EDITORIAL

YOUR JOURNAL

My brief, on being persuaded to take over the journal editorship in mid February, was to change the journal format to A4, make it more readable and relevant. Statements like "articles are to be pithy", "more photographs", "amalgamate the newsletter" and "advertisements" were suggested. So here it is, your first 'new format' issue. Is it what you expected?

On taking up the job I was not clear on what was needed. With the help of the editorial committee and comments by John Holloway, we defined the Journal Policy. Read it — it's on the title page. However, the journal is still evolving and these first issues should be seen as part of this transition. For example, we are currently relying on papers already submitted and written with the former style in mind.

I am not sure what you are looking for and would therefore appreciate your comments. My feeling is that we need to be flexible and should try various options. As you see from the policy statement, the journal is trying to meet several objectives ranging from keeping you abreast of Institute news to presenting learned papers, to provoking thought about new issues.

I believe it is also important that high standards are maintained. Therefore we have decided that longer articles and technical notes will still be refereed and carefully edited. Attention is also being given to layout and design.

However, I believe the journal should be stimulating and easily read, and this suggests changes in the way articles are written and presented. Some ideas to achieve this are given in the ‘Advice to Contributors’ to be found on the back page. I also hope we will see a wide range of topics covered. Most articles should be shorter than in the past, but I am keen to have feature articles (or perhaps reviews) in which particular subjects are highlighted.

There are to be four issues a year. We are therefore depending on receiving a good flow of material. Currently we are aiming for sections called: 'Comment', 'Recent Events', 'Letters', 'Institute News', 'New Information' as well as 'Articles and Feature Articles'. Please feel free to contribute to any of these.

Don J. Mead
Editor

ENVIRONMENTAL ADMINISTRATION CHANGES

How will they affect rural fire legislation and control?

A.N. Cooper, Chief Fire Control Officer, NZ Forest Service

The Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 is administered in the New Zealand Forest Service on behalf of the Minister of Forests.

The Minister is the rural fire authority for all State land, which includes national parks, scenic reserves, maritime parks, indigenous and exotic forests administered by the Forest Service (including leased land) and other lands of the Crown within the meaning of section 176 of the Land Act 1948, e.g. unalienated Crown land.

The Forest Service has had the legal authority to prevent, control and suppress fires in all State areas. The organisation to do this, since 1955, has been mainly based on the exotic forest infrastructure. The Forest Service has also had other responsibilities in rural fire control such as collecting fire hazard data, training, organising meetings, standardising equipment, coordinating fire plans, declaring regional fire emergencies. Administrative responsibilities have included maintaining a panel of rural fire mediators and register of voluntary fire forces, preparing orders and notices for new, or changes to the dozens of rural fire districts, many of which do not include state forests, proposing and assisting with legislative changes and other work for the Minister. Forging links with other Government departments and agencies (Defence, Fire Service Commission) and national organisations working to improve fire control in rural areas (Federated Farmers, Forest Owners, NZ Counties Association) has been an important facet of Forest Service work.

Establishing the Department of Conservation, the Forestry Corporation and the Land Development and Management Corporation will change all that. State lands not allocated to production uses (national parks, scenic reserves, most forest parks, open indigenous and protection forests, etc) will become the responsibility of the Minister of Conservation and control will pass from the Forest Service. Similarly control of indigenous and exotic forest production lands will pass to the Forestry Corporation.

Changes to the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 will be needed to meet this new situation.

This would mean dividing the State fire control organisation into two fire authorities. The Act will need amending, mainly by name changes — in-
Introducing the Minister of Conservation and his department, the Board and Forestry Corporation, and nomenclature for officers of both authorities, especially regional controlling officers who will have to become principal rural fire officers. Out would go references to the Forest Service and Conservators of Forests.

The amended Act would allow both organisations to work as independent fire authorities in the same way as a county or rural fire committee authority. Cooperative arrangements could be made with other fire authorities as well as each other. The latter will be essential as there will be areas where production and conservation land adjoins or is interwoven. It will be important to decide whether production forest fire safety margins are to take precedence in that situation.

The Forestry Corporation looks like becoming the strongest rural fire authority in New Zealand in manpower, equipment and organisation concentrated on exotic forest stations and sawmills throughout the country. It would have the strength to assist other rural fire authorities in an emergency, just as the Forest Service has done in the past, but assistance would probably be charged for.

The Corporation may have to carefully assess needs and dangers within its own area before giving assistance to others because its responsibilities probably will be much more specific than the Forest Service's.

Accepting that all these suggestions are possibilities, a major area of uncertainty still exists — the administration of the Forest and Rural Fires Act.

The future of the Forest Service's sectoral services (research, advisory services, forest health, training, etc) has not yet been decided. If a stand-alone department is approved by Government, the Minister of Forests will still presumably be in charge and the Act could be administered as at present.

If sectoral services become a division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Minister of Agriculture would be the link with Parliament. Another possibility is administration of the Act by the Forestry Corporation on a contract basis to Government through the Minister.

The Department of Conservation might also take the job but will, at first, be preoccupied building up a completely new organisation.

The Fire Service Commission is another possibility. It is responsible to the Minister of Internal Affairs, and has an extremely strong head office, regional and area command organisation.

A remaining uncertainty concerns regional emergencies and the prohibition of fires when the Director General of Forests and Conservator of Forests titles cease to exist.

Sir,

In 1980 John Holloway wrote an editorial* advocating dropping the word "exotic". He presented good reasons for using the term "plantation" instead.

Since 1984 I have tried in both speaking and writing to avoid the use of the word "exotic" and to replace it with the word "plantation". This was despite the fact that I was, during some of that time, leader of the "Exotic" Forest Management Research. In those two years I have found no occasions where the word "plantation" was not appropriate. Even more important, I am convinced that when talking to those outside our profession, or to fellow professionals overseas, "plantation" was a much more appropriate word than "exotic". Our expertise is in "plantation" management, not "exotic" management.

We do not talk about cows, wool or kiwifruit as being exotic anymore. Has the time come to regard radiata pine and her sisters as no longer being aliens?

As we go more international it is most important that we remove the word "exotic" from our language and talk and write only about "plantations".

Wink Sutton
Tasman Forestry Ltd,
Rotorua

The Minister of State Services has announced that the Government has decided to set up a separate Ministry of Forestry. This agency is to be responsible for forest policy advice to the Government, forestry advisory services, training and forest research. It would also control regulations governing quarantine and forest diseases, rural fires, timber preservation standards and timber grading.

The new head of the Department of Conservation has recently been announced and is to be Ken Piddington.

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