

Science Working Group report

The following is a summary of the Science Working Group report to the NZIF Council meeting on September 1, 1993, at Rotorua.

Legislation

The Forest Amendment Act 1993 became law on July 1, 1993. Its purpose is to promote the sustainable forest management of indigenous forest land. The Act covers export controls, sawmill controls, sustainable forest management plans (the major part of the Act) and a number of miscellaneous provisions. The legislation appears to correct some of the anomalies that existed previously in regard to the felling and utilisation of indigenous forests and particularly in regard to compensation payments to private indigenous forest owners. The Act also appears to be consistent with and avoids unnecessary overlap with the Resource Management Act 1991. The major problem with the Act will be in its implementation, especially with regard to the development of sensible forest management prescriptions which meet all the sustainability criteria. This may not be too much of a problem for some types of beech forest but our level of understanding about mixed podocarp-hardwood forest will make prescription development very difficult for these forest types.

The Biosecurity Bill became law on October 1, 1993. This legislation will enable a vastly improved performance in the way pests are managed and controlled (see comment in August NZ Forestry).

East Coast Forestry Scheme

The concern about the lack of published material on the soil protective capability of various types of vegetation cover on East Coast hill country has been allayed with the publication of an article on this subject in the August issue of NZ Forestry, and the preparation of a more detailed article on the same subject for the NZ J.For.Sci.

MOF has produced a brochure covering the new modified 1993 East Coast Forestry Scheme. The new scheme pays more attention to the protection of kanuka and other regenerating indigenous scrub and forest species and incorporates a weighting system that will promote the "non clearing" of indigenous vegetation. The scheme will also include a weighting system which aims to promote the planting of category 3 and severely eroding category 2 land. The details of the weighting systems are currently being designed and

will be completed by the end of October 1993 (see item in Recent Events).

South Island High Country Afforestation

Attempts to "liberalise" the MacKenzie District Scheme for forestry development have evidently run into opposition from ECNZ and DOC. A joint FRI/Landcare report on the hydrological implications of converting tussock grasslands to pine forests has been seized upon by ECNZ and used to support an argument that afforestation of parts of the MacKenzie will have undesirable effects on stream and river flows. It seems that the ECNZ may have misinterpreted the information in the report. In any event John Novis has promised to keep the Science Committee of NZIF informed and the Committee may be asked to prepare an independent report.

Royal Society

Colin O'Loughlin attended the NZRS meeting in Wellington on September 1, 1993. The meeting covered RS budget, new proposed structure, new RS Act and benefits to member bodies. A report for the NZIF Council will be prepared on the results of the meeting.

Overseas Forestry Matters

Sustainable management of forests has become a major focus of overseas Government forestry organisations and research institutions. Great volumes of literature are appearing on the topic, much of it of limited interest or use to New Zealand forest managers. Two notable achievements concerned with sustainable management are the completion of a Society of American Foresters Task Force Report on "Sustaining long-term forest health and productivity" and the organisation of a Ministerial Conference on the "Protection of the forests in Europe" in Finland in June 1993. The outcomes from this conference include general guidelines for sustainable management of forests in Europe, guidelines for conservation of biodiversity, and strategies for long-term adaptation of forests to climate change.

An increasing concern in USA and in some European countries is the effect of rapidly increasing environmental ordinances and regulations on the activities and economies of the forest sectors. In a recent editorial in Science, "Pathological growth of regulations", it pointed out that the US Congress has created a huge multistatutory regulatory machinery (EPA

administers 11 major statutes, over 9000 regulations, employs 125,000 bureaucrats to design more regulations and spends \$500 billion). To meet the requirements of the regulations companies and public works facilities and other organisations are spending \$150 billion annually. The impact is especially tough on small companies, including forestry companies, because they cannot afford to develop environmental expertise. The regulatory pathology impairs their health. The article also suggests that the EPA does not administer its statutes well and exaggerates the hazards involved in such areas as the use of chemicals and pesticides. Maybe there are lessons for New Zealand here.

Colin O'Loughlin
Convener, NZIF Science Group

NZIF Conference 27-29 April 1994

INTRODUCTION

The 1994 NZIF Conference and Annual Meeting will be held in Nelson. The Nelson/Marlborough region has a diversity of land uses, from horticulture and aquaculture to farming, forestry and tourism.

CONFERENCE 1994

The conference theme is "Plantation forestry – a Sustainable Resource", and it addresses three issues of sustainability.

Economic Sustainability

The past year has seen swings in the marketplace attracting a lot of interest in forestry and its financial returns. The unprecedented interest in the commercial forestry sector has resulted in many nurseries being unable to meet the demand for seedlings.

The 1994 NZIF Conference will address the economics of forestry from the global and local perspectives. Comparisons will be made with other major land and resource users to assess how forestry stacks up economically, now and in the future. We will also discuss how processing fits within the economics of the forestry industry.

Biological Sustainability

The conference's second session studies the issue of sustainability with regard to

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