
Changes proposed to resource management procedures

There are several changes proposed to resource management procedures that are currently with the Government for consideration. Any change to these procedures will have major implications for the forestry industry.

Resource Management Amendment Bill

The Ministry for the Environment was due to release a draft amendment Bill to the RMA in late July. Due to the current political climate the proposed Bill will be as non-controversial as possible to ensure its success. The Bill will be short and kept to technical issues, such as coastal rentals and treatment of land reclamations. Issues that are under consideration for inclusion include:

- recognition of existing investments,
- priority for current right holders over new applicants (when rights come up for renewal),
- the treatment of frivolous and vexatious objections,
- appeal provisions for costs,
- clarification of notification procedures,
- extension of the range of economic instruments available to Local Authorities.

The Ministry will only go ahead with any of these issues if it is satisfied that the proposals will be beneficial and not create a new set of problems.

Environment Amendment Bill

This Private Member's Bill was introduced into the House by Hon. Peter Dunne in late 1991. Submissions were called in 1991 but have only recently received a hearing. The Bill is designed to amend just one section of the Environment Act; however it has far-reaching implications. The proposed amendment reads:

"Section 31 of the principal Act is hereby amended by inserting after paragraph (a), the following paragraph: (aa) To report to the Minister on the implications for and the effects upon the sustainability of the environment of all aspects of Government policy."

This would sanction, by statute, the Ministry for the Environment measuring all government policy against "sustainability of the environment", which is not defined. Those opposing the Bill say it means that it promotes the Ministry's

determination of "sustainability of the environment" above other more acceptable international definitions, and that it does so at the expense of international competitiveness, investment implications, issues regarding employment and unemployment, etc. Oral submissions on this Bill were to be heard in July.

Planning Tribunal

It is understood that the Justice Department is considering removing the specialist role of the Planning Tribunal under the Court review process. This would mean that the planning judges would be full District Court judges and hear criminal as well as resource management cases; the inverse would also be true. This move could be seen as a solution to the backlog of District Court cases. Those against such

a move are concerned that we could lose the long-established expertise of the widely respected Tribunal. It appears that we now, more than ever, need the Tribunal, as there are a number of major regional policy statements/district plans appeals coming before the Tribunal. The Hon. Doug Graham, Minister of Justice, has written to the Resource Management Law Association informing them of the situation and expressing his concerns about such a move. It seems most sensible to retain a separate Planning Tribunal, hearing only resource management and related cases.

Hellen Agnew
NZIF Environmental Working Group

Environmental Working Group update

Following representation made at the Taupo AGM the Environmental Working Group (EWG) has expanded its scope of activities to encompass wood processing in addition to forest growing, as being part of the same continuum. John Gifford from FRI has joined the EWG to help boost the EWG's capabilities in the area of wood processing.

Dougal Morrison will be coordinating the preparation of the NZIF position statement on biodiversity. Thanks to those NZIF members who have offered to assist with this process.

Auckland Meeting

A meeting of the Montreal Partners (Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia, and USA) considering Standards and Criteria for Sustainable Forest Management will be held in Auckland from October 30 to November 3. The NZIF will be invited to attend as an observer and we will keep members informed of activities associated with the meeting.

The NZIF has been asked to provide comment on the Forest Accord *Principles for Commercial Plantation Forestry Man-*

agement with the distinct possibility of taking a direct part in the process at a later date. We will endeavour to invite comment from members on the *Principles* if and when this becomes appropriate.

The NZIF has been approached by the International Union of Societies of Forestry for comment on whether the IUSF should join the Forestry Stewardship Council. Council was to consider this idea at its meeting in late July.

The Ministry for the Environment has released a *Sustainable Land Management Strategy*. The EWG will be providing comment on this to MfE by their deadline of August 14.

Carbon sequestration

Colin O'Loughlin and Ket Bradshaw will form the nucleus of an EWG subgroup working on carbon sequestration issues.

For further comment or clarification please contact the undersigned, C/- Ministry of Forestry, P.O. Box 1610, Wellington.

Tim Thorpe
Convener