

NIKAU FOREST DEVELOPMENTS - MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

Owners reap rewards of strong market and foresight of being harvest-ready

Nikau Forest Developments Limited owned 38ha of 33 year old radiata pine located in the Marlborough Sounds. Well in advance of harvesting they obtained the necessary resource consents, had a harvest plan, and had built a log marshalling site and barge ramp to facilitate harvest operations. They then proceeded to determine when to harvest and market their forest resource, and who they would engage to manage this process.



Bill Gordon

Bill Gordon, an Engineer from Wellington, is one of the principals of Nikau Forest Developments.

Bill explains the process:

"Prior to commissioning PF Olsen, we were moderately aware of the generalities of the process of logging and sale of blocks such as ours. We knew enough to be nervous, but not enough to know how to deal with the detail. PF Olsen obviously had intimate knowledge in all related areas, their referees spoke highly of them, and they offered up value in the form of preliminary logging plans, prior to being commissioned."

Just prior to harvesting starting in September, a major wind event blew a portion of the stand over. The ground hauler team, about to commence operations, recovered the merchantable wind-throw first, and then commenced operations proper. However the December 28th weather event that affected much of the upper South Island saw 300mm of rain overnight at the site, and a further 10ha of wind-throw. The cable hauler, scheduled to arrive in the first week of January, proceeded directly to the wind throw. As the crew tidied up the wind-thrown trees, more of the exposed faces blew over. Mark Wybourne, PF Olsen's Marlborough Harvesting Manager, consulted colleagues in PF Olsen and decided to alter the harvesting plan. Rather than proceed through the wind-throw areas at a slower pace and risk the rest of the stand blowing over, Mark decided to harvest the good standing timber as quickly as possible and return at the end to tidy up the wind-throw.



This resulted in harvesting more fresh (highest value) wood into strong domestic and export markets. It also minimised the amount of wind-throw by focusing on the remaining standing timber first, reducing the amount of time wind vulnerable stand edges were exposed. This resulted in the best possible return to the forest owners. Because Nikau Forest Developments had the foresight to be fully harvest-ready, PF Olsen was able to respond immediately to the wind-throw event and maximise the returns by marketing from short-length export cuts.

"The project was completed with a high degree of professionalism in circumstances that were challenging due to the location, and made worse by an extreme weather event near commencement, ultimately over half the block being subject to wind-throw. Particular mention should be made of the individual at the 'sharp end'. By our experience Mark Wybourne did an outstanding job in managing the day to day aspects of the operation, and reporting to us."

"No doubt Mark is supported with a corporate structure equally as competent and also wide reaching. Collectively they have done a great job, such that at this date [21st June 2011] the project is almost complete. I have no doubt the close out will be handled just as competently as the rest of the project." (Bill Gordon)



Mark Wybourne