David Norton's Article

Sir,

David Norton, in his article on Indigenous Biodiversity Conservation and Plantation Forestry, criticises the New Zealand forest Accord and the Principles for Commercial Plantation Forest Management derived from the Accord. Norton sees these voluntary agreements between conservation and forestry interests as polarising conservation and production, whereas enlightened managers should be adopting his more integrated approach.

The main purpose of the Accord was to identify those natural areas it would be inappropriate to clear for the establishment of plantations. This may be polarisation, as Norton calls it, but it is also plain common sense that has delivered significant conservation gains. It has been a cost-efficient way of resolving the hugely controversial land use disputes that dogged the pine industry during the native forest clearing era of the 1960s-1980s.

Would Norton have us return to that era or to so-called 'enrichment plantings' of exotics in indigenous forest areas? The Accord and Principles do not see plantations as areas devoid of value for indigenous biodiversity. A key section of the Principles sets out goals for the management of indigenous biodiversity in plantations. The conservation of indigenous flora and fauna is to be provided for where appropriate, with specific undertakings for threatened species, riparian margins, waterways and for the restoration of critically depleted habitats. The Principles also address a key issue of plantation management being ignored by Norton — the possibility of working in conjunction with IFA to develop and define common competencies and standards related to the accreditation of forestry degree programs.

9. That NZIF seek formal representation on relevant Advisory Committees maintained by education providers, (eg. School of Forestry Advisory Committee — University of Canterbury; Forestry Advisory Committee — Lincoln University (being established ))

10. That the Working Party investigate the administrative resources required to establish and maintain the proposed accreditation scheme.

Commentary by Chris Perley

Sir,

Chris Perley (August 1998) argues cogently for the inclusion of uncertainty in decision making, and for reducing the over-emphasis on Discounted Cash Flow Analysis. I agree with nearly all his points, but feel he has over-stated his case, perhaps for the sake of impact.

How would Chris address the following situations? Two business people (Mr Alpha and Ms Beta) approach Chris Perley & Associates for expert forestry advice. To Chris's disgust, they are interested only in maximising their profit, have scant regard for the environment, and have weed and pest threat they pose to natural areas. Invasive weeds can bulk up within a plantation and form a huge seed reservoir that hastens their spread. Grazed farmland presents far less of a threat in this regard.

Plantations can also facilitate the dispersal of animal pests such as deer and goats. They are harder to control under the forest cover provided by the plantation than on open land. Unless there is effective pest control within a plantation, native forest areas may survive better as forest islands amidst pasture than when surrounded by pines inhabited by browsing animal pests.

These issues present new challenges for plantation managers. Norton hasn't convinced me the "old paradigm" should be ditched in favour of his "new paradigm" which looks much like the old multiple use regimes for forestry long promoted by New Zealand's forestry schools and state-funded foresters.

Kevin Smith
Conservation Director

Peter Hay
Convenor
NZIF Accreditation Working Party

LETTERS

11. That the Working Party investigate any legal or constitutional requirements involved in NZIF operating an accreditation scheme.

The NZIF Council endorsed these recommendations in principle, but decided to consult with the membership first before proceeding with implementing most of them. Therefore members feedback, views and comments on the recommendations is welcomed by Council.