

## **Q&A: West Coast Windblown Timber (Conservation Lands) Bill**

### **1. Why is urgent legislation needed?**

Current conservation law does not provide for the recovery of timber for commercial purposes. Urgent legislation is required to recover timber because it will deteriorate if left too long and lose its commercial value. Beech sapwood in particular would need to be recovered within months before sap stain fungi and beech borer destroy the value of the timber. Felled rimu may be recoverable for up to five years.

### **2. Which conservation areas can timber be taken from?**

The proposal is restricted to conservation lands outside of National Parks and ecological areas, and also excludes the Te Wahipounamu - South West New Zealand World Heritage Area and the white heron sanctuary reserve at Whataroa.

It would allow timber to be retrieved from stewardship lands, some reserves and marginal strips. This area is estimated at about 20,000 hectares.

### **3. How long would timber be able to be removed for?**

It is proposed that legislation would apply for a period of five years after which it would be repealed and any timber removal would cease.

### **4. What about health and safety in this potentially risky environment?**

Authorisations to remove timber will require that the operators provide health and safety plans to show their removal methods would be safe for workers and the public. The Department of Conservation (DOC) would have these plans independently audited when proposals are assessed. The Bill also provides for the public to be excluded from areas while timber recovery operations are in place to protect the public.

### **5. What about the impacts on forest ecosystems?**

The scale of the damage from the Cyclone Ita event means there are large amounts of dead or dying tree material available to contribute to natural nutrient cycling and habitat creation within the forest ecosystem. Only timber that can be processed for high value uses – logs and sawn slabs – would be removed, leaving the rest of the tree in the forest available for plants and animals within the forest ecosystem. The removal of a small proportion of that material is therefore unlikely to have a significant effect.

### **6. What measures will be put in place to protect the environment?**

The impacts of timber removal would be minimised through strict controls. No significant soil disturbance would be allowed and operators would be required to minimise damage to the forest and conservation values at the site. Limiting the time period within which timber can be recovered would also limit disturbance as work would be undertaken prior to areas regenerating.

### **7. What is the size of the economic and employment opportunity from this windblown timber?**

The area of severe windfall where over 50 per cent of forest has been felled is 20,000 hectares but a further 200,000 hectares of forest has a proportion of trees down. The

volumes of wood involved in total would be many millions of tonnes, but only a small proportion is likely to be economic to recover with the tight safety and environmental controls proposed.

A crude preliminary estimate by the Ministry for Primary Industries is 105,000m<sup>3</sup> of rimu and 36,000m<sup>3</sup> of beech. The stumpage rates for rimu are about \$250 per m<sup>3</sup> for rimu and \$60 per m<sup>3</sup> for beech. There would be considerable greater flow-on benefits to the economy from the recovery, sawmilling and finishing.

#### **8. How will the royalty income be spent?**

Cabinet has agreed that any royalty income will be reinvested in conservation. Some of the funding will be needed for administering and monitoring the timber recovery authorisations and to fund the research project on the effects.

Conservation work that could benefit from the royalty income include controlling pests (including those that could eat the seeds needed for forest regeneration) and weed control in the affected areas. The West Coast Conservation Board and local Ngāi Tahu rūnanga will be consulted on how the revenues are spent.

#### **9. What interest has been expressed by foresters and sawmillers in recovery of the windfell timber?**

There have been a number of enquiries about the recovery of windblown timber from the timber industry, saw millers and landowners on the West Coast.

Specific companies that have expressed interest are:

- Jon Dronfield (NZ Sustainable Forest Products Limited), 021 332 611
- Andy Grigg (saw miller), 027 265 0144
- Dave Hindman (saw miller/forester), 027 453 5205
- Dean Sweetman (Westco Lagen), 027 457 1093

#### **10. What has been the process for these decisions and what is the programme ahead?**

The Minister of Conservation was approached by Maureen Pugh, former mayor of Westland, soon after the windfall event. The Minister visited the area on 1 May and sought surveys on the extent of the damage. The Minister met further with Maureen Pugh on 8 May in Wellington.

The Minister took a paper to Cabinet on 28 May and the Bill has subsequently been drafted by the Parliamentary Counsel Office. Ngāi Tahu and the New Zealand Conservation Authority were consulted. The agreement of the United Future and Māori parties was secured this week for today's announcement.

The Bill will be introduced to the House under urgency next week and passed through all stages. Request for proposals on timber recovery will be sought by public notice in early July.