

Harvesting in Multi-Use Area – Kaiti Hill (Titirangi), Gisborne

May 2015

Background

PF Olsen has recently completed harvesting a small woodlot located on the iconic Kaiti Hill, Gisborne City. The work was commissioned by the Gisborne District Council (GDC) who established the 8.2 hectare Radiata pine crop in 1985.

Before the operation commenced, significant public and Iwi consultation was undertaken.

The GDC employed Geoff Canham Consulting (GCC) to assist them with this process. In our view this was essential as Kaiti Hill has significant cultural and historical values, as well as being a well-used and cherished recreational area.



Operations

Most harvesting operations have a number of interesting and challenging aspects. The Kaiti Hill harvest had the most interesting suite of operational issues of any forest we have harvested in the region.

The GDC, GCC, PF Olsen and Iwi all contributed to the harvest planning which was essential for the success of the operation.

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Some of the key operation issues were:

Public Access

Kaiti Hill is well utilised by the public for sight-seeing, walking, biking, fitness programmes and so forth. To ensure the public did not enter into the harvesting area, extensive advertising was undertaken informing them that parts of the hill would be closed for harvesting. Additionally, two metre security fences were established along boundaries that were able to be accessed by foot.

During harvesting operations security personnel were employed to patrol 'at risk' boundaries to ensure no one gained access to the harvesting area. At night, a security guard remained at the site to ensure there was no unauthorised entry.

The road through Kaiti Hill was closed to the public with a manned security gate, affording access to authorised contractors and staff only.

Archaeological Sites

Kaiti Hill has a number of significant archaeological sites.

Before harvesting commenced, an archaeological survey was completed and overlaid with the operational harvest plan. This ensured that the earthworks and tree felling operations planned would avoid damaging these sites.

While the planned roading and harvesting infrastructure was being constructed, local Iwi were on site to manage a response should an unknown archaeological site be uncovered.

Historical and Significant Sites

Kaiti Hill has a number of historical and significant sites which also required consideration and management.

A hauler landing site was required close to the historic Kaiti Hill Gun Emplacement and Observatory. This necessitated the construction of a very small landing which caused a number of operational issues such as having to shift slash and logging debris off site daily to maintain a safe operating area. The crew were highly mechanised allowing them to work safely on a very small footprint.

Power lines were present within the woodlot and a fibre optic cable within the operational area required specialist tree felling. The main city communications tower is also located on the harvesting boundary.

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Hours of Work

Due to the proximity of the harvest operations to the urban environment harvesting operations and trucking were restricted in the hours they were able to operate.

Operations could only take place between 7am to 6pm during weekdays, and 7am to 2pm on Saturdays.

Environmental management

The long term plan for Kaiti Hill is to remove all the exotic established trees from the area.

Kaiti Hill will be re-established with native trees interspersed with walkways and viewing platforms. Other ideas are being put forward for public consultation.

Accordingly the harvesting site had very strict conditions in regard to how the site was to be left following harvesting. This included reinstatement of the skid areas, drainage and sediment control and ensuring fence integrity.

The major difference to most commercial harvesting operations was the requirement to remove logging slash and debris from the site.

The harvesting yielded approximately 3,800 tonnes of merchantable logs. Firewood, debris and slash removed from the harvesting site created a significant volume exceeding 2,400 tonnes.

This removal of waste wood caused daily logistical issues tying up resources in trucking and loading infrastructure.

It also became a challenge as to where the material could be transported. Approximately half of the volume was utilised by a local firewood merchant, some was chipped and the remainder burnt.

Other matters

A number of other matters arose during the operations. These included members of the public climbing security fencing and having to be escorted from the area.

An unauthorised drone was flown around the harvesting site on a number of occasions which was a major distraction and intrusion for the harvesting crew.

Regular visits by affected parties: GDC representatives, Iwi and media needed to be guided on site.

Contractors

Xmen Logging Ltd undertook the harvesting and performed very well operating on constricted skid sites within a challenging environmental and operational site.

All supporting contractors; Pacific Haulage Ltd, Cranswick Enterprises Ltd and Eastland Tree Care also contributed above their contractual requirements to ensure the success and safety of the operations.

PF Olsen were greatly supported by Mike Riordan representing Canham Consulting who assisted with day to day operational issues and liaison with the GDC.

Next steps

With the completion of harvesting the next step will be to re-establish the site with native trees and walkways etc.

Kaiti Hill is a significant site and is treasured by the community so PF Olsen wish every success to those taking the next steps to develop this iconic area.





Post-harvest – a nice clean cutover



Site rehabilitation – slash and logging waste had to be removed