

National Newsletter November 2025

Sent: Nov 26, 2025, 11:16 AM

Councillors meeting 11 November

As you know, we normally have a Councillors' meeting at this time of year to review what's happening in the NZFFA. The latest one seems to have been one out of the box. Everyone there will have their own view of how it played out and why, but here is a short version from someone who wasn't there at all. Trimmed of the details, the important outcomes seem to be:

1. Peter Davies-Colley has resigned as President and as a member of the Executive. His critics believed that he had been acting unilaterally which had caused problems with staff and contractors, and divisions within the Executive and the Council. At the meeting Peter called for a vote of confidence, lost, and resigned.
2. As a consequence of that, Michael Gravatt, Les Dowling and Jennie Marks have all stepped down, and Angela Taitoko has resigned as Treasurer.

As you might expect, this has created something of a hole in our administration and we are working quickly to fill it.

1. Vice President Vaughan Kearns has been elevated to replace Peter. He will arrange a Council meeting to elect new Executive members and a new President, if the Council decides.

Rule 8 of the Constitution allows that "in case of urgency the President may convene a special meeting on giving such notice as he or she may determine."

4. A member of staff has been invited to return to their duties after Peter had suspended them for reasons that are not at all clear.
5. Angela has been asked to return as Treasurer at least until the AGM next year, but has declined. She has done a professional job tidying up the accounts and will be hard to replace.

Of course we still need to approve the new Constitution and file it under the Incorporated Societies Act. Before doing that we will check it again, to make sure it covers situations like the above.

These points are the reverberations from a brave attempt to refresh the NZFFA that failed. When you're trying to reshape a volunteer organisation you need to think like an evangelist: i.e. envisage a bright new future, share that with others, enthuse them about it and lead them to make the necessary changes. Those of you who are familiar with committees will fully understand.

Contrast this with panelbeating, where the fastest way to repair a damaged fender is to work out exactly what shape caused the impact and how strong it was; and then

smack the panel from behind with precisely the same shape and force. Then in theory, all you will need to do is fair it up. It can be very satisfying, but in my experience some people hate the noise.

The current executive as of today is:

Vaughan Kearns	Middle Districts	President
Neil Cullen	South Otago	
Graham West	Bay of Plenty	
Kees Weytmans	Tairāwhiti	
Tim Forde	Hawkes Bay	
Dougal Morrison	Wellington	
Gary Fleming	North Canterbury	
Hamish Levack	Wellington	Secretary

Dave Forsythe will prepare the budget for 2026

Tree Grower

By now you should all have received your November Tree Grower, and alert members will have noticed that it has a new format. It's not a competition in "spot the changes," it's a result of being published under a new contract since Julian resigned as Editor. Some of you might think this was a Good Thing, because Julian held strong opinions and was really difficult to deal with, but I got along with him OK as I have with most of you. Getting rid of people who give you angst is becoming fashionable again, but it's a dangerous practice. It sows distrust.

Battle Hill Field Day

There was a field day in Wellington / Porirua on Saturday 15 November, which many of you would have enjoyed. Of course you weren't invited so you couldn't, but had you been there you would have. We learned about best practice efforts for slash management and to reduce the amount of sediment flowing into Porirua harbour, and these lessons may be applicable all around the country.

In short, Greater Wellington Regional Council has asked Forme to talk to forest owners and contractors about their forestry sites, and develop risk management practices to minimise slash movement and sediment loss. This is not enforcement, it's education.

Forme has been asked to assess pre-harvest sites and planning, make FOA Best Practice Guides and other resources available to forest owners and operators, and provide each of them with an independent, site specific risk assessment report. Forme then advises Greater Wellington of the overall trends, without sharing the

specific reports or the individual site details. This gives GW a picture of the state of the catchment, and how it should improve as stakeholders adopt best practice,

Those involved are Greater Wellington Regional Council, MPI officials, private forest owners, holders of cutting rights, harvest managers, logging and earthworks contractors, cartage and road metal contractors, and log buyers. The catchment covers 2,300 ha.

In general terms, what Forme has discovered is that

1. Material breaches of a permitted activity under the NES-CF are common. Notifying GW of a material change to an operational plan is not.
2. Generally, there is a low level of harvest planning, and the methodology is not always suitable for the site. Ground based extraction has often pushed into areas steeper than 25 degrees, with sidecast tracking of the hillside to access the logs.
3. There has been little end-hauling of soil on slopes exceeding 35-degrees.
4. There has been inadequate soil compaction during road construction. Best practice would include the use of a sheepsfoot roller.
5. Exposed or disturbed soil is not often stabilised, unless it is a high-risk site.
6. Sediment control features are not often installed at the required frequency, and culverts and flumes are often in the wrong location, installed incorrectly or not installed at all.
7. Maintenance of sediment control and drainage systems after harvesting is not common, though it's a landowner responsibility.
8. Machines are being used within 5 m of permanent waterways.
9. In some sites where there are hazardous conditions and deeply incised gullies, logging slash has been left within permanent waterways.
10. Slash deposits are often located on slopes exceeding 25-degrees, and sometimes on slopes exceeding 35-degrees.
11. Post-harvest site rehabilitation does not always include pulling the slash back on to a stable location, or reinstating water control and drainage features that have been damaged during operations.
12. Some crossings of permanent waterways do not meet the NES-CF regulations.
13. Not all Significant Natural Areas are being identified on the harvest plan maps, and some of the SNAs have been modified during harvest.

14. Harvesting across tributaries to waterways that hold fish spawning habitat has occurred during the winter fish spawning season.
15. Copies of the FOA Best Practice Guides, NES-CF Standards, and Forest Engineering Standards were seldom found in most crews; and some harvest managers and forest supervisors did not have them either.
16. Environmental outcomes were poor when the logging crew did its own earthworks. For example, harvest contractors will often side-cast displaced soil without stabilisation. Construction projects are best undertaken by trained contractors who work to standards described in the FOA Forest Road Engineering Operators Guidelines.
17. Second-rotation harvests do not necessarily result in less disturbance than first rotation harvests. This is often due to modern ground-based machines replacing cable haulers.

These are some great findings to keep in mind when planning forest operations.

After learning all this and being shown photos of good and bad practice, we toured the GW forests managed by Forest 360 to see what they were doing. It was impressive. Had you been invited you would have enjoyed it.

Howard Moore.



Reinforced culvert facing to stabilise the slope



Corduroy skid site, logs laid with gravel to reduce dust and mud



Temporary bridging that can be removed when the skid site is closed.