

plants and animals and their supporting natural communities, ecosystems and ecological processes, against possum damage, as cost effectively as possible over the next 10 years. The plan establishes rules and criteria for evaluating and responding to the possum threat to native plants and animals and for evaluating between different control methods and auditing techniques. A key element of the plan is the ranking of all conservation-managed land on the basis of its conservation values and degree of risk, so that national control priorities can be set. The increase in funding and the setting of national priorities means for the first time a well focused and financed possum control programme for sustained control can be put into action.

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Radiata pine moves up market – and leaves a gap

New Zealand radiata pine has been a staple of the Japanese industrial packaging market for many years, but has recently been undergoing a reappraisal by the forest products industry in Japan, to the extent that more New Zealand product is being utilised in the plywood and lumber markets.

Traditional resource constraints, price escalations for raw logs, and New Zealand efforts over the last few years to educate the market about the qualities of radiata pine have probably all played a role in changing Japanese perceptions of what end-uses radiata pine is best suited to. But now it seems that, just as radiata is acquiring a more respectable reputation in Japan, there are moves to replace it. The problem lies in the differential between the (high) log cost and the (relatively low) price of the finished product, which is squeezing the profitability of the processing sector.

The issue affects both radiata pine and North American lumber. The Japan Forest Products Journal notes in a recent edition that some processing companies are looking to replace North American species with red pine, while Southern US yellow pine is seen as a substitute for radiata. Southern yellow pine is similar to J-grade radiata in price, and is being looked at seriously despite concerns about blue-stain. Cost, quality factors, and concerns about longer-term supply and cost stability are clearly playing a part.

The perceived move away from radiata is not a widespread phenomenon, but is taking place on a background of expecta-

tations of further price rises and currently low stocks. The negotiations on the third quarter price for NZ logs commenced in mid-June. The Japanese side were expecting price increases of at least 10%, given the stock situation (down to as low as one month), the recent 4-5% appreciation of the yen and demand for logs from coun-

tries such as Korea.

Additional supply problems, as they see it, are the need for the New Zealand growers to regulate harvest volumes and service New Zealand processors. – (Reprinted from JapanLink, Ministry of Forestry, Rotorua.)

Memo on timber in spotted owl region may hurt Clinton's bid for compromise

The Clinton administration is finding there is less timber available for harvest in the spotted owl region than had been believed – a finding that could complicate its search for a compromise in the long-running dispute over Pacific Northwest forests.

The reassessment, disclosed in an internal administration memo, suggests that the White House is likely to support lower harvest levels than industry groups are demanding. At the same time, it could reduce the chance that the administration will favour setting aside reserves that are off limits to cutting, a major goal of environmental groups.

The report indicates that the Forest Service has been overestimating harvest levels. The White House commented: "We are taking steps immediately to investigate discrepancies on a forest-by-forest basis."

The analysis underscores the difficulty the White House faces in fashioning a

spotted owl plan that will meet President Clinton's pledge to balance economic and environmental interests, and break the log-jam over timber policy. The new plan, promised at a forest conference in Portland, Oregon last April, probably will be unveiled in August.

Forest Service estimates have been criticised before by environmental groups and others. The memo says that a 1991 report to Congress by a panel of scientists found that sustainable harvest levels in the Pacific Northwest region were on average 15 per cent lower than Forest Service estimates. Now, the memo says the discrepancy has grown, citing forests where the amount of harvestable timber is 20 to 40 per cent below Forest Service estimates. Regionwide, the reduction is closer to 33 per cent rather than 15 per cent. – Reprinted from *Tradenz Timber Trends*, New York.