Hancock Forest Views

Hancock Forest Management®
A Division of Hancock Timber Resource Group, A Manulife Asset Management Company

Hancock Forest Management (NZ) Ltd Stakeholder Newsletter July 2018

Welcome to the 18th edition of Hancock Forest Views, a newsletter prepared by Hancock Forest Management New Zealand Limited (HFM NZ) to keep our stakeholders informed of what is happening in our forests. We hope you find the newsletter interesting and welcome your feedback.

HFM NZ farewells Environmental Planner Robin Black

March of this year marked the end of an era for the HFM NZ Environmental Team, with the retirement of Environmental Planner Robin Black. Robin has had a long history in forestry and been a key member of the HFM NZ Environmental Team since 2006.

Robin started out work in the Protection Forestry Division of the New Zealand Forest Research Institute. He then moved to a soil conservator role in the Hawkes Bay Catchment Board and subsequently Hawkes Bay Regional Council. He came back into forestry in 1995 when he took up the role of Environmental Planner for Carter Holt Harvey Forests, based in the Central North Island. Following the sale of Carter Holt Harvey's North Island forests to Taumata Plantations in 2006, Robin joined the Environmental Team of HFM NZ.

With a degree in geology and his background in soil conservation, Robin's knowledge of the geology under our forests is second to none. His passion for the environment has further built up an encyclopaedic knowledge of all things environmental – from freshwater ecology, native flora and fauna, ecological restoration and the identification and protection of historic sites. If anyone encounters anything out of the ordinary in our forests the usual first suggestion has been 'let's ask Robin'!

Robin Black with his wife Wendy at the Board HSE Award presentation

Robin electric fishing with one of many stakeholder groups he has hosted in our forests

During his working career Robin has connected with many, many people, freely sharing his knowledge both within the company and with our stakeholders. Anyone that has interacted with Robin inevitably comments on both his incredible depth of knowledge and also his passion and enthusiasm. These two attributes have left a lasting legacy within HFM NZ with the knowledge he has passed on.

Robin's contribution to our team was recognised by our forest owners in 2017 when he was awarded the 'Taumata and Tiaki Board of Directors' Health, Safety and Environmental Award' to recognise his outstanding contribution to our environmental stewardship programmes.

Robin is not completely lost to us. He has maintained a role on the Mokaihaha Kokako Trust, a group working to achieve the recovery of an endemic population of kokako in the Mokaihaha Reserve adjacent to Kinleith Forest. He also plans to maintain his involvement in the Kinleith Forest Consultative Group. We wish Robin all the best in his retirement.

Kauri Gum digging sites in Northland

Working around historic sites is one of the many challenges of harvesting plantation forests in many parts of New Zealand. This is particularly the case in our Northland forests due to the long history of human occupation in the area. Many of the historic sites in Taumata Plantations' Northland forests are the result of Maori occupation, however, we also encounter many sites associated with early European settlement. One of the more prolific European historic features are the remnants of past Kauri gum digging.

Kauri gum is formed where resin leaked out of fractures in the bark of Kauri trees. After the trees died and had fallen to the ground, the remnant pieces of gum were left behind in the soil and over time became fossilised. From the 19th century, Kauri gum became a valuable commodity used in the manufacture of varnish. Prospectors flocked to the gum fields in the northern parts of the North Island and from the 1840's Kauri gum became a major export from NZ to Britain and North America.

Mamaranui and Rotu Forests, which are located in the Kaihu Valley north of Dargaville, contain significant evidence of past gum digging. It has been reported that at one time there were over 1,000 Dalmatians working in the area. It was an important economic activity in the area from the 1870's to 1920's.

Gum diggers often worked on the drier hills in winter and headed for the swamps in summer. Teams would locate the gum using very long spears (centre). Here they are keeping the pit relatively dry with a simple hand-powered water pump as men took turns to dig. Photo source: Ipenz.org.nz

Gum diggers camp in Manuka scrublands in Northland. Photo source: teara.govt.nz

In the 1930's, cheaper synthetics were developed for making varnish and the price of gum fell. By the 1940's the industry was all but over. Today, the gum digging holes and the remains of gum diggers' camps provide the evidence of past activity. As there was little woody vegetation remaining in the areas, diggers built chimneys out of sods and used sacking for their roofing and walls. Generally, you can still see the hut terraces and remains of the sod chimneys. A few camps remain largely visible with artefacts such as pieces of glass bottles, tin, crockery and some saddlery brass pieces found in the past.

Typical gum digging hole in Mamarunui Forest north of Dargaville

Any pre-1900 historic sites are protected under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act. All sites identified from archaeological surveys are included in harvest plans, with plans developed to harvest the trees as carefully as

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possible to minimise damage to the sites. Inevitably, further sites are found during harvest and crews are fully briefed on what to look out for prior to harvest and processes to follow if they find anything unusual.

After harvest, the sites are excluded from planting and checked annually by HFM NZ staff to remove any wilding pine regeneration. In this way it hoped that our historic heritage under our forests will be protected for generations to come.

A piece of fossilised Kauri gum

Positive signs for Kiwi recovery in Northern Forests

North Island Brown Kiwi inhabit pine forest in many parts of Northland and HFM NZ works closely with the Northland Kiwi Recovery Group to do our part to assist with kiwi recovery. HFM NZ undertakes predator control in Whatoro Forest north of Dargaville, Gammons Forest south of Kaikohe and also provides support to a number of other kiwi recovery groups operating adjacent to our Northern region forests.

As part of our kiwi protection initiatives we undertake annual call monitoring in a number of our Northern forests to gauge population levels. As kiwi are nocturnal and well camouflaged, monitoring kiwi populations directly would be very difficult. However, they have distinctive calls which can be used to monitor population levels. HFM NZ uses this information both to understand where we are likely to encounter kiwi during our operations and also to monitor the success of our predator control programmes.

Kiwi call monitoring was in the past a manual operation, with people spending long cold nights out in the forest listening and recording calls. In recent years monitoring has become much easier with the assistance of electronic listening devices. These are left out in the forest for several nights to record calls which are then analysed to identify any kiwi calls during the period. Call monitoring is generally undertaken through the May-June period when kiwi are most vocal.

Typical kiwi nest in pine forest. All operations staff are provided with training to be on the look out for kiwi and in particular nesting sites. If located, DOC staff are called in to provide assistance.

We have just finished the preliminary analysis of this year's calling data and were delighted to find that kiwi numbers appear to be on the increase. As young and juvenile kiwi don't call, we anticipated several years delay before any population increase would show up in call monitoring, which has been the case. However, as anticipated, the numbers appear to be on the rise.

This year's data shows an 86% increase in calling in Whatoro Forest over last years. Other forests under predator control are also showing positive signs, with a doubling in Whanui Forest, north-east of Whangarei, which is included within the Kiwi Coast project area.

While it was expected that numbers should rise with effective predator control, it is still very satisfying to see the positive signs. It is particularly pleasing in Whatoro Forest which has been actively harvested over the last 9 years, with 1,230 ha harvested to date and first rotation harvest now nearing completion.

The monitoring results show that it is it possible to maintain and even increase kiwi populations through the harvest cycle with the correct processes in place. It also supports the advice we have received from Kiwi's for Kiwi and Kiwi Coast advisors, that predator control is the absolute key intervention to assist kiwi survival.

New National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry comes into force

In May of this year the new National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry came into force. This marked a significant milestone for the forest industry, with the rules in Regional and District Plans for eight key plantation forestry activities being replaced with one set of rules that apply across the country.

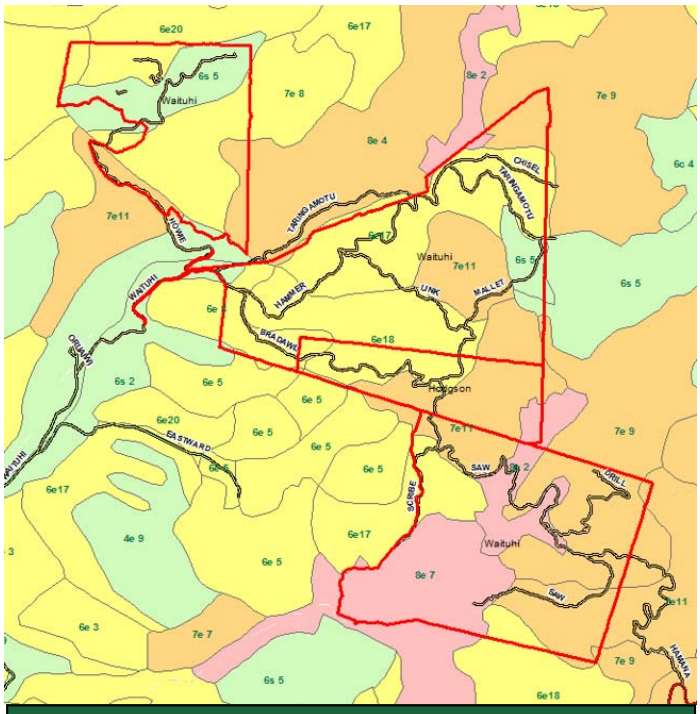
To account for variation in operating conditions, the National Environmental Standard is underpinned by Erosion Susceptibility Mapping. The mapping system developed by University of Canterbury and Landcare Research divides NZ into four erosion risk categories, from low risk (green zone) through to very high risk (red zone). This mapping then underpins the activity status and rule sets for activities such as harvesting, road construction and planting.

For the first time in New Zealand, both new planting and replanting on the most erosion prone country now requires resource consent from the Regional Council to ensure the land is suitable for production forestry and the planting layout is workable for future harvesting.

To achieve consistency at a national level has inevitably resulted in an increase in the level of regulation in some regions. Forest managers in many regions now face rules for activities that were previously fully permitted. For HFM NZ, many of our regions already required consent for key operations and those consents continue to apply. However, we have had to apply for new consents in a number of our forests under the NES.

The NES also introduces new rules to manage biodiversity impacts, such as restrictions on activities impacting fish spawning and native bird nesting.

It is hoped that the new regulations will result in better environmental outcomes in the field and less time and resources wasted in bureaucratic RMA processes - debating the same issues with regional and district councils around the country.



Example erosion risk mapping for a hill country forest in the King Country

FSC® and NZS 4708 Audit August 2018

As most readers will be aware, Hancock Forest Management is certified to both FSC* (Forest Stewardship Council®) and NZ Standard 4708. This year we are being audited against both in the week commencing 13th August. As a stakeholder you should have received notification of the audit via email from our auditors. If this is not the case and you wish to speak to the auditors for any reason, please contact our Environmental Manager, Sally Strang Ph 0274 779 015 or email sstrang@hnrg.com.

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