

# Getting attention for forestry

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Shouting louder and longer seems to get attention. It may be unfair, but it is often the reality. A lot of media coverage at the moment concerns the accident rate in forestry. This year the accident rate has been nothing short of appalling with six deaths so far. The average over the past few years has been a third of that, a figure which was still too high. It is not at the top of the news every day, but it is in the headlines frequently.

However, the number of deaths and injuries from quad bikes does not hit the headlines in the same way. I do not have the exact figures for this year, but the number killed over the past few years has been around five each year, similar to the number of deaths in forestry. Since January there will also have been over 400 serious injuries from quad bike accidents on farms, if the recent average is maintained.

Federated Farmers do not shout loudly about the quad bike accidents, certainly not in the way that the Council of Trade Unions does about accidents in forestry. Why is this? For some reason Federated Farmers do not want to upset their members by saying loudly that it is unacceptable to have over 800 serious injuries a year, along with a number of deaths, from quad bike accidents on farms. Helen Kelly of the Council of Trade Unions has no such inhibitions about the problems in forestry for the workers involved. She is on the radio or television whenever she gets the chance, complaining about the risks, which is why forestry seems to be so much in the news for the wrong reasons.

What about Fonterra and the Clean Streams accord? The most recent announcement is Fonterra proclaiming that they expect to have 100 per cent of the streams on their suppliers' dairy farms fenced off from stock by 2017. Riparian planting for these fenced off areas would have to wait a lot longer and be completed by 2030, another 17 years away.

Fencing streams and rivers from livestock will help reduce the worrying nitrogen pollution. Therefore we

should not complain if a company tries to put right a long-term problem. However, the reality is that the accord excludes all streams less than 30 centimetres deep or a metre wide. I understand that streams less than 30 centimetres deep or a metre wide contribute about 40 per cent of run-off from dairy farms.

This brings us to the NZIF conference where the Taranaki Regional Council seems to be carrying out the stream fencing properly and promptly, but without a loud shout anywhere. They are managing the process of fencing off all waterways, including all those less than a metre wide, and ensuring riparian planting within the fenced off areas, all by the end of 2015. This is 15 years sooner than Fonterra plan. Most of us have heard about Fonterra's targets, but hardly any of us knew how well Taranaki Regional Council were doing until the conference last month.

Those of you who have managed to keep with me so far may be asking - what is my point? It is that the whole truth is not always the winner. It is often whoever shouts the loudest, talks to the media most or writes the most press releases.

We all know that forestry is good for the country, that wood is an excellent building material as well as being genuinely sustainable. Trees are vital for holding the soil on highly erodible hill country and as riparian planting to help reduce nitrogen run-off. Trees also mix very well with farming, easing some of the lumps and bumps caused by the weather and the economic ups and downs. Logs and timber also bring in many billions of dollars in export earnings.

However, we do not tell enough people often enough and loud enough about the value of trees and timber grown in New Zealand. Partly it is a shortage of resources. But we are often too complacent. Trees are good, so is motherhood and apple pie. We may not think we need to keep telling everyone the benefits of forestry, but we must do this regularly. Otherwise louder voices will win.

