

A man who thought outside the square

Ross Macarthur
1923-2005

Ross Macarthur, a former Chief Soil Conservator of the Marlborough Catchment Board and past member of the New Zealand Institute of Forestry has died aged 82 after a career spent mainly in Marlborough where he was involved in the design, planning and execution of erosion control and conservation projects.



Born in Wellington, he was educated at Scots College, Victoria University and Lincoln College and post World War Two at Oxford University where he graduated with honours in 1948. During the war years he served as a pilot and navigator with the New Zealand Air Force and remained as a general reserve until 1953.

Between 1948 and 1953 he worked for the NZ Forest Service in Canterbury and at the Forest Research Institute until joining the Southland Catchment Board as a soil conservator and land classifier, a position he held until 1957. Then began his long association lasting 48 years with conservation and forestry in Marlborough, where he was of Chief Soil Conservator of the Marlborough Catchment Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Marlborough Forestry Corporation until his retirement in 1985.

During this time he initiated the first high country run plan at Rainbow Station and also commenced whole catchment approaches to land management, which included the Wairau Valley flood protection and the restoration of the severely eroded Wither Hills. Other key initiatives of the time were the introduction of fire processes to reduce burning on the Northbank hills of the Wairau and Northbank catchment control scheme. This led to a change of land use in the area to forestry.

As a consequence the NZ Forest Service, private landowners and some regional bodies acquired land to develop into forest. Former mayor Sid Harding and Ross were the driving forces behind the formation of Marlborough Forestry Corporation that was formed with various local authorities. This is now the Marlborough Regional Forest jointly owned by Marlborough and Kaikoura District Councils with an annual budgeted profit of about four million dollars and providing many benefits to the community.

He investigated the possibility of skyline logging to remove mature trees from steep hills, travelling extensively to America, Canada and Europe to learn advanced extraction methods. In 1971 he became a founding member of the

Marlborough Forest Owners Association and remained on the committee until 1992, becoming an honorary member in 1995. For 12 years he was a member of the Nelson Lakes National Park Board and involved in the building of the Rotoiti lodge for school use.

In recognition of his outstanding service in the Marlborough district, he was awarded the Paul Harris award by the Blenheim Rotary Club. Contemporaries remember him as a visionary, a man who thought outside the square, was always open to new ideas and techniques and encouraged others to be the same. His

many other interests from time to time included Social Credit philosophy, colour therapy, UFOs and growing organics, discussions of which enlivened many field trips.

He is survived by his wife Sylvia and sons Ian and Peter.

Adapted from the Marlborough Express 17/6/05 by Maurice Williamson

New wood availability forecast

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This will increase the number of regions from 10 to 13.

Next steps

The proposed wood availability methodology will be trialed in a region (possibly Nelson or Marlborough) when the new yield tables have been completed. Users of the forecasts will be asked to review the results with respect to credibility and usefulness. Once this has been done and any further refinements have been made, regional forecasts will be undertaken across the country.

In conjunction with the wood availability forecasts a national harvesting intentions survey of major forest owners is planned. This will seek harvesting intentions for each of the 13 regions. These will be used as starting points in the wood availability models.

Input from resource foresters in the major companies and consultancies will be sought to ensure realistic forecasts are produced. This will occur through both the NEFD Steering Committee and through discussions at a regional level.

If you have any questions or comments please contact Paul Lane (email paul.lane@maf.govt.nz).