

NZIF Council report on Forestry Corporation of New Zealand Ltd

In the light of the resolution passed at the Napier AGM, Council have endeavoured to make an assessment of the sustainability of the forest operations of Forestry Corporation of NZ.

1. The Corporation, as an SOE, controls 170,000 ha of exotic forest at Kain-garoa, Whakarewarewa, and Rotoehu, with a cut expected to be sustained at an annual level of 2.6 million m³ from 1996.
2. The forests are primarily radiata pine (137,500 ha) and Douglas fir (19,290 ha) with declining areas of Corsican, contorta, larch, ponderosa, Southern pine and other species. These latter are progressively being converted to radiata and Douglas fir, and restocking averages 5500 ha per annum.
3. Of the major species, Council had an interest in the distribution of age classes.
 - a) For radiata, the spread appears reasonably "normal" and the planned clearwood age of felling is 27 to 28 years.
 - b) Douglas fir has a slightly skewed age class distribution. The table below shows this for 19,290 ha. The recent fellings and restockings show that the average Douglas fir

planting programme over the last 30 years has been about 425 ha. The Corporation is currently replanting about 10% of its annual replanting programme in Douglas fir, a 30% increase in the annual planting programme. Little Douglas fir has been felled in the present year.

Older than 70 years	800 ha
60-70 years	1600 ha
55-59 years	2050 ha
50-54 years	50 ha
45-49 years	150 ha
40-44 years	240 ha
30-39 years	1600 ha
20-29 years	4100 ha
10-19 years	4100 ha
0-9 years	4600 ha

4. Silviculture emphasises clearwood production and over 95% of radiata has either been pruned or is planned to be pruned. Less than 10,000 ha is expected to remain in unpruned "framing". The Corporation has commenced pruning Douglas fir in 1993 with an annual programme of 500 ha.
5. Maximising of returns on the forest capital is seen as the main thrust of management and there is little interest in pulpwood regimes. The contractual pulpwood supply to Tasman Pulp and Paper Ltd is seen as a mainly top-log by-product of sawlog management and from production thinning.
6. We were invited to meet the senior staff of the Corporation.

From the comments made to me by Council members after this meeting it was a consensus that:

- a) Management is relatively conservative in terms of rotation lengths to be adopted.
- b) Emphasis on clearwood for radiata would preclude shortening of rotations below that which will yield an adequate clearwood sheath.
- c) The restocking into Douglas fir will maintain the area of this species and it will probably increase in total over the next few years.
- d) Felling of less vigorous, more disease-prone species for conversion will continue to be a method of increasing productivity.
- e) There is no evidence that there is any alarming trend which would jeopardise sustainability of the forest resource quality. The cut has been high up to 1992-93, although the radiata has been cut at less than

the sustainable level, and will probably be at reduced levels over the next three to four years, after which the sustainable level of 2.6 million m³ will be maintained. New planting of purchased land will enhance future production which will be concentrated in the Bay of Plenty.

7. The thrust of the AGM resolution was to involve another agency in an investigation or a complete analysis of how harvesting and marketing policies affect the supply of wood in the future, by both species and quality, from the forests managed by Forestry Corporation of NZ.

The company management were not prepared to submit to this process. However, as set out above, they gave us the opportunity to meet their most senior staff and at this meeting provided a range of data which have been drawn upon for this report to Institute members. Certain commercially sensitive information discussed at the meeting has not been included in this report.

8. Conclusions that can be drawn from the information provided are that:
 - a) The forests are being managed responsibly.
 - b) The management policies are aimed at maximising the return to the owners of the forest in a sensible commercial manner.
 - c) There is a modern and progressive attitude to staff training, investment in research, marketing and forest protection.
 - d) The enhancement of value of forest produce is supported as a long-term aim to improve the worth of the forest. Investment jointly with the USA firm, Fibreform, at Waipa, plus renewal and replacement of obsolete plant in the mill facility are initial steps in this process.

Log supply to efficient independent sawmills continues and 20 sawmills draw supply from the forests.

8. Comments from members and correspondence in the August 1993 Journal indicate a degree of discomfort in the Institute being involved in any examination of a forest company's activity whatever the ownership. Recent publicity generated by the NZ Owned Sawmills Association suggests however that an orchestrated criticism of forest

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CPD – continued

designed by a specialist, to find out the aspirations of the members. The survey will provide hard data to enable the planning of further action to be based on an analytical approach, to ensure that the energies of the Institute are being directed to deliver on the needs of the members. The survey will be strongly marketed to members at a local branch level with an extensive consultation process to be undertaken. The results of the survey will be summarised and presented at the Nelson AGM. The task force is also investigating what overseas Forestry professional groups have done in this area, as well as reviewing what other professional groups in New Zealand have done. This will provide Council with a clear statement as to the focus of the Institute that is needed to carry the profession into the next century and the role of CPD in this "Vision 2003".

Peter Casey
John Galbraith

Obituaries

Stephen H. Spurr 1918-1990

Stephen Spurr died in June 1990; the Institute of Forestry regrets that it has taken so long to produce this obituary.

Stephen Spurr was an Honorary Member of the Institute, perhaps its most distinguished Honorary Member. He was given this appointment in 1961 very soon after his sojourn as a Fulbright Research Scholar at the Forest Research Institute, Rotorua.

I first knew Stephen in the late 1940s. He was a most likeable and impressive young man, destined for a distinguished career in American and world forestry. He was then Associate Professor of Forestry at Harvard University and there and later at the University of Michigan he made a name for himself as the author of three standard textbooks, on aerial photographs, forest inventory, and aerial photogrammetry. These were most impressive publications, the more so since they were specialist documents and Stephen was far from being a specialist – rather he was a very good and very wise all-round forester with a full appreciation of the social, environmental as well as the commercial implications of forestry.

Stephen went to Michigan as Professor of Silviculture in 1952 and spent nearly 20 years there, rising to Dean of the School of Natural Resources, a school he had himself founded. He was a brilliant lecturer, recalled with fondness by all his students, particularly the postgraduate ones. In 1962 he produced his major work "Forest Ecology", which has been reprinted

twice. Such was Stephen's reputation as a thinking and practical ecologist that he became one of the American President's specialist ecological advisers and in 1966 in this capacity he produced a major study on the Rampart Dam in Alaska.

In later years he became more involved with University administration and particularly with postgraduate studies. He became an authority on educational matters generally and had many high honours in the field of professional education as well as of forestry. In 1967 he moved to the University of Texas as its President and was there until he died. His last few years were troubled sadly by heart problems and Parkinson's disease.

Stephen is best known to New Zealanders through his silvicultural and mensurational work at FRI. He found it a great experience. His wife wrote: "The time spent in New Zealand was a joy to us. The beauty of your country and the hospitality of your people made our sojourn in your country one of the highlights in our life." He returned to Rotorua for a few months in 1962.

In New Zealand he was immediately taken not so much by radiata pine, which

did of course impress him, but with Douglas fir – "the best planted Oregon pine in the world". He wrote two important FRI bulletins on New Zealand Douglas. He prophesied that in his lifetime Douglas fir sawn timber would be exported from New Zealand to the United States. He was very nearly right; it is Douglas fir saw logs rather than sawn timber which is now going to the USA.

Stephen was an extremely active and busy man. I have two vivid memories of this. When he first returned home from Rotorua he sold me his portable typewriter; he delivered it at my home just one hour before his plane left, having used it right up to the last moment to type an article. Then two years later he came down to Wellington from Tokoroa for a weekend and stayed at our Khandallah house. He said he needed some exercise; within one hour of his arrival we were at the top of the nearest big high hill, Mount Kaukau. He was indefatigable.

His impact on New Zealand forestry from all points of view was immense. He will be remembered for a long time.

A.P. Thomson

Brian Johnstone Allison 1927-1992

Brian Allison was born and brought up in the English Lake District. He graduated with a forestry degree from Aberdeen University in 1951. His analytical and reporting style reflected that university's method of training. For five years he worked for the British Forestry Commission as a District Forest Officer. In 1956 Brian joined the Commonwealth Development Corporation serving successively in Malawi, Swaziland, the West Indies and London. While in Africa he gained a real insight into the productivity and management of large teams of unskilled labour and what that could cost in forest management. He was often to remind us of this later. While in London he completed qualifications in management and accounting. By now Brian realised that there were fewer opportunities for him in Commonwealth forestry so he turned his attention to New Zealand.

He joined NZ Forest Products Limited in 1962 – one of a number of Aberdeen

forestry graduates recruited by Jack Henry about that time. With a family of three small boys he paid his own passage to New Zealand. Throughout the rest of his life he often praised the opportunities New Zealand gave his whole family in life style, education and careers. In addition the Kinleith Forest was large enough to allow him to develop his ideas on the holistic approach to forest planning.

Brian was appointed Working Plans Forester but his title was to change a number of times during his career to Assistant Forest Manager, Manager Forest Planning and Services, etc. While organisational charts and titles gave him some amusement, he realised they were essential in a big organisation but he did not let them stand in his way when he wanted to get his ideas across at all levels.

Forest planning became his life, to which he applied his intellect, imagination and innovative skills. Thus began a most remarkable 25-year period where Brian

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owners can be expected when the social or political environment encourages this. The Institute should adopt an unbiased role in informing firstly the membership and secondly the concerned public, of significant aspects of forest industry activity from which a judgement can be made.

The above report on the AGM motion is intended to provide such information on the Forestry Corporation of NZ and it is Council's view that no further investigation is merited, particularly in the light of recent statements on FCNZ's future.

Peter Olsen
President