

John Bolton Novis

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John epitomised the values that many of us seek to achieve, but can never fully attain – with his strong professional and personal ethics, his desire to get to the heart of a problem, and ensuring that family comes first. Anyone who worked with him for any length of time recognised his dedication to the forestry sector and to supporting the industry through sound and reasoned policy and planning. John was not afraid to take a contradictory position if he thought the evidence did not support a particular approach, but he also agreed with Einstein that imagination is needed to make the big leaps.



survey work in some of New Zealand's remoter regions, including western Fiordland. This experience equipped him for his subsequent work on indigenous forestry and high country management at the Forest and Range Experimental Station. This was followed by stints at Ashley Forest and Westport, and a year of travel in North and South America.

Having worked through his accumulated savings, John returned to New Zealand in 1980 to complete a Master of Applied Science (with First Class Honours) at Lincoln College, where he examined the energy requirements of exotic production forestry.

University, NZFS and Ministry work

John Bolton Novis (B. For. Sc., M. Appl. Sc.) was born in 1954 and spent most of his early life in North Canterbury, gaining an appreciation for the outdoors, and building his lifelong interests in fishing, swimming and running. Rugby was another passion, although his active participation was interrupted by injury while still at secondary school. His major frustration over the past six years was how his health prevented him from actively pursuing these activities, in particular pitting his wits against trout and salmon at his favourite fishing spots in the Canterbury high country and in the Waiau and Hurunui Rivers.

His early life experiences shaped his career path, and in his final year at high school he was offered a forester trainee position in the NZ Forest Service, which he took up in 1972. This decision started an almost 50-year involvement in forestry. After his initial induction course in Rotorua, John settled into four years at the University of Canterbury, where his dissertation was on the epidemiology of poplar rust in Canterbury. He lamented on more than one occasion the loss of this pathway into training and the industry.

John's initial training and Forest Service experience will be familiar to many of those reading this. For example, stints of up to six weeks in the bush undertaking

The leap from forest management to forest policy occurred in 1982 when John moved to Wellington, initially with the Forest Service and then the Ministry of Forestry. His detailed analysis of issues and ability to strategically assess the implications of proposals was soon recognised, and he was drawn into many of the planning, environmental and research issues of the day. He was also actively involved in the work of the New Zealand Institute of Forestry, serving as both a national councillor and secretary, over two terms from the mid-1980s through to the early 1990s.

During this period John authored (or co-authored) publications on the National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD) system, predicted wood supply and the use of land resource inventory material in rural planning. Two of the highlights that remained with him from the 1980s and 1990s was his time as secretary to the Forest Industries Council, where he worked with the key decision-makers of the day, and being called on to support the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment on a major research project.

John returned to Canterbury in the early 1990s, and over the next 15 years he was heavily involved in the first generation of district and regional plans in Canterbury and on the West Coast, initially for the Ministry of Forestry and subsequently for the Ministry



'If you apply common sense, you won't go wrong.'

of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). His considered views on land use planning and assessment were taken up by his colleagues across New Zealand in their own work (and submissions) on district and regional plans.

John would say that the 1990s was a time of 'personal restructuring' for him, following his marriage to Lisa and the birth of Sarah and Anna. He reduced his hours to be fully involved in bringing up the family and in supporting Lisa.

Benchmark projects

With the creation of MAF in 1998, he brought his skills to that Ministry and later the Ministry for Primary Industry's regional policy team. His experience in resource planning was readily welcomed and he created a niche for himself in leading a number of substantial project areas. His focus remained on forest policy, as was illustrated in the 2002 publication he co-authored with David Rhodes on *The Impact of Incentives on the Development of Plantation Forest Resources in New Zealand*.

During the 2000s and 2010s John led, or made major contributions to, a number of benchmark projects which have helped to build broader community understanding of the forest industry, and of the strides that the sector has made in sustainable resource use. These included the 2009 Forestry Sector Study and the five-yearly Montréal Process country reports on sustainable forest management. As part of this work he participated in several international fora, including the New Zealand delegation to the 13th World Forestry Congress held in Buenos Aires in 2009.

Through each of these projects he sought to raise the image of the industry, demonstrate the connectedness of the sector and better inform the wider public on key areas of forestry activity. His work on the Montréal Process has ensured that New Zealand's progress on sustainable forest management was well documented and benchmarked against key indicators. In these five-yearly reports he ably brought together the issues and information relevant to sustainable forestry and how they are applied to forest management in New Zealand.

Forest resource statistics

An enduring issue for John was the need to improve the quality and value of New Zealand's forest resource statistics. He had a close association with the design and delivery of the NEFD for over 35 years, and in more recent years he managed the annual commercial nursery survey and the preparation of the 2014–16 national wood availability forecasts. The notes he left for his colleagues on his retirement included recommendations for further improving the data collection system.

Integrity and commitment

John will be remembered for his personal integrity and commitment to an industry he devoted almost 50 years to. For his friends and colleagues, it will be his dry sense of humour, tenacity and loyalty that we will recall over the coming years. We all wish that his health had not robbed him of the retirement he richly deserved and of the years he should have shared with Lisa, their daughters and his wider family.