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## NRMW-FOREST PRODUCTS

AFS SUMMARY AUDIT REPORT JUNE 2006

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## REPORT

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# REPORT

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<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2 THE AUDIT.....	1
2.1 Scope .....	1
2.2 Objectives .....	1
2.3 Protocols .....	1
2.4 Verification Process .....	1
2.5 Background of Client .....	1
2.6 Indicators .....	1
2.7 Stakeholder Communications .....	2
3 AUDIT RESULTS .....	2
3.1 Performance against Criteria & Requirements.....	2
3.2 General Findings .....	2
3.3 Areas of Non-Conformance .....	2
3.4 Observations and Opportunities for Improvements .....	3
3.5 Notable or Good Practice .....	3
4 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS .....	3



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# REPORT

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This audit was conducted as a recertification audit of the NRMW-Forest Products Forest Management System which has previously been certified to the Australian Forestry Standard. It was the first audit of the organisation following the separation of plantation and native forest operations into separate organisations. The audit was conducted as a recertification audit following the separation. The audit included both field and office components.

## 2 THE AUDIT

### 2.1 Scope

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

### 2.2 Objectives

Conduct a recertification audit of Forestry Plantations Queensland against the requirements of AS4708(int):2003 including office and field based activities.

### 2.3 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 8 audit days in total, of which 6 days were in the field, one day was in Head Office and one day was offsite reporting.

### 2.4 Verification Process

The audit was conducted during three separate audit events, each of four days, completed in conjunction with an audit of NRMW-Forest Products AFS activities. Each of the separate audit events 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

NRMW-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 first full audit of the new native forest organisation, and the last audit to be conducted simultaneously with Forestry Plantations Queensland.

The operations of NRMW-FP are divided across a Head Office, North, Western, South-east and Cypress Forest Management Areas (FMAs). During this audit, activities at each of the FMAs except Cypress were reviewed.

### 2.6 Indicators

A sample of NRMW-FP SFM indicators were reviewed during this audit and found to be fairly stated. Independent scientific consultants for AFS Ltd (School of Botany, University of Melbourne) have




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## REPORT

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prepared a comprehensive discussion paper on the use of statistics in the determination and then communication of objective measures of operational performance in forest management.

### 2.7 Stakeholder Communications

Four stakeholder organisations were interviewed during the audit, covering NGOs, local government and industry and both state and regional bodies. The state wide NGO indicated that while they had received information from (then) DPI Forestry they had declined to offer any comment. The regional NGO, local government and industry stakeholders indicated that they had enjoyed positive relations and meaningful dialogue with DPI Forestry.

## 3 AUDIT RESULTS

### 3.1 Performance against Criteria & Requirements

The organisation was reviewed against the following elements:

- management requirements contained in Element 1 of the AFS;
- public participation and good neighbour practices;
- biological diversity;
- productive capacity of plantations;
- forest health and vitality;
- soil and water protection; and
- social and economic benefits.

### 3.2 General Findings

The system documentation and management arrangements of NRMW-FP were found to comply with the requirements of the AFS. It is noted that the system documentation is undergoing continuing review and change as a result of the movement of the operations from within DPI&F to NRMW. However, the pre-existing forest management practices remain in operation.

### 3.3 Areas of Non-Conformance

*Context:* A non-conformance can be classified as either a major non-conformance or a minor non-conformance. A major non-conformance is a failure which would cause a stakeholder to doubt the effectiveness of the forest management system. A minor non-conformance is a failure which could become a major non-conformance if it was not corrected.

*Findings:* There was a minor non-conformity identified during the audit. At one harvest operation (a long term, low intensity forest sawmill) out of a total of over ten operations subject to audit a number of operational issues were observed, including:

- Incursion into stream zone to salvage logs from fallen trees
- Possible un-crowned stumps
- Stream crossing in poor condition
- Offcuts and piles of cut timber (some 2m high, with signs that they had been there for some time) spread across mill area (presenting a fire risk)



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## REPORT

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- Significant quantities of litter present (particularly drink bottles and fuel/oil containers)
- Evidence of fuel/oil spills to soil near mill

### 3.4 Observations and Opportunities for Improvements

*Context:* An observation identifies a situation where it is the auditor's opinion that further review of some element of the system by the client is warranted. An opportunity for improvement identifies a situation where it is the auditor's opinion that some further improvement could be considered.

A number of observations and opportunities for improvement were identified.

1. Emergency response - requirements for medical evacuation are noted in the OHP, but a trial of the procedure has not been done. It is suggested that a trial is undertaken as part of bushfire operations training involving all relevant agencies. There is extensive bushfire emergency training.
2. With the demerger of native forest and plantation operations there is added complexity in the relationship with EPA which is covered in an MOU. It is suggested that the requirements are put into a form that can be clearly understood by staff.
3. The aspects and impacts process could be clarified to more clearly demonstrate the relationship between the assessment of "significance" and risk. This will allow more targeted interventions and treatments in the areas of observed highest risk.
4. Safety plans are included in each OHP. It is noted that the planning forester completes a site specific risk assessment in conjunction with the permittee. NRMW is encouraged to ensure that the site specific risk assessment, as documented in the OHP, is complete.

### 3.5 Notable or Good Practice

*Context:* A notable or good practice identifies an issue or practice where it is the opinion of the auditor that the client has adopted management practices or performance commitments that are beyond the basic requirements of the standard.

The following notable practice was identified.

1. Wondai - a site inspection pack with copies of (likely) relevant herbarium notes and SMPs is prepared prior to first inspecting the block. This is a good idea.

## 4 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

It is recommended that:

1. the recertification of NRMW-Forest Products to AFS AS4708:2003(int) is approved with no additional audit requirements.

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