

## Editorial

Chris Goulding

The 2017 NZIF conference was held this September in Rotorua. It was an undoubted success with excellent speakers. Jonathan Dash, Chair of the Organising Committee, has kindly volunteered to write 'The last word'. A short report on the AGM, the awards and the conference follows this Editorial. Papers based on some of the presentations will be published in the February issue of the Journal.

The conference was held shortly before the 2017 General Election and representatives from some of the political parties – the Greens, Labour, National, New Zealand First and TOP – each spent 15 minutes presenting their views. All parties recognised the importance of forests in New Zealand. Some parties also recognise that forestry needs a clearer voice in government. There was talk of resurrecting a version of the New Zealand Forest Service, disestablished now for 30 years.

Recent New Zealand governments lacked a government department specialised in forestry. Such a department would have an advocacy role while still being neutral towards the various interest groups within the sector. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is headed by a former army officer, who no doubt is an excellent leader of people, but neither he nor those immediately reporting to him have any technical qualifications or extensive experience in forestry. Contrast this with the Director-General of the Forest Service, Andy Kirkland, who had a science degree from Victoria University, a forestry degree from ANU and an MBA from the UCLA USA, combined with extensive practical experience starting from the bottom, including time spent measuring inventory sample plots as part of the National Forest Survey. The advocacy role is important. This is very clear when reading Elizabeth Orr's book on Pat Entrican, *Keeping New Zealand Green*, and his role in setting up the Kawerau mill in what was an early public-private partnership.

A new forestry department need not necessarily be a resurrected Forest Service. I would imagine that supporters of the Department of Conservation would fight any suggestion that it be subsumed into a department with profitable wood production as a key role. It could be a department within a larger Ministry, perhaps MPI itself, as is the USFS within their Department of Agriculture. Whatever the structure, the fact that there are large areas of land whose prime use should be that of forests coupled with the large proportion of the log harvest that is exported unprocessed in contrast with other OECD countries, should indicate that change and an up-to-date forest policy are required.

In this issue, Chris Fowler presents a paper on the long awaited National Environmental Standard (NES)

for Plantation Forestry which was notified in the New Zealand *Gazette* on 3 August 2017. The NES has been seven years in the making. It is expected that it will provide a licence to operate and simplify the sector's ability to manage environmental performance and compliance, reducing 'churn' and costs. It will raise environmental standards for most effects when compared to existing rules. Russell Death describes how the health of New Zealand's waterways has declined dramatically, mainly because of the intensification of dairying. Despite the environmental risk of harvesting on some steep land, forestry needs to be considered for good waterway management.

Tony Withers and Elise Peters describe attempts to suppress the eucalyptus tortoise beetle, present here for 100 years and affecting the growth and yield of eucalypts. The authors remain optimistic.

MPI responds to the paper in the February issue by Robert Hughes and Paul Molloy querying the costs of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) for the small-scale forest owner, particularly those with more than 100 ha of forest. For the farm/forester who is more farmer than forester, a consultant is usually necessary. New Zealand is poor in the professionalism of its associations compared to Europe (e.g. Sweden) or North America (e.g. Wisconsin). There, these associations can provide consultancy and expert advice which supplement a thriving consultancy profession. There has not been the same level of support for the start-up of such an association in New Zealand from government as occurred elsewhere. Having an ETS that motivates the small-scale farm/forester to plant up the less productive parts of their estate is in the nation's interest.

Bruce Manley and David Evison estimate the decay of carbon in logs that are exported from New Zealand. When exported to China and India, the harvested wood products have very short half-lives, two years, compared to the 30 years for solid wood used domestically. This has implications for the international accounting of greenhouse gases, impacting the forest's carbon stock time profile and hence the profitability of afforestation under any revised ETS.

Manley et al.'s paper on quantifying the small-scale owners' estate in Canterbury, Otago and Southland is disturbing. It shows that current knowledge on the total area, its location, or its yield is in error. The wood availability forecasts of the National Exotic Forest Description may also be in error for this region. There are significant differences in the estimates of net stocked area between this study and those of the Land Use Carbon Analysis System (LUCAS). If the figures in this paper are correct and are applicable nationally, New Zealand has claimed too much area as Kyoto forest in its IPCC reporting.



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