



*Forest Fire Management Committee  
of  
The New Zealand Institute of Foresters.*

## **Terms of Reference/ Charter**

### **Background / Context**

During the Australian / New Zealand Institute of Foresters Conference held in Creswick during April 2015, a resolution was passed:

*That the IFA and the NZIF form a forward looking position in relation to fire, involving a strong focus on proactive land management mitigation measures balanced against an operational fire response focus and that both organisations:*

- *review current fire-related policies,*
- *endorse the National Bushfire Management Policy Statement for Forests and Rangelands,*
- *endorse the National Research Priorities to 2020 and Beyond for bushfires, and*
- *encourage Australian Federal and state and New Zealand governments to provide adequate funds to reduce the fire risk which shall reduce the cost of fire response and hence the total expenditure on fire.*

The New Zealand Institute of Foresters (NZIF), Council resolved to form a national Forest Fire Management Committee to further this theme.

### **Committee's function**

Being committed to the principles of sustainable forest management and the processes and practices which translate these principles into outcomes, the NZIF Forest Fire Management Committee is to provide a strong focus, for the NZIF Executive Board and members, on proactive land management mitigation measures balanced against an operational fire response; cognizant of the:

- Australian/New Zealand Standing Council of Primary Industries National Bushfire Management Policy Statement for Forests and Rangelands;
- Australian/New Zealand Forest Fire Management Group (FFMG) Risk Management Position Paper;
- FAO Fire Management: Voluntary guidelines. Principles and strategic actions. Fire Management Working Paper; and
- Australian/New Zealand Forest Fire Management Group National Research Priorities to 2020 and Beyond for bushfires.

### **Committee's role**

NZIF Forest Fire Management Committee's role is to assist the NZIF Council on all forest fire management issues, including:

- Providing the NZIF Council with information regarding current forest fire management issues in Australia and New Zealand;
- Gathering information to enable NZIF members to have professional debate on issues arising;
- Assisting NZIF members to be informed of current forest fire management research developments;
- Encouraging members to present on forest fire management topics at the NZIF / ANZIF conferences;
- Review and make recommendation to the NZIF Council on forest fire related policies;
- Identify policy issues which could or would have consequences to the ongoing effective management of fire on the forest and hill and high country lands and recommend an NZIF position on such matters; and
- Writing submissions for the NZIF to submit to relevant Inquiries / Reviews.

### **Governance**

The New Zealand Institute of Forestry (NZIF) is governed by its Rules as an Incorporated Society, and its Code of Ethics. It is an industry body dedicated to promoting the highest professional standards.

As a Program administered by the NZIF, Forest Fire Management Committee will have a diverse, skills based Management Committee, with a Chair, and members appointed by the Council. The Forest Fire Management Committee will report to and be accountable through appropriate delegations to the NZIF Council.

An NZIF Council member will be an Ex officio member of the Forest Fire Management Committee.

### ***Forest Fire Management Committee Culture***

#### **Principles:**

- Strongly committed to enhancing the benefits that come from sustainable forest management.
- Participation irrespective of race, religion, creed, or political convictions.
- Observe and practice neutrality, independence and impartiality.
- Seeks to educate members and communities.
- All activities will respect NZIF Code forestry professional code of ethics.

#### **Partnerships and alliances:**

Forest Fire Management Committee functions to meet the requirements of the NZIF Council and its members. However, to ensure that the Committee members remain current regarding related developing global issues and forest fire management knowledge, the Committee will, consistent with these TOR/ this Charter, develop linkages with other organizations.

#### **Measures of success**

Measures of success for the Forest Fire Management Committee may include:

- External organisation actively seek NZIF authoritative advice regarding Forest Fire Management issues; and
- Members are well respected for their knowledge and experience in forest fire management.



# **New Zealand Institute of Forestry Position Statement**

**May 2016**

## **Managing fire in New Zealand forests and rural landscape**

The natural forests of New Zealand evolved in the absence of frequent wildfire until about 1400 to 1600 AD when Maori introduced the more methodical use of fire. This was followed by an extended period of burning associated with European settlement and land clearing. In 1874 the New Zealand Government introduced and subsequently improved legislation to control the use of fire and its impact on forests. Government ownership of large areas of plantation forests led to effective training and a career path for fire management activities. Land managers in New Zealand now view fire protection as part of management responsibilities, and have control of the complete process from fire planning to fire suppression.

Changes in State plantation ownership from the State to private companies started in 1987 and led to changes in many forest management practices, including fire protection. The absence of a proven economic benefit through incomplete data led to a number of owners reducing fire protection expenditure, and this increased stakeholder concern.

In New Zealand, the Fire Service Commission (the Commission) is the statutory agency responsible for all urban fire forces (paid and volunteer) and for the general promotion of national fire safety including funding research. Within the Commission is the National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) which is responsible for coordinating rural fire authorities throughout New Zealand and can fund fire suppression on private land where this cannot be cost recovered from the person responsible for causing the wildfire or the property owner.

The rural fire force capability relies largely on resources drawn from organisations involved in land management activities. These organisations include forest owners and management contractors, local government authorities, the national conservation agency administering protected lands, aviation firms operating in rural areas, companies involved in road construction, forest harvesting, silviculture and control of pests and weeds and volunteers. Coordinating the community-based groups ensures that there are common wildfire management policies and processes as well as common standards for technical competency, safety and specialist fire-fighting equipment. National coordination, consistent approaches and a fire danger rating system also underpin both fire prevention (e.g. public education, restrictions around fire use) and fire suppression activities.

The legislation that establishes and empowers the roles of the Commission and NRFA is explicitly dovetailed with other legislation, particularly, the Forest and Rural Fires Act. This statute allocates powers and responsibilities for aspects of land and forest management and places obligations on land owners. Not only is this integrated approach efficient, but it ensures the involvement of land managers and foresters with their expertise and practical knowledge in responding to wildfire, in land management policies and strategies that take account of fire risk and it incorporates their

understanding of the use of fire (as 'prescribed burns') to achieve the land and forest management objectives.

The Government in early 2016 has agreed that the urban and rural fire services will be merged into one entity with regional committees of influence. Much of the detail has yet to be developed for this major change in the legislative management of fire in the forest and rural landscape. The NZIF should position itself as an informed stakeholder in this process. This will enable the NZIF to be in a position to influence the work by officials on the details for this merger.

The issue confronting most New Zealand plantation, forests, hill and high country lands is the weather conditions which occur every year during which, given sufficient fuel, wildfires can be virtually impossible to contain. Uncontrolled fires pose a serious threat to human life, property, community assets and to plantation, forests, hill and high country values and these potential impacts need to be minimised by effective management. Fire also plays an important role in the maintenance of biodiversity and ecological processes and is an essential tool for plantation, forest, hill and high country management. Forest managers are required to integrate a broad range of fire-related issues and to implement management programs that address objectives related to natural resource management and protection. Forest management entities have a requirement to maintain an effective workforce available for fire management tasks, and to allocate sufficient resources to this task in order to meet their duty of care to the community, volunteer firefighters, and their own employees. Safety of personnel must be a paramount consideration in all operations associated with fire suppression or the planned use of fire. Forest fire suppression is a difficult and dangerous task that requires well trained and experienced firefighters together with appropriate equipment and effective management systems, such as the CIMS Incident Control System. The ability to conduct backburning during wildfire suppression operations requires specialist skills and considerable experience, which is most effectively gained by involvement in prescribed burning programs. Prescribed burning is the planned application of fire under specified environmental conditions to meet particular management objectives. Prescribed burning is an important tool for forest management and is used for a range of purposes including site preparation, and fuel reduction.

Scientific studies have demonstrated that the speed and intensity at which a forest fire burns is related to the amount and arrangement of fuel comprised of leaves, twigs and understorey shrubs. In many plantation the amount of fuel increases with the time, and may continue to accumulate for several decades. Prescribed fire can be used to reduce the amount of accumulated fuel on the boundaries of plantation, thereby reducing the intensity and difficulty of suppression of external unplanned wildfires, and minimising likelihood of severe damage to forest values.

Fire management programs should be based on the best available information about fire behaviour, the role of fire regimes in the environment, and the influence of fire on communities and society. This requires a commitment to ongoing research in a range of disciplines, and a commitment to technology transfer to ensure that new information is made available to decision makers and practitioners. Scientifically-based decision support systems are an important tool for integrating a wide range of information and can assist managers to make consistent and transparent decisions about complex issues.

There is a need for forest managers to engage the community during the development and implementation of fire management programs, particularly where plantation and other forested lands adjoins urban and settled areas. Fire-related issues likely to be of interest to the community include asset and environmental protection, risk management, and the relationship between bushfire smoke and human health. Effective communication and consultation with the community

leads to greater support for fire management programs, and ensures that knowledge available within the community is made available to forest managers.

## **Policy;**

The New Zealand Institute of Foresters –

- Advocates the need to actively manage fire in New Zealand plantations, forests, hill and high country lands in a comprehensive, integrated manner that considers risks, ecological and forest management requirements as well as the protection of life, property and other assets.
- Effective communication and awareness of the general public that fire is an important part of the landscape is essential;
- Forest fire suppression requires active involvement of well trained and experienced forest land managers who have considerable experience in prescribed burning.

The NZIF supports:

- The use of the CIMS Incident Control System and inter-agency agreements to facilitate co-ordinated management of wildfires, including resource sharing, standardisation of training and equipment, and mutual aid during fire emergency situations;
- The development and use of scientifically-based decision support systems to inform forest fire managers during strategic planning, resource allocation and operational decisions;
- The development of performance indicators to provide meaningful information about the effectiveness of fire management in terms of environmental, social and economic outcomes.