School of Forestry news

New staff at School
Professor Roger Sands, a tree physiologist from the University of Melbourne, has taken over the reins as Head of Department at the School. Since arriving, Roger has been overseeing the review of the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, as well as lecturing and setting up his research programme.

Dr Nora Devoe, who holds a Ph.D. from Yale and has worked extensively in the Pacific Islands and Malaysia, has joined the staff at the School. Nora will be responsible for teaching and research in the areas of tropical forest management and community forestry.

Student numbers increased – again
Enrolment at the School continues to grow, with an 18% increase in overall numbers of undergraduates and postgraduates. Interestingly, first-year numbers are down slightly compared to last year – the increase seems to have come about partly because of a larger number of postgraduates, especially at the Diploma level (20 students are now enrolled for the Diploma), and partly because last year’s final year was comparatively small.

Works Civil Construction Prize awarded
John Moore, a Bachelor of Engineering (Forestry) graduate of last year, has been awarded the Works Civil Construction Prize in Forest Harvesting and Transport. The award goes to the student who scores the highest combined marks in the final-year projects associated with FORE 422 (Forest Harvest Planning) and FORE 423 (Transportation Systems in Forestry). All B.(for) students take these two papers, which are option papers for B.(for) students. The prize of $1000 and a plaque was awarded to John by Kevin Thompson, Chief Executive of Works Civil Construction (pictured).

Staff, students attend the Australian IFA Conference
Six students from the School of Forestry opted for a different type of North Island field trip this year, and instead received permission to attend the Institute of Foresters of Australia Conference in Ballarat. As well as the conference, the students, with Dr Ted Bilek as supervisor, joined a special post-conference field trip. Ron O’Reilly also attended the conference and presented a paper on forestry education which he co-authored with Professor Roger Sands.

School hosts Oregon farm foresters
Professor Sands, Ron O’Reilly and Dr John Allan (now retired) hosted a visit by a group of farm foresters from the Pacific North West states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Mike Bondi, a postgraduate of the School of Forestry who is now an Extension Officer at Oregon State University, organised the tour, which included both North and South Islands.

25th Anniversary events underway
As part of the 25th Anniversary celebrations, Dr Mike Carson, Manager of the Biotechnology Division of the Forest Research Institute and graduate from the School, gave a presentation on Trends in Biotechnology Research as the first in the Dean’s Series of Lectures. Throughout the year, outstanding alumni of the School will be presenting talks to the students, highlighting activities in which future graduates will be involved.

Plans for the 25th Anniversary and Reunion in late November are well underway (see inside back cover). Industry support and interest from all sectors is growing. The staff of the School is looking forward to a large turnout from past graduates as well as a great range of industry personnel. Should be a great time!

Ron O’Reilly

LIRO studies forestry students

The increasing importance of forestry in many regions of New Zealand, along with the media portrayal of plantation forestry as a generator of income and employment, has accelerated interest in forestry careers. This in turn has led to increasing numbers of students choosing to take forestry courses or options as part of their degree.

The range of courses and options available suggests a wide range of career options. However, as with many degrees, little is formally known about the final career choices of these students. Questions such as how many forestry students end up in the forest industry, how long do they stay in the industry and what are their movements within the forest industry need to be answered.

Since 1989 the Logging Industry Research Organisation (LIRO) has been following the workforce progress of students taking Polytechnic courses in Logging and Forestry. This project identifies the workplace experiences of these students, how long they stay in the industry, what their perceptions are of the industry before they begin working and once they
are in the workforce.

In 1994, LIRO decided to take this study a step further and extend the study to cover University students taking forestry courses. That is to contact and then follow the workforce movements of those students who were likely to begin (or spend part of) their careers in the forest industry.

Last year students undertaking Bachelor of Forestry Science degrees at Canterbury University, Bachelor of Commerce (Forestry) degrees at Lincoln and Bachelor of Science (Technology, Forestry) at Waikato University completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire asked the students for general demographic information, and their reasons for choosing a forestry degree or a forestry option within a non-forestry degree.

The students are currently being contacted (and will then be contacted every six months) to find out how many of them are carrying on with a forestry degree, and of those who completed degrees last year, how many have jobs, and if these jobs are in the forest industry. Once this has been completed, a LIRO report will detail the students’ initial movements into (or otherwise) the forest industry.

Janelle Byers
Logging Industry Research Organisation, Rotorua

NZFOA census of forestry training

With some nine months to go, the NZFOA’s health and safety objective, of having 100% of forest personnel qualified or in training for the work they do by January 1996, appears to be in jeopardy.

A recent LIRO census to determine the status of training in the forestry industry has shown that while 76% of loggers have one or more FIRS (Forest Industry Recognition of Skills) module, only half of forest worker respondents have a similar qualification.

LIRO also says the coverage of the census was disappointing, and that if the figures quoted in Foresty Facts and Figures 1994 are assumed to be correct, then only 62% of loggers and 24% of forest workers responded to the questionnaire.

The NZFOA’s “100%” aim was adopted in 1993 in response to the forest owner responsibilities created under the then newly introduced Health and Safety in Employment Act.

The census also highlighted some disturbing regional patterns. In Northland and the East Coast, two areas that are undergoing significant expansion in both forestry and logging, less than half the workers have FIRS modules. Increased efforts will be needed from these areas if the 1996 goal is to be met.

There still appears to be some confusion surrounding the FIRS system, and some 10% of the workforce has not changed its Loggers or Forest Skills Certificates to FIRS modules.

LIRO says it is interesting to note the forestry workers’ dependence on the contractor for training. Approximately 60% of workers noted that their training was provided by either the contractor or the contractor in combination with others. Forest owners’ trainers and independent trainers were only used by 17%.

By contrast the forest owners’ trainers and independent trainers were used by almost 40% of loggers.

Other findings of the census included:

- The average age of the workforce is 25.8 years for forestry workers and 31.4 years for loggers. The average age of both groups falls well below the 34-year male average for New Zealand’s working population. Over half of the logging workforce are European while over half of the forestry workforce are Maori.
- The forestry workforce is heavily dependent on the contractor for training. The logging workforce access forest owner and independent trainers for most of their training.
- It is apparent from the ‘general comments’ that the workforce perceived the accessibility and variability of trainers/assessors one of the biggest barriers to training and obtaining FIRS modules. The present system is causing frustration because of the delays involved.

Rayonier New Zealand recently announced the first recipients of its comprehensive tertiary scholarship programme.

Launched in 1994, the grant programme is aimed at offering financial assistance to university students who live in regions where Rayonier has forestry or nursery operations. The company awarded $26,000 this year to 20 students studying towards a range of degrees.

There were also four awards for students specifically studying forestry or forestry engineering at either Canterbury or Waikato University. The awards went to Brenda Colville, Simon Rapley and Daniel Gaddum, all studying at Canterbury University and Craig Fisher studying at Waikato University.

Charles Margiotta, Rayonier New

Forestry scholarship winners

Three of the four students who received specific forestry scholarships and three of the further 16 students who received general scholarships. All students shown here are studying towards a forestry degree at Canterbury University.