

## Multiple use forestry

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Once upon a time, multiple use forestry was a ‘new, new’ thing. An industry version of the internet. It had its very own Act of Parliament aimed at making it the forest management approach used on publicly owned forest lands. It was the subject of a dedicated paper within the forestry Bachelors degree, with students who argued over whether it was a force of nature or just a blimmin’ nuisance. It also seemed to have an engaged group of followers, both within the forestry management profession and amongst its various publics. Foresters were known to study Landscape Architecture and Recreation. Soil conservation was the primary management value, and people got to enjoy the recreational and aesthetic pleasures of exotic plantation forests like Whakarewarewa and Hanmer Forests.

And then it got parked. Having too many objectives is the enemy of efficiency, apparently. It also got in the way of the sale of forest assets. But then, did we actually need the language of multi-use to practice forestry in a way that maintained benefits over multiple rotations?

Multi-purpose forestry grew out of an environmental movement determined to see natural forests managed more for non-commercial environmental benefits than felled for wood products or bare land. As an idea and a movement it has been sustained in places where natural forests and habitats are particularly at risk of destruction with significant biodiversity and social consequences. In Aotearoa, the separation of natural and planted forests eliminated some of the need for a movement helped by a remarkably robust primary plantation species, a demonstrated commitment to re-planting and working in relatively resilient landscapes.

Forest owners also did their best to reassure by largely embracing market-driven environmental governance structures like Forest Stewardship Council certification (the management of approximately 65% of the country’s plantation estate is now certified by FSC). As a concept, multi-use forestry seemed to be a bit of a family heirloom – interesting to dust off periodically as a reminder of another age, but not something we actually needed to mind. A bit like stage coaches or walking canes. Is it just me or has that now changed?

Policy and community interest in the non-wood benefits and costs of forests seems to break out on a semi-regular basis. People with no previous history of engaging in plantation forestry have been coming out with opinions that range from ‘Whew, thankfully we

planted some trees, we’ve got this’ to ‘Tut tut, can we trust those people to do the right things by the land and our people?’ And, just like that, the language of multi-use forestry is back. Some of that language (like soil conservation, water quality, onshore processing and farm conversion) is exactly the same as it ever was, but some of it includes relative newcomers like health and safety, particulate control at ports and carbon. Some of it is due to now having clear-felled our way through some very difficult country, and some of it is down to changes and challenges in the world at large.

What has changed, however, is the way a broader view of costs and benefits of plantation forests is being encouraged. When you no longer own the forest a simple amendment to the Forests Act 1949 will no longer cut it. In this world, there are carrots (carbon credits, direct planting subsidies, Te Uru Rākau) and sticks (NES-PF, HSWA 2015). As it always is when complexity raises its head, the language is jargonistic and full of acronyms. But on the upside, the need for ethically applied expertise based on a distinct body of knowledge becomes greater. Someone has to lead the way through the maze.

In this and the next edition of the Journal, some of our best thinkers on the subject of multiple use forest management get to show off their work. Scion has been working with the Hawke’s Bay Regional Investment Company and the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council to understand the opportunity for a self-sustaining regional afforestation strategy aimed at using the potential of land to produce a commercial forestry return while reducing soil erosion and other environmental benefits. The papers in this edition introduce the project and then look at: identifying sites for potential afforestation across the erodible landscapes of the Hawke’s Bay and the suitability of tree species within those sites; the afforestation of headwater riparian areas; the biomass and processing opportunities within the region; and the use of the Forest Investment Framework for valuing specific non-wood benefits.

In addition to the Scion contribution, there is a critique of some of the accounting approaches of the ETS. The ‘Last word’ wraps things up with an analysis of the structural conflicts that impact the sale and process of afforestation. All of it should give both Foresters and policy-makers something to think about when it comes to policy settings and decisions about what tree to plant and where.



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