

Private Native Forestry



Risk management for private native forestry

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

This fact sheet explores the types of hazards associated with native forests, how management activities influence these and ways to reduce risk¹. All forest owners face risks relating to their assets, finances, their own and others wellbeing. Some forestry risks are caused by natural hazards and are to some degree always present, others are introduced with operational activities.

Environmental risks

Environmental risks relevant to native forests in Tasmania include wildfire, extreme weather events, pests and diseases and longer term changes to climate.

Fire and extreme weather events

Wildfire and extreme weather events expose people, assets and the environment to direct impacts including potential injury or death, loss or damage to property infrastructure, forest resources, environmental and cultural values. Although the scale varies considerably, at worst, impacts can be widespread and long lasting, placing enormous costs on individuals and the broader community both during and following the event. Forest management can influence both the likelihood and consequence of impacts from these events.

Wildfire risk is driven by weather, fuel, exposure to ignition sources and the ability of firefighting resources to rapidly extinguish fires. Forest owners can reduce



Increased levels of fine fuels after regrowth thinning pose a short term risk.

wildfire risk by creating fire breaks, modifying fuels, minimising ignition sources when fire danger levels are high and ensuring good vehicle access around the forest and to water. Forest management activities such as thinning, wood cutting, road maintenance, weed management and burning can reduce wildfire risk as long as fire protection is considered when planning and implementing the activities.

¹ Hazards vs risks - A hazard is a something that can cause harm. Risk is how likely a hazard is and the scale of consequence resulting from it.

Windstorms have caused significant damage to forests and forest infrastructure in south-east Australia in recent years. While wind events are uncontrollable, management can influence the vulnerability of forests to damage. Tall stands of thin trees, forests growing in shallow soils and situations where wind speed can accelerate are particularly susceptible to windthrow and care is required when planning stand interventions. Well-timed thinning can promote more windfirm forests. However later aged thinning may increase the risk of wind damage.

Extreme rain events cause localised landslips and downstream damage through flooding and debris movement. Some Tasmanian landscapes and forests can reduce the risk by holding soil together and slowing runoff. The forest practices system assists forest owners to evaluate and avoid the likelihood of landslides and soil movement as a consequence of associated with extreme rainfall and landslip during silvicultural and roading operations.

Biosecurity

Invasive pests such as insects, animals, pathogens and weeds can all act as significant damage agents in forest environments under particular conditions. In the worst instances, these can impact both the ecology and commercial productivity of forests. Particular risks in Tasmanian native forests include the *Phytophthora* root rot fungus, a range of weeds, feral deer and rabbits. Weeds and pathogens can be spread by machinery movement during forest operations and by animal movement. The [Forest Practices Code](#) and [Tasmanian Washdown Guidelines](#) include instructions to reduce these risks. Biosecurity risks change over time and forest owners should look out for and report anything unusual to Biosecurity Tasmania.

Operational risk

Management activities introduce safety, infrastructure, environmental, financial, legal and social risks for the forest owner. Contractual arrangements and insurance are management tools commonly used to reduce these.

Safety

Forestry operations, especially harvesting, present a heightened safety risk for workers and others. Where manual chainsaw felling of trees is proposed or where there are steep or difficult conditions this risk is further exacerbated. The Tasmanian *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* obliges landowners, forest managers and contractors to eliminate health and safety risks for workers as far as is reasonably practicable. The [Forest Safety Code](#) and [Forestry Log Haulage Code](#) provide guidance on methods of controlling safety risks during operations. Ensuring that plans and contracts include appropriate consideration of safety hazards and risk controls is critical for forest owners engaging others to conduct operations in their forests.

Forest, environment and infrastructure

Poorly planned or implemented forest operations can result in damage to forest resources, the environment, cultural values and infrastructure. As a result the operation may fail to achieve the desired outcomes, and could have a permanent or long term negative effect on a range of values, such as forest health, waterways, biodiversity and cultural values. It may also expose the forest and people to increased risks. Operating within the forest practices system and clearly specifying expectations and responsibilities within contracts assists to avoid these risks.



Good quality road infrastructure is an important risk management tool

Commercial risk and risk management tools

Financial and compliance risks

The point along the supply chain where forest products are sold is the key determinant of financial, legal and regulatory risk for harvesting operations. There are various options for sales. Forest products can be sold as standing trees under a stumpage arrangement, or as delivered products to the purchaser's site. The more responsibility a forest grower assumes for management of harvesting and haulage, the greater their risk exposure. Fact Sheet 5: Timber products, markets and supply chains for private native forests discusses the range of sales arrangements in more detail.



Good quality forestry contractors will help to manage commercial risk

Contractual arrangements

Contractual agreements are the most important tool for managing operational and commercial risk. Contracts should provide absolute clarity about which parties are engaged and what their responsibilities are. In many cases, a log purchaser or agent will provide a template contract for the activity. It is essential that you take legal advice on the contract to ensure that your interests are clearly addressed. Under delivered sales arrangements, forest owners are responsible for contracts and this should also be undertaken with legal advice.

Insurances

Contracts should clearly specify which parties are required to hold insurance, what insurances need to be held and what value should be insured. It is usual for all parties to hold public liability insurance to an agreed level. Any party that uses employees to undertake activities must also hold workers compensation insurance. Where a party is involved in providing professional or expert advice, it is normal for them to hold professional indemnity insurance. A certificate of currency must be provided for any required insurance which specifies what the insurance is for, what value is insured, what entities are insured and when the insurance expires. Your own insurer may require to be notified about the insurance details of other parties.

It may also be possible to take out insurance for the forest asset itself, in case of damage. To determine whether this is appropriate and feasible, forest owners should discuss with an experienced agricultural or forestry insurance broker.

References

Fact Sheet 1: Commercial management of private native forests

Fact Sheet 3: Native forest silviculture

Fact Sheet 5: Timber products, markets and supply chains for private native forests

The [Forest Safety Code](#) and [Forestry Log Haulage Code](#)
[Tasmanian Washdown Guidelines](#)

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More information

Prepared April 2023 by Greenwood Strategy Solutions

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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