

Forestry Corp cuts contracts for harvest and haul

07 May 2021

After salvaging the equivalent of about 270 B-Double truckloads of timber every working day from fire-affected plantations over the past year, Forestry Corporation has taken the difficult step to reduce contracts for timber harvest and haulage and supply over the coming five years while replanting and regrowing for the future. Source: Timberbiz

Forestry Corporation of NSW's Snowy Regional Manager Dean Anderson said the reduction was unavoidable, with a quarter of the region's plantations affected by fire and requiring time to regrow.

"The Dunn's Road fire affected an area around one and a half times the size of the ACT, including more than 45,000 hectares of softwood timber plantations around Tumut and Tumbarumba. We have not experienced a fire of this scale before and unfortunately we cannot continue with business as usual after such a significant event," Mr Anderson said.

"The plantations around Tumut are predominantly Radiata Pine, which is a north American species that is generally killed by fire. After a fire, timber from the larger and more mature trees can often be salvaged and used in the same way as unburnt timber, but after 12 months the quality for structural timber begins to degrade to a point where it is less useful. "Our primary focus over the past year has been salvaging the timber and delivering it to local processors so we could get as much value as possible for the local community and maintain local jobs for as long as possible.

"In the past year, we have salvaged around 2.7 million tonnes of timber, which is enough to fill more than 60,000 b-double trucks. Lined up end to end, 60,000 b-doubles would form a convoy stretching from Tumut to the Sunshine Coast in Queensland.

"Unfortunately, this enormous salvage task is now drawing to a close and we've had to take some difficult steps to re-set to a sustainable level, so that we do not harvest more timber than we are currently growing.

"Industry was already facing a supply reduction following the 2008 Billo Road fire, and unfortunately this has been compounded by the impact of the Dunn's Road fire.

"Sawlog supply to the AKD and Hyne mill will decrease, and we are working with the mills to manage these changes as best we can coupled with the fast-tracked replanting program to get the industry back to normal as soon as possible.

"We are disappointed that this means we will not have enough harvest and haulage work for all of our existing contractors over the next few years. We have not taken the decision to reduce supply so significantly lightly and are aware of the impacts on families and individuals, but we do not have another option if we are to maintain a viable industry here in Tumut over the long term.

"We ran a fair and transparent selection process to select the local businesses who will provide these services over the next few years and will be transitioning to the new arrangements over the next six months commencing 1 July 2021.

"We thank everyone who has worked with us over the years for the service they have provided, particularly over the past year when we were operating at more than twice the usual rate to salvage timber following the fires and will work with local companies to manage the transition.

All the contracts have been awarded to local companies already operating in the area.

"Despite changes in volume and capacity, the local industry remains vibrant and focused on the future with AKD continuing to seek highly-skilled employees to help add value to the timber products they produce from local forests.

"Work has already begun to replant the plantations and get the industry back on a solid footing for the future. Blowering Nursery has undergone a \$1.63 million upgrade to increase seedling production capacity and we will be replanting 14 million seedlings over the equivalent of around 24,000 football fields each year to restock areas harvested in NSW and the fire-affected plantations as quickly as possible.

"Over the past year, more than \$ 8 million has also been invested in road and infrastructure repairs, with around 1,000 kilometres of fire-damaged roads in the Tumut area – approximately the distance from Batlow to Adelaide – and remedial roadworks are continuing."

Source: <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/forestry-corp-cuts-contracts-for-harvest-and-haul/>