

## Judges' Report

CATEGORY:

### Forestry

## Mt Camp Creek, BEL Forestry Ltd (with MacKenzie Management Ltd)

**INTERVIEWED**

Jason Bryant (Director, BEL Forestry Ltd)

**DATE**

15 November 2024

**JUDGES**

Rob Miller, Kristie Paki Paki, Wendy Sullivan

### INTRODUCTION

In 2020, BEL Forestry Ltd, in collaboration with MacKenzie Forest Management, undertook the harvest of the Mt Camp Creek Forest in the Wakamarina (Whakamarino) Valley. This forest, initially planted with *Pinus radiata* in the early 1990s, extended up to the stream edge (Marginal Strip) and onto a mining reserve — both public conservation lands managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC).

Standard forest management practices at the time typically involved either (1) harvesting, aerial spraying, and leaving the area to regenerate naturally, or (2) harvesting and leaving the area unsprayed. In both cases, the landowner would receive revenue from the harvested logs, but these practices carried a high risk of wilding pine and exotic weed reestablishment, which could significantly hinder natural regeneration. If not properly managed, harvesting in riparian zones could also cause substantial environmental damage.

To mitigate these risks, an alternative management approach was developed in consultation with DOC. This approach focused on low-impact log extraction during harvesting, followed by native planting, ongoing maintenance, and targeted weed control.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Mt Camp Creek is a tributary of the Wakamarina River and connects the river to Mt Richmond Forest Park. The Bryant family owns the land at Mt Camp, which includes 200 hectares of plantations managed by BEL Ltd, where Jason Bryant serves as director. Harvest planning for the area was conducted by MacKenzie Forest Management Ltd. The *Pinus radiata* forest was planted in 1991 and harvested in 2020.

Riparian cover—whether composed of exotic or native vegetation — is crucial for maintaining cool, clear water conditions that support native invertebrates and fish. Harvesting pines or clearing vegetation along riparian margins can disturb soils, increase surface runoff, and expose water to direct sunlight, resulting in overheating and rendering it unsuitable for aquatic life.

In partnership with DOC, landowners, BEL Ltd, and MacKenzie Management Ltd, a Letter of Authority was issued, establishing conditions to minimize the environmental impact of the harvest. These included prohibiting new tracks within Public Conservation Land (PCL) stream margins, felling or removing all pines, and minimizing soil disturbance while preserving the native understory.

After the successful harvest, targeted spraying controlled exotic weeds, and locally sourced native pioneer species were planted over two years in the public land area. A commitment to a multi-year plant maintenance program, including replanting and release spraying, has been made. Regular site visits have been conducted to monitor progress and adjust management strategies.

Despite a recreational hunting program, browsing has led to low survival rates for palatable species like kohuhu. However, early results indicate that plantings of kanuka and manuka have been relatively successful.



### THE JUDGES WERE IMPRESSED BY

- The strong collaboration between landowners, forest managers, and DOC, where revenue from PCL harvests was reinvested in planting and maintenance, resulting in significant environmental benefits.
- The three-year plant maintenance program, which included releasing naturally regenerating plants, demonstrating a level of care that exceeds legal requirements.
- Targeted invasive weed control and plant release techniques that minimized chemical use near waterways.
- The generational commitment of the Bryant family to protecting land and waterways, reflected in their proactive approach to minimizing environmental damage during forestry operations.
- Lower-impact harvesting practices, best-practice road construction and culvert management, and minimal harvest-induced erosion.
- The retention of significant areas of indigenous forest within steeper gullies in the Bryant family's commercial forest area.



## PROBLEMS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

- Minimizing soil and native vegetation damage during harvest was achieved through consultations with DOC, utilizing existing tracks, and using mechanized felling away from streams to protect stream banks from erosion and sediment runoff.
- Plant survival was enhanced through a three-year maintenance program.
- Replanting focused on non-palatable species to prevent losses from browsing.

## SUMMARY

This project demonstrates a thoughtful approach to managing and enhancing riparian margins while addressing legacy impacts. Collaboration between generational landowners, environmentally conscious forest managers, and DOC has allowed revenue from historical land use to support long-term environmental enhancement. Active management of riparian margins is fostering improved ecological corridors between Mt Richmond Forest Park and the Wakamarina River. Continuing to apply an environmental perspective to planning and operations will contribute to a positive shift in the forestry industry.



## SUGGESTIONS

- Since recreational hunting has not adequately protected palatable species, future projects should consider more targeted pest control, possibly by employing contractors. Focusing solely on unpalatable species may reduce species diversity and affect ecosystem function.
- This is an excellent example of over-legal-boundary plantings. Sharing lessons learned through platforms such as the Te Hoiere Project could provide a valuable case study for the forestry industry.
- Evidence of forestry replanting within riparian margins on private land and minor tributaries suggests an opportunity to apply lessons learned from this project across the broader forest. Some trees planted within 10m of streams could be removed while small, to avoid sedimentation during the next harvest.
- Logging waste (slash) should be removed from the site and utilized where a viable market exists. If there is no market, slash should be left in a stable location where it will not wash into streams, causing environmental damage during storm events.

