

IFA News

In order to create wider understanding of forestry issues across the Tasman, we have entered an understanding with the Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) to publish from the IFA Newsletter.

Register forester scheme proposed

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) is developing a registered professional forester (RPF) scheme to meet the increasing challenges facing the sector. The IFA board is proposing a registration system based on those used by the forestry profession in New Zealand, the US and the UK and in other professional associations such as the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology.

A draft of the proposed system has been circulated among members and is being discussed currently.

According to the IFA executive director Jane Waslin, the scheme was devised to assist those members who wish to seek RPF status to increase their capacity to bid successfully for work or fill a vacant niche in relation to supervision responsibility in codes of forest practice in several states and to interest organisations in specifying RPF requirement for tenders as a matter of quality assurance.

The board anticipates that not all members will wish to become RPFs and that RPF status will not have any bearing on a member's category of membership. The scheme will be available for those who consider it will have a commercial advantage to them being able to testify their professional standing. For this reason the scheme will be self-funding and conducted on a user-pays basis.

The background to the introduction of the scheme is the changing environment in which foresters must operate, as the focus in Australia changes from the central focus on employment by government agencies and large corporations. A National Forest Policy Statement focuses on sustainable forest management on both public and private land with mechanisms such as codes of forest practice to ensure continuing professional forestry standards.

The emphasis has been placed on the private sector, particularly farm forestry, for expanding the plantation resource and this in turn has placed a responsibility on foresters to ensure that high professional standards are realised in any forestry scheme.

Details of the scheme are available

from Jane Waslin, Executive Director, IFA, PO Box 2 Yarrarlumla ACT 2600, Australia; fax: 612-6281 4693; email: ifa@cbr.for.csiro.au.

Practical focus for Conference

"Practising Forestry Today" is the theme of the Institute of Foresters of Australia 18th biennial conference.

The conference, to be held at Hobart, Tasmania between 3 and 8 October 1999, will examine the following:

- the practical responses to changes in the political, legal and social framework within which forestry is conducted, and
- the technical underpinning of today's forestry practices.

The keynote speaker will be Dr Harry Wiant, president of the Society of American Foresters during 1998, when he actively presented a strong argument that foresters have been responsible managers of public and privately owned forests, contrary to public perceptions.

A pre-conference tour will visit issues including hardwood plantation management, blackwood swamp harvesting, selective logging high elevation forests, dry sclerophyll forestry and forest practices special values while taking in some of Tasmania's most remote localities.

Details are available from the organisers: Mures Convention Management, Victoria Dock, Hobart TAS 7000; Fax: 613-6234 4464; Email: conventions@mures.com.au

NSW coping with big changes

The New South Wales division of IFA is coping with some big changes at present. The administration of the division has changed, with a new committee. At the same time, foresters have been dealing with the NSW Government's move to fast track its own solution to the State's native forest land use impasse. It has legislated the changes as part of a Forest Agreement programme and government offices in a number of department have been trying to resolve and document the practical agreements to make the solutions work in the field.

WA takes on the media

The Western Australia division of the

IFA has lodged official complaints with the Australian Journalists Association over media coverage of the debate surrounding the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) for the State. Although the RFA recommended that about 60 per cent of the remaining "old growth" forests be retained in reserves, a concerted campaign has developed calling for 100 per cent reservation.

In the view of the division, much of the media comment has been ill-informed and some journalists have allowed their views to override objective comment. The division has invited the AMA to visit the forest for a professional discussion on forest management.

Members have also written letters to the *West Australian* newspaper and the division has been consulted by politicians for an, independent informed viewpoint on the forestry debate.

Community Forestry Studied

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in South Africa has released a report on the status of Community Forestry in South Africa. South Africa's new dispensation is framed within a constitution which commits the country to "ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources" and the promotion of "justifiable economic and social development".

The commitment of the government is to create a facilitative environment for local economic development. The forestry sector is recognised as an important element of local natural resources development.

Community Forestry, as defined in the White Paper on Sustainable Forest Development is "forestry designed and applied to meet local social, household and environmental needs and to favour local economic development. It is implemented by, or with, the participation of communities."

What is fundamental to this approach is that community forestry is defined in terms of the needs of the people it is intended to serve, rather than in terms of the forest resource type.

Trees for Africa Newsletter