

Meeting Record Wednesday 20 August 2025

Present – Colin Maunder (Chair), Matt Dodd, Matt Owen, Jackie Egan, Paraone Butler, Fraser Toulmin, Sarah Orton, Simon Callaghan, Shane Perrett, Todd Cheeseman, Bridget Robson, Elise Hayes, Eben Herbert, Rafael Moradei, Luke Connor, Pat Goeynsinsup, Bridget Robson, Tracey Bowers

Apologies – Seamus Bardol, Andy Warren, Damita Mita, Simon Callaghan, Les Russell, Dave Butler, Sally Strang, Reuben Hawtree, Amy Smith, Ross Green

Meeting commenced at 10.00am

#1 Welcome & Introductions

Those present introduced themselves.

Minutes of the meeting held 28 May 2025

Resolution 1

That the minutes of the meeting held 28 May 2025 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Moved by Jackie Egan

Seconded Fraser Toulmin

Carried unanimously.

Follow up on Action Points from previous meeting:

Action 1 NZFOA Environmental Committee and the Regional Council's National Compliance Audit Group meet to agree points for the submissions on any proposed changes to the NES -CF and the NPS for Biodiversity

Sally and Fraser met and talked through the submission points that Regional Council had made and that Fraser had previously socialised with the forest audit group and Sally shared her thoughts as chair of the NZFOA committee.

Action 2 CNIWC will organise a Rotorua meeting in week four of the consultation period (end of June/early July) and circulate any additional information received.

Fraser reported this was covered off in the MPI meeting 17th July at Sala St MPI office that a few of the liaison group attended.

As part of the MPI meeting Colin reported that Timberlands hosted MPI staff after visiting Gisborne and showed them orange zone harvest area in Whaka Forest with no risk of slash movement which was useful as part of the risk assessment they are working on.

Fraser and Colin discussed the timeline on submissions or amendments and when we will see something and the consensus was that the new rules will come into effect in October/November this year.

#2 Industry update -

No agenda items provided

Colin asked about smaller woodlot work, Todd mentioned summers coming but harvesting still tricky as prices are stable but lower than owner's expectations and domestic prices are good.

Colin asked about any issues such as weather. The extreme weather event at Kutarere/Waiotahi around the 30th of July was discussed. 200mm to 250mm fell in the Waiotahi Valley catchment. Fraser reported that BOP Regional Council does not have gauges in that catchment and rely on the data team to size the event for NES purposes and base information on anecdotal data.

Mike reported that Reuben Hawtree had told him the effects of the 200mm event had been exacerbated by multiple 100mm events from April through to this event.

Colin reported he is on an emergency group with farmers and other rural land users, and the good news was that forestry was not talked about in a negative way and that foresters had responded to the event promptly and were out there cleaning up.

Fraser queried the new ETS rule release. Colin reported rules around conversion of land to forest including whole farm conversions should be announced today. Beef and Lamb have been vocal on change of land use and there has been discussion about increased fire risk with no fire plans and lack of pest management plans.

Eben had two items

- 1. Eben reported the Tauranga Taupo River was full of fresh slash last week and that there have been areas planted to the stream edge and harvested with slash placed on the riverbanks.**

Jackie replied that there had been a lot of harvesting on this river but there will be significant setbacks on re-establishment. Jackie also reported they had been keeping an eye on that area and flying with the drone and will check it out further and that there had been a big rain event at the start of June. No further action in this forum as site is in the Waikato area.

- 2. The slash rules previously applied to commercial slash and woody debris but where does woody debris now sit under the new regulations.**

Bridget Robson joined the meeting and reported woody debris could be anything including matter unrelated to commercial forestry which is why it was removed from the regulations.

Sarah reported that windthrow debris was never included in the NESCF as it is from a natural event and is covered under the RMA legalisation

Fraser reported that council has few mechanisms to manage slash up until harvest and that the only point of slash control is at harvest or post-harvest. Waiotahi Forest was harvested under NESPF with no resource consent and in the latest weather event, slash, windthrow and woody debris has made its way into stream beds from mid slope failure and other storm damage. It is

unlikely that compliance with the NES-PF would have prevented the level of damaged experienced. The harvest work was compliant under the NES.

Fraser says S.15 and S.17 of the RMA and any associated enforcement is the only real tool Council has, given the gaps in the NES-CF. He acknowledged that it is a blunt tool. With respect to Waioatahe, Manulife have been swift and positive with their actions.

Bridget suggested she raises with Brigid at MPI the gap in regulations between obvious slash from a commercial harvest and other non-harvest incidental debris from the forest.

Fraser reports that council has no interest in regulating pockets of windthrow unless it poses an environmental risk such as damming diversion, stream bank erosion or risk to aquatic life and that council can use the RMA to manage this risk, which can be tricky as they must prove it is a risk.

Colin reminded group of consenting process for planting in high-risk areas where risks are considered for more control and discretion on planting areas.

Colin asked Bridget if any timeframes on when revisions will go through parliament and Bridget says she hasn't heard and can ask Brigid - later it was advised - update on timing of the NES-CF review will be by the end of the year, but with the 17 other pieces of national direction, it is unlikely to come into effect until 2026.

#3 Regional Council -

Fraser shared results from the **National Compliance Forestry Audits** with all 16 councils represented in a new group that meet at MPI in Wellington. All councils submit compliance reports for peer review by another council randomly selected

The first compliance audit against the National Standard was completed in 2024

Significant noncompliance and low risk noncompliance easy to interpret but middle ground tricky to interpret

42 files were reviewed in 2024 and 59% agreed with the compliance rating

108 files were reviewed in 2025 where 73% agreed with the compliance rating

Recommendations

- The first meeting came up with a bare minimum which would go into a field sheet
- All agreed in the first meeting that we use consistent compliance grades. There were instances where no grade was given and in 2024 this was 17% of cases which reduced to 5% in 2025. This could be due to insufficient evidence as difficult to peer review if you haven't been to the site. Trying to improve relating photos to a specific location and more talking to a photo image. The name used on filed Photo images cannot be changed, if used for legal purposes, so saving them with a location title instead of the default IMG number is useful. Some councils use a numbering system which corresponds to a grade however there is a push for the MfE (Ministry for the Environment) rating system. A new staff member of council should be able to pick up a previous compliance sheet and quickly locate any non-compliance alongside a landowner/ forest manager.

- Decide what would go into significant non-compliance category ie slip/slash into a stream and identifying the threshold from changing from moderate to significant
- Try to get away from using emotive terms
- Where remediation was directed, some council lacked clear deadlines for recipients in addressing non-compliance

Fraser also reported consented forestry to be introduced next year, a field visit to be conducted into Wellington Regional Council Forest land for calibration purposes and that the group will keep increasing the number of reports with councils heavy in forestry activity submitting more reports.

Also discussed was how contractors are employed for audits and how much of the process they cover and the pros and cons and consistency around this. Not all contractors are fully warranted.

Bridget asked what the requirements of contractors are and if they are suitably qualified for the job. Fraser reported that there are limited numbers of contractors available. Contractor's work is peer reviewed. Bridget suggested a competency assessment would be good

Bridget asked if contractors have an incentive to create work for themselves. Fraser reported that it was a difficult one to answer as contractors are employed on different arrangements with councils, but generally specific jobs are contracted out.

Bridget suggested a feedback sheet to allow a process for feedback

Todd asked about the admin side where timing of invoicing should be within the timeframe of the work being completed. There should be an option to nominate the landowner as contact for invoicing.

Fraser says council is looking at time taken to issue a compliance report and BOPRC are working to one week, but some councils are up to four weeks

Some instances of councils invoicing contractor audit time separately to council audit time

Emerging compliance issues locally

Mike and Paraone reported two main issues:

- Submitted harvest plans should be what he sees on the ground, and he has found instances where plans have changed on the ground with no notification. A reminder that the permitted activity is for plans that have been submitted and if the plan changes an amendment should be made.
- Timing of maintenance post weather events needs to be done in a timely fashion pre-event if you know somethings coming and post event

Todd reported capacity can be an issue if contractors are busy and Fraser replied to let the council know

Also timing of operations outside of the notice period should be notified and 20 working days' notice period can be assessed and reduced on a case-by-case basis

Day One - Audit

Audits

The 2025 audits were structured differently by the organising committee. The participating councils were split into two tiers, based on the volume of forestry activity in their region (Table 1). The tier determining how many files each council had audited. In 2024, only five files were audited per council.

As per 2024, councils submitted their complete list of forestry inspections from the previous financial year (2023/2024). The organising committee then randomly selected 10 files (tier one) and 5 files (tier two) to be audited, ensuring they covered the full spectrum of compliance ratings (SNC, MRNC, LRNC, Complying).

Prior to the meeting, councils were notified by the organising committee, of the files that had been selected for auditing. In advance of the audit, each council uploaded ([to the Te Uru Kahika Forestry Compliance and Enforcement MS Teams site](#)) their relevant material related to the inspection (compliance reports, field notes, photos, NES-CF Management Plans, etc.).

Councils were assigned to audit a single council's files as per Table 1 below. This was a different approach to 2024, where a council's five files were each audited by a different council.

Due to availability of time, less time was spent on discussing compliance ratings that the auditing council agreed with.

Tier 1:	to audit	Tier 2:	to audit
Northland	to audit Otago	Auckland	to audit Tasman
Bay of Plenty	to audit Northland	Wellington	to audit Marlborough
Waikato	to audit Gisborne	Nelson	
Manawatu - Wanganui	to audit Bay of Plenty	Marlborough	to audit Southland
Hawkes Bay	to audit Taranaki	Tasman	to audit Wellington
Taranaki	to audit Manawatu - Wanganui	Canterbury	to audit Auckland
Gisborne	to audit Waikato	Southland	to audit Canterbury
Otago	to audit Hawkes Bay	West Coast	

Table 1. Council tiers based on level of forestry activity

Audit Results

In 2024, a total 42 files were audited (figure 2), and in 2025, a total 108 files were audited (figure 3). The [source data](#) from the audit is available on the Forestry – Compliance and Enforcement MS Teams site.

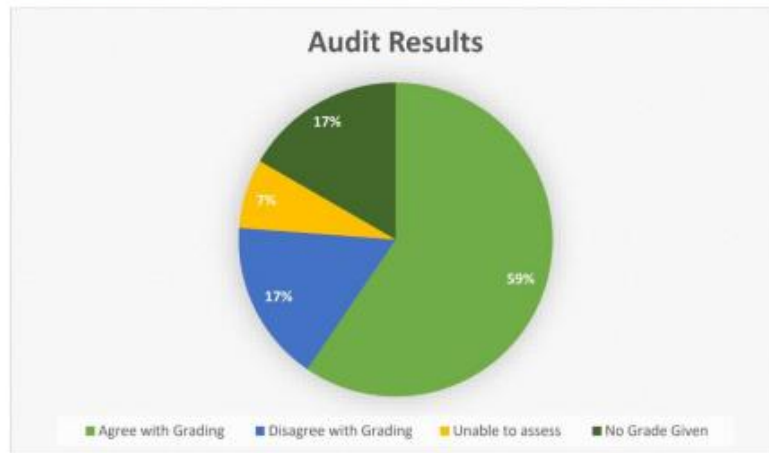


Figure 2. National Forestry Audit Results 2024

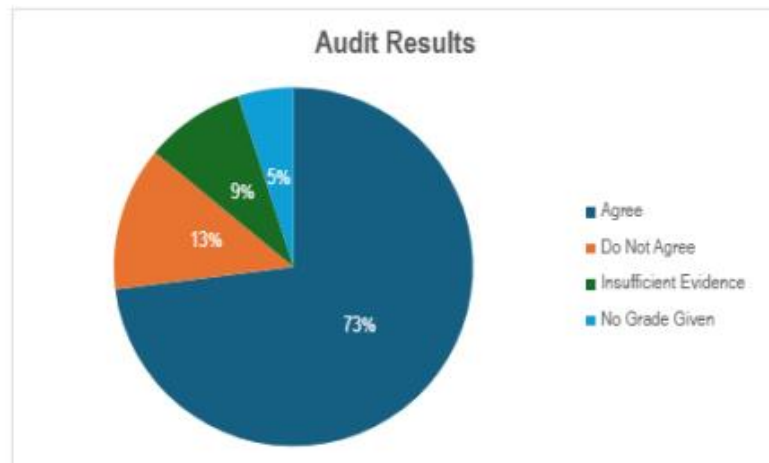


Figure 3. National Forestry Audit Results 2025

- The percentage of compliance gradings that peer reviewers agreed with was 73%, up from 59% in 2024. This was even with the increased number of reports submitted for auditing by tier one councils (from 5 in 2024, to 10 in 2025).
- Peer reviewers found initial compliance gradings that they disagreed with fell from 17% in 2024, to 13% in 2025.

- There are still compliance inspection reports (9%) that do not have enough evidence to support the file being audited and still lack information. The Group aimed to address this in 2024 by agreeing to minimum standards for the contents of a compliance inspection report.
- The number of Compliance Inspection Reports that did not have an initial grading fell from 17% in 2024 to only 5% in 2025. The aim of the Forestry Compliance Group is to reduce this number to zero.

Findings and Recommendations

There are still councils that are not using the MfE (Ministry for the Environment) recommended compliance ratings, which makes consistency of compliance across the activity challenging. **If each Council adopts the recommended compliance ratings it will address the 5% No Grades Given.**

No single council was fulfilling all the minimum standards agreed to by this group, for the contents of compliance reports. Common themes were a lack of geographically identifiable photographs linking the observed non-compliance with the specific site within a wider forest. **Councils are reminded to ensure compliance reports contain the agreed minimum standard of content. This will address the 9% insufficient evidence.**

- Compliance Officers are discouraged from the use of emotive terms such as “pleasing to see” and “good looking water controls”. They should stick to simple and easy-to-understand but factual language.
- Where remediation was recommended, some compliance inspection reports lacked deadlines or due dates for works completion.
- Not referencing the ESC class for the specific site being inspected and the relevant Harvest Plan or other relevant management plan that was being worked under e.g. Harvest Plan
- Councils are getting better at noting the relevant NES-CF regulation that has been breached when documenting non-compliance.
- More councils are utilising drone imagery and videos as part of their inspections. This imagery is great for showing compliant as well as non-compliance. Some drone technology allows for measurements and analysis (cut to fill, total disturbed areas etc.).

Next Steps

Councils to apply the **Minimum Standards for Content for Compliance Inspection Reports** and the newly developed **established standards for SNC compliance ratings** to promote consistency across Forestry Compliance and the service provided to ‘customers’. Both guides should be applied to NES-CF and consented forestry activities.

#4 General Business

- CNI Wood Council Forestry Awards - 31 October 2025
- Fraser acknowledged Mike Collins for 21 years of service at BOP Regional Council

Meeting schedule and Chair -

Q	Date	Chair/Venue
4	19 November	Jackie Egan - BOPRC/Field trip to Omataroa Forest hosted by Matariki Forests

Meeting concluded at 11.15am

Action Points - nil

	Action	By	Status
1			
2			

Seven Meeting Goals: there should be one meeting goal per agenda item which describes the primary outcome:

Advance the Thinking - workshop

Build Capacity – developing skills, training

Make Decisions – bringing an issue to a close

Share Information – reporting, no discussion

Build Community – celebrations, team building

Improve Communication – feelings, relationships

Obtain Input – feedback, for consideration only

DRAFT