

# Good start to the year

### Bachelor of Forestry Science, BE (Forestry) and postgraduate students

The year has started well with a total of 83 students enrolled in the undergraduate forestry degree programme (a further four are enrolling from the middle of the year). The Bachelor of Engineering (Forestry) programme now has 18 students enrolled in the three professional years.

Our postgraduate programme continues well with 27 students from 12 countries enrolled for a variety of degrees. We have recently bid farewell to three Master of Forestry Science students from Papua New Guinea, all three of whom completed research looking at conservation management and restoration. We currently have a great diversity of research projects being undertaken, ranging from valuing wood quality traits through to forest road pavement. New areas of interest include bioenergy/biomass utilisation and grassland fire ignition.

### Research

The School has been actively involved in a range of new research activities alongside the already established programmes in wood quality and sustainable land management:

- a very successful workshop “Revisiting Eucalypts” was held at the School on 12 February. The Workshop explored opportunities for eucalypts ranging from carbon capture to substitution for tropical woods;
- our Forest Engineering group led by Rien Visser has been awarded a research contract with EECA (Energy Efficiency Conservation Agency) for studying biomass recovery operations. The focus is on recovery of landing residues and integrating chipping/hogging operations within our current harvesting systems. The one-year project will include case studies of four different operations in four different regions;
- Dr David Evison has a FRST-funded subcontract with MOTU Economic and Public Policy Research to develop a model to predict changes in forestry land-use based on relative profitability;
- Associate Professor Bruce Manley has been awarded two research contracts for work looking at the risks associated with carbon forestry. A FRST-funded project investigates carbon price risk while a MAF-funded project evaluates insurance options;
- Associate Professor David Norton recently organised and hosted a one-day workshop exploring the new area of biodiversity off-sets as a part of sustainable land management.

### Staff and Visitors

The School is in good heart with a number of changes occurring for staff. Dr Clemens Altaner has been appointed to the position in Wood Variability and/or Primary Processing. Clemens is a wood science graduate from the University of Hamburg who has worked on wood quality projects at the University of Glasgow and the University of Auckland. He will take up the position in September. A long serving member of staff, Professor John Walker will retire in September 2009 but will continue with a variety of research projects. In combination this will continue the School’s long standing wood research efforts.

After many years of service and significant contribution to the School and University Ron O’Reilly has retired to pursue interests of a fishing nature. Ron leaves the School with a strong forest engineering focus still in place and we wish him well in pursuing his fishing interests.

Two members of staff have been appointed to significant service roles within the university. Associate Professor Euan Mason has been elected to the University Council, in essence the university board of directors. Euan is very much looking forward to the role. Dr Hamish Cochrane has been appointed Associate Dean of Engineering and Forestry and will eventually take over as Dean of Engineering & Forestry from the end of Dr Richard Duke’s term in January 2010.

We have also benefited from a range of visitors that have been with us for the early part of the year. Professor Thom Erdle from the Faculty of Forestry and Environmental Management at the University of New Brunswick, Canada, has been with us for some months. Thom is a forest management specialist who apart from interacting with staff and students here is also chairing the internal university review of the Bachelor of Forestry Science.

Professor Karl Stampfer and Dr. Raffaele Spinelli (head of Forest Engineering in Austria and Head of Italian Forest Operations Research Group respectively) have been visitors contributing to the Forest Engineering programme. Whilst here both have been actively involved in research - Karl has been instrumental in setting up and carrying out a radio-controlled choker study and Raffaele has started a review of NZ landing size and layout. They have taken the opportunity to travel and study a number of NZ harvesting operations and have asked me to thank the wider industry for their welcome and support.

### Industry Support

While the School is well supported by the College of Engineering it is the support that is given by various sector entities that is particularly appreciated. Our close relationship

with the South Island staff of Scion continues with several continuing to contribute to various undergraduate papers and to postgraduate research projects and supervision. Special note must go to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry who continue to actively support the undergraduate teaching of indigenous forest management. Staff time and resources

are provided by the Ministry, and without this support the students would miss out on significant area of forestry in New Zealand. In particular we would like to acknowledge the efforts of Alan Griffiths in this area.

Hamish Cochrane

Waiariki School of Forestry, Wood Processing and Biotechnology

## Student numbers rise as economy struggles

The first term of the academic year is now over. This has been a busy time with student enrolments, staff appointments and the commencement of course redevelopment programmes for 2010.

Student enrolments are again up this year, not only for our school but also for our Institute as a whole. I understand this is a trend affecting many other New Zealand tertiary institutions this year. At least there appears to be one benefit of the worsening economic situation in which we find our economy.

These lifts in student numbers bring some relief to the forest industry as forestry schools within New Zealand and across the ditch have struggled to attract students in recent years. Over the last few years tertiary institutions, such as the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, University of Canberra, the University of Melbourne and Lincoln University, were forced to cancel forestry programmes as students moved towards apparently more attractive programmes such as marketing and IT. Now there appears to be an opportunity for us to attract more students onto our courses which is great for us and must be good for the industry.

In an effort to attract more students into our industry and to make our qualifications more relevant we have recently appointed Keith Raymond to assist us to redevelop our National Diploma in Forestry (Forest Management) Level 6 programme. Keith is well known to our industry, having completed his Bachelor of Forestry Science (Honours) at Canterbury in 1981, then having worked for Forestry Corp, Fletcher Challenge Forests Ltd and Carter Holt Harvey Forests, in harvesting, supply chain management and other senior operations roles until 2007 when he became an independent management consultant. Keith will work with our academic staff, with FITEC and with industry to help us tweak our current Diploma in Forestry to make it more relevant for industry and more attractive for students. The new Forestry Diploma will be offered from 2010.

We have also recently appointed Dr Jenny Aitken, as Head of Department – Biotechnology. Jenny also has considerable experience in the forest industry. She initially worked as a Technician and Scientist at Forest Research Institute for 20 years in plant propagation and tissue culture. She then managed biotechnology, breeding

and nursery production for Carter Holt Harvey for a further 10 years, before she set up her own biotechnology business, The Tree Lab, and a consulting business in New Zealand and overseas. Jenny commences with Waiariki Institute of Technology on a part-time basis, to help us develop several programmes in bio security, biotechnology and sustainable energy.



*Dr Jenny Aitkin*

In a few days our Institute will host the Bay of Plenty Job Summit in our new Forestry School building, which is a regional follow-on from the National Job Summit held recently in Auckland. One opportunity we will be pushing is that education is a way out of our nation's current economic woes and that forestry is an essential industry for our economy which does offer an exciting and rewarding career. Recent trends in student numbers have been encouraging. Now our challenge is to offer students more relevant, and more interesting programmes of study. That will be my challenge for Term 2.

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*Jeremy Christmas*