World Forest Institute

Social Acceptance of Working Native Forests. The Contrast between Victoria, Australia and the Pacific Northwest

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What I will be presenting:

1. A bit about VicForests and forestry in Victoria, Australia

2. My Project at the World Forest Institute

3. What I learnt and what I hope to bring home

4. Questions
Who is VicForests and where do we operate?

• State Owned Corporation

• Responsible for the sustainable harvest and commercial sale of timber from Victoria’s native forests.

• Responsible for ensuring all areas harvested are successfully regenerated

• Operations based solely in eastern Victoria, Australia

• VicForests’ operations are certified to the Australia Forestry Standard
Our Forest Types and Products:

Central Highlands

- Mountain Ash *Eucalyptus regnans*
- Alpine Ash – *Eucalyptus delegatensis*

East Gippsland

- Mixed eucalypt species forest

Range of products

- Door and window frames
- Flooring
- Staircases
- Furniture
- High strength construction timber
- Paper and paper products
Harvesting

- Rotation age between 60 – 120 years
- Coupes maximum 40 hectares – average is approximately 18 hectares (44 acres)
- Some thinning at 20 – 40 years
- Majority of harvesting done mechanically - increase in efficiency/safety

Regeneration

- Responsible for regenerating the forest following harvest
- Regeneration burn imitates the natural regeneration process
- Spread by helicopter
- Locally picked seed is used to ensure the same species regrow
- Regeneration process can take more than three years to complete successfully
Challenges

**Threatened Species Management**
- Leadbeater’s Possum
- Spot-tailed Quoll
- Long-footed Potoroo

- All species live and rely on the forest in which we operate

- A lot of community interest in the management of these species

**Wildfire**
- Australian forests burn hot, and burn often
What did I want to research during my 6 month Fellowship at WFI?

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1. Improve my understanding of the relationship between the native forest industry and stakeholders
2. What are the greatest challenges for the native forest industry in regards to community acceptance
3. What strategies can forest managers employ when engaging stakeholders to help build their social license to operate
4. Does forest certification aid in social acceptance?
5. Comparison between Victoria and the Pacific Northwest
Where to start?

• Participated in a variety of field trips throughout the PNW
• Spoke with a wide range of individuals
  • Forest industry, watershed council, community groups, landowners, government, non-government organisations
• Conducted interviews

Focused on learning from personal experiences and lessons learnt
Collaborative and Restoration projects

Saw some great examples of collaborative projects

Tree tipping projects that return woody debris to salmon bearing rivers and replacement of undersized culverts for fish passage

Reintroduction of fire to the landscape in areas where frequent low intensity fires have been removed

Cooperatives working together to sell a range of forest products
Collaborative and restoration projects

Stream restoration projects that involve members from the community

Thinning of dense forest stands to encourage the development of old growth forests

Harvest strategies such as Retention harvesting

Removal of the tops of trees for snag development
Social acceptance of forestry in the PNW

Common themes (similar to Victoria, Australia)
low social acceptance of:
• Clear cut harvest units
• Harvesting old growth forests
• Operations that could impact threatened species

- Spotted Owl
- Marbled Murrelet

• Salvage operations
• Use of chemical and pesticides
• AFS/SFI vs FSC
Loss of Trust

1. A lot of public trust in forest management has been lost due to poor practices in the past or current misinformation.

2. The challenge is to regain and maintain trust, and to provide information to the public that have varying levels of knowledge and interest in the forest industry.

3. We base a lot of forest management on science, but often fail to understand the relationship between humans and natural resources.
Improving Social Acceptance at VicForests

Discussed strategies with a range of organisations that they employ to help build their social licence to operate. Often these strategies fell into the below categories:

1. Gain and maintain forest certification

2. Involvement in collaborative projects
   • Host open days out on site to help plan a harvest unit

3. Community outreach
   • Find out what matters to the community and have greater involvement in these events (Clean up Australia Day, Plant a Tree Day)
   • Seek cooperation from locally trusted organisations (Community leaders, Rotary, natural resource groups with balanced views)

4. Transparency and reporting
   • Develop clear business Objectives and Targets that matter to the community
   • Involve the community in monitoring programs of Objectives and Targets

5. Review markets for non-timber forest products
Thank you

Questions