Features on:

Brian Baxter
John Shoobridge
Roderic O’Connor
Richard Boland
Welcome
This fifth edition of TREELine focuses on a number of aspects of farm forestry, and it does so principally by highlighting the achievements of four of the state’s outstanding farm foresters. The edition has been put together with the Australian Forest Growers conference in Launceston firmly in mind, so that we may tell the proud story of farm forestry in Tasmania to a broader national audience.

We also feature an article on smaller harvesting operations that may well help to cut harvesting costs for forest owners and hence increase the output from smaller natural forest holdings and woodlots.

And we hope that the articles on the annual harvest from private forests and the proper role of forests in the landscape may provide not only food for thought and discussion but help to redress a number of current misconceptions held by critics of our industry.

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Forestry – an important part of the rural landscape

The focus of this edition of TREELine is on four farm foresters who exemplify not only best practice on their properties but whose stories also illustrate the breadth of farm forestry activities in Tasmania and the importance of forestry activities to not only their own properties but Tasmania more generally.

There has been much written and said lately by critics of forestry, and an alarming misrepresentation of the importance that forestry plays in the rural landscape and in supporting vibrant rural communities. Of particular concern is that some local communities and local councils have reacted to a lot of this misrepresentation.

Private Forests Tasmania has examined the sale of all rural properties to companies for the establishment of plantations between 1 January 1999 and 31 December 2005. Rural properties in Tasmania sold for the purposes of establishing plantations accounted for just 1.06% of rural properties – a very far cry from the figure of 17% touted by critics.

Another ill-considered action taken on the basis of inadequate information or understanding was that recently taken by King Island Council in amending its planning scheme. The ostensible reason was to prevent large-scale plantations from replacing existing grazing and dairy pursuits on the island. The amendment prohibits forestry which “means any land used for the intentional planting, propagation and harvesting of trees for commercial gain and includes intensive tree farming and plantation forestry.”

Prima facie, this bizarre prohibition would now seem to prevent any farmer on King Island from planting shelterbelts or small-scale plantations or even from harvesting any native forest for firewood or fence posts. This is truly a ludicrous situation.

It is hoped that the examples provided by the four landowners and farmers featured in this edition of TREELine will cause opponents of forestry to rethink their prejudices and focus instead on understanding the proper role of forestry in the rural landscape.
Appropriate technologies for small-scale forest harvesting operations in Tasmania

Landowners face great difficulties when trying to undertake harvesting operations. The costs of harvesting and haulage operations often prohibit viable operations in both native and plantation forests and the situation gets worse as the scale becomes smaller.

The current generation of harvesting machinery in Tasmania is highly productive, expensive and relatively large in size, and has focused on large-scale or high-volume operations. The use of these large machines on small coupes or thinning operations results in a drop in productivity and an increase in operating costs. Machines more closely matched to the small-scale operations can help to reduce capital investment and operating costs associated with thinning operations and smaller coupe sizes.

A recently completed report by Private Forests Tasmania, “Appropriate technologies for small-scale forest harvesting operations in Tasmania”, reviews the characteristics of the small-scale resource and the range of locally and internationally available machinery. It recommends potential harvest machinery and harvesting systems, based on the review and three harvesting case studies.

The report identifies the major impediments to viable small-scale harvesting as a lack of information for both landowners and harvesting contractors; a poor skills base; unavailability of appropriate machinery; inaccessible harvest coupes; a diverse, heterogenous ownership; and poor haulage logistics.

The key elements to ensure viable small-scale harvesting can be summarised as:

1. The operations must be very well organised and co-ordinated to ensure continuity of work for harvesting contractors;
2. The machinery must be well-suited to the conditions and ideally capable of moving between sites independently for short transport trips;
3. Self-loading trucks need to be used more extensively to prevent logistical problems between harvesting and cartage contractors; and
4. The operations must be very well organised, co-ordinated and group-managed to ensure continuity of supply to buyers.

For a full copy of the report contact Private Forests Tasmania.
Brian Baxter, Greenside, Pipers River

Thirty years ago Brian Baxter and his father Walter set about clearing much of the remaining bush on the family’s 693ha property at Pipers River in the North-East.

“We were flat out through the ’70s and ’80s,” says Brian, the fourth generation on the property.

But the task is not ending in a way that either would have predicted.

About a quarter of Greenside is still native forest, mainly peppermint (Eucalyptus amygdalina) and brown-top (E. obliqua) – because the pair stopped when the 1990s came, and well before they had cleared the lot.

“The wind’s the issue,” Brian explains.

As well as growing poppies, wheat and lucerne, the farm runs wool, fat lambs and angus cattle: and it was becoming obvious to father and son that the stock were doing better if they had some shelter to keep the chill off. “It makes a big difference to their food requirement and health.”

So they decided to leave about 20% of the trees standing. The remnant blocks range from about 2ha to 20ha.

However, that was only the end of the beginning. The two men soon realised that those blocks themselves were not doing too well. “We haven’t got dieback like the Midlands,” says Brian, “but it’s here.”

He could see two reasons: the inevitable exposure suffered by such remnant stands, especially the smallest, and the fact that stock were grazing them, eating away potential regeneration.

That started them on the third phase of their forest management: fencing. With the help of some $30,000 for materials from Tamar Natural Resource Management, plus money from Envirolfund and Greening Australia, Brian is close to completing at least 15km of fencing round all the native stands and along all the creeks and wetlands.

The funds come under a 10-year management agreement which bans stock incursion.

For different reasons, he has also run about 6.5km of costly wallaby fencing along his long boundary with state forest. “We run lots of wildlife,” he explains. “At least, we used to.”

He relates how he and his father used to see the outlying pasture as poor stuff, until realisation dawned. “It was the livestock it was supporting!” he exclaims, meaning the rufous and Bennett’s wallabies and unexpectedly large hordes of forester kangaroos, all of which he estimates eat a third of the grass if unchecked. “They just change the composition of the pasture to rubbish.”

Apart from the initial cost, there is constant maintenance: but, says Brian, “We think it’s a better option than constant poisoning.” Contract shooting also helps.

The native-forest retention programme has another element – logging. Over the last 10 years, almost all those remnants have been selectively harvested. The exceptions are the edges of the creeks, and some white-gum stands which have suffered particularly badly from dieback, or are likely to.

The logged stands are usually left to regenerate naturally, which Brian says they almost always do well as long as the soil is disturbed, and because livestock and weeds are absent. “We’ve always been anti-weed.”

Brian Baxter checks a fenced remnant bush block on Greenside
The logging has brought a return, almost all from pulpwood because plenty of sawlogs have been extracted over the years. “The young bloke [William, still at school] will get, hopefully, another one in.”

There is incidentally some argument as to whether the harvesting itself is allowed under the management agreement. Brian’s view has prevailed, but the cash flow is not the main consideration. “Our thing is bush health,” he insists.

Good-quality sawlogs 80-100 years from now are not a serious element in planning, if only because the rules could well change again in the meantime. But, he adds, “There’ll be a healthy bush there if nothing else.”

The final part of the Baxters’ forest plan involves their plantations, which total some 60ha. Here, says Brian, “The only mistake we made was we didn’t plant enough.”

Around 1980 he and his father put in two large shelterbelts of E. globulus, which have just been clearfelled for poles and pulpwood and are being coppiced for another rotation.

The attraction at the time was that the Baxters could act as harvesting contractors during the clearing stage. “I was the bushman and he’d drag them out,” says Brian. “I’d bark them.”

That paid well – but the customer now insists on paying only stumpage, so the Baxters gave plantations away until 10 years ago, when they put in some E. nitens (along with blackwood, Acacia melanoxylon, in steep gullies) including 50ha as a joint venture with Gunns.

At only some 760mm of rainfall a year, it will be another 10 years or so before these trees can be logged. With hindsight, Brian would have started 30-odd years ago, and the returns would already be coming.

Yet another forestry operation has just been completed, namely direct-seeding 2ha of shelter belts with mixed native species. Private Forests Tasmania’s Mike Castley, who did the job, saw his first attempt succumb to drought and his second flooded out as soon as it was completed. The third go is looking hopeful.

Brian also acknowledges help on a wide range of matters from Mike’s PFT colleague Arthur Lyons.
John Shoobridge, Cleveland, Ouse

The woodchip revolution was still 10 years away when John Shoobridge’s father John bought Glenmark, a 2227ha property containing some 1200ha of native forest on the southern slopes of the Central Highlands near Lake Echo.

“He was a generation ahead of himself,” says John Jr. “He could see the potential.”

The purchase was far-sighted indeed for a family whose main business was, and still is, grazing cattle and sheep on their 4456ha farm Cleveland, just beyond Ouse in the upper Derwent Valley.

Particularly since, as John says, its potential “was essentially unrealisable … until the advent of woodchip mills in Tasmania in 1970”.

That was when Triabunna-based Tasmanian Pulp and Forest Holdings and the Tamar’s Northern Woodchips answered many landholders’ prayers by finding an export market for pulpwood and returning an income that enabled planned regeneration on a large scale.

In many cases conservation benefits were unlocked too. “You give something a value and it’ll be looked after. Trees have a value and they’ll be looked after,” John says. “We’re productive conservationists.”

Now, after some 40 years of native forestry, plus plantation ventures to fill the gaps in the wood flow, the Shoobridges derive about a quarter of their income from trees – and both John and his son Thomas, now very actively involved, intend that to continue.

“We want forestry to be a significant contributor to income flow,” John says.

The forested part of Glenmark was *Eucalyptus delegatensis* (white-top), with borders of *E. dalrympleana*. It was regrowth from a fire in the late 19th century and had been logged sporadically for sawlogs in the old way, by single-tree selection.

“Like all private forests, this one was mismanaged,” says John. “Bush operations were ad hoc, summertime only, and with inappropriate machinery by today’s standards. The term ‘sustainable forestry’ had not been invented.”

An early customer was the Boyer paper mill at New Norfolk, which in 1965 started buying pulpwood in the form of cords, 1.5-ton bundles of split hardwood about 2.1m long. “That is”, says John dryly, “taking the best potential sawlog prematurely for a meagre 50c a tonne.”

The sales did not provide a use for residue, or for other material that was not good enough for sawlogs according to the standards of the time.

And even though John Sr, with both eyes on the future, was using baling twine to mark the trees he wanted retained at Glenmark, the contractors were resolutely ignoring his instructions.

It was clear that there must be a better way, and in 1969 John Jr engaged noted forester Tom Walduck to survey the property and propose a long-term strategy.

Walduck’s recommendation, and the subsequent decision, was to dedicate the main part of Glenmark to forestry, fence it off and leave it for 20 years.

“His advice was invaluable, and was proven to be correct,” says John.
In 1989 selective logging began there, lasting for another 14 years in the first instance. It removed the overstorey, cleaned up the forest floor, and provided not only pulpwood but a steady stream of mill logs.

For some years the Shoobridges ran a sawmill on site. However, they closed it after a decade because, despite sending staff for training at Victoria’s Creswick forestry school, they found standards were not high enough.

Although at that time their forest revenue was hitting a peak of 35% of farm income, John is in no doubt that relying on stumpage brings a higher net return.

Glenmark’s native forest is scheduled to be revisited in 2015 for another spell of selective logging, lasting another 25 or 30 years and producing what is likely to be clear timber in prime sawlogs and veneer logs from trees some 30m high – with multi-aged growth underneath to continue the process.

In 1974 John bought 607ha Victoria Valley, very near Glenmark. It contained much less forest, but he kept what there was, and it was selectively logged only in 2004-5.

The E. rodwayi forest community on both properties is targeted for protection under the Private Forest Reserves Program. Part of Glenmark’s wood production zone is managed for conservation and to provide a benchmark.

In 1979 John introduced forest operations to Cleveland itself. He fenced some 80ha of native bush (ultimately logged in 1989) and cleared the first of two areas for pulpwood, planting 26ha of radiata pine in 1982 and using the remainder for pasture. The first pines were thinned 17 years later.

Instead of the Glenmark trees the woodchip buyers had their eyes on, which were firmly set aside as part of John’s long-term planning for a sustainable income, they got Cleveland’s pulp logs to be going on with.

“That was the bait,” he says. “Woodchip companies, if you don’t watch them, take the best and leave the worst.”

In 1983 and 1985 he established his first hardwood plantations, using Private Forests Tasmania grants to put in 12ha of E. nitens and Acacia melanoxylon (blackwood) at Cleveland, followed by another 5ha of eucalypt.

Although these first plantings of blackwood failed, the species has become a long-term speciality since 1987, when the family began regenerating blackwood regrowth from the 1967 bushfires, also on Cleveland – thinning and pruning it without removing the overstorey. Similar intensive blackwood management is taking place on a tract selectively logged for pulpwood in 1989.
Speed is not the point here. The time scale is well over a generation.

In 1991 all this activity won John the state Tree Farmer of the Year Award presented by Australian Forest Growers’ predecessor, the Australian Forest Development Institute – and he was a finalist for the national award the following year.

In 1995 he planted 18ha of *E. nitens* in a small unforested patch of Glenmark’s native forest, probably devastated by fire long ago. This is being managed for clearwood, and by the time it is clearfalled around 2025 it will have had three prunings and one thinning.

In 1998 the purchase of Leintwardine, next to Cleveland, led John to begin using 92ha (some 10% of the property) for more pine plantations on poor sandy soil with the help of some money from the Natural Heritage Trust. The programme continued in four stages until 2002.

In keeping with John’s philosophy throughout, the pines are being intensively managed on long rotations for veneer and sawlogs as well as fibre. “We’re here for the long haul,” he emphasises.

He is a member of Tasmanian Oak Growers, a consortium of 10 landowners who between them have most of the state’s private *E. delegatensis* forest and are exploring markets that include low-grade veneer logs for China.

It was only this year that John decided on his biggest plantation venture yet – converting 568ha of Glenmark that had been ringbarked and cleared for grazing in times gone by.

Almost all the plantings will be *E. nitens*, but there will also be 20ha of *E. delegatensis* and 20ha of the two species mixed, both for long rotation.

The partner in this venture is Gunns, which leases the land for a quarterly payment. “We rely heavily on Gunns to facilitate the whole process,” says John.

He explains that in the early days it took time to build mutual confidence between himself and his pulpwood customers, Gunns’s predecessors. The trees to be retained in four early Glenmark coupes were taped jointly by himself and the company concerned.

Now Gunns makes the decisions on its own, and John gives high praise to the company’s Bruce Hay for his judgment and consultative approach.

Other foresters who have been of great help over the years have been PFT’s Graeme Clark and consultant Mark Leech.

But John advocates that landowners themselves should have a close personal involvement in forestry. If mutual confidence between the owner and the company is absent, he says, “That’s probably going to be the genesis of a fair bit of trouble.”

He stresses repeatedly that sustainability and long-term returns are his aims. Not only has he found a formula for an initial cash boost and a medium-term income: “We’ve still got a resource out there that’s growing nicely and quietly,” he says.
As one of Tasmania’s biggest private forest owners and managers, Roderic O’Connor has decided views on the right policies for the sector – and for his own operations.

For one thing, he does not intend putting in a single hectare of plantations on his 17,200ha at Connorville, south of Cressy. Not that he is opposed to plantations. He cannot see the sense in converting good regrowth forest – preparing it, planting it, protecting the trees from pests, even pruning them – when he believes that good native-forest management will give him a better net return over one or more lifetimes.

“I have a large forested estate: why can’t I manage it?” he asks. “Everything I do now is a lifetime-ahead-of-me focus.”

Connorville is a cattle, wool and prime-lamb property that has been in the O’Connor family since 1824. There is some cropping including poppies.

Nearly half the land, some 8000ha, consists of mixed eucalypt forest at the base of the Great Western Tiers, in large continuous blocks. Of that, Roderic considers only about 3000ha to be production forest.

“It’s not a big part of my business,” he says, “but I’m fully intending it to be in the future.”

As could be expected, all or most of that bush has been subject to fire (in some cases several times), to ringbarking on a large scale, and since the late 19th century to the attentions of timber-getters out for the finest sawlogs. Today’s operations are a matter of what he calls redressing the balance.

The most abundant species are Eucalyptus viminalis and E. amygdalina mixed, followed by E. delegatensis, E. dalrympleana, E. obliqua and Acacia melanoxylon (blackwood) in that order.

Modern-style forestry has been a serious activity on Connorville since the early 1980s, and management is still in its first phase: a continuous and careful process of selective “clean-up” logging that produces only 7% sawlog to 93% pulpwood by value.

With one minor exception there has been no clearfelling – and none is planned, even though ringbarking has produced fine even-aged regrowth in places.

The harvesting is followed by regeneration of every hectare. “The determinant of everything is regeneration,” Roderic says.

That is achieved in various ways – in some areas by burning and in others by sowing, usually with seeds of the local species. In other areas, the disturbance from the logging operation is enough.

He has drawn on much outside forestry expertise, and says he was fortunate in particular to have the advice of Craig Hawkins and consultant Mark Chin.

He says that Hawkins was “very much about what was in the best interests of the forest. He took a very well-rounded approach in relation to production and conservation – and I was very lucky to have the exacting skills of somebody like Mark.”
Paying tribute to Chin’s “futurist” focus on what happens after the skidder has gone, Roderic is happy to recognise that many of the benefits of today’s work may only accrue to the heir of his son Lachlan Roderic O’Connor, aged four.

He expects the current phase to last till the 2030s, when he aims to start reaping its fruits in the form of long-term harvesting and regeneration that he hopes will produce as much as 40% sawlog and certainly up to 15 or 20%.

“My focus is on an annual sustainable cut as soon as possible,” he explains. “I’m designing it to be a low-volume operation … to be able to maintain a mixed-age forest.”

Roderic is a member of the Tasmanian Oak Growers (TOG) consortium of private forest owners who have set about finding their own markets for solid timber and thereby, they envisage, maximising the value of their logs.

“It’s becoming blindingly obvious that anybody in the first stage of the agricultural production process is being squeezed mercilessly,” he says. “We must go down the value-add chain or we’ll be slaughtered.”

Sales have been made to China and India, but domestic buyers are equally sought. Any milling will be done under contract, to the buyer’s specification. “Our intention is just to get to the broader market.”

Part of TOG’s strategy is to secure Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of the product as a marketing advantage. Issues to do with the chain of custody of the wood are still being sorted out, but Roderic’s confidence in obtaining the FSC’s approval is a measure of his faith in the growers’ environmental credentials.

He is a director of the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, and has set aside a massive 3200ha of Connorville’s forest to be managed for conservation under a covenant on the title – forgoing much income both short- and long-term under a self-imposed duty to maintain in perpetuity the values of the area as a “comprehensive, adequate and representative” reserve.

“The preferred form of our conservation measures over the last eight or so years has been by covenant,” he explains. “It keeps me and future generations really committed.”

He is less enthusiastic about the way he says the state’s private forest owners have been treated by governments.

A past president of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association forestry committee, he says: “I’m an ardent critic of the way public policy has been shaped in relation to the forests, particularly private forests.”

The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, announced by Prime Minister John Howard and Premier Paul Lennon in May 2005, included a commitment to see 43,200ha of old growth and “under-reserved” forest types on private land conserved under what was described as “a voluntary market-based programme” under which private land would be sold or covenanted to form reserves.
The resulting cost of purchases by the state or conservation trusts, and of private commitments to manage for conservation, is to be funded by a Forest Conservation Fund including at least $5.5 million from the federal government.

But the agreement also imposed a cap on the area of native forest that can be cleared or converted to plantation, plus a complete phase-out of private clearing or conversion by 2015 – not to mention planned laws to prevent clearing and conversion of threatened non-forest vegetation.

Roderic is not alone in his dismay that landowners were not consulted over such dramatic steps.

He also believes the conservation programme is nowhere near voluntary in the full sense of the word. Seventeen months on, no deals have yet been signed – and he says that in practice the delay, and the absence of clear guidelines, have placed some land in a limbo where it is quarantined from productive use with little scientific justification.

“We’re in no-man’s-land at the moment,” he laments. “Caution has effectively created prohibitions.”

He adds that the phase-out of clearing is already being enforced with a heavy hand to restrict not only farming but also forestry in ways that go beyond the original intention.

And, although the 17 months have been spent building a process aimed at securing the most efficient use of public funds, the federal government says the exact amount set aside is “commercial-in-confidence”.

“We’ve supposedly got money on the table,” Roderic says, “but I haven’t seen the colour of it. It’s appalling that we should be left this long.”

Above and beyond the detailed conservation issues, he believes there has been a clear denial of private property rights.

Given the large part that private land must play in conserving biodiversity and other values, he is unhappy at what he says is governments’ failure so far to pay any consideration for the environmental credits they are still asking landowners to amass at their own cost.

“There has been a gradual take for 20 years because of the political hot potato that the Tasmanian forests are,” he says.

He points out that not only are those who undertake forest operations already helping to fund the Forest Practices Authority and Private Forests Tasmania: he and others like him have set aside land far beyond the requirements of the Forest Practices Code, and restructured their operations to cope.

“But we’ve done the right thing, and yet massive pressure is still being applied by regulatory authorities. We’ve had 20 years of interference, and because it’s been over-political there’s never been a sound result.”

Roderic’s frustration is based on the knowledge that he is taking the long view that the community, through its politicians, says it wants.

“I’ve consulted my property, and it’s told me what’s in its best interests,” he says. “I want to make sure everything’s right.

“It’s all really, to me, about looking to the future.”
Richard Boland, Nara Park, Highclere

It takes a giant leap of imagination to grasp what the Boland family have done with their 240ha Nara Park property at Highclere south of Burnie.

On a September day 125 head of ruddy Hereford cattle graze on brilliant-green pasture, surrounded on three sides by towering belts of planted Eucalyptus nitens and Pinus radiata, with a spreading blackwood (Acacia melanoxylon) for shade in the foreground and other old blackwoods and gums in the middle distance.

You can’t really see the further paddocks for trees; and, even if you climbed the hill behind and looked down, the trees would still be tall enough to prevent you from working out that about 85% of Nara Park is still pasture.

At your side is Bob Boland, describing the scrubby wasteland of poor stony ground he bought for £550 around 1960. “You couldn’t find a worm,” he says.

Much of the place had been cleared and some ploughed, but there was still plenty of degraded bushland. “It had all been well and truly logged out.”

Most of all, a biting south-west wind scoured the whole property.

Bob tells how he and his son Peter set to work for more than 15 years clearing, fencing and getting rid of the stones.

“The first thing I did was to get rid of the big trees,” he says.

“They were dead in the tops.”

There was much more felling to follow. “I had a day without a cloud in the sky, and I blotted out the sun,” he recalls. “I had 100 log heaps.”

Nevertheless the clearing was done intelligently, with Bob leaving some of the better trees, especially blackwoods for shade. It produced a lot of firewood and other low-grade material, plus a few sawmill logs, many of them blackwood again.

It also enlarged the grazing area for Nara’s Herefords.

But it did nothing to abate the wind or to change the fundamental character of the property – although Bob did plant about 3ha of radiata pine (almost all of which has now been harvested).

The turning point did not come until the mid-1980s when Peter went to New Zealand to investigate and study his options.

Farm forestry experts were also consulted: and, according to Bob, the then Forestry Commission’s new Perth nursery made seedlings available at reasonable prices for the first time.

The upshot was the three-year planting programme that started in 1986 and has transformed Nara Park so thoroughly.

With some state government help, the Bolands planted some 30ha. About 90% of the seedlings were E. nitens and the rest radiata pine. In some cases, every fifth row was E. regnans (swamp gum), planted with the now-superseded idea that it would be left when the rest was harvested.
Thirty hectares is not a huge area, but the benefit has come from its dispersal into a multitude of mostly narrow shelterbelts, with a few slightly larger woodlots.

Another 30-40ha of native forest have been fenced off with the help of some money from Greening Australia.

“The trees have warmed the property up. No question,” asserts Bob, remarking that it was a mistake to align even some of the tree lines parallel to the wind direction, instead of east-west like most of them.

As evidence for the way the wind has indeed been blocked, his grandson Richard cites the difficulty of drying hay in the sheltered paddocks.

He adds: “The shelter is just a huge benefit for the grass and also for the cattle.”

Indeed, the farm’s productivity has probably doubled because of the plantings. Its carrying capacity has increased, less feeding-out is needed, the cattle hold their condition for longer, and it’s easier to irrigate because the water doesn’t blow everywhere.

Moreover, there was no trade-off. “We haven’t taken out productive ground,” says Richard, who now handles most of the daily management. Many of the planted areas were stony, eroded, or undesirable for other reasons.

The opportunity was also taken to plant along most of the creeks, in some cases with mixed native species rather than just eucalypts.

Now that the earliest plantings have been in for 20 years, the challenge is how to manage the next stage, namely harvesting and replanting (with perhaps some entirely new plantings as well).

A likely tactic is to harvest the eastern sides of shelter belts first and then replant, coming back for the western side only when the eastern has grown. In the case of the pines, Richard may plant two extra rows on the eastern side to begin with.

The goal will be a mosaic of stands of different ages, so that necessary harvesting can take place and generate income without disrupting the productivity of the grazing operation. Indeed, in the mixed-species plantings that form part of Richard’s plan, some trees will be left in perpetuity.

The mix will include blackwood, for which he foresees eventual selective logging for high-grade timber and veneer.

The existing pines were pruned to produce clearwood that should yield a large proportion of veneer logs and correspondingly high returns. Other commitments prevented the same job being done on the *E. nitens*, which Richard believes will probably yield mostly pulpwood.

The trick, he explains, will be to harvest large enough quantities of timber to make it economical – without removing the reason for the trees’ being there in the first place. “We really don’t want to lose that shelter,” he says.

“That’s the biggest challenge now … to get that right.”
Increasing plantation cut coming from private forests

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<td>1,894,197</td>
<td>1,789,127</td>
<td>1,726,001</td>
<td>1,019,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plantation Hardwood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantation Hardwood Sawlogs, Veneer and Ply Logs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,851</td>
<td>3,408</td>
<td>11,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantation Hardwood Pulpwood</td>
<td>511,436</td>
<td>28,921</td>
<td>549,988</td>
<td>799,280</td>
<td>973,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Log Products</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>511,436</td>
<td>628,921</td>
<td>556,839</td>
<td>802,688</td>
<td>984,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plantation Softwood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softwood Sawlogs, Veneer and Ply logs</td>
<td>166,455</td>
<td>110,619</td>
<td>146,681</td>
<td>133,422</td>
<td>121,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softwood Pulpwood</td>
<td>189,462</td>
<td>205,887</td>
<td>247,273</td>
<td>170,701</td>
<td>217,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Log Products</td>
<td>1,198</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>357,115</td>
<td>316,506</td>
<td>394,008</td>
<td>304,538</td>
<td>339,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>2,681,422</td>
<td>2,839,624</td>
<td>2,739,974</td>
<td>2,833,227</td>
<td>2,343,603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments for 2005-06 data

1. Information has been sourced from over 80 processors throughout the State.
2. Data has been aggregated to maintain the confidentiality of individuals’ information.
3. Fuelwood information is not now included because of the difficulty of obtaining enough data from the many producers.
4. There is an increasing amount of hardwood plantation resource being harvested, with 22% more than last year.
5. There was a reduced harvest of native forest products due to reduced demand, with the sawlog recovery percentage consistent with last year.
6. Native forest products made up about 43% of private wood harvest.
7. Hardwood plantation products made up about 40% of the private wood harvest.
8. Softwood plantation products made up about 15% of the private wood harvest.
Each year, Private Forests Tasmania (PFT) staff compile Australia’s only authoritative harvest summary from private forests using responses received from processors. The information is provided to PFT on the basis that it will be aggregated and strict confidentiality of the raw data provided by processors is guaranteed and adhered to.

The private forest harvest in 2005 – 2006 was 2,343,600 tonnes, which accounted for approximately 40% of total timber production in Tasmania during that period. This is a slight reduction from the 43% proportion reported for last year and can be explained by the substantial decline in the harvest from native forests for sawlog and pulpwood.

The total harvest from private forests in 2005 – 2006 decreased by 489,600 tonnes (17%) compared with 2004 – 2005, due entirely to the substantial decrease in harvest from native forests, which was down by 41%. This was offset only partially by an increase in the plantation harvest of 217,000 tonnes.

The harvest from plantation forests accounted for 56% of the total harvest from private forests in 2005 – 2006, continuing an upward trend over the past few years for the proportion of the harvest from plantations versus native forests.

One of the key features now demonstrated over a number of years is the increasing use of plantation forest hardwood as a source of woodchips and for the first time, in 2005 – 2006 plantation hardwoods overtook native forest as the major source of woodchips and now accounts for 51% of the hardwood pulp log volume harvested from private forests. It is anticipated that this trend will continue into the future.

### Native forest and plantation harvest as % of total harvest from private forests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Native Forest Harvest</th>
<th>Plantation Forest Harvest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>1,019,345</td>
<td>1,324,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>1,726,001</td>
<td>1,107,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>1,798,127</td>
<td>950,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>1,894,197</td>
<td>945,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1,812,871</td>
<td>868,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>2,053,089</td>
<td>622,205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The downturn in the international woodchip market has meant a significant decrease in the total private native forest harvest, but the silver lining in this is that it could well mean a greater supply of logs in the future, subject to the ability to harvest native forest within the parameters set by the Policy on Maintaining a Permanent Native Forest Estate.

### Plantations supplying more pulp wood

One of the key features now demonstrated over a number of years is the decreasing use of native forest hardwood as a source of woodchips and for the first time, in 2005 – 2006 plantation hardwoods overtook native forest as the major source of woodchips. The proportion taken from plantations has increased nearly 450% in five years while the harvest from plantations for woodchips in 2005 – 2006 increased in volume terms by 173,929 tonnes and percentage terms by 21.8% compared with 2004 – 2005.

### Plantation hardwood pulpwod as % of total hardwood pulpwod from private forests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Volume (tonnes)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>973,209</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>799,280</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>549,988</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>628,921</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>511,436</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>238,104</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review of the State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land

On the 18th August 2006, the Government announced that the Minister for Planning is to conduct the first periodic review of the State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 2000. The review is to examine whether the Policy requires change to remain contemporary and effective in fostering sustainable agriculture in Tasmania.

Members of the public have been invited to provide input into the review, and we at Private Forests Tasmania actively encourage all landholders to make their own submissions.

As with all things, the review will attract those people who have a vested interest or political barrow to push which is at odds with seeking the best outcome for Tasmania.

Already there have been reports of submissions arguing that plantations should not be allowed on land that is mapped as Class 1 – 4 land. But how many of the people making this assertion actually know the facts or the basis of the land classification system?

The land classification system is developed to assess land in respect to its cropping capability, and nothing more. Generally the most suitable cropping land is that classified as Class 1 – 3 land inclusive, with Class 4 land being considered very marginal for cropping and requiring significant fertilizing and involving significant crop risk.

According to the Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) there are approximately 107,000 hectares of Class 1 – 3 land and approximately 600,000 hectares of Class 4 land mapped in Tasmania to date.

Private Forests Tasmania has just completed the most comprehensive and detailed analysis of the privately owned plantation estate in Tasmania, and particularly with respect to the locating of plantations on so-called prime agricultural land.

As at 31 December 2005, there were 4,300 hectares of plantations on Class 1 – 3 land and 21,500 hectares of plantations on Class 4 land. To put these figures in context, plantations accounted for 4% of Class 1 – 3 land and 3.5% of Class 4 land. And to put these figures into a broader perspective of farm forestry, there are 1,589 individual landowners with plantations on their farms, ranging from half a hectare to several hundred hectares. Are farmers to be prevented from planting trees on their own land because of some misplaced presumptions about what is required to enhance agricultural production in Tasmania?

Disclaimer: TREE Line is published quarterly by Private Forests Tasmania as a means of communicating to those interested in sustainable native forest and plantation management in Tasmania. Every reasonable endeavour has been used to ensure that the material is accurate at the time of publication. No legal responsibility can or will be accepted by Private Forests Tasmania for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance of such information to the user’s purpose. Before undertaking any significant forestry project it is recommended that you seek personal professional advice from Private Forests Tasmania on the particular matter.

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