

Notes from Aotea Community Meeting

Feb 5th, 2021

Attendees:

- Approximately 50 community attendees – refer attendance list.
- Hancock Forest Management staff: Brent Donaldson - Area Manager Central Region, Sally Strang – Environmental Manager and Sarah-Jane Luoni – Environmental Forester.

Brent and Sally gave an overview Hancock Forest Management and the ownership of Morrison's Forest. HFM manages forests on behalf of Taumata Plantations Ltd. Taumata Plantations Ltd have a forest right with the Morrison's to harvest the trees on the land. The land is owned by the Morrison Family. Hancock's involvement is in planning and managing the harvest only. The land will return to the Morrison's after harvest.

Regarding timing, this is very much dependent on getting the necessary consents and Heritage NZ approvals. All going well HFM are aiming to start road line salvage this winter. Road line salvage involves clearing trees along the planned road lines. The engineering contractor will then move in to undertake road construction and this will be followed by more road line salvage. The first harvesting is planned to commence in 2022. This will involve a hauler crew for approximately 1 year and a ground base crew for approximately 9 months. HFM will aim to avoid working in peak summer to minimise impact on holiday use of Aotea.

Forest access is proposed via the existing gate off Morrison Road, near the start of the Coastal Walkway. The other two access points to the forest, via the Koiwi wetland causeway (the gate to the left off the causeway) and the gate on corner at the top of the hill (opposite Maukutea Drive) are not suitable or safe for truck access.

Specific points related to harvesting were discussed:

- HFM propose to not harvest the coastal strip of stunted trees as a buffer for wind and erosion.
- The coastal walkway will need to be closed when harvesting is happening within 2 tree lengths. HFM will liaise with the community to ensure this happens at a time when people are least impacted.
- HFM propose to leave harvesting the trees on the flat opposite the houses until last (at least 2 years away) to provide a buffer for noise and dust from operations. There were mixed views on this, some people were for it, some were keen to get the trees down to improve their views and some were keen to get rid of the trees to get rid of the pollen.
- Houses within 2 tree lengths of the forest boundary will need to be vacated while the trees get felled. This should only take several hours. More discussion about the best way to do this is needed – timing and arrangements will be in agreement with the affected residents.
- There will be approximately 10 logging trucks per day, starting at about 4.30am at the earliest. Brent commented that HFM is very careful about trucking and mentioned that HFM can post lower speed limits for trucks and forestry vehicles in the area.

- A question asked about the likely timing of trucks. It was confirmed that trucks will be staggered through the day. From Aotea trucks will travel to Te Kuiti, Rotorua, Tokoroa and Port of Tauranga.
- Harvesting crew operating hours are normally 7am -3pm. There are roughly 10 people per crew and support vehicles also visit the forest.
- Concerns were raised regarding the potential for road damage by the trucks. Meeting attendees generally advised that the District Council has not been particularly proactive in addressing road maintenance at times in the past, and the ratepayers are concerned they will be footing the bill for damage. It was noted that the Morrison's are also ratepayers for the forest land. Winter logging concerns raised about springs popping up under roads and causing damage.
- A question was asked about traffic control on narrow road sections, in particular the stretch coming up the hill into the village which has a soft left hand side which could be worsened by trucks. It was suggested that the road needs sweeping to remove needles so that the full width can be used safely.
- Hancock staff agreed that they would have discussions with the council regarding the upcoming harvest and the need for any repair work.
- The duration of the harvest and scheduling of it throughout the year was also raised. The meeting was advised that the harvest would continue for around 3 season, that the current plan is to schedule the harvesting to as much as possible avoid the busy summer period. The meeting was also advised that any weekend harvesting would be very unlikely, that there may sometimes be crew members turn up to maintain machinery.
- It was noted that the Kawhia Road/Aotea Road intersection is a concern for the tight corner for trucks, particularly travelling out. HFM NZ noted that as a standard part of the pre-harvest planning process a hazard ID is undertaken for the trucking route by HFM NZ Distribution Supervisors. The intersection will be checked.
- The key environmental issues to be looked after are:
 - Wetlands and streams in the block. Harvesting will planned to minimize impacts on these areas as far as practical.
 - The block has numerous important archaeological sites. A Heritage NZ Authority and District Council consent will be required for harvesting around the sites. Iwi consultation is already underway on this.
- There was a discussion about the state of the land after harvest. The meeting was advised that the forest will be left in a 'cutover' state after harvest. Harvesting slash (branches) will as much as possible be spread out over the land to minimise exposed soil.
- A concern was raised about the likelihood of debris movement in heavy rain. Hancock confirmed the topography and sandy geology mean that this is low risk. The waterways within the forest do not have the capacity to carry debris and the slopes are short and not very steep. The biggest erosion risk is from wind.
- There was discussion about plans for the land and it was agreed it is up to the Morrison's as to what happens next with the land.
- There will be a blessing before work commences.
- Communication with community will be ongoing. For example, notifying stages and when work starts and stops.
- Questions were raised about dust. It was noted that there should not be dust from the cutover. If road dust is an issue dust lock will be applied.

- Questions were raised about the need for a fire break? It was discussed that this will be an issue to be discussed if the forest is to be replanted.
- A question was raised regarding employment opportunities. It was explained that the harvesting crews are generally fairly stable and don't take on people just for one job (due to the skills required). It was noted that there might be other opportunities such as using local hire companies when required.
- Question about whether possums will move into residential areas after harvest and whether HFM can control them before harvest so that the population is low. HFM agreed to look into this.

ACTION:

1. HFM to follow up the matters raised with the Otorohanga District Council.
2. Invite Otorohanga District Council representative to the next meeting. Ask what they plan to do about road management and maintenance.
3. Share Archaeology report with Aotea Community when finalised.
4. Organise a forest open day in 2022 once roads are built and harvest is underway.
5. HFM to notify the community of progress - when operations are planned to start and stop.
6. Email harvest plan map to Dave.
7. Requested signage be placed on road to let the public know when operating.

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In attendance:

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Aotea Community Meeting Minutes

29/4/2022

Hosted by Sue and Dave Forsythe in Aotea.

Brent Donaldson and Sarah-Jane Luoni attended from Manulife Forest Management.

Apologies from Sally Strang.

Sarah-Jane gave an update of progress since the last meeting in February 2021. A summary document is attached which was also distributed to attendees. Key points that were discussed include.

- MFM's land use consent application
- Road safety and what MFM have done so far to address the concerns already raised by the community, (detailed on the summary document).
- Additional concerns were raised about springs underneath the road and how these areas will hold up under heavy traffic. All we can do is monitor these areas and take action if damage does start to occur.

Sarah-Jane gave an overview of the archaeological work that has gone into preparing for harvest.

Sarah-Jane stated that people are welcome to accompany her into the forest if they are interested in learning more.

The start date for operations is tentatively July, depending on how the consent process goes.

Harvesting timeframe was queried and it was stated that the duration is likely to be 3.5 rather than 4 years as initially suggested.

Brent reinforced the no work times (Dec 20 to Jan 7th or thereabouts); noting that time has squeezed a bit due to time taken to obtain all the necessary consents and authorities (and undertake the necessary consultations).

It was queried where all the wood will leave the forest, and Sarah-Jane confirmed that everything will be trucked out via the entrance on the flat opposite the township.

The small trees on the steep face at the southern end of the forest were queried. Concern was raised that the trees were causing the face to erode. Sarah-Jane confirmed that the plan is to leave the trees on the slope, our thinking is that the trees are helping to slow the erosion and will be best left in situ.

Brent Donaldson emphasised that he is the point of contact for any concerns as operations progress.

Interest was shown in operations and the machinery involved. It was suggested that a community field trip be held once the hauler crew is established in the forest. MFM can provide dates for this when the consent is finalised.

Sarah-Jane clarified that there are multiple skid sites throughout the forest across three separate harvest areas. Copies of the harvesting plan maps have previously been circulated. Two harvest

areas will require a hauler tower and one is suited to a ground based crew. The different machinery configurations were briefly discussed.

A query was made on whether pine cone collection could continue. It was clarified that areas will be well signposted when they are closed for safety reasons and it was reiterated that the flat area of trees closest to the village will be left until last and will provide a buffer for disturbance from harvesting.

There was community interest in firewood rings being left at the forest entrance for collection. MFM undertook to organise this when operations get underway.

Brent stated MFM's intention to bring a truck in at time and date yet to be determined for monitoring of noise levels.

Morrison's Forest Harvest Update

- An archaeological authority has been granted by Heritage New Zealand for the work.
- A land use consent application has been submitted to ODC for earthworks and traffic generation.
- The council has identified the houses immediately opposite the forest as affected parties and those people will be invited to submit their views on our application.

- Our current estimated start date for road line salvage is July at the earliest, depending on the outcome of the consent process.

- At our last meeting, road safety was strongly communicated as a priority and we acted on your feedback.

- We worked with Waka Kotahi through their agents WSP, to identify and make safety improvements to the SH31/ Aotea Road intersection.
 - Curved mirror to be installed to assist sight distances for trucks and the public exiting onto the SHW 31 from Aotea road.
 - 60km/hr speed restriction (sign posted) on SH31 approaches to the intersection.
 - Trucks Crossing warning signs to be installed.
 - Vegetation clearance to improve sight distance.

- Our engineers met with ODC engineers to discuss improvements to Aotea and Morrison's Roads which include:
 - Widen and strengthen road shoulders to give loaded trucks room on identified tight corners. This involves removing grass and unsuitable material and rebuilding with gap65 metal. This will improve sight distance and allow more space for trucks to turn smoothly.
 - Marking the centre lines around corners.
 - 60 km speed limit signs for our trucks along Morrison/Aotea Rd to ensure safe travel speed for trucks.
 - 30km speed limit signs for our trucks when they come around the corner and into Aotea township.
 - We will shift the forest entrance gate further into the trees to allow trucks pull off further away from road to reduce noise for residents.

- Our distribution supervisor went for a ride along on the local school bus to understand the safety challenges from their point of view. As a result of this, a sign saying School Bus Turns will be installed 200m either side of the Morrison's/Aotea Road intersection.

- Other measures we propose include:
 - Limiting operations to a maximum of 20 trucks per day. Generally, it will be around 12.
 - No work on weekends or public holidays
 - No work over the Christmas new year break. Approx. Dec 20 – Jan 10.