will enable businesses to decide how to best operate within the NDAs they have available to them. Costs of mitigation will be borne by those who incur them, without unduly constraining existing activities.

We note research by Motu in 2012 that showed the benefits of having carbon and nitrogen trading schemes operating in tandem. Of course, for that to be true the ETS needs to be producing a carbon price that is sufficiently high to incentivise ‘good’ behaviour.

On that topic, we have seen the gross political manipulation of carbon markets and have no wish to see that repeated for N. Clearly we need to come up with mechanisms that are fair to all, economically efficient and achieve good environmental outcomes.

Meanwhile, we would like to remove grandparents from this discussion. They can go back to being the good guys.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – Forest Growers Levy Trust Inc 12.30 p.m. Wed 20 May 2015 | ForestWood Centre | Level 9, 93 The Terrace, Wellington

Actual Levy Payers are invited to attend and discuss the reports presented at the meeting. An *Actual Levy Payer* is any person who paid the plantation forest levy during the 2014 financial year.

The business of the Annual General Meeting will include receiving the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Board, and any other business appropriate for an AGM. An *Actual Levy Payer* is not entitled to vote at the meeting unless they are a current member of the Trust.

If you plan to attend, please give at least two business days’ notice to the Trust, by emailing admin@fglt.org.nz

David Rhodes, Secretariat

RURAL FIRE

WORKING TO GET IT RIGHT

A review of the country's fire services is gathering interest and momentum, particularly in the rural sector.

New national rural fire officer Kevin O'Connor, who started in his new role in spring last year, aims to have a discussion document available for nationwide consultation from May, with the aim of drawing out perspectives on the best way forward.



New national rural fire officer, Kevin O'Connor

He says the way rural fire services are operated across New Zealand is a particularly important part of this work and is understandably receiving a lot of attention.

"We all know that the reform of our fire services is long overdue and no more so than in rural fire."

The National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) is working very closely with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) on this aspect of the work, he explains.

"Many of the NRFA's rural stakeholders and sector representatives, including the FOA, are talking with us about the key issues facing New Zealand's rural communities and fire-fighters, and the ways that we can – locally, regionally and nationally – better support and deliver these critical services."

This review signals a significant and rare opportunity for participants to collectively help set the path for the future. "It's important we make the most of it."

O'Connor is looking forward to having more conversations with forest owners, particularly once the discussion document is out for input and feedback.

Kevin O'Connor came to his new role at the NZ Fire Service (NZFS) after a long career in conservation management with the Department of Conservation (DOC). The FOA's rural fire committee chair, Grant Dodson, says O'Connor is highly regarded and well-known in the fire community.

BIOSECURITY

EARLY WARNING REVAMP

DURING 2015, FOREST GROWERS WILL INVEST NEARLY \$1 MILLION IN LEVY FUNDS ON WHAT IS COMMONLY CALLED FOREST HEALTH SURVEILLANCE (FHS).

FOA biosecurity manager Bill Dyck says we should really be calling this work forest biosecurity surveillance, but the old name has stuck.

"It provides us with an early warning system should an insect or pathogen breach New Zealand's border biosecurity. Also it enables us to give assurances to trading partners that our forests, and our export products, are free of organisms that they don't want.

"The recent introduction of new molecular technologies at Scion to improve insect and pathogen identification will greatly assist with eradication and control, and in providing greater confidence to our trading partners that we know what bugs we have."

Dyck says that despite having one of the best forest biosecurity surveillance systems in the world, it can never be perfect. So we are constantly striving to improve the FHS programme.

"We are involved in a two-year process involving expertise from New Zealand, Australia and the United States to redesign our system, in partnership with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and their high risk site surveillance system," he says.

A major item on the industry's biosecurity agenda is getting a Government-Industry Agreement (GIA) signed. Hopefully this is not too far away, but it depends on MPI agreeing to the funding model proposed by FOA.

GIAs were pioneered in Australia. In the NZ version, each primary industry works with government on a common biosecurity strategy, with both parties having a say on the shape of the strategy as well as paying their share of readiness and response to potential biosecurity threats.

Getting a better understanding of Australian forest industry experience with their GIA is one of five major action points to come out of the 2015 FOA/FFA/MPI Forest Biosecurity Workshop held in Rotorua in March.

With some incursions, such as myrtle rust, the Australian Government has funded 100% of the response. With other incursions it has been less generous, so establishing firm criteria for the level of government response funding is important before the GIA Deed and operational agreements are signed on this side of the Tasman.

It will also be insightful, says Dyck, to

see how Australia responds to the recent incursion of giant pine scale, *Marchalina hellenica*. The FOA Forest Biosecurity Committee is assessing the risk it poses to the NZ plantation forest estate.

Other action points were:

Is enough being done to prevent the import of unwanted micro-organisms? Of particular concern are *Phytophthora ramorum* (also known as sudden oak death and ramorum blight) and *Fusarium circinatum*, the fungus that causes a serious disease, pine pitch canker.



Giant pine scale on a pine in Crete
This evil little sucker has now reached Australia and is a potential threat here

How can we use 'citizen science' to help detect the arrival of unwanted organisms? As with all unwanted organisms, the more eyes that are looking, the earlier it is likely to be detected and the greater the chance of effective control.

FHS design: A growing emphasis on high incursion risk areas must not be at the expense of lower-risk areas. Otherwise unwanted organisms may build up to levels that can't be eradicated.

Ways to reduce post-border risk: Investigating practical ways to reduce the post-border risk of the transfer of unwanted organisms between forests on vehicles, clothing and plant material.



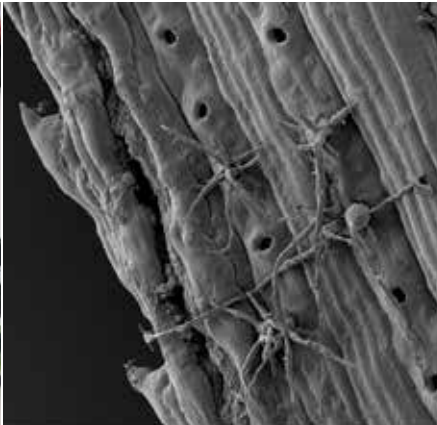
RESEARCH

WHAT IS YOUR LEVY BEING USED FOR?

MORE THAN HALF THE MONEY COLLECTED FROM THE FOREST LEVY IN 2015 IS BEING INVESTED IN RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.



Laying out needles for a red needle cast susceptibility screening assay



A scanning electron microscopy image of a needle infected with *Phytophthora pluvialis* shows hyphae protruding out of the needle stomata

Photos: Scion

growing the programme using the levy funding, bolstered with additional funding from industry, to attract more government investment for forestry research and innovation through the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment.

The remainder of the total FGLT budget – about a fifth – will go on: operational costs for the maintenance of IT and the database, depreciation of software, the levy board and communications; secretariat; and programme management costs with a team of 6.5 full-time equivalent staff making sure the programme runs smoothly.

More? Download a copy of the work programme here: <http://bit.ly/1BWYaUF>



The plantation forestry levy is to fund activities that benefit all forest growers. The first levy, set at a rate of 27c/tonne, was collected from 1 January 2014 on all harvested wood products from plantation forests.

In late 2014, the Forest Growers Levy Trust (FGLT) decided to continue the levy at the same rate in 2015. It expects to raise more than \$6.5 million from the levy this year, with additional money coming in from government research grants and voluntary contributions from industry players.

Over 80% of the 2015 budget will be spent on the \$5.96 million work programme of which 57% (\$3.4 m) will fund the research, science and technology programme. The balance goes to health, safety and training (\$965 k), forest health and biosecurity (\$920 k), marketing and membership support (\$296 k), environment (\$120 k), Farm Forestry Information Transfer (\$95 k), fire (\$85 k) and transport (\$50 k).

The 10 projects in the research, science and technology programme are being supported because they have the “potential to deliver real value for growers”, explains FOA research manager Russell Dale.

The largest of these is the \$1.6 m sustainable intensification programme being conducted by Scion that aims to deliver more value from each hectare of forest.

“For future forests it is looking at the best trees for the conditions at a particular site. It also aims to extract more value from existing forests by looking at how we can improve sustainable growth and improve

the profitability of the crop over the rest of the rotation, through interventions such as fertilisers and soil organisms,” says Dale.

Three other projects with a budget of \$1 m focus on forest health and biosecurity. Scion is aiming to build our understanding of red needle cast and control options; Lincoln Bio Protection is looking at the value of beneficial organisms, such as endophytes, as a way of improving the health and vigour of tree crops; and another team from Scion is looking at phytophthora diseases and their impact on commercial forests.

There is also financial support for two existing research programmes: Scion’s work on the main alternative tree species and fire research.

FGLT has also agreed to fund four new projects: weed research; the impact of harvesting on riparian margins; extension of water quality monitoring; and the final 18 months of the steep land harvesting Primary Growth Partnership programme.

“This is in recognition of the steep land programme’s contribution to improving productivity and safety in the industry,” says Dale.

The streamlined funding process offered by the FGLT means that research programmes have more certainty regarding longer-term funding and approvals can move more quickly for things like biosecurity issues, says Dale.

“In the past, we had to find funding from a wide range of sources. This was slow and time-consuming and, in some cases short-term, to fit in with company and department budgets.”

Dale says the FGLT is also looking at

REGIONAL UPDATES

Meetings have been held in Balclutha and Blenheim to update levy payers on the activities of the Forest Growers Levy Trust.

They follow the inaugural forest growing research conference and field day held for levy payers and other industry stakeholders in Rotorua last October.

FOA research manager Russell Dale says that since more than half of the levy is being spent on research and technology, the meetings focussed on those programmes and what they will deliver for forest owners.

“We also used the meetings to get forest owner and contractor input into the shape a new steep land harvesting research programme might take from mid-2016 when the current MPI Primary Growth Partnership programme is completed,” says Dale.

The first well-attended meeting was held in Balclutha, Otago on 18 March in conjunction with a Southern Wood Council meeting. A short Future Forests Research (FFR) workshop on future research priorities in harvesting and logistics was held alongside.

The second meeting, including the FFR workshop, was held in conjunction with the Marlborough Forest Industry Association and the local Nelson/Marlborough Farm Forestry Association branches on 23 April, as this edition of the *Bulletin* went to press.

Find out more about FGLT activities at the FOA Research website: www.research.nzfoa.org.nz

FOREST CERTIFICATION

PEFC AVAILABLE IN NZ SOON

THERE WILL SOON BE A NEW OPTION FOR GROWERS AND WOOD PROCESSORS LOOKING FOR AN ALTERNATIVE TO FSC CERTIFICATION – PEFC CERTIFICATION.

This follows the NZ Forest Certification Association (NZFCA) being accepted in January as a member of the international PEFC scheme. PEFC (Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) are the world's two largest forest management certification schemes.

FSC certification is well established in New Zealand, with more than one million hectares of the country's 1.7 million ha of plantation forests FSC-certified. This is based on the FSC-approved National Standard for Certification of Plantation Forest Management, which became effective in 2013, thanks to a lot of work from a standard development group,

WILDLING BATTLE

The *Right Tree in the Right Place*, a national strategy for managing wildling conifers, has been released by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI).

It aims to prevent the spread of wildling conifers, and contain or eradicate established areas of wildling conifers by 2030. The FOA participated in the working group that developed the strategy.

Wildling conifers displace native vegetation, change ecosystems, reduce available grazing land, limit future land use options, visually change landscapes, can affect water quantity in water sensitive catchments, and can result in damaging wild fires.

Approximately 1.7 million hectares, almost 6% of New Zealand, have already been affected to some extent by these unwanted trees, which have spread largely from farm shelter belts and plantation forests. Their spread increases at about 5-6%, or around 90,000 ha a year.

The strategy proposes a range of actions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of wildling conifer management. MPI is now leading a process for implementing the strategy.

For a copy of the strategy, go to <http://bit.ly/1FOR805>

Photo copyright Phil Taylor



Having two forest certification systems in New Zealand will open new market opportunities for products sourced from NZ forests

chaired by FOA environmental committee member, Colin Maunder.

The National Standard is a NZ interpretation of FSC's Principles and Criteria, compiled through 'friendly' negotiation by representatives of Māori, environmental, social and economic representatives, he explains.

"This balance between interests tends to make FSC certification widely accepted, but more difficult to manage."

FSC recently revised its principles and criteria and then developed a set of International Generic Indicators (IGIs). According to Maunder, the IGIs must be transferred into National Standards and the standard development group is now in the process of producing a revised version for stakeholder input later this year.

The 2015 Forest Levy Growers Trust work programme includes \$30,000 to cover this activity. The revision is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. Of more urgency, has been the recent release of FSC's revised list of 'Highly Hazardous' pesticides, which cannot be used without FSC 'derogation'.

"Currently derogated terbuthylazine and hexazinone have both come off the list, while 1080 has remained on," he says.

"Of greater concern, however, is the addition of cuprous oxide (used for Dothistroma control), picloram (weed control) and pindone (possum and rabbit control). FSC certificate holders must either cease using these pesticides or obtain derogation by October 2015. Failure to do so would result in certification being withdrawn."

A Wood Council initiative, NZFCA was established in 2014 to bring the PEFC scheme to New Zealand. Members include forest growers, processors and organisations associated with NZ forests.

PEFC is the world's leading forest certification system, promoting sustainable forest management through independent third party certification. It has 263 million

hectares of certified forests globally and its eco-labels are easily identified by consumers. Many of the countries that buy or compete with NZ forest products are PEFC members, including China, Australia, Indonesia, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Russia and the US. Japan recently joined and India is also looking to join.

NZFCA chair Dr Andrew McEwen hopes to have a PEFC-endorsed certification system based on the NZ Standard for Sustainable Forest Management in place later this year. The NZ Standard is based on the Australian Forestry Standard which is the basis for the PEFC-endorsed Australian Forest Certification system.

NZFCA is working closely with its Australian colleagues on this and McEwen says it is possible there may be a joint Australasian standard in the future. This will benefit the many forest owners, managers and processors that operate on both sides of the Tasman.

A number of NZ companies already use PEFC Chain of Custody certification, but until now, this has only been possible using imported material from PEFC certified forests. PEFC endorsement of a NZ system will allow NZ forest owners to obtain certification for their responsible management practices and allow processors and others in the supply chain to procure PEFC-certified material from local, sustainable managed sources.

"This benefits everyone from forest growers to manufacturers and exporters as it opens up opportunities for new markets for forest products produced by NZ forests," he says.

McEwen doesn't expect growers to simply drop one scheme in favour of the other. They will be able to choose whether to certify using one scheme or both. However, as he points out, audits for simultaneous certification are likely to cost less than gaining certification for the two schemes independently.

NES GETTING THERE

DRAFT RULES FOR FORESTRY ACTIVITIES UNDER A NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARD (NES) HAVE BEEN LARGELY AGREED BY THE WORKING GROUP SET UP TO DEVELOP THE STANDARD.

The next tasks are guidance documentation and addressing stakeholder feedback.

The NES aims to improve the consistency of rules for the management of plantation forests under the RMA. At present, each regional council has its own set of environmental rules with each set subject to revision independently.

Many rules are also needlessly bureaucratic and costly. This forces forest owners to apply for complex resource consents for very standard operations performed the same way throughout the country and to reinvent the wheel every plan change in order to retain the ability to harvest their crops.

The driving force behind the proposed forestry NES has been the joint Forest Owners and Farm Forestry environment committee, led by its chair Peter Weir. After two false starts over several years, he has high hopes that the NES is drawing closer to completion.

really has the bit between its teeth.”

An earlier cost/benefit analysis found insufficient benefit to justify an NES. Its calculations have been revisited and the result is favourable. In addition, monetary values are being assigned to environmental benefits, so these can be added to the equation.

Weir says tools for assessing environmental risks need to be developed and proven, in order for an NES to operate. Work underway includes:

- Further refinements to national erosion susceptibility maps that underpin the rationale for most of the proposed rules
- Development of a national fish spawning calendar
- Adoption of the Scion wilding pine spread risk calculator

PF Olsen's environment manager, Kit Richards, who is on the MPI working group, says a spin-off from the NES will be the development and adoption of improved environmental management technologies across the country.

“Too often tools, models and other decision-assisting technologies have been produced in a regionalised or ad-hoc fashion, limiting their uptake and leading to fragmented rule-making. They are also often difficult to maintain because of a small pool of users.

“The degree of cooperation and cohesion among the parties is very positive, with special credit due to the input from and perseverance of Fish & Game. As with the development of a national water policy, we are seeing the benefits that arise from taking a more integrated and collaborative approach to RMA rule-making.”

Details of progress with the NES are published in newsletters on the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) website under ‘Resource Planning’.

POLICY FOR A CHANGING FUTURE

A year ago, a group of Auckland forestry professionals began meeting to discuss their growing concern about the lack of alignment between the industry's aspirations and government policy.

They soon realised the sector needed to adopt a self-help approach and prepare a suitable forestry policy using its own resources.

More recently the group has broadened its membership and formed into a formal project – Forest Policy NZ. Five working parties will address the various sector components and develop policies that could provide a more positive direction for the future.



Garth Cumberland and friend

Retired forestry consultant Garth Cumberland chairs the project management team, which includes the leaders of the five working parties: Forest & Land Resources (chair Russell Dale); Forest Management (Dr Brian Richardson); Forest Products Processing and Marketing (Marcel Vroeghe); Environment & Social (Trish Fordyce); and Regulatory Framework (Dr Andrew McEwen). Industry veteran, Peter Berg, chairs a smaller governance group, which will oversee the implementation of policy once it has been developed.

The project includes representation from the Ministry for Primary Industries, NZ Forest Owners Association, NZ Farm Forestry Association, NZ Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association, Scion, forest and environmental law, forestry consultants and corporate forestry.

Draft policies produced by the working parties will address issues which are likely to affect the sector (such as climate change and future energy scenarios) over the next 100 years.

The drafts will be debated at a sector-wide conference, organised by NZ Institute of Forestry (working title “Forest Policy for a Changing Future”) in Wellington scheduled for 10 August. More detail soon at <http://nzif.org.nz/> under ‘Events & Conferences’. To contact the organisers email admin@nzif.org.nz



Road building is regulated by most councils to ensure environmental harm is minimised

Under the NES we hope to get one road-building standard that everyone complies with

“We are very thankful to have the support of forestry minister Jo Goodhew and are delighted to see Nick Smith back in the environment portfolio. These ministers understand that this is not about reducing protection for the environment but about finding ways to cut through needless red tape,” says Weir.

“Thanks to their support, we have a well-resourced working group at the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) that

IN THE NEWS

FIVE NEW SFF PROJECTS

There are five new forestry projects in the latest Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) round, announced recently by associate primary industries minister Jo Goodhew. These involve:

- Developing a practical way to screen 10,000 two year-old eucalypts (*E. bosistoana* and *E. globoidea*) for growth-strain, a major processing weakness. This will potentially enable the mass propagation of cultivars suited for the production of laminated veneer lumber.
- Improved control of the larvae of the eucalyptus tortoise beetle, *Paropsis charybdis*, with the parasitoid *Eadya paropsidis*
- Evaluating historical research trials on cypress cultivars on a range of sites to provide insights on their relative performance as potential commercial species
- Evaluating options for the inclusion of farm-grown totara timber in the Building Code
- Developing a rapid and cost effective tool for measuring the durability of coastal redwood

According to Dean Satchell on the FFA website, the eucalyptus tortoise beetle is the most serious defoliator of eucalypts in New Zealand, but is normally only a serious problem for trees belonging to the *Symphyomyrtus subgenus*.

"Many of the eucalypt species susceptible to paropsis could be commercialised if an adequate level of control over paropsis was achieved. In particular, for warmer areas, red mahogany (*E. scias*) because of its quality timber suitable for high value end uses and white-topped box (*E. quadrangulata*), for its extremely durable timber, excellent form and fast growth. Colder climate species such as *E. johnstonii*, *E. nitens* and *E. globulus* could regain favour if biological control of paropsis was to prove successful."

Ms Goodhew says around \$1.2 million has been committed over four financial years towards the five new SFF projects. The Ministry for Primary Industries will be opening the next SFF funding round in mid-2015, inviting new ideas for future SFF projects.

More: <http://bit.ly/1FoGQeI>



The latest in a new series of NZ Wood billboards beside SH2 near Whararata. The NZ Wood campaign is now largely funded by the Forest Growers Levy to promote the environmental benefits of plantation forests to the community, the nation and indeed, globally. An advertising campaign targeting the general public is now being formulated.

FIRE POND AQUACULTURE

FIRE-FIGHTING PONDS ARE ONE OF THE COSTS OF ESTABLISHING A FOREST. BUT FOR ERNSLAW ONE, THEY ARE SHAPING UP AS A POTENTIAL PROFIT CENTRE.

Ten years ago, Ernslaw One's Naseby Forest manager Greg Kendall came up with the idea of farming koura (freshwater crayfish) in the company's 400 fire ponds. The company saw the revenue potential and after some initial trials, fish farm permits were obtained.

Today there are 1400 permitted koura ponds in Ernslaw One's Otago and Southland forests, with plans to increase this to more than 3000 in the next few years.

"Koura farming sits nicely alongside our forestry operations and provides an acid test for the environmental health of our forests, as koura generally don't tolerate poor water quality," says Ernslaw's aquaculture manager John Hollows.

"We have made our first sales under the KEEWAI brand name and these are proving a popular menu item at Hilton Hotel restaurants in Queenstown.

"It would be hard to find a better example of a clean green New Zealand product. KEEWAI are stocked at low densities, receive no feeding or artificial supplements. Nature provides them with all they need.

"Currently we are supplying high-end restaurants around the country and are investigating opportunities in Asia. To our knowledge we are the first commercial-scale operation and see this project as a flagship for land-based aquaculture within existing productive land."



Ernslaw's John Hollows with a soon-to-be delicacy and an aerial view of some of the company's koura ponds