



Forest Regulation and Codes of Practice

(IFA Forest Policy Statement No. 2.8)

Key Statement

Codes of practice provide an effective tool to regulate forest management activities, such as timber harvesting and roading. All significant forest activities should be subject to codes of forest practice, irrespective of land tenure, which are effectively implemented, regularly reviewed and audited with public reporting or audit results.

The Issue

Forest management activities and practices, such as timber harvesting and roading, have the potential to impact adversely on other forest values if not carried out in an appropriate manner. Effective Codes of Forest Practice, are essential to control the standards of on-ground implementation of all significant forest practices. in order to protect forest wood and non-wood values for the community.

Background

Over the last decade initiatives, such as the Regional Forest Agreement process, and other forest conservation and protection measures has substantially reduced the proportion of the forest estate managed for timber production and related activities in public multiple-use forests. In most public native forests, substantial areas are set aside for conservation and the protection of water quality and other forest values.

Forest management planning for multiple-use forests provides a means to meet statutory requirements and provide for the full range of forest values in areas which are available for timber harvesting. Comprehensive forest management plans take account of national, state and local government policies, as well as the requirements of Regional Forest Agreements. In forests and plantations where timber harvesting is permitted, Codes of Forest Practice provide the basis for regulating on ground implementation of timber production and roading.

Most States and Territories have developed Codes of Forest Practice, which apply to public and/or private forests. Some jurisdictions also have significant regulatory controls over forest management activities such as timber harvesting. Codes of Forest Practice provide for the most effective balance between production and conservation and a flexible model to deal with the variability of situations, management intent, area and type of forest and ownership. Such Codes are based on best available science and knowledge and provide a set of guidelines and standards to ensure reasonable protection of the environmental and cultural values of the forest during the implementation of forest practices.

When effectively implemented Codes of Forest Practice can ensure that commercial timber growing and harvesting operations are carried out on both public land and private land in such a way that:

- is compatible with the conservation of the wide range of environmental and social values associated with forests;
- promotes the ecologically sustainable management of native forests proposed for continuous timber production; and
- enhances public confidence in the management of native forests and plantations for timber production.

The major challenges related to Codes of Forest Practice are to:

- ensure effective implementation of existing Codes of Forest Practice across all timber production and roading activities, regardless of land tenure;
- enhance coverage of regulations and codes of practice to deal with other significant forest activities;
- ensure there is regular review, auditing and public reporting of Codes of Forestry Practice;

- promote training and support to all forest managers in developing and implementing codes, particularly in small scale harvesting activities; and
- ensure that codes of practice on private land are developed in a way that is appropriate to the scale, ownership and type of forest and management intent.

Policy

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the ongoing development, implementation, auditing and review of Codes of Forest Practice and associated forest regulations, to cover all significant forest management activities, irrespective of land tenure.

The IFA considers that:

- codes of practice provide an effective tool to regulate forest management; and
- appropriate training and support is needed to assist forest managers and those who implement forest activities to meet code of practice requirements.

The IFA supports and encourages Codes of Forest Practice which:

- promote best practice forest management;
- are based on best available science and knowledge;
- set minimum environmental standards;
- are subject to regular public review; and
- are backed by appropriate support, monitoring, compliance, audit, public reporting and where required, enforcement.

Further Information

McCormack, R. J. A Review of Forest Practice Codes in Australia. FAO website found at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/W3646E/w3646e0f.htm> .

Wilkinson, G. R. (1999) Codes of forest practice as regulatory tools for sustainable forest management. In Ellis, R.C. and Smethurst, P.J. (Eds) Practising Forestry Today, Proceedings of the 18th Biennial Conference of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, Hobart, Tasmania, 3-8 October 1999. pp.43-60.

<http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/index.php?id=81>

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/nrenfor.nsf/fid/59C7C9973DE0D8D0CA25734D000DB3E7>

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