

Update on FSC deliberations

1. Plantation Standards

Euan Mason

The Plantation Standards Technical Committee of the Forestry Stewardship Council National initiative is creating a set of national standards that can be applied to plantations in New Zealand. The NZ Institute of Forestry has one representative (me) on the committee, and several members have been elected to either the Indigenous Standards Technical Committee or the National Initiative Working Group.

The principal issues still under discussion in the Plantation Standards Technical Committee are contributions towards indigenous biodiversity and the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides.

Draft 3 contained a proposal from the Environmental Chamber for "representative area" contributions to indigenous biodiversity within ecological districts that received plenty of comment from plantation owners, managers, consultants and forest researchers. The committee has considered these comments as well as estimates submitted via the Economic Chamber of the likely financial cost of the initial proposal. Some progress was made towards a resolution of the issue at an April meeting of the committee, but you'll have to wait for the next draft for details.

My personal opinion is that representative areas best contribute to indigenous biodiversity when they are large, and that restoring scattered areas to fill an FSC requirement is much less efficient than making a contribution to the restoration or maintenance of large areas. In addition it seems obvious that companies with a financial focus will voluntarily adopt standards only when they do not lose financially by doing so. Quantifying the financial benefits of FSC certification is difficult, and so the standards may evolve over time as benefits are more clearly quantified.

The chemical use issue is awaiting a report from an expert, but it is no secret that minimisation of herbicide and pesticide use will be a feature of the standards.

Harvesting in some indigenous representative areas was raised by the Maori Chamber. The Environmental Chamber representatives stated that this was a matter for the indigenous standards technical committee because it involves harvesting of non-planted indigenous forest, and that the plantation standards should require reserves of indigenous forest. My personal view is that a restriction on harvesting may reduce the size of the representative area contribution that managers are willing to commit themselves to.

While progress has been slower than some people expected, it's also been faster than others expected. The 4th draft should be available for public comment soon, after which you will have three months to consider and comment on the draft. At time of writing only draft 3 is

available from the Institute's web site (www.forestry.org.nz), but I'll post the 4th draft as soon as it is released.

2. Indigenous Standards

Roger May

Background

The role of the Indigenous Standards Technical Committee (ISTC) as a technical sub-committee of the National Initiative Working Group is to develop indigenous forest standards under the FSC system, to consult with interested stakeholders on the content of those draft standards, to liaise with the Plantation Standards Technical Committee (PSTC) to ensure harmonisation of both draft Standards and, ultimately, to submit the draft indigenous forest standards to the National Initiative Working Group (NIWG).

Meetings of the Indigenous Standards Technical Committee

The second and third meetings of the ISTC were held on the 29th January and 22nd February 2002 at the School of Forestry. The meetings were attended by eight of the nine elected representatives from the Maori, Economic, and Social Chambers. However, these meetings took place with no representation from the Environmental Chamber despite advanced invitations.

The main items dealt with at these meetings were the continuing issue of Environmental Chamber representation on the ISTC, the role of the National Initiative Working Group, the perceived status of the ISTC and the draft Indigenous Standards by the NIWG, harmonisation of Indigenous Forest Standards and Plantation Standards, and a number of funding, procedural, and communication issues.

Draft Standards released

The draft Indigenous Standards were notified as being open for stakeholder comment on 10 March. Over 200 stakeholders were notified and have until 31 May to make submissions. Standards can be viewed NZ Institute of Forestry website at www.forestry.org.nz under "Events/news".

Current status of the ISTC and the National Initiative

The status of the ISTC is now receiving greater support with small forest owners and Maori stakeholders now clearly stating their need for the draft Indigenous Standards to be developed in tandem with the Plantation Standards. This situation will assist the National Initiative Working Group move towards endorsement by FSC and improve dialogue across the sectors involved in the Standards development process.