

decided that this is not a reasonable expectation, then there must be some concern as to where the Act might next take resource management planning.

At the end of the day, however, there remains the issue of extensive and severe land degradation. One must ask the question whether restraining forestry in an attempt to "protect" the existing landscape and natural values at the expense, to some degree at least, of soil values, is true conservation? The situation is serious in much of the Mackenzie Basin and a good case can be made for all land uses which could help mitigate land degradation being given the fullest encouragement through the District Plan.

Decisions on submissions to the Proposed Change will hopefully be available in early 1994. In the meantime, for those interested, the transcript of the evidence presented at the hearing is available. It runs to three volumes and 660 typed pages!

John Novis



Redwood revisited

Sir,

I note that Bill Libby (NZ Forestry, Nov. 1993, p. 5) claims that Coast Redwood is "difficult to establish". He includes a photo of the Skyline-Skyrides 1984 plantings of this species on the lower slopes of Mt Ngongotaha, the caption of which contains some incorrect information.

The myth that redwoods are difficult to establish arose because much of the early planting of this species failed. The reasons for this are unknown. In the mid-1970s I was asked to investigate this myth by establishing redwoods near Ruatoria and in Mangatu Forest. The background to this was that redwoods grown in the East Cape region had wood properties similar to those found in California, and that one strategy for the slumping mudstone country in this locality would be to establish redwoods to be grown to large size and then logged by helicopter by single tree selection. This kind of stand would provide a permanent anchor for the land and would obviate any adverse effects of logging on the soil.

Trials were established in Mangatu Forest in areas already planted with radiata pine two years previously, because there was some evidence that redwoods need shelter. At the lower altitude, some

300 m asl, on a very exposed wet site, the redwoods were badly toppled after planting directly in rank grass, although most of them survived. At the higher altitude, some 1000 m asl, survival and growth were excellent.

In June 1984 Skyline-Skyrides Ltd asked me to advise them on a crash planting programme. They wanted something pleasant to look at which would eventually be saleable as a valuable timber. The site was run-down, reverting hill pasture which hadn't been topdressed for years. I recommended Coast Redwood, which they accepted. Groups of three trees more or less at three-metre spacing, were planted along the contour with 10 m centres. The idea was to thin them irregularly, and to prune them progressively, to give in due course a more or less irregular, natural-looking stand.

Contrary to the photo caption, trees were obtained from four nurseries and varied considerably in size and quality. The largest were between 75 cm and 1.25 m tall; others were 22-36 cm tall; the smallest around 15 cm tall. All had reasonably good fibrous roots due to wrenching.

The planting gang, fortunately, consisted of people who had no previous experience of planting, so I was able to give them precise training which they adhered to religiously. On arrival, tree bundles were dunked in water and thereafter planted as rapidly as possible in grass-free planting spots which had been sprayed with glyphosate four weeks previously.

Survival was over 95% but unfortunately the management introduced sheep and a few goats which made short work of the small seedlings.

The lessons to be learnt from these experiences is that, contrary to myth, Coast Redwood is easy to establish provided grass competition is eliminated, seedlings are well wrenched, and properly handled in transit and planting.

C.G.R. Chavasse

The Redwood Grove

Sir,

It was a delight to read about "Redwoods" in the November issue of NZ Forestry, with the article by W.J. Libby (Redwood - An Addition to Exotic Forestry), and also some comments on the Redwood Grove by Dennis Richardson (Thinking Aloud).

Both authors brought back strong memories for me of the redwoods in Whaka forest, especially Richardson's

statements about the Redwood Grove being previously a "failed larch mixture closed to the public"; thereon hangs a tale.

An opportunity was taken in 1968 to fell and remove the dead and dying larch from the Grove area, which had been planted in 1901 and remained untouched for 60 odd years. The larch were not only ugly, but could be a terrifying sight under certain strong wind conditions, and extremely dangerous. They were mainly whips, 20 to 30 metres in height. Very little light came through the canopy in summer, and masses of dead larch needles suffocated any vegetation trying to grow on the forest floor.

Because of "closed gates" at that time, only a few privileged members of the public and Whaka and FRI staff could visit the Grove.

Unfortunately, an FRI scientist wrote to the Minister of Forests at the time (Duncan MacIntyre) saying that "Cooper was destroying the Redwood Grove" in relation to the larch thinning operations. This accusation led to a flurry of telexes between the Minister, the Director General of the Forest Service (Lindsay Poole), and the late Dave Kennedy, Conservator of Forests, Rotorua.

Dave Kennedy advised Lindsay Poole that it was a "Bert Roche" situation and the Minister should be advised accordingly. Duncan MacIntyre was subsequently very keen to hear about the Bert Roche diction (basically fools and idiots should not be shown, or asked to comment, on a job half done!).

Dave Kennedy's reply was a masterpiece of diplomacy and evasion. He gave me all the correspondence with the comment that he "would probably get the sack", but that never happened, of course.

The photograph by J.C. Libby in "Figure 3 - The Long Mile Redwood Grove in Rotorua Planted in 1901" (Redwood an addition to exotic forestry), shows that all the trauma of thinning out the larch has paid off in the long term. The heavy undergrowth of *Cyathea* and *Dicksonia* species is one of the outstanding developments in the Grove, another being that public visitors must have run into a total of several hundreds of thousands since the late 1960s. It is good to see the Grove being maintained and enjoyed still.

In the rest of the compartment adjoining the Grove, the larch plantings succeeded and redwoods of any size were scattered and others suppressed. The larch was very heavily thinned in order that further redwoods could be planted and the original redwoods develop further. This has also been successful. Richardson was wrong when he stated in "Thinking Aloud" that the objective for the area may have been "coming perilously close to