

President's Annual Report 19-10-13

There has been a big surge in forest harvesting this year. Over one million tonnes were harvested in Marlborough last year and this is predicted to increase to close to 1.5 million tonnes next year.

The increase in production has been going smoothly thanks to the skill of forest managers and also thanks to some interesting improvements in harvesting and transport systems.

Some of you heard Barry McIntosh and Rob Wooster from Moutere Logging talk at last year's AGM about the Falcon Claw. The Falcon Claw also featured in the winning entry of the Marlborough Environment Award for forestry. Some of you saw the claw in action at a field day on very steep land in the Onamalutu Valley. It was very impressive watching this machine swoop down and pick logs off a distant hillside controlled by an operator with a video camera link to the carriage.

Harvesting contractors have been able to produce some impressive daily tonnages using excavator mounted feller bunchers on the hillside, grapple skidders, and waratah processors on the skid site. Log cartage contractors are making use of the new weight limits to increase payloads by up to 30% on approved roads. This can lead to lower freight rates and reduces the number of log trucks on the road.

Marlborough has 400 small forest owners, many of who are now ready to harvest. This could lead to a logistic nightmare. Some small blocks have shown low returns, but there are many cases where forest managers have co-ordinated the harvest of several small blocks to share access tracks and skid sites and to create economies of scale.

Co-operation is also happening on a larger scale. A great example is the agreement between Nelson Forests and Manuka Island Forest to bridge the Goulter and Chrome rivers to give all weather access to the Mt Patriarch forests from the west. This will greatly reduce travel times for logging crews and log trucks going to and from Nelson.

There has been some very interesting co-operation since last year's AGM where we had a great range of speakers talking about "Rebuilding Christchurch with Wood". We heard Di Lucas talking about the need for cost effective foundations systems and from John Reelick about the innovative hollow timber piles. Jason Guiver from Nelson Pine told how lvl made from Marlborough wood was being used to replace steel in commercial buildings.

These 3 speakers will be back next April to speak at the NZ Farm Forestry Conference in Blenheim. They will also be talking about the \$15 million Tuhoe building being built with these innovative wood building systems. This will be NZ's greenest building so is worth keeping an eye on.

The conference will have several field trips including one down the Pelorus Sound looking at how forests are being managed in a great landscape.

Another trip will be looking at harvesting methods on steep land up the Wairau. Between 250 and 300 farm foresters are expected to come to Marlborough so it will be a great opportunity for our MFIA members to join in the discussions on a wide range of forestry topics. We will be sending invitations to MFIA members to join the most interesting sessions.

It is a great honour to have our founding president, Sir Doug Kidd, attend this year's AGM. I remember talking to Doug back in the 70's about using wood energy. Wood is now an important energy source in Marlborough as it provides far more total energy than coal.

Executive committee member, Mike Gifford, is working closely with John Reelick and Carbonscape to turn Marlborough's wood waste into high value carbon products using microwave. There are some exciting prospects for combining 2 world leading technologies. We will keep you informed with progress.

With much of Marlborough's first crop now being harvested, there has been some interesting discussion on the second crop. Pine is still preferred as the main species and is expected to grow even better in the second crop. Several members are planting poplars to protect gullies and to provide debris dams. Poplars can enhance the landscape by providing contrasting colours and textures. Poplars also grow fast and have a ready market in China. Replanting options will be discussed on the Farm Forestry conference field trips next year.

Our Association has had to withstand several threats over the years, of unreasonable demands and attitudes from the Marlborough District Council. A more positive sign this year was the Council adopting the "Smart and Connected" initiative to make the Council more business friendly. We had a meeting with the major, several councillors, and 12 of our members to talk about a range of economic and environmental issues and opportunities. The depth of knowledge expressed by our members was impressive. It highlighted many of the wide range of benefits provided by trees and tree planting.

We need to keep the pressure on though as there are still some crazy ideas coming from the Council such as the colour palette, and proposed restrictions on tree planting on large areas of Marlborough.

We need to keep the Council focused on important opportunities such as container and break bulk shipping from Picton. There is potential to ship the equivalent of 20,000 containers on a coastal service. This would be of great benefit to all Marlborough's major industries. It would greatly reduce costs and reduce the number of truck movements to Nelson and Christchurch. The Shakespeare Bay development, 20 years ago, cost just \$6 million, and look at the benefits to Marlborough. What could container and coastal shipping do for Marlborough?

It has been a real pleasure working with Ron and the executive committee. We discuss a wide range of forestry issues at our meetings and committee members have a great pool of knowledge to call on.

Today we can enjoy celebrating a good year for forestry, and look forward to another challenging and rewarding year ahead.

Michael Cambridge