Environmental Working Group update

NZIF Position Statement on Biodiversity
Karen Shaw has prepared a draft position statement on biodiversity which will be distributed to members for comment in due course.

Environment and Conservation Organisation (ECO) Conference
I attended the ECO AGM and Conference at Otaki in August, the theme of which was Environment and the Election. Attempts are being made by some ECO members to stir up issues over natural forest logging, including a proposed petition banning all natural forest logging, but otherwise forestry as an environmental issue is largely on the back burner. Some useful discussions were had with ECO representatives over the Accord and Principles. I strongly believe that the Institute should maintain its presence at these forums.

Tim Thorpe
Convenor

Maori perspectives in forestry

Council at its July 2 meeting in Rotorua acknowledged a need to address appropriate processes to ensure recognition of Maori perspectives in forestry decision-making.

The September 6 meeting of the NZIF Environmental Working Group, with invited guests John Ruru and John Herbert, considered a specific example of problems caused by failure to take on board Maori perspectives. The particular issue was whether the Institute should or should not continue to take an interest in the New Zealand Forest Accord and Principles for Commercial Plantation Forest Management in New Zealand.

Consideration of Maori perspectives revealed that aspects of the Accord and the Principles worked against the interests of Maori. Some of the issues were:

i. tino rangatiratanga, the right of Maori to maintain full authority over use of their resources, was being compromised;
ii. two or three cyles of land clearance on the East Coast has resulted in successive generations of serral vegetation in the form of manuka and kanuka and degradation of land productivity; reversal of this trend has been urgently needed;
iii. the scrubland is not “natural forest”, being an artifact of human manipulation; but environmental lobby groups have purported it to be “natural forest”;
iv. enforcement of the NZ Forest Accord on a proposed joint partner with Ngati Porou cost Ngati Porou postponement of afforestation and restoration of productivity; this can be measured in an extra $300 per hectare cost of removing regrowth to be carried over the length of a 30 year rotation;
v. emphasis on preservation of indigenous forest diminishes encouragement of sustained forest management for sustained yield of native timbers;
vi. the Accord has been corporate driven and penalises individual land owners.

It has been agreed that two courses of action need to be pursued:

1. At the local level Sections are encouraged to dialogue with tangata whenua on Maori issues which need to be taken into account in local forestry development; and
2. Dialogue is to be initiated with appropriate Maori organisations at the national level to enhance the Institute’s understanding of Maori perspectives.

Peter Allan