

# Healthy Environments He Taiao Mauriora: Topic Update



## Forestry Activities

Forestry Topic Lead:

Not yet allocated

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### What is the current situation?

- The Waikato region has a large variety of forestry areas, in terms of soils, slopes and catchments.
- Forestry has a long history of contributing to the Waikato regional economy, and requires careful management for environmental effects. Soil disturbance effects can be amplified during and after the typical 25 year rotation harvest, and during extreme weather events.
- One size does not fit all and activities are generally managed on a catchment by catchment basis.
- Until the National Environmental Standard came into force in May 2018, forestry activities were controlled under the Waikato Regional Plan. Under the plan resource consents were required for:
  - Earthworks
  - Vegetation clearance
  - In-stream structures
- Terminology clarified:
  - **Sediment** is material that is suspended in the water column, and often deposited in channels, estuaries and harbours.
  - **Slash** is tree waste left after forestry activities (residue from pruning, thinning or harvesting).
  - **Debris** is any material which can be mobilised by water (including slash and harvest residue) that is not suspended in water.

### Forestry in short, steep catchments (key facts case study - Coromandel)

- Coromandel's steep hills are very prone to natural and localised weather related slope failure. This typically occurs on steep land, which may be forestry, DOC estate, and or land that is grazed.
- The Coromandel Peninsula is well known for its high rainfall and high-intensity sub-tropical storms from the North East. With climate change, there is evidence of weather events becoming larger and more frequent. Storms and rain can be both very localised and widespread across the Peninsula.
- The key forestry management considerations on steep land are earthworks failure, weather-related slope failures, soil erosion and debris management.
- Historically, poor forestry practice in some areas has led to some 'legacy' effects of sedimentation in some coastal areas. This is exacerbated by short, steep catchments, and Coromandel's exposure to high rain events.
- Coromandel harbours:
  - Harbours are susceptible to sedimentation from any land use activity.
  - Production forestry effects (sedimentation and debris flow) are amplified during and after harvest, during and after tracking/earthworks, and during high intensity rainfall.
  - There is clear evidence of both historical and recent forestry activities contributing to sediment loads and debris flows into harbours, along with other land uses.
  - Larger weather events can also cause slope failures of indigenous forests and pasture.
  - The main influences on sedimentation and debris flow that reach the harbours are:
    - Steepness of slope
    - Tidal flows (ability for harbours to flush)

- Forestry management practices and current rotation cycle

#### Forestry in rolling land (key facts case study - Central Plateau)

- The Central Plateau is characterised by mainly flat topography with some steeper gullies. It is free draining with volcanic soils. The key management consideration for this area is soil erosion.
- Large tracts of Central Plateau forests were converted to dairying in the early 2000's. This was provided for as a permitted activity in the regional plan. There is some evidence of these conversions having contributed to increased sedimentation in the Waikato River catchment and tributaries. Effects of increased nutrients in the river system are being considered through Healthy Rivers Wai Ora (Plan Change 1).
- This conversion has largely now been completed, and forestry is following a normal pattern of rotation harvesting.

#### Forestry in West Coast hill country (key facts case study – Whaingaroa Raglan Harbour)

- Whaingaroa (Raglan Harbour) is characterised by lower hill country and relatively large catchments. It is prone to storms and rainfall emanating from the Tasman Sea. The key management consideration for this area is soil erosion.
- Whaingaroa Harbour has relatively high tidal flushing. There is some historic evidence of sedimentation from previous land uses.
- It appears that forestry is a relatively low contributor to harbour sediment, due to the mix of land uses (not dominated by forestry) and harbour flushing.

#### **What is the National Environmental Standard?**

- Government has established national regulations around forestry activities – the National Environmental Standard for Production Forestry (NesPF), which came into force 1 May 2018.
- The NesPF replaces rules in the regional plan. Waikato Regional Council retains the function of issuing approvals (consents) under the NesPF regulations.
- Existing resource consents granted prior to NesPF prevail over the NesPF. Forestry activities consented before May 2018 therefore continue to operate under existing resource consents. These consents may be reviewed at which time the NesPF can be considered.
- Management of forestry slash or pruning and harvesting residue is dealt with in the NesPF.
- The NesPF provides for the following exceptions whereby more stringent rules can be applied in regional plans:
  - To give effect to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management
  - To give effect to parts of the NZ Coastal Policy Statement
  - To provide for the protection of Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes
  - To provide for the protection of Significant Natural Areas
  - To manage specified unique and sensitive environments
- The NesPF provides for monitoring of forestry activities. It is too early to assess the impact of the NesPF on environmental effects.

#### **What is WRC doing?**

- Forestry activities are programmed for review as part of Healthy Environments (review of the regional coastal plan and regional plan).
- The review of forestry management will need to take into account provisions of the NesPF.
- The plan review is in two phases (refer WRC website, search “Healthy Environments”, for latest timeframes).
- Forestry activities will be reviewed as part of phase 2.
- Until the review is complete, forestry activities will continue to operate under existing consents and the NesPF.

### **When are we doing it?**

- 2017 – scoping.
- 2018/19 – identifying phase 1 issues and options, and starting consultation.
- 2019/20 – completing phase 1 consultation and writing amendments; scope phase 2 topics including forestry.
- 2020/21 – notify phase 1 changes; develop issues and options and undertake engagement for phase 2 (including forestry).
- 2022/23 – notify phase 2 changes.
- 2023/25 – phase 2 submissions, hearings, appeals.
- 2025/27 – appeals.
- 2027/28 – final operative rules.

### **Who will be we talking to?**

- Key stakeholders with an interest greater than the general public.
- Affected communities.

### **How can interested parties get involved?**

- We anticipate consulting with key stakeholders and affected communities on the forestry topic in 2020 / 2021.
- Anyone will be able to submit on any plan changes when these are publicly notified (forestry activities expected to be notified as part of phase 2, 2022/23).

### **Where can I go for more info?**

- WRC Healthy Environments project page: <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/council/policy-and-plans/rules-and-regulation/waikato-regional-plan-review/>
- Council meeting agendas: <https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/community/whats-happening/council-meetings/agendas-and-minutes-for-council-and-standing-committees/council/>
- General Feedback: <https://bps.waikatoregion.govt.nz/online-services/new/CustomerFeedbackComplaints/step/1>