



Biodiversity position statement

Karen Shaw

The New Zealand Institute of Forestry Environmental Working Group has, over the last 18 months, developed a position statement on Biodiversity for consideration by NZIF members.

To supplement the first general publication of the position statement, and encourage the comments of NZIF members and journal readers, we have sought to have several articles on Biodiversity published in the same issue of NZ Forestry. The objective was to provide a variety of perspectives which would stimulate debate among NZIF members and readers of NZ Forestry.

Biodiversity as an issue has become increasingly important both domestically and internationally. The Resource Management Act has meant that territorial authorities are increasingly required to confront biodiversity issues. New Zealand has also signed the Convention on Biological Diversity, which has implications for the management of natural resources in New Zealand. In addition, a number of letters have already been published in NZ Forestry on the subject of biodiversity.

If there are perspectives which appear to be excluded from the position statement, and NZIF members consider that they should be included, we want to know. All members are encouraged to provide feedback to Karen Shaw, at Opus International Consultants Limited, PO Box 3057, Hamilton, by December 22, 1997 (Tel. 025 276 3935. Fax. 07 838 9324).

Action items under the position statement will be developed once comment has been received from NZIF members.

The position statement is as follows:

Biodiversity

1.0 Why is Biodiversity an issue for NZIF?

- 1.1 Biodiversity is the variety of life, including plants, animals and micro-organisms and the processes which sustain them.
- 1.2 The New Zealand Institute of Forestry (NZIF) is an organisation whose members represent a sector of the natural resource management industry, and who actively seek to influence natural resource policy and use of natural resources at both an operational and a strategic level.
- 1.3 Forest biodiversity varies in accor-

dance with the variety of age-classes, managed species, understorey species, soil types, gene pool(s), macro- and micro-climates, etc. existing in the planted and natural landscape. Planted and natural forest landscapes exhibit different levels of biodiversity based on their management objectives.

- 1.4 NZIF recognises the importance of biodiversity in both planted and natural landscapes, its role in providing current and future resources and its contribution to environmental quality. In doing so, the NZIF supports the New Zealand Government as a signatory to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.
- 2.0 NZIF members recognise the importance of **public policy** to manage biodiversity in New Zealand.
- 2.1 Accordingly, NZIF members seek:
 - i the protection, maintenance and enhancement of native ecosystems including forests, scrub, grasslands and wetlands through application of relevant legislation such as the Forest Act 1949, Resource Management Act 1991, Conservation Act 1987, Biosecurity Act 1993, and the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms legislation;
 - ii the provision of resources for scientific effort and education in biodiversity;
 - iii a greater focus on the non-market values of forests and other ecosystems.
- 3.0 NZIF members recognise the importance of **research and education** to identify and enhance biodiversity in New Zealand.
- 3.1 Accordingly, NZIF members support:
 - i taxonomic studies to increase our knowledge of the biodiversity in natural environments;
 - ii interdisciplinary ecosystem studies to understand the processes that maintain forest biodiversity and the functional role of that biodiversity;
 - iii surveys and monitoring to identify appropriate ecological, geophysical, social and economic criteria and indicators of biodiversity;

- iv forest health and biotechnology research to help maintain and protect existing forest genetic resources;
- v development of management options to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

4.0 NZIF members recognise the importance of identifying safe and efficient operational practices to enhance and maintain biodiversity in a productive environment.

4.1 Accordingly, NZIF members seek the identification and development of:

- i methods to conserve indigenous biodiversity and enhance biodiversity in productive environments, e.g. protection of existing indigenous forest remnants;
- ii techniques to conserve forest genetic resources and enhance them to provide for increased diversity, ecological robustness and productivity within productive environments.

5.0 NZIF seeks to assist the New

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Zealand Government in responding to the Convention on Biological Diversity by providing research effort, policy support and information on operational processes which facil-

itate the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity in New Zealand forests under our management.

6.0 In addition, Institute members shall encourage all forestry sector partici-

pants to support and facilitate the identification of biodiversity indicators and ways to manage natural resources so that biodiversity in New Zealand is enhanced and maintained.

Biodiversity in New Zealand Plantation Forestry – an Industry Perspective

W.J. Dyck*

Abstract

New Zealand plantation forests are not biological deserts and can support considerable biodiversity in their understoreys. More importantly, as signatories to both the New Zealand Forest Accord and the Principles for Commercial Plantation Forest Management in New Zealand, most forest managers are committed to the conservation of indigenous biodiversity in reserve areas and to the conservation of threatened species that are known to occur in their plantation forests.

Introduction

New Zealand's plantation forests provide multiple values including protection of water and soil resources, carbon sequestration, amenity, as well as wood production. They also can contain a perhaps surprisingly high level of biodiversity of both indigenous and exotic species, both terrestrial and aquatic (Allen 1995a, Ogden 1997, Rowe 1996). However, is this biodiversity important, and should it be deliberately managed? This paper presents a plantation forest industry perspective on biodiversity and the role of plantation forest management in conserving New Zealand's unique indigenous biodiversity for future generations. The view presented draws heavily on the underlying intent of the Principles for Commercial Plantation Forest Management in New Zealand.

New Zealand Forestry

The fact that plantation forestry makes a major contribution to New Zealand's economy (11.8% export earnings, 5.3% GDP) is well known (NZFOA 1997). It does this through the production and processing of 16.8 million m³ of plantation-grown wood from less than 6% (1.54 million ha) of the country's land area. As a comparison, less than 100,000 m³ of wood is produced from New Zealand's natural forest, which comprises 24% of the land area. The economic importance of plantation forestry will become even greater as the existing forests mature and more pasture is planted.

New Zealand's indigenous biodiversity resides primarily in the country's remaining natural areas, primarily forest. However, only one-third of the country's original natural forest area that was present before Maori and European settlement began exists today. While we may bemoan the loss of much of our natural heritage, New Zealand is fortunate, and also somewhat unique, in having been able to set aside virtually all its remaining natural forest for conservation purposes. Both food and fibre (including wood) are produced from "farms".

The advantages of producing wood from an intensively managed plantation forest versus harvesting natural, unmanaged forests are similar to producing agricultural crops on farms rather

than gathering food from natural ecosystems. Just as it is impossible to support the world's 5.5 billion people without intensive agriculture, it will become increasingly impossible to meet world demand for wood and fibre products without greater reliance on intensively-managed planted forests. However, despite their obvious commercial significance, in comparison to conventional agricultural crops, plantation forests are expected to provide a greater level of environmental benefits. They do this by protecting soil and water values, and by providing social benefits such as recreation and hunting. They also provide a greater level of biodiversity than agricultural crops.

The Forest Accord and the Principles

New Zealand forestry is also unique in having signed a number of very important environmental agreements with the country's major conservation groups. These were very significant milestones for both the conservation of biodiversity and a commitment to sustainable forest management. The New Zealand Forest Accord was signed in August 1991 and the Principles for Commercial Plantation Forest Management in New Zealand was signed in December 1995. The majority of New Zealand's forestry companies are signatories to these documents through the New Zealand Forest Owners' Association. Signatories to the Principles also include the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association Inc., Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc., World Wide Fund for Nature New Zealand, Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand Inc., and Maruia Society Inc.

The Forest Accord distinguishes between natural and plantation forestry and recognises the important heritage value of the remaining natural forest and the value of commercial plantation forests as an essential source of renewable fibre. It also acknowledges that the existing area of natural indigenous forest should be maintained and enhanced and that plantation forests should not replace natural forest and other natural areas. While the Forest Accord does not exclude signatories from extracting wood from the remaining natural forest on a sustainable basis, the current harvest from natural forests is very small and declining.

The Principles for Commercial Plantation Forest Management in New Zealand were developed to promote understanding between the signatory parties with a view to New Zealand achieving environmental excellence in plantation forest management and participating as an effective advocate internationally for the sustainable management of plantation forests and the protection, preservation, and sustainable management of natural forests. The Principles recognise the interdependence of ecological, economic, and social sustainability and acknowledge that plantation forests were established for commercial purposes. However, they also recognise the contribution that plantation managers can make to protecting environmental values and to sustainable land use.

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