

National Newsletter December 2025

Sent: Dec 15, 2025, 10:08 AM

President's Christmas Comments

Seasons Greetings to all.

This time last year I was just beginning a stint at our family holiday home on Aotea/Great Barrier Island. My wife, Jude, had just moved there permanently after a horror year where she had witnessed the death of both her parents and a younger brother. She was determined to do the things that she wanted to do, "while I still have life in me".

I personally didn't think she would last the winter, but she surprised me and has had a wonderful time in the garden and inside the house, turning it into a welcoming home.

Now, I'm back with her again for another summer after making several mid year visits.

While all this joy was going on, I was battling tough economic conditions to provide timber building products from my boutique sawmilling operation in Raetihi. It seems that my customers are becoming ever more picky and irritable, especially the one from near Te Awamutu, whose house and farm/forest you will be visiting, if you attend the field days of the 2026 NZFFA Waikato Conference.

Between this, I was commuting to Wellington to argue with my friends at FIAG and later to assist the New President, Peter Davies-Colley, after his election, directly from the branch ranks, at our very successful Canterbury Conference.

It was clear from the outset that Peter's leadership was going to be exciting and disruptive, which is normally a good thing. Unfortunately the pace of change was too much for the majority of the executive and the previously reported divisions, saw to it that his Presidency was brief.

Change is almost always painful in some way, and this was no different during his tenure.

It will take some months to see if the changes made, will be for the better or otherwise of our organisation. But it must be clearly stated that Peter worked extremely hard and always had the betterment of the Association as his clear goal.

Until now, I have avoided the Presidency because I know how time, and energy, demanding this role is. The executive has appointed a new Vice President, ex Wairarapa farmer Dougal Morrison. Dougal will have a busy role because I have requested that he relieves me of most of the external duties that continue to grow yearly, as the Association becomes increasingly involved in the politics and advocacy of the Forest Industry.

Pest Control, Wilding Pines, Whole Farm Conversions, Pathogen threats to the Radiata pine estate, the Emissions Trading Scheme, relationship with Bioeconomy Science Institute (BSI), formerly Scion, The Forest Growers Levy Trust, Pan Sector Meetings, Federated Farmers, and a list that could fill a page, will all be items requiring engagement by both Dougal and I in the New Year.

But in the lead up to it, I want to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year. To paraphrase my good friend Allan Laurie, " for the good of climate and country, get out there and plant more trees, especially Cypress and Grand fir," and you all know who to order those from.

Kindest regards to you all.

Vaughan Kearns

President

New Vice President

Dougal Morrison was elected as the new National Vice President at the meeting of the National Executive on 10 December. He will support Vaughan Kearns as the Acting President, particularly to manage relationships in Wellington. Dougal is a retired farmer, an active forester and currently manages the “Streamside Planting Programme” for Porirua City Council.



Dougal Morrison , enjoying a lunch break while on a working bee with Wellington Branch stewards, planting native seedlings in a wetland restoration project.

NZFFA National Conference

Reminder: The **NZFFA national conference** will be held in Cambridge, Waikato, from Monday 20th to Friday 24th April 2026. There is a proposed pre-conference trip on Sunday 19th, and a proposed post-conference one on Saturday 25th April.

Online registration will be open any day now! (All members will be notified by email).

Remember to book your accommodation early.

Waikato branch looks forward to seeing you here!

Tanes Tree Trust - Sponsor of the NZFFA 2026 Conference

We are glad to welcome Tāne's Tree Trust, who will be sponsoring our Wednesday field trip with its Native Forestry focus.

TTT initiates, supports and freely disseminates research into best-practice in all aspects of native tree establishment and native forestry.

They promote native forestry on private land as an appropriate land-use option to achieve many conservation, production and cultural gains.

Come and see innovative work in this area, and hear speakers with unparalleled knowledge, experience and enthusiasm.

Southern Forest Harvesting and Windthrow Recovery Workshops

Southern Forest Harvesting and Windthrow Recovery Workshops

Following on from a similar workshop held in the Tasman region in October, NZFFA and TUR/NZ Forest Service planned 3 workshops in South Otago and Southland. As in the top of the South, the workshops were aimed at small scale forest owners to provide a roadmap towards a positive harvesting experience. The recent wind event in the south has also left many forest owners with questions about how and when to salvage windthrow and what are the issues to be aware of.

The Winton workshop was cancelled because of lack of enrolments but Milton and Fortrose went ahead and the 25 participants found them very worthwhile. Peter Davies-Colley ran the workshops and used group discussions to come up with the key points for forest owners to consider as they plan the harvest process. Southern MPI advisors Paul Marshall and Aidan Braid provided information on ETS and NES-CF obligations involved with harvesting and replanting and at Fortrose we had Ross Best from Log Marketing giving valuable insights on what to ask your contractor or harvest manager. One of his pieces of advice was if the forest owner was unhappy with risk involved or unsure of the options offered, to ask for a minimum guaranteed nett income figure for the woodlot.

Local power provider Powernet gave information on the regulations re trees and powerlines. With 95% of the outages which affected 25000 people in the south being caused by trees taking down lines, it is likely the rules will be more tightly enforced and or made more stringent.

Advice on how long owners have to recover windthrown logs varied, but experience from Tasman where there is no or little sap stain 5 months after the cyclone shows it depends on several factors such as root and bark attachment as well as climate.

Neil Cullen.



Branch Amalgamation

From January 2026, Southland Branch is joining with South Otago. This enlarged branch will hold field days in Southland and South Otago and will be actively recruiting new members at the NZFFA site at the Southern Field Days at Waimumu in February.

Members from the North Otago Branch which has been inactive for some time, will in 2026 become members of the Mid Otago Branch or if they prefer and inform our administrator can join South Canterbury.

Waimanu Forest Field Day

Tree Growers Tairāwhiti, the Gisborne/East Coast Branch of NZFFA recently had a very successful field day to Waimanu Forest. Waimanu is owned by Aratu Forests Ltd and is situated close to Gisborne.

Mainly through the efforts of our Branch field day organiser, Barry Foster, this field day invitation was extended to a wide group of participants. As a result, our usual handful of local Farm Foresters were joined by representatives of Tairāwhiti Environment Centre, Forest & Bird, DOC, TUR/MPI, Manaaki Whenua (who are establishing RECCE plots on the indigenous regeneration slopes) and the senior management team of Aratu Forest.



Photo 1: Discussing the options to go forward with Transitional forestry.

Three main points stood out for me of this field day.

1. **The Bird life.** We visited 5 different areas in this 2000 ha plus pine forest and everywhere the bird life was plentiful & diverse. You can't just switch that on for a farm forestry field day. That comes from years of targeted pest control. I visit many different forests throughout NZ and the bird life we experienced that day in Wainanu was some of the richest birdlife I have encountered in NZ.
2. When I studied forestry in the Netherlands, 50 years ago now, we were always discussing "**Multi purpose forestry**". I have not heard that term since I entered NZ in 1987.

And on this field day I hear Neil Woods, the CEO of Aratu, -a company that pumps more than a million \$ weekly into the Gisborne economy-, talking about multi purpose forestry. Forestry that is profitable, open to the community for a range of recreational activities, bio-diversity, improving water quality etc.

3. **The complexity of the range of regulations** that has to be navigated. Aratu is bound by the regulations of the Overseas Investment Office, the ETS rules of MPI/TUR, the RMA as well as the Gisborne District Council rules & regulations. And these regulations are occasionally contradictory. The complexity is mindboggling.

Our Branch will continue to invite members of the wider community during our Branch field days.



Notice of 2 day Field day trip up the East Coast, Tairāwhiti

Tree Growers Tairāwhiti, the Gisborne / East Coast Branch of NZFFA organises a 2 day field day on Saturday the 31st of January and Sunday the 1st of February 2026.

We will meet at the Mitre 10 carpark on Saturday the 31st of January at 07.45. We will be leaving at 08.00 sharp.

Programme Saturday 31st January.

08:00 departure from Mitre 10 carpark

09:00 toilet stop Tolaga Bay

09:20 arrive at Pourou Station and have a look at the 11 different Poplar cultivars planted in July 2025

10:00 arrive at Te Puia Springs to view & discuss the Redwoods planted around 1930 & pruned to 36 mtr

13:00 arrive at Te Kautuku, Rangī and Ester Raroa farm near Rangitukia.

Te Kautuku station, Rangitukia overnight trip . This visit has a similar theme to the recent Waimanu Forest field day in that we will be looking at a discussing biodiversity restoration project and its funding. See more here <https://eastcoastexchange.toha.nz/biodiversity-project/te-kautuku> and <https://toha.network/tekautuku>

If time allows we will visit the line cut Acacia melanoxylon on Rangitukia station

08:00 Departure from Te Kautuku, travel **to Poroporo Forest**, owned by Nateva.

09:00 Welcome by Nateva, the ex NZ Carbon Farming company. Visiting a unique 45 year old Pinus radiata stand, underplanted with Acacia melanoxylon. The natural regeneration of Kahikatea needs to be seen to be believed. We will also visit a number of Eucalyptus trial sites.

13:00 When forest entry permission has been granted we would like to walk into **Manutahi Forest** from School Rd. We be appraising 1976 and 1984 planted melanoxylon under 2 different regimes. And walking into cpt 4_1 and 4_2 with 1982 planted Eucalyptus saligna and E. regnans.

Please register for attendance before the 15th of January 2026 by emailing Barry Foster, bjfoster@xtra.co.nz or text Barry on 0274-497131

All folk are welcome, especially farmers who would like to learn about the beneficial effects of Trees on Farms. This will be an overnight trip and we need to organise accommodation and possible transport. Please register asap so we can start organising.

Kees Weytmans

kees.weytmans@gmail.com

NZFFA Member on the Te Araroa Trail

One of our Association members and committee member of the Cypress Development Group, has taken some time away from Sawmilling to go for a stroll.

Hamish Randall of Whanganui has until recently been cutting boards from large redwood logs at Ruapehu Sawmills after a long stint with MacBlack Timber.

Here is Hamish hard at work with Ben Shallcrass at Ruapehu Sawmills in Raetihi on September 18.





Soon after, he was off to Cape Reinga to begin his walk on the Te Araroa Trail.

He began the Trail on October 14th and practiced beforehand by walking there from Raetihi.

On Thursday December 4th he completed the North Island section and emerged at Cook Straight , Te Moana-o-Raukawa.

Here he is with his backpack full of rice noodles and lentils after completing the North Island leg.



He has certainly dropped a few kilograms of weight as he has made his way South.

At the time of writing he was on board the inter-island ferry on his way to begin the South Island leg of his remarkable journey.

Hamish's partner Rachel Rose has told me today that she has never seen him look happier.

Ngaipu Poplar Demonstration Row

The establishment of this site started with ongoing road stability problems with the Masterton- Stronvar Road that connects Masterton with the farming communities of Wainuioru, Stronvar and Ngahape, and includes large areas of Ngaumu, Poroporo and large corporate forests. Basically the road is required to traverse a steep and unstable hillslope over the Patukawa hill. The recommendation was to establish a Conservation woodlot, and establish a tree cover over the whole gully system. Masterton District Council, came to the party in addition to grants from the Regional Council and a Farmer Share. In preparation unstable and weedy ineffective vegetation was cleared (mainly hawthorn and silver poplar) and burnt. Culverts and runoff diverted from most vulnerable slopes and the gully retirement fenced for stock exclusion.

A Farmers request for no Radiata opened up the protection programme for alternative tree species. NZ Dryland Eucalypts were approached and secured 5 trial areas of ground durable Euc species. With high loess mobility in the soils the length of the main gully was secured in hybrid tree willow. The remaining area secured 12 diff species of eucalyptus with each species graded up the slopes according to its dry tolerance, timber potential etc. The last two rows aligned the Stronvar road, firstly Eucalyptus pulchella found to have very light tree form, low brittleness and low shading. One row of mixed hybrid Poplars were placed along the road fence both to view the form and growth of respective clones and being deciduous allow less shading and more drying of soils along the roadside slopes. Poplars chosen were a mix of both commercial and trial material available with random repeats of most hybrid across the slope.

This was all established in 2013, so most trees have consolidated in stature and afford a much greater level of slope protection benefitting the stability of the road surface. Some Poplars struggled to take and small blankings were carried out in 2015 and 2018. These species have all been mapped for future assessments. In terms of management, all species have received form pruning to assist in securing single leader height growth.

In 2024 all poplars were pruned to a max of 5 metres and the clones painted to identify each clone. These have now been affirmed and marked with more permanent road marking paint. Heavy pruning results in varying levels of new epicormic growth, some minor and others rampant, but each clone displays different growth habits.

With the emergence of the Poplar Action group (PAG) within Farm Forestry this Demonstration site should pick winners for potential timber production.

Standout clones for height and diameter growth have been Otahoua, Braaksma and Toa. Best narrow form on straight leaders go to Crowsnest and Fraser. Some clones are under represented like Veronese and Kawa, with limited samples of Wia iti, Maxi x Tricho and Maxi x Nigra clones.

For those interested in following Poplar, this has become an important Demonstration of clonal form and growth, as so often one year after planting many of the clones and not readily identifiable. The same happens when harvesting Poplar for timber, that the identity of the parent or clone is lost leaving all poplar to be bundled as one.

The NZPWRT recently were hosted by Guy Williams on his Ngaipu property viewing both expansive slope plantings of Poplar and Willow and the Demonstration plantings.



Otahoua Poplar pruned to 5 metres 2024 as 12 y o, and epicormic cleaned 2025.



Braaksma Poplar pruned to 5 metres 2024 as 12 y o, and epicormic cleaned 2025.



Roadside Poplar sequenced Toa, Wai iti.

Rewanui Poplar and Willow Demonstration Site 2025

An opportunity has been taken to both display soil conservation and a public demonstration block on the property of Rewanui, owned as a Forest Farm for the purposes of “public afforestation” as set out in a Government Act for the Montfort Trimble Foundation.

Rewanui at 334 ha, contains large areas of protected native bush, *P radiata* managed woodlots, stock grazing lands, exotic and native timber species, experimental plantings and new native slope and wetland plantings. Most tree species are managed with a potential for future timber supply and income. A number of tracks, trails and walkways have been established to assist with access around the property.

Most grazing is confined to terrace flats, but one steep hill paddock of 32 ha , scarred from previous events suffered moderate erosion damage during Cyclone Gabrielle which necessitated the need for a start to soil conservation plantings to vulnerable hill slopes.

The initial site selected, rests on the basal slopes of greywacke steepland soils in areas prone to slip and soil creep erosion.

Eight commercial Poplar clones and one tree Willow (90 poles) will demonstrate both effective soil conservation layout and a clonal growth and form of various Poplars. The site is located 200 metres from the main Rewanui Lane carpark and is on the Exotic Loop track. The trial has been laid out in two batches of 5 clones planted up a slope from wet basal slopes to drier thinner hill soils at the recommended average spacings of 10 – 15 metres apart.

Poplar clones used	Planted colour code
P Crowsnest (<i>P.euramericana</i> x <i>P nigra</i>)	(yellow)
P Fraser (<i>P euramericana</i>)	(orange)
P.Shinsei (<i>P maximowiczii</i> x <i>nigra</i>)	(pink)
P Otahoua (<i>P euramericana</i>)	(white)
P Veronese (<i>P euramericana</i>)	(red)
P Braaksma (<i>P euramericana</i>)	(green)
P Kawa (<i>P deltoides</i> x <i>P yunnanensis</i>)	(black)
P Weraiti (<i>P euramericana</i>)	(lilac)

Willow clone used

S Tangoio (S matsudana x S alba) (blue)

Pole planting was financed with GWRC grants and MTF share. Planting occurred August 6th with graded 3 metre poles, sited and spaced, and the use of auger to assist with 90 cm planting depth, driven to depth and top soil crushed and re rammed. With the spring season remaining dry, the poles required further ramming for pole tightness in October, with adequate rainfalls through November assisting with pole emergent growth.

Current survivals of poles with new stem growth are at 100%.

It is intended to manage the site by form pruning to single leader form and potentially prune these stems to 7 metres.

Rewanui poles

Clones

- BRAKSMA
- CROWSNEST
- FRASER
- KAWA
- OTAHOUA
- SHINSEI
- VERONESE
- WERAITI
- TANGOIO





Special General Meeting

NZFFA will be holding a Special General meeting on the 29th January 2026, 7pm, via Zoom.

This meeting is to approve the amended NZFFA Constitution to meet the Incorporated Society 2022 Act.

Please find attached:

- [Draft Agenda](#)
- [Draft Constitution](#)

Please register your attendance for the meeting on the link below or email admin@nzffa.org.nz

[Register here](#)

Any apologies should be sent to admin@nzffa.org.nz.

Regards

Raewyn

NZFFA Office Manager

admin@nzffa.org.nz

Waikato Branch AGM

The Waikato branch is having their AGM on the 21st of February 2026 at Hampton Downs.

More details to follow.

Dave Forsythe

I'm embarrassed to be a New Zealander.

A reply from the President of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association to the article, "Fear over IKEA Forests as a district is swallowed by Pines"

In reply to Hawkes Bay pilot Joe Faram's, and Porangahau farmer James Hunter's interviews, in the latest attack on forestry, I too am embarrassed to be a New Zealander, when I read their sentiments being distorted by the media.

Just have a look at the photographs of the Hawkes Bay land being planted in Pines. Half of the topsoil has already been washed into orchards, vineyards or out into the sea. James Hunter believes that establishing blanket forestry in Hawkes Bay is the "dumbest thing New Zealand has done in agriculture". James has been farming in the district for a very long time, his family since 1854. He is a former recipient of the NZFFA North Island Farm Forester of the year award. I don't necessarily agree with his sentiments. To me, the dumbest thing was to the deforest the area in totality in the first instance. The emergency response to the affects of this deforestation was to plant Poplars and Willows along the waterways , to attempt to hold the riverbanks and stop them eroding further. These plantings, although on the whole beneficial, have in some instances, caused even more damage. Further north in Central Hawkes Bay, poplars and willows, when mobilised by floodwaters, have caused more economic loss, than the millions of tons of silt that have been deposited on some of the most productive agricultural land in the country.



James Hunter's farm is a showcase of Farm Forestry done well, He has planted pines on his steeper country and nurtured magnificent wetlands to provide biodiversity for indigenous flora and fauna. This is truly world class farming with environmental concerns front of mind. He is ahead of the game with his carbon offsets for his

livestock operation and has income earning potential through having his woodlots registered in the Emissions Trading Scheme. He has every right to be concerned if blanket planting of pines, without fire breaks or internal sources of fire fighting water within forests, are not provided in newly established forests. But these are complex issues which cannot be addressed in a page or two in a newspaper.

As usual, this article takes the easy route with its headlines and stoops to the current mantra of " Pine Bashing".

FORESTRY IS THE ANSWER, NOT THE PROBLEM

Throughout history almost every empire has collapsed and fallen as a result of the lack of access to wood. The Egyptian Empire, The Greek Empire, the Roman Empire, all collapsed as they ran out of wood to sustain their civilisations. Even the British Empire began its decline after the war of the American Independence in 1770. This was a direct result of the British Navy not having access to enough wood to build their ships. The Americans had it all , and they still do.

Now as we move well into the 21st-century, wood is becoming more important than ever. To build a low carbon, sustainable future, wood will be the main ingredient. Wood is used to build and heat our homes, whether they are one story bungalows or 10 story apartment blocks.

This six story Mass-Timber constructed building, being erected behind Parliament buildings in Wellington, is testament to the value of New Zealand grown radiata pine. This state of the art, base-isolated office complex, designed by Studio of Pacific Architecture Ltd, will house 600 Parliamentary staff and MPs.





This is the future for New Zealand, and it is the future for Hawkes Bay. Hillcountry farming in the hotter and drier climate that is coming our way, will become ever more difficult and unsustainable.

Farming and forestry are not mutually exclusive. Each can support the other as a sustainable land use option. Forestry and forest products bring jobs and wealth to the region. Pan Pac Forest Products Ltd employs 400 staff and a further 400 contractors. this one business alone, along with the supply chain workers employs 11% of all of the full time employed people in the Hawke's Bay region.



So let's stop the nonsense about ruining the landscape with forests.

That ruining started about 800 years ago and now we have a chance to fix it.

Vaughan Kearns

President

New Zealand Farm Forestry Association

Members Views and Opinions

NZFFA believe its important to hear your views and share your thoughts and ideas.

If you would like to share something in the Newsletter, please send to admin@nzffa.org.nz



Membership Subscription Invoices

Membership Invoices

- A reminder that the annual membership invoices will automatically be sent out on the 1st January 2026. If you would like me to change any of your subscriptions before the invoice gets sent out, please email me at admin@nzffa.org.nz
- NZFFA has also been advised that to comply with the IRD, we need to add GST to the fee for Branches and Special Interest Groups.

eg Ashburton was \$15, it will now be \$17.25.

The exceptions are for the below branches and SiG.

South Otago

Sequoia Action Group

North Canterbury