



## January 2009 Newsletter

### View From the Treetops

Hi all,

Best wishes for a prosperous New Year. This year and maybe next are showing some dark clouds on the horizon indicating a bumpy ride may be ahead of us.

Hope you all had a good Christmas, relaxed and ready to handle the changes ahead.

Our AGM was held in October in conjunction with a well attended/enlightening field trip looking over Redwood and Ben Hopai Forests, thanks to Rick Osborne and Alistair Shanks for making their properties available. We also had a robust discussion on carbon credits with Allan Laurie and Stu Orne of GreenAir while having lunch overlooking young Douglas Firs and radiata in Redwood forest Avon Valley. A very enjoyable day was had by all.

Next was the AGM which was held in the wool shed of the Ben Hopai Station just before the rain came bucketing down. Executive members up for re-election were Michael Cambridge, Aaron Robinson and Peter Gilbert and we have two new members in Brendon Whitely and George Shallcrass. On behalf of the members I would like to welcome Brendon and George onto the executive. This gives us 15 executive members for this association.

Unfortunately we lost Paul Van Der Voort from the executive, he is now working in the North Island.

Early December we ran a Landscape Group Forestry Field Trip to show Councillors, Council staff and other member of the Landscape

Group what is involved in forestry, the planning, the preparation that goes into making decisions on suitable skid sites, roads prior to harvesting.

We produced a glossy hand-out outlining how much planning goes into forestry which includes looking after our environment. Thanks to Allister Christie of Grapelanders Tours for providing a bus to keep the group together. Speakers described points of interest. The trip went through Marshlands, past Pukaka to Tua Marina, then with some stops through the swamp having a look back at Blenheim from just below the top of Strachan Peak. We then ended up at Johanneshof Cellars for refreshments and more discussion. It seemed to have gone off very well with lots of discussion from different view points.

Thanks to the three forestry entries for the Marlborough Environment Awards forestry section.

Best of luck to entrants, Warwick Foley, Lou Jowers and Nelson Forests Ltd.

The government has put carbon trading, ETS on hold subject to a review.

A delegation of this executive has been to see Colin King and will be meeting the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry David Carter late February to discuss our concerns of having it put on hold.

### Rural Fire Districts.

I attended a workshop last November to view/discuss the concept of an enlarged Rural

Fire District. In brief to have Marlborough North and South as one fire District. We highlighted the issues and benefits of the present Districts and the proposed combined District. One big issue is the lack of funding to Marlborough North Fire District and now DoC will no longer bankroll the fire suppression costs for production forests (any forest planted for timber production).

We will be having a second workshop in February.

In December I attended a fire preparedness meeting for Marlborough North Rural Fire District.

Some of the topics covered were, Forest Safety Plan/ Systems, Zones for Forest Operations, Fire suppression costs and Fire Danger Codes.

Further details on some of these issues and fire awareness for this fire season are included in this newsletter.

## **Kevin Parkes**

# **Rural Fire Districts Continued.**

## **Introduction**

In late November-2008 the National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) held a workshop in Blenheim to facilitate the proposal that Marlborough South, Department of Conservation and Marlborough North Rural Fire Districts be combined to form one Marlborough Fire District.

Mr Murray Dudfield of the National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) chaired the meeting through a series of steps, which broadly defined the proposal and set in place a further meeting in February-2009 to progress the proposal.

Groups represented included the NRFA, Marlborough North Rural Fire District (MNRFD), Marlborough South Rural Fire District (MStHRFD), Department of Conservation (DoC), Nelson Forests Ltd (NFL) Marlborough Forest Industries Association (MFIA) Marlborough District Council (MDC), Marlborough Regional Forestry (MRF), Forest Managers and Consultants, and the NZ Fire Service.

## **Background**

The MNRFD is a co-operative organization with an appointed committee. Nominal funding is levied from DoC and MDC, and some of the larger plantation forest owners. Administration is largely provided by DoC with some support from MDC, Nelson Forests Ltd, and other plantation forest companies. Fire management is undertaken by these larger organisations, and also by the community in the form of rural fire parties north of the Wairau River and into the Marlborough Sounds. The MStHRFD area south of the Wairau River is covered by the Marlborough District Council and DoC. The costs for these two areas of responsibility are met from Council rates, and from government funds for the reserves and the one kilometre-wide fire safety margins surrounding the reserves.

At this time MNRFD is under pressure from two sides; it is not meeting the NRFA requirements, and DoC does not want to continue to carry fire suppression costs for fires in production forests because of the uncertainty of being reimbursed.

## **The Workshop**

The workshop meeting discussed some historical background to the formation of the MNRFD and the MStHRFD. Then discussion groups were formed to broadly expand on critical aspects of the proposal such as funding, management of resources, and governance.

At this stage it appears that DoC want to cease their governance of the MNRFD area, and that the MDC might be willing to administer a Marlborough-wide fire district provided the forest industry helps to fund the liability for fire suppression costs in production forests. It is not yet known which parties will comprise the combined authority, which parties will stay outside the proposed authority, or how the proposed authority will be funded, governed, and managed.

There was agreement that the proposal should be taken to the next level of detail in February-2009. During this next meeting the various affected parties will be able to see where they fit into the developing proposal and make submissions according to their position.

*Peter Gilbert* Fire Committee, MFIA

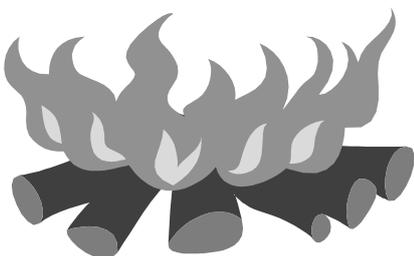
# 2008/09 Fire Season Preparedness

We have been blessed with a wet spring bringing an abundance of green growth to the Marlborough countryside. The new growth will soon dry out increasing fire danger levels.

Please let's all do our bit to prepare for the 2008/09 fire season by following the points listed below. Who knows - your homework may save your investment.

1. Audit the fire gear of your contractors.  
Silviculture crews are required to have:
  - 1 knapsack pump (15 litre minimum) and 1 x 20 litres of water per knapsack, or 9 litre pressurised water fire extinguisher.
  - Hand tools – preferably a shovel for each person.
  - 1 x 350 gm fire extinguisher carried on the belt of every person using a chainsaw.
2. Make sure you and your contractors have a fire procedure included in the emergency procedures.
3. Have on hand a map with roads and water points.
4. Check that access roads are open. This is particularly relevant after the recent wind fall in some areas of Marlborough.
5. Encourage contractors to have fire fighting NZQA qualifications and make these qualifications a consideration during the contractor employment process.

*Aaron Robinson*



# Fire, Safety and Training Report

Six of your executive serve on this subcommittee; Bert Hughes, Aaron Robinson, George Shallcrass, Jason Bryant, Peter Gilbert and Graham Sharland (chair). Please feel free to ring any one of us.

Vegetation fires are started small, often by the people working in the forest or by the machines they use. Provision should be made for immediate suppression. This requires fire fighting equipment and the skills to use it. Should this fail, a fire emergency procedure needs to be in place so the spotter can raise the alarm.

DJ Geddes writing for the NZ Institute of Forestry (on Fire Protection under the heading of fire fighting) describes the knowledge helpful to avoid a fire or control one should this fail.

*“Whenever work is taking place in forests in the summer, there should be someone involved with the job who knows something of fire behaviour and where the risks are NZQA unit standard 3285, **Protect Personal Safety at Vegetation Fires**, is a minimum standard.”*

*“Crews should have shovel, and should have training to the level of the NZQA unit standard 3286, **Control Vegetation Fire Using Dry Fire Fighting Techniques** to ensure that they know how to use them. Provision should be made to ensure that the fire fighting equipment is always suitable for the purpose, fire extinguishers confirmed as in working order, and shovels sharp with sound handles. The provision of equipment without training and checking is of very limited use.”*

Please let one of us know if you are interested in:

1. Obtaining one or both of these 2 units
2. Information on fire prevention or fire suppression
3. Attending an informal fire prevention/suppression evening.

*Graham Sharland*

# Re: Fire Fighting Insurance Cover for Forest Owners.

There appears to be confusion concerning the availability of cover for fire fighting costs under either :

- a) the forest and rural fires extension to a public liability insurance policy and
- b) cover purchased under a specialist forestry insurance policy.

It has been widely assumed that public liability insurance will cover fire fighting/suppression costs but it has come to our attention that this is not always the case. As you will see below the circumstances where fire fighting/suppression costs are recoverable under public liability insurance are limited so it is essential that all forest owners maintain fire fighting/suppression costs under their respective specialist forestry insurance policy as well.

Public Liability insurance policies will usually read something like:

*“To indemnify the Insured against such sums as the Insured shall become legally liable to pay in respect to claims made against the insured arising from Personal Injury and/or Property Damage as a result of an occurrence”*

This is not the full text but an abbreviated form. In general what this is saying is that there needs to be:

- a) An occurrence
- b) A third party who has suffered property damage
- c) The insured needs to be legally liable and it arises from the insured business activity

If the above have been satisfied then the Insured is likely subject to policy terms and conditions to be indemnified for claims brought by third parties for compensatory damages. This would be payable under the general indemnity part of the public liability policy.

If the occurrence is a fire and the rural fire authority charges or levies the forest owner for the fire suppression costs then as long as the forest owner is deemed to be legally liable for the fire then the fire suppression costs, and only these costs, are recoverable under the forest and rural fires extension. It is important to note that at all times the



forest

owner needs to have been responsible for the fire occurring and must involve damage to third party property for this extension to operate. If the fire is caused by any other party or parties or from circumstances out of the forest owner's control (eg lightning strike), or does not involve third party damage then the forest owner's public liability policy will not respond.

Therefore the costs of fire fighting in your own forest or costs for fighting fires where you are not legally liable for starting the fire are not covered.

We would like to advise you to contact your insurance company and check the cover your public liability policy currently gives you and investigate additional cover for fire fighting costs and levies, possibly from specialist forestry insurance providers.

Murray Turbitt

**GR & RA SHALLCRASS**  
TREE FELLING & TIMBER SALES, TRUCK AND  
MACHINE HIRE.

Hi, I'm George Shallcrass, I have lived in Marlborough all my life, I grew up in Picton and am currently living in Blenheim. I'm married to Rose, we have 4 children, all still at home. I started my working life as an apprentice fitter-turner-machinist with Taylors Engineering, was a commercial fisherman for a number of years and I am currently self-employed. I do a variety of jobs from earthworks, general cartage, tree felling, milling, and timber sales – mainly dealing with alternative species. We have interests in family forestry in the Linkwater area.

George Shallcrass