



REPORT

NRW-FOREST PRODUCTS

AFS SUMMARY AUDIT REPORT - JANUARY 2007

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1 INTRODUCTION

This audit was conducted as a normal periodic audit of the NRW-Forest Products Forest Management System which has been certified to the Australian Forestry Standard. It was the second audit of the organisation following the separation of plantation and native forest operations into separate organisations. The audit was of Regional office and field activities.

2 THE AUDIT

2.1 Audit Scope

NRW-Forest Products, native forest harvest activities in Queensland.

2.2 Audit Objectives

Conduct a periodic audit of NRW-Forest Products against the requirements of AS4708(int):2003 including office and field based activities.

2.3 Audit Protocols

The audit was conducted in accordance with JAS-ANZ Procedure 26 Revision 2, DNV Certification audit protocols and with the requirements of AS4708(int): 2003.

The audit was conducted by an auditor assessed by DNV Certification as meeting the competency requirements for qualification as an AFS auditor. The audit comprised 3 audit days in total, all of which were in the field.

2.4 Audit Process

The audit was conducted on 31 January 2007 at Wondai, 1 February at Dunmore and on 2 February in Dalby and Brisbane. The audit included an opening meeting, review of operational documentation, interviews with operational management and Senior Management, review of records associated with management and control of the forest management system and field audits of forestry activities.

2.5 Background of Client

NRW-FP is a Business Unit of the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water – Forest Products, which conducts native forest harvest operations in accordance with State legislation on behalf of the State of Queensland. DPI Forestry achieved certification of its environmental management system to ISO14001 in 1999 and to the AFS in 2005. The native forest and plantation operations were separated in April 2006. This is the second audit of the new native forest organisation.

The operations of NRW-FP are divided across a Head Office, North, Western, South-east and Cypress Forest Management Areas (FMAs).



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3 AUDIT RESULTS

3.1 Performance against Criteria & Requirements

3.1.1 Criterion 1 – Forest management shall be undertaken in a systematic manner that addresses the range of forest values

NRW-FP manages its forest activities with an AFS AS4708 management system. The system has been extensively reviewed since the separation of plantation forestry activities from native forest activities in 2006. The current “*Sustainable Forest Management System (SFMS) – Native Forests*” Version 1.3 (October 2006) effectively describes the function and scope of NRW-FP. The process of Sound Performance Indicators to monitor and control the potential impact on important forest values is effective and consistently utilised. Internal audits are routinely undertaken, and are a very comprehensive evaluation of aspects and impacts associated with commercial native forest activities.

3.1.2 Criterion 2 – Forest management shall provide for public participation and foster on-going relationships to be a good neighbour

Generally NRW-FP does not have fixed neighbours, however evidence was collected to show consideration and communication of neighbours that may be affected by operations. The fostering of good neighbour relationships was apparent in the Cypress Pine area; notably with graziers in relation to fire protection initiatives.

3.1.3 Criterion 3 – Forest management shall protect and maintain the biological diversity of forests, including their successional stages, across the regional landscape

NRW-FP has an effective process in place to identify and manage the full range of forest values. Examination of planning of operational activities showed biodiversity values were assessed prior to the commencement of harvest activities.

3.1.4 Criterion 4 – Forest management shall maintain the productive capacity of forests

NRW-FP are engaged in two distinct harvest activities. Harvest in cypress and western districts is to manage an ongoing resource and future harvest activities, while in the forests included in the SE Queensland agreement harvest activities are planned for a single cut followed by regeneration and conversion of the forest status to reserve. Silvicultural practice appropriate to the future status and productivity of forests was observed during the audit.

3.1.5 Criterion 5 – Forest management shall maintain forest ecosystem health and vitality

Quarantine measures to address the spread of “Mother of millions” are in place, noting that the weed is spread in any case through floods.

3.1.6 Criterion 6 – Forest management shall protect soil and water resources

No instances were observed where NRW-FP had failed to adopt the required Code of Practise prescriptions in relation to soil and water protection. The approach of NRW-FP is rigorous.



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3.1.7 Criterion 7 – Forest management shall maintain forests’ contribution to carbon cycles

Native forest operations maintain the carbon sink capacity of the forests.

3.1.8 Criterion 8 – Forest management shall protect and maintain, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, their natural, cultural, social, religious and spiritual heritage values

Indigenous peoples rights and responsibilities are built into NRW planning processes, including procedures for legislative requirements for determination, consultation and recognition of native title claims and cultural heritage values (e.g. *Native Title Act 1993* (Commonwealth) & *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*.) NRW-FP have a “Native Title Work Procedure” for use in development of harvest plans. Contributions are also made to the conservation of European heritage (e.g., Woolwash area Settlement Huts).

3.1.9 Criterion 9 – Forest management shall maintain and enhance long-term social and economic benefits

NRW-FP is an active participant in industry development activities and in local activities. Assessment of competency for forest workers’ and inclusion of health and safety requirements in harvest plans is a strength.

3.2 SFM Indicators

SFM indicators will be reviewed at the next surveillance audit.

3.3 Themes

3.3.1 Theme 1 Notable or Good Practice

Notable or good practices are issues identified during the audit where it is the opinion of the auditor the approach is exemplary.

During the audit eleven examples of notable or good practice were observed. In particular, operational harvest plans prepared by NRW-FP were found to be detailed and effectively addressed environmental, economic, cultural and social issues. Biodiversity within the harvest area is maintained and protected through the identification of habitat and recruitment trees, together with the effective maintenance of corridors and streamside reserves. NRW-FP were found to pay particular attention to the social needs of communities where it operates and to its own personnel.

3.3.2 Theme 2 Opportunities for Improvement

An opportunity for improvement is a situation or issue identified during the audit where it is the opinion of the auditor that further consideration by the organisation would be useful. The organisation may find the suggestion as worthy of implementation or as unnecessary.

Thirteen opportunities for improvement related to AS4708 were identified during this audit. These included suggestions relating to management of the severely fire affected cypress stands in the Dunmore State Forest, improvement of the methodology for setting objectives and targets, improvements in the methodology for assessing competency and training needs and internal audit of non-commercial forest activities.



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3.3.3 Theme 3 Areas of Non-Conformance

An identified non-conformance can be classified as either a major con-conformance or a minor non-conformance. A major non-conformance is assessed when a critical failure is identified or a complete part of the AFS is not implemented, which calls into question the validity of the certification. A minor non-conformance is assessed when a failure is identified which increases the potential of a critical failure.

One non-conformity related to AS4708 was identified during this audit. It was noted that additional work is required to complete a comprehensive identification and analysis of forest values, specifically in relation to a range of lower impact activities.

4 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

It is recommended that the certification of NRW-FP to AFS AS4708:2003(int) is continued with no additional audit requirements.

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