

Climate change strategy on political agenda

Peter Berg

One of the more important matters (certainly from a forester's perspective) being discussed by Government, its officials, and other interested forestry sector and community groups is the issue of climate change. While the environmental impact of catastrophic climate change is the real and over-riding issue for international consideration, it is really the commercial implications of carbon charges and credits that have focused attention over the last year or two. Forests are significant stores of carbon and through planting and management, harvesting, transport and processing of products foresters can have significant impact on the carbon balance sheet.

This is particularly the case in New Zealand; it is by its nature well suited to growing trees (the natural vegetation is forest). extensive plantations have been established, the forest industry is very important to the national economy and the Institute's view is that it is essential our forests and their management form a significant part of any strategy the Government develops as part of its climate change policy.

Government's climate change policy appears to be driven by the desire to ratify the Kyoto protocol as soon as possible, desirably before other countries, and certainly before this year's election. While the Institute is strongly in accord with the desire to limit green house emissions and the associated likelihood of accelerated climate change we remain at odds with Government over its rush to commit. Accordingly in our submissions we have advocated New Zealand first consider the development of a national climate change strategy with policies appropriate to our economy. With this background we believe Government will be far better placed to provide effective solutions to its obligations

under the Kyoto Protocol.

Unfortunately Government has given no real indication of its view on matters as basic as ownership of carbon, carbon taxes, pre 1990 plantation forests, possible role of indigenous forests, maintaining an internationally competitive forest products industry and so on.

Of course not all of these are matters requiring consideration under the Kyoto protocol, but they are all essential parts of a coherent climate change policy for New Zealand's forests and the Institute has been firm in its view that until these matters are addressed in the context of a broader national climate change strategy it would be imprudent for Government to ratify the Protocol.

Meanwhile we are approaching the date of our next AGM, scheduled for 15 March and being held in association with the Forest industries expo at Rotorua. The association with the Expo is both appropriate and fortuitous, providing the opportunity for foresters to compare the very best of forestry technology and systems at one time and in one place.

Equally satisfying has been the strong body of candidates seeking election to various positions on the Council of the Institute, good representation and support should ensure a healthy future for the organization. I look forward to a good turnout at the AGM in Rotorua next month.

We further believe Government's climate change strategy as it relates to the entire economy as well as our forests will need to be carefully developed and enunciated before Government proceeds to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, which we note is intended by September next year.

Directory to lift Registered Forestry Consultants' profile

In an endeavour to lift the profile of Registered Forestry Consultants, the NZIF Registration Board has decided to produce a Directory of Forestry Consultants. The main target of the directory will be potential clients and the professional community generally. The directory will be freely available to consultants to utilise and will be sent to relevant target groups as well as being used to raise the profile of consultants in relevant magazines and newsletters. It is the intention of the Registration Board to update this directory annually. As well as being published in hard copy, the directory will also be made available on the NZIF web site.

To assist in the preparation of the directory, consultants have been busy filling out brief questionnaires. If there are consultants who have not received a questionnaire or who have been missed, can they please contact either Mike Smith or Sue Wilkie, of Business Media Services Ltd, who are producing the Directory on behalf of the Registration Board. Telephone (07) 349 4107 or email: bms@wave.co.nz.

Any queries or comments regarding other issues should be directed to Dave Field, 44 Dalbeth Rd, RD 2, Rotorua. Dave's phone is (07) 357 4949.

United approach to skilledworker shortage

Northland's forestry industry and Northland Polytechnic have joined forces to solve a critical shortage of skilled workers to take advantage of the "wall of wood".

Forestry plantations maturing over the next 10 years have the potential to create at least 3000 and possibly as many as 6000 new jobs in Northland, at all levels of the forestry industry.

Forestry's expansion is also projected to create a further 6000 indirect jobs in supporting industries.

The industry and Northland Polytechnic have formed the Forestry Education Establishment Group (FEEG) and are seeking regional development funding for a Northland-wide education programme on forestry careers.

For further information, contact Derek Colebrook on 09-433 8292 or 021-902 593.