

Native Forests Management and Public Opinion

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Australian educational institutes have a much greater focus on native forestry and environmental management than is the case in New Zealand - where a greater proportion of our training is targeted on production forestry.

A lot more harvesting of and general experience in, native forestry occurs in Australia compared to New Zealand. Australian foresters can sometimes bring those values and management methods with them when managing production forests.

Fire risk is the second major contrast between NZ and Australian forest management. I arrived in Australia during drought and the transition to being more fire fighter than forester over summer was unusual, but an enjoyable part of the job.

Radiata pine forests are more prevalent in New Zealand and there are a larger number of small scale forest owners.

A large proportion of New Zealanders have at least a few radiata pine trees growing in their back paddock. This seems to make forestry a more socially accepted form of land management in New Zealand compared to Australia (especially where water QUANTITY has been a concern).

An example of this: A few years ago there were protesters fighting against the conversion of forest to dairy land in New Zealand, whilst at the same time there were protests occurring in Australia against farmland being converted into pine forests.

In New Zealand I personally felt proud telling people I was a forester, whilst here in Australia I am a little cautious - after having to defend my career choice on a number of occasions. Despite this I do not regret my transition to Australia from New Zealand, and it has offered me a lot of opportunities that I would not have had if I had remained in New Zealand.

Landscape and rainfall

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My name is Jeremy Mansell and I have lived in South Australia in the Green Triangle (GT) region for nearly three years working as a district forester. I am from Otaki in the Horowhenua and finished a forestry degree and Masters at Canterbury in 2006.

The biggest difference apparent to me between forestry in NZ and Aus is landscape and rainfall. Australia's vast landscape has been one contributing factor to the success of forestry in the GT. As in NZ the easy productive country in the GT was snapped up for the purposes of farming or cropping leaving the marginal country for forestry. The difference being that in the GT the marginal country is, at worst, rolling hill country in NZ terms. This has meant that production systems for establishment, management and harvesting of plantations have become very efficient and cost-effective, resulting in a very profitable plantation industry.

The other big difference apparent to me is rainfall. While Australia has a surplus of space, it does not have a

surplus of rainfall (well not normally). One of the biggest limiting factors to forest establishment/expansion in the GT is rainfall. The GT typically has around 800mm of precipitation per year with a range of 400mm to over 1,000mm. Rainfall (or lack of it) and to a lesser extent fertility produces trees which are well suited to structural timber - something that forestry in the GT has exploited.

While it is not rocket science to identify landscape and rainfall as differences between forestry in NZ and Aus, they drive a lot of decision making, though less so in recent years. With the advent of Managed Investment Schemes, forestry has displacing farming from large tracts of flat land. It will be interesting to see if this is a permanent change in land use and how landscape and rainfall will affect these decisions in the long term.