

Why NZIF is involved in advocacy

James Treadwell

I have some questions for you. Do you believe our industry promotes itself well to the New Zealand public and the government it elects? Do you think our sector is as vocal as the farmers, the green movement, health professionals or the financial advisers? Do you believe we are doing the best we can to promote the multiple benefits of our sector? If like me you answered 'no' to these questions, you probably understand why NZIF is involved in advocacy for the sector and its members.

NZIF as independent advocate

NZIF rules and objectives state we are here to advance the profession of forestry in New Zealand by means including 'acting as an independent advocate for forestry'. We probably are the only forestry organisation which can advocate the views of forestry professionals without being perceived as having some sort of 'hidden' commercial motive. By ensuring we base our advocacy on facts, which in turn can be backed up by research and science, we can maintain our credibility.

NZIF advocacy until a few years ago was restricted to the apolitical aspects of forestry, such as valuation standards and the silvicultural merits of particular species, possibly because of the existence of a Ministry of Forestry and a greater level of understanding within New Zealand's political community of the broad range of benefits offered by forestry.

Starting with the reforms of the 1980s, the political view of forestry has changed from so supportive as to warrant government ownership and investment to indirect hostility to the extent regulatory and other settings have been changed to favour non-forestry land uses. This change is apparent in many decisions, including the decision to sell Crown forests at top dollar (on an opportunity value basis) and then to claw back the public value without compensation by way of legislation such as the Climate Change Response Act, the closing of the Ministry of Forestry, and the failure to provide for a level playing field for forestry exports through international agreements such as the China/New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

Advocacy, or support or recommendation of a particular cause or policy, has over the last few years fallen into NZIF's lap. There are many groups or associations in our sector. On a quick count we came up with over 50 in a very short period. It seems many of us have been expecting another group to speak up for the sector, and too often we have been disappointed by the deathly silence. Your council has decided it is time we took action, and rather than waiting for others to act we are prepared to take a lead on key issues important to our members.

As a professional forester, I see significant benefits for New Zealand in a stronger forest industry. I think the benefits are well known. Not all land use decisions are based on perfect information or rational decision-making. The political and regulatory climate is one of the key determining factors in these decisions. Our competing land users have a very strong advocacy voice in the Federated Farmers. In order for forestry to retain an equal footing we need the same level of advocacy as our competitors.

Asking the hard questions

For those of you who read the NZIF Newsletter, you will have noticed the President's Column has become more issue-focused and hard-hitting. Questions need to be asked and the first place we ask them is within the President's Column. The reason for this is two-fold: first, it is a call to action for our members; and, second, it gives those we are questioning a chance to respond. However we do not stop there. We are holding meetings with politicians of all parties, and we are working with other associations (especially the Wood Processors and Manufacturers Association, the NZ Farm Forestry Association and the NZ Forest Owners Association) to get them on board, or alternatively understand where they are coming from. We are meeting with local body leaders to push our arguments and we are using the media to get our message across.

The media can be a very powerful way to entice action. However it is a double-edged sword and it can often raise opposition to the cause. Add to this the fact the media do not see forestry as very 'sexy' (their words not mine) it is difficult for us to get our message published. To do so we often have to sensationalise the message, something which is foreign to us as foresters.

Member survey

At the end of last year we sent members a survey asking many questions about what you wanted the NZIF to be and do. We were pleasantly surprised to see the strong support for the Institute to be fully involved in advocacy for the sector, with 35% of you placing it as the most important thing and 85% of you placing it in the top five things the council should do. Even in 1978, when members were asked in a questionnaire about what they thought was the most important role the New Zealand Institute of Foresters (Inc.) could fill, most said the Institute should be an advocate for forestry.

So, are we doing a good job? I think not and take the majority of the blame for this. When I look at Federated Farmers, New Zealand Wine, the Council of Trade

Unions and many other organisations I realise we can do so much more. Yes, I know we are a small voluntary organisation with all councillors having full-time jobs, but when I use the word 'we' I mean our sector. As a sector we are receiving millions of dollars per year in membership and levy fees. As a sector we could agree to use a small proportion of this to employ a full-time professional advocate for the industry and agree the issues we want to see change in. Our sector is wallowing in its own self-pity at the moment, often asking 'why don't they understand?' The answer is simple, we have never tried to explain what we do, we have never worked to get the public (or even the workers of our sector) on side, we have never actively, and as one, pushed for what we want, and we have generally reacted rather than been proactive and told our good news stories.

What should we be advocating for?

Many of you may be wondering what we should be advocating for. Currently, the NZIF is advocating against any unfair treatment to forestry. We believe a level playing field is only fair and therefore push back when other land users seem to get benefits, whether intended or not. These benefits include not paying for their pollution (be it carbon, water or land-based) and receiving subsidies which will allow for improvement in land where the return goes directly to the landowner, e.g. dams to improve farm land. However recently NZIF has started advocating on topics where we believe the government is just wrong. This includes the poorly run Overseas Investment Office and the Emissions Trading Scheme.

Our industry competes with other land users for important resources, such as land and government funding for research, and we rely on favourable laws and rules set by central and local government under which we can operate profitably. While I think it is true most in the industry don't expect subsidies or hand-outs, it would be nice to be getting a fair deal on things like inclusion in the Emissions Trading Scheme.

The need for more advocacy

I would like to see the sector agree on the need for more advocacy. As the third largest export earner, I am positive we can add more to New Zealand Inc, grow our sector and become one of this country's most important industries if we work as one and have a plan. This is why the New Zealand Forest Policy is so important. This sector-supported initiative will help us understand what we want to look like in five, 20 and 100 years' time. Once we are clear on this we can then plan an advocacy campaign based on long-term, immediate and short-term goals.

We are naive if we believe we can go about our business and not bring the government and the public on side. Not engaging is what we currently do and I am afraid it is not working. Yes, some of us are doing okay but we can do so much more. Are we happy to sail along satisfied with our lot, or do we want to grow, become important to the New Zealand public and have young people thinking our industry is an option for a

career? We can do so much more, we should be doing so much more, and I am determined to ensure we are doing so much more. New Zealand needs us – we just need to convince them of this fact.

I want to see us advocate externally for the following:

- Equal treatment for all land users
- The right to undertake a long-term business without having property rights removed
- The ability of the sector to grow the economy (via additional planting, further processing etc)
- The importance of forestry in providing employment for small rural towns
- The environmental benefits forestry brings to New Zealand
- The recreational benefits forestry brings to New Zealand.

Internally I would like NZIF to advocate within the sector for:

- The sector to have a stronger voice
- A better understanding of marketing both our products and our image
- Recognition of all parts of the sector.

Views of professional foresters ignored

In May 2000, Wink Sutton wrote in this Journal in regard to a (Labour) Government's decision: 'Not so long ago the forestry profession would have been consulted on this issue, but not now. The government (ever conscious of public opinion) now seeks the advice of others. What has gone wrong? Why are the opinions of professional foresters no longer respected?'

My view is since 2000 the opinions of professional foresters have been completely ignored. In fact, my belief is there are some in the media, government and even MPI who do not even realise there is such a thing as a professional forester. I am unsure how this has come to be, but we only have ourselves to blame. It seems to me we have done nothing to reverse this view for 15 years. Scarily, when you search 'advocacy' in the NZ Journal of Forestry online the last article to use the word was in 2011.

What will NZIF do?

So what is NZIF planning to do about this? First, as we have started, we will speak up when we feel the sector is being unfairly treated. Second, we will engage more frequently with the government and the opposition to ensure our views are being heard on a one-to-one basis. Third, we will work with other sector associations to try to ensure the industry has a voice and the voice is being heard. Fourth, we will promote the findings of the New Zealand Forest Policy when they come out early 2016. Finally, we will challenge anyone (whether within or outside the industry) who makes ill-informed statements about our sector.

There is a danger advocacy is perceived as having negative connotations and it is political muck-raking. However it is imperative NZIF advocacy shares the good news stories (often local), which most often do not get told out of a small group in the region where they happened. For this to occur we need your involvement. We need to hear these stories.

NZIF members have diverse education and experience backgrounds. We should harness this collective wisdom to get a better perspective of the big picture. The challenge still is to get members contributing, as the current risk is

our advocacy represents just a few who are tasked with and prepared to speak out on behalf of the rest of us.

Advocacy is generally considered as one of those 'nice to have' words. I have come to believe it is more than this. I believe with good planning, one voice and a large industry support advocacy has the ability to grow our industry, add value to New Zealand Inc, and we can become an industry everyone wants to be involved with.

James Treadwell is President of the NZIF. Email: president@nzif.co.nz.

Book review

Practical Log Scaling Guide

John Ellis and David Crawley (2015)

Reviewed by Chris Goulding



Every person dealing with the production and sale of logs in this country should have a copy of this guide, which sets out the practical procedures for the measurement of New Zealand roundwood.

The guide updates and combines three earlier publications: *Log Scaling Guide for Exporters* (FRI Bulletin 221, 2001); *Procedures for the Measurement of Roundwood* (FRI, 1994); and *New Zealand Forest Service Information Series #70*. The guide has three major sections: Basic measurements; Domestic methods; and Export log scaling methods. These are supplemented by sections on log quality measurements, conversion between export scales and domestic cubic metres, and check scaling procedures.

This is the definitive manual for the scaling procedures to calculate Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) cubic metres in New Zealand.

There are brief explanations of other scaling systems, including Scribner (USA), the Russian Government Standard (GOST) and the Chinese Guo Biao (GB 4814-84), along with formulae and tables to relate the scaled measure to cubic metres. While Scribner is widely used in the USA West, a description of the Doyle rule would also be useful as it is the most widely used USA rule, especially in the East and South.

Perhaps the best parts of the guide are the extensive photographs showing where and how measurements should be made for a wide variety of situations and log defects, very much illustrating that a picture is worth

a thousand words. Formulae are presented throughout the manual and extensive use is also made of tables, which aids understanding. The formulae are presented in Visual Basic notation. Given that Visual Basic is no longer supported (officially), standard mathematical notation would have been better, although this is a minor deficiency and the formulae are easily understood.

The use of Smalian's formula to estimate cubic metres based on the measurement of both end diameters and length is not readily found. It is in the manual (page 37, Volume from sectional measurements). For shorter logs, less than 6 m, stacks of uniform length logs are most readily measured using this formula, as it not necessary to keep track of which end measurement belongs to the other end measurement of an individual log, merely to sum the square of every diameter measured. Also, a paragraph relating 'air-dry' weight to thrown volume to stacked split volume would have been most useful for the many buyers of firewood.

The guide benefits from the many years of experience of the two authors and is a credit to them and to C3 Ltd. It is endorsed by the Ministry of Primary Industries and has a preface written by David Rhodes, the CEO of the NZ Forest Owners Association.

The Practical Log Scaling Guide is available from C3 Ltd, Tauranga (solutions@C3.co.nz). For further information on the Guide please contact John Ellis (info@scaling.co.nz).