

Tekapo Forest – south of Murray Place

The case for delaying any decision re harvesting for a year:

1) According to a 1973 document the original purpose of the plantation was for wind shelter NOT commercial forestry:

"An Appraisal of the Tekapo Region with Specific Emphasis on Planning of the Domain" was written as part of some research for a Diploma in Landscape Architecture for the University of Canterbury, by T. C. Emmitt (B. Hort.). He writes:

The County Council plantation to the south-east of the township was planted at the request of the Tekapo Commission for the purpose of shelter. They comprise mainly P. nigra and P. ponderosa, and although their timber value is small due to poor maintenance, their amenity value is high....

This area is important to the future development of Tekapo as it is a buffer against wind, smoke and smell from the local rubbish dump and sewerage works. Because of bad maintenance its timber value is rather low, and therefore it presents Tekapo with a ready-made recreation area.

2) Even in these earlier years this document shows that the amenity value of these trees and their recreational value were recognized. Delaying felling for a year would allow time for a cost/benefit analysis to be done, assessing removal of the trees versus retaining them for recreation and aesthetic purposes; and it would allow time to set up an alternative model for management if the trees were to be retained and to estimate more accurately the cost of that.

3) If the community is to lose the best part of this forest (Section B in particular), then we deserve to be given more accurate figures regarding the value of the timber and what the revenue would be once all the costs, including amenity planting and debris removal in Section A have been allowed for.

4) Thinking ahead: say all the trees in Section B are milled and replanted as per a "normal" commercial forestry scenario with pine trees, intending to mill them again 30 or more years down the track, then we will not get back the kind of open, park-like forest we have now, because production practices have changed, meaning a much denser forest. To accommodate recreational values as much as possible in this area, any felling should be staged, instead of felling all the 65-year-old Corsican pine at once. This calls for a management plan that looks to the future of this forest as a recreational area primarily. Delaying for a year would allow time for a MP to be drawn up.

A Management Plan could cover the following:

a) In the longer term aim to have the whole of the area between Murray Place and the bottom of the hill on the south side designated as a Recreation Reserve - and explore the management options for this.

b) In the medium term allow the Forestry Board to harvest the area where they have milled before.

c) In the short term (in a year's time?) allow the milling of Section A to proceed, subject to a proper budget being drawn up, allowing for low stump cutting, debris removal by mulching and installation of a watering system and the amenity planting. (Volunteer assistance can be called on for planting.)

For Section B explore the possibility of allowing at least half of the trees to remain (according to independent advice those 63 year old Corsican pine should be good for another 20 years at least). A year's delay would give time to determine more accurately the value of those trees - both in terms of timber value, but also their other values in terms of amenity and recreation. Selectively log, as has been done previously, those which pose a windfall danger, if necessary. (Maybe Don....? could be engaged for such work - he lives in Tekapo, so would save transport costs.)

Bear in mind that this Tekapo plantation was not planted for commercial forestry purposes. It is a community asset for shelter from wind and sewerage smells as well as for recreation. More recognition needs to be given to those aspects in any decisions you make for tree felling.