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FACT SHEET 2

Private Native Forestry

Tree Alliance

Getting ready to harvest

Tasmania's extensive private native forests have a long history of active management for timber production. With our changing climate and an expanding bioeconomy, Private Forests Tasmania has identified strong opportunities to boost the health and resilience of these forests, while generating income and other ecosystem benefits through silvicultural treatments such as thinning. This private native forest management series is designed to assist forest owners to successfully plan and carry out active management for beneficial outcomes. It includes fact sheets on relevant topics, a detailed how to guide and case studies demonstrating how active management techniques are being applied to achieve various land management and financial objectives in five private native forests.

Introduction

Like any other land management activity, it is good practice to start organising harvesting operations well ahead of time. Planning for harvesting should ideally start several years prior to the anticipated operation. This provides time to complete essential tasks, allows for delays and enables the forest owner to take advantage of good market conditions and the availability of contractors and service providers. This fact sheet discusses what needs to be done to get harvest ready.

Mechanical harvester, Ben Nevis

What does getting ready to harvest involve?

Before you can harvest, the following arrangements need to be in place:

- Forest management objectives determined.
- Forest inventory and other information gathered.
- Customers found and sales contracts established.
- Service providers found and operational contracts established.
- Plans and permits approved.
- Internal forest road network upgraded to meet log haulage standards.

Setting objectives and gathering information

The first step in getting involved in active commercial management of your forest should be to establish objectives. Fact Sheet 1 Commercial management of private native forests and Fact Sheet 4 Non-timber products and values in private native forestry provide information on the integrated benefits that are possible from commercial forestry activities. Working out what is most important for your situation will help you to plan management activities that offer greatest benefit. The forest owners participating in the case studies in this series have shared their general objectives for their forests and how these fit with other aspects of their enterprises or life. For example, John Lord is managing

Private Forests Tasmania

the Blackwood Creek forest for multiple uses including timber production to cover major family expenses, reduce fire risk, create employment and support community access for recreation. He shares his vision in more detail in our video series.

Another key part of planning is gathering information about your forest. This will include the forest types, forest age and history, the structure and condition of the forest and geographic and environmental features of the forest. If harvesting is proposed, it is important to understand the range of species present, size of the trees, availability of harvestable trees, quantity of specific forest products and other variables which can assist with forest management decisions. A general assessment may be adequate initially. However, a more detailed forest measurement, called a forest inventory, should be completed to inform operational plans and contractual negotiations. The How To Guide provides more technical information on these stages of getting ready to harvest.

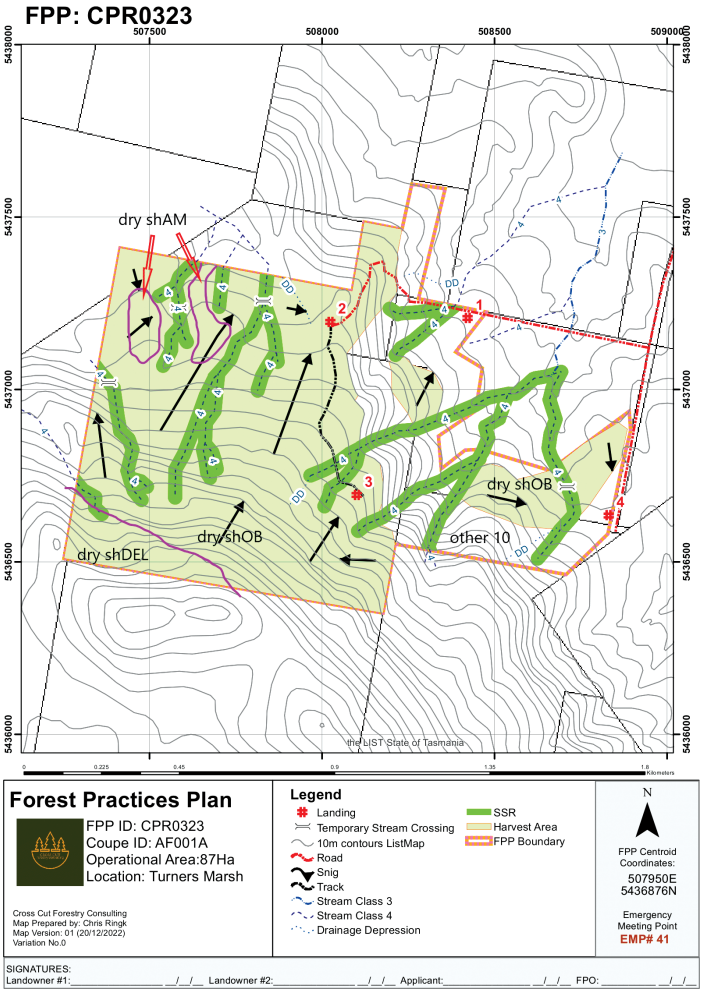
Contracts

By allowing plenty of time to plan for harvesting operations, owners can ensure the site is ready for harvest when prices are good and contracting services are available. Like other agricultural commodities, market demand and prices for forest-based products fluctuate and can be unpredictable. Being ready in advance helps you take advantage of good market conditions at short notice.

There are several different routes to get wood to market. They include:

- Direct sales to processors who acquire wood as standing trees and arrange harvesting and haulage (stumpage sales). All the case studies in this series apply this option.
- Direct sales to processors who acquire wood products delivered by the forest owner's contractors to an agreed location (delivered sales).
- Sales through a third party that would typically also arrange contractors to harvest and haul products and find markets for the wood products (agency sales).
- Engagement of a third-party forest manager that plans and manages the operation and marketing on the owner's behalf for an agreed fee (managed sales).

The choice of which option is appropriate will depend on the range of forest products being sold and the capacity of the forest owner to negotiate contracts and manage the operation . Regardless of the sales method and service provider arrangements, it is essential to have a written contract that clearly identifies the expectations of each party. These topics are covered in more detail in Private Forest Tasmania's How to sell wood from your private forests information sheet and other guidance in this series. Another useful resource is the Directory of Tasmanian Forestry Services, an online database available for forest owners to find contacts for professional services, harvest and haulage services, processors and other forestry advice.



Forest Practices Plan map example

Planning

Forest harvesting in Tasmania is regulated under the Forest Practices Act (1985) and Forest Practices Code (forest practices system). Almost all harvesting operations in Tasmania require an approved forest practices plan (FPP). FPPs are prepared by foresters with training in the forest practices system and approved by qualified Forest Practices Officers (FPOs). FPPs can be planned and approved within a minimum timeframe of ten days, depending on the availability of FPOs to prepare and approve the practices plan, and the complexity of the proposed operation. No further approvals are needed if the forest has been declared as a Private Timber Reserve (PTR) by the Forest Practices Authority (FPA). Establishing a PTR is a once off activity that usually takes around six months to approve. While a FPP is still required for individual harvesting activities, once in place a PTR provides for future active forest management, regardless of any future changes to local government planning requirements. A PTR also provides an exemption from land tax for the relevant area. Examples of planning considerations are provided in the case studies in this series.

If the forest is not a PTR, planning approval will also likely be required from the relevant local government authority for timber harvesting operations. Planning

permits must be addressed within statutory timeframes, and a response to an application is required within 42 days of submission. Timeframes may be longer and less predictable if the local government authority requests more information to support the permit application.

Harvest planning is usually coordinated by the party responsible for the management of the operation with input and authority from the forest owner. Further useful information and links about forest management planning can be found on the Forest Practices Authority Landowners web pages.

Roading

Internal forestry roads need to be capable of supporting heavy vehicle use for the period of harvest. Forest tracks often need maintenance or upgrading ahead of harvesting. This allows reliable access to landing sites and ensures roads can accommodate truck configurations and cater for haulage operations under a variety of weather conditions. These works are set out in the approved FPP.

Roads used for haulage of wood products quickly deteriorate if they are subject to heavy use too soon after construction or maintenance, particularly in wet conditions. Poor road conditions cause operational difficulties and environmental damage, costing the forest owner far more to maintain or repair and possibly delaying operations. It is best to complete roadworks at least six months, and preferably a year ahead of harvesting operations, to allow the road surface to settle.

Roadworks will most likely require engaging contractors with specialist equipment and skilled operators. Works can either be coordinated by the forest owner or the party responsible for managing the harvesting operation. Regardless, operational plans and contracts should be established, particularly for complex works.

Contingency

Once you have contracts, plans and roads in place, you should expect that it could take some time for the operation to commence and that this might happen at short notice. Having everything ready to go will help you take advantage of opportunities quickly when they arise.

It also makes sense to build in contingency time in case things don't go to plan. Operations can be delayed by a range of factors such as public road maintenance, neighbour's activities, adverse weather or market constraints. Many harvesting operations are impacted by factors outside the control of the owner and service providers. At times, operations can be suspended for a considerable period. Understanding that delays are possible will assist with managing finances and logistics.

Activity	Time horizon
Private Forest Reserve (not mandatory)	6 months for PFT and FPA review
Planning Permit (mandatory if no Private Forest Reserve)	10 days prepare application 42 days minimum council review
Forest Practices Plan (mandatory)	10 days prepare and approve application
Road upgrades / construction	Minimum six months, ideally 12 – 18 months.
Service provider availability	Unpredictable
Market availability	Unpredictable
Operational delays	Unpredictable

References

- Products, markets and supply chains fact sheet
- How to sell wood from your private forests fact sheet
- Directory of Tasmanian Forestry Services, an online listing to assist forest owners to find contacts for professional services, harvest and haulage services, processors and other forestry assistance
- the Forest Practices Plans web page[1].
- Forest Practices Authority - Landowners webpage

1 https://www.treealliance.com.au/resources/Forest_practices_plans

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More information

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Tasmania is one of the best places in the world to manage forests for sustainable and profitable outcomes. To learn more about your options for renewable native forest management, contact the team at Private Forests Tasmania on their Tree Alliance hotline or through their general enquiries.

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