



The Forest Owners Association (FOA)/Farm Forestry Association (FFA) Fire Committee (FBC) met in Christchurch on 9 July 2025 prior to the Management of Fire in Our Forest and Rural Landscape Conference 2025. The following represents a summary of topics that the committee wanted to highlight from this and subsequent meetings.

New Deputy Chair

Alan Coyle (FFA) was appointed as the new Deputy Chair of the Fire Committee.

New Committee Members Endorsed

Two new members were endorsed by the committee:

- Reihana Fisher (NZ Forest Management), replacing Colin Dunston.
- Craig Brown (Forest Protection Manager – One Forty One), replacing Cameron MacDonald.
- Brent Swanson (DOC) was also invited to attend future meetings as an observer.

Overview of the FENZ Session

The FENZ session included discussions and presentations on:

- The 2024/25 wildfire campaign, “Spot the Sign, Stop Wildfire,” which focused on targeted messaging, digital integration with MetService, and public engagement.
- The upcoming changes to radio communications, including the transition to a new Public Safety Network and implications for forestry partners.
- Discussions on signage consistency, lithium-ion battery risks, and the need for clearer operational protocols between FENZ and forest owners.
- The Fire Committee discussed the need to clarify overlapping duties between forest owners and FENZ as PCBUs, particularly during fireground operations. Current FMO agreements reference these responsibilities but lack operational detail.

Meeting with the Deputy Director-General, Te Uru Rākau

Sam Keenan (Deputy Director-General, Te Uru Rākau) joined the committee to discuss strategic alignment between forestry and fire management. Key points discussed included:

- TUR’s evolving role and priorities under the current government: export growth, domestic processing, and bioeconomy development.
- Challenges in inter-agency coordination and policy development.
- Opportunities for collaboration with MPI, DOC, and FENZ.
- Emphasis on protecting the forest estate and improving response capability.

Research Update

Scion researchers Richard Parker and Laura Kiely presented updates on:

- Suppression tools: battery-powered backpack sprayers, slash pile temperature probes, and wearable thermal cameras.
- Wildfire occurrence database: over 116,000 fire records compiled with spatial and climatic data, to be made publicly available.
- Predictive tool development: “Light-a-Match” prototype for simulating fire behaviour and smoke spread, aimed at supporting landowner decision-making.

Fire occurrence, investment and capability surveys

The Fire Survey Working Group met on 30 July to refine the scope and delivery of upcoming surveys focused on forest fire preparedness. Four key areas were confirmed: insurance coverage, aircraft use, investment and capability (including training and geographic distribution), and fire incident data. Surveys will be tailored for different forest owner groups to improve relevance and response rates, with a mix of spreadsheet and online formats. Engagement with Scion is planned to align incident data efforts. Survey content is targeted for finalization by the end of August, with distribution in September.