

President's comment

A profitable forestry sector should be the priority, not carbon forests

News can date rapidly. As I write this, agreements between National and Act, the Maori Party and United Future have been announced and we are waiting to learn the makeup of the new Cabinet. By the time you read this, the Cabinet will be known, Parliament may have started its final sitting for the year and the ETS legislation may have been suspended.

Only a few months ago the NZIF responded to the Green Party's request for submissions as to whether or not it should support the Labour Government to allow the ETS Bill to be enacted or whether it was better to delay until after the election. Our advice was that enactment should be delayed and that there was no need to push the Bill through in haste. This was based on the fact that no sector except forestry was included in the scheme until 2010 and it was better to deal with some of the concerns with the Bill, rather than passing it and then face significant amendments in the new Parliament. We also took into account announcements from National that if it became the Government it intended to make changes. In view of this uncertainty, we felt a delay until after the election was preferable. While the Green Party did not accept our advice, it seems that our reading of the situation was correct. Unfortunately we now have even more uncertainty.

I have always been disappointed with New Zealand's climate change policies, particularly as they relate to forestry. The focus has been on the rules of the Kyoto Protocol and on how to reduce New Zealand's liabilities under those rules (particularly from deforestation activity). The rules became embedded in domestic policy. But the Protocol does not require a country to do this; it only has to use the rules to account "at the border". Where the rules are nonsensical (trees standing at 31 December 1989 are somehow different from trees planted on 1 January 1990 or all the carbon runs out of the trunk of a tree as soon as it is harvested) there should be added incentive to adopt a more sensible domestic policy. My preference is for a policy that recognises all the benefits of forests, including their climate change mitigation role, and that sets out to maximise the collective value.

The current focus on carbon forests detracts from the real challenge we face as a sector; how to improve the viability and profitability of commercial forestry so that people want to invest in it because it is a good business. If we could achieve that, there will be an increase in stored carbon.



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But a whole lot of carbon forests will not create a profitable forestry sector. How many carbon forests will turn out to be “plant it and leave it” forests and what issues will that raise for forest health, fire protection, wilding pines, etc? In 30 years time, when no more carbon credits are available from the land they stand on, will a flood of low quality wood be released on to markets to compete with the resource of those who have put in the effort to produce a superior product, develop markets, undertake research, etc?

In the last issue of the Journal (Vol 53(2)) I made a mistake in naming the new Fellows' Committee. The members are John Galbraith (who was elected convenor at the Committee's first meeting), Tony Grayburn and Colin O'Loughlin. My apologies for this mistake.

Andrew McEwen

Equations 'important' in professional journal

Dear Editor

I was browsing the NZ Journal Forestry (August 2008) and couldn't help but notice the article “A Problem with Equations..”, which concluded that “the Journal is much too important to be clogged with equations”.

I beg to differ. In my view, the Journal services a small numbers based profession and is too important not to include equations. With the proviso that an explanatory narrative should always be included as an alternative, equations provide a complementary way of analysing and understanding a topic and can provide elegant and succinct insights for those who understand them.

Keep up the good work.

Jan Kerr

Free NZ Institute of Forestry membership for students



The New Zealand Institute of Forestry (NZIF) is offering students the opportunity to join for free. The Institute is an association of professional foresters. As an independent advocate for forestry it offers advice on issues of significance that are related to forestry, and has profoundly influenced legislation relating to a number of recent issues. It serves as an ethical guide for foresters, and sets standards for professional forester registration. In addition, the NZIF provides several fora for debate and ensures that professionals interact socially. Student members are eligible for a range of benefits, including:

- A weekly electronic newsletter
- Access to all issues of the New Zealand Journal of Forestry on-line (back to the very first issue over 80 years ago)
- Eligibility for scholarships
- Financial support for attending the NZIF annual conference
- Free attendance (along with drink and nibbles) at the Canterbury NZIF local section's event evenings
- A “Meet the employer” evening at the NZ School of Forestry each year
- A student debate sponsored by the NZIF
- A student representative on the NZIF Council (the Institute's governing body).

Join on-line at <http://www.forestry.org.nz>, and name your professors (ensure that they are members first) as nominators. The stated \$45 fee on the form is officially “refunded” by the Institute's council (no transactions will apply).

Join today!