



Giving National Context to International Indicators: New Zealand forest industry and territorial authority views on Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators

Summary

A series of seven workshops was undertaken across New Zealand from May to June, 2009, to seek the views of New Zealand's forest industry and territorial authorities on the national context of the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators. New Zealand is a member of the international Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests, or Montréal Process.

A range of representatives from larger and smaller forestry interests participated in the workshops, as well as council and central government representatives. Each indicator of the Montréal Process was evaluated.

The workshops found that while the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators were developed internationally, the majority of the indicators are relevant to New Zealand. Actively facilitating management approaches that enhance social benefits were considered difficult, however. Forest managers were wary of the potential costs of indicators. Cross-sectoral issues were raised with tensions between forestry and other sectors regarding regulations, environment impacts and quality land resources.

Overall the applicability of some of the terminology to New Zealand was questioned, with a call for the indicators to be written in a way that is more meaningful to the forestry industry. It may also be useful to provide a definition for each indicator to promote consistency and understanding.

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Introduction

The 'Montréal Process' is the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests. The Montréal Process was formed in 1994 to develop and implement internationally agreed criteria and Indicators for the conservation and sustainable management of temperate and boreal forests. New Zealand is one of twelve member countries whose collective land area contains about ninety per cent of the world's temperate and boreal forests.

A series of seven workshops was undertaken across New Zealand with representatives from forest industry and territorial authorities from May to June, 2009. The objectives of the workshops were to:

- Gather new impressions on previous research about the values New Zealanders hold for forests
- Assess the perceptions on the internationally-formulated Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators for sustainable forestry
- Assess whether there are regional differences in the interpretations of the indicators
- Identify any gaps in the indicator sets

Workshop Series

The workshops were held in regions with both plantation and indigenous forests: Whangarei, Auckland, Rotorua, Gisborne, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin. Companies with large scale forestry interests and government departments (either local or national) were represented at every workshop, while farm scale forestry and associated forestry businesses (e.g. nurseries, technology and management



companies) were present at the majority of the workshops (Table 1).

Representatives from
large forestry companies
farm-scale forest owners
forestry businesses (e.g. nursery)
forest industry organisations (e.g. training)
regional and district councils
national authorities (Doc, MAF)

Table 1. Forest industry and territorial authority representatives at the workshops

The workshops used a qualitative research approach, and were facilitated by Coastline Consultants.

The workshops commenced with a brief description of previous research on the values that New Zealanders' hold for forests (Barnard et al, 2010). Participants were asked for their impressions on these values (Table 2).

What New Zealanders' Value about Forests!
Biodiversity at species and ecosystem level
Productive capacity of forests for timber
Non polluted drinking water and waterways
Forests as carbon sinks
Forests as part of local communities (including intrinsic values, history)
Access for recreation (passive and active)
Forests as landscape features
Opportunity to be involved in managing local forests
Forests' contribution toward soil conservation

Table 2. List of values New Zealanders' hold for forests, as used in the workshops

The participants were then facilitated to work through the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators, including their relevance at a regional level.

Results

In general the participants agreed to the list of values, though it was noted that they lacked an emphasis on aspects of higher value to the

sector, particularly economic and employment factors.

The relevance of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicator to sustainable forestry in New Zealand was considered to be:

Criterion 1. The Conservation of Biological Diversity is generally seen as less relevant by workshop participants than the other criteria. The main reason participants gave for this response was that the New Zealand forestry industry is based on exotic plantations where the primary driver is economic return. Participants generally considered this criterion to be more relevant to indigenous forests and at a landscape level, or to be relevant to specific regions and sites only. The relevance of the individual indicators of this criterion varies across the country dependent upon the management approach of local companies and local authorities (e.g. whether they account for ecosystem and species management within a regime) as well as the status of indigenous biological diversity in each region. Further work is required to define regional indicators for biological diversity.

Criterion 2. Indicators associated with the Productive Capacity of Forests are generally considered to be relevant throughout the country because they provide important information about the productivity and economic return of each forest. Existing indicators could be made more specific with regard to accounting for non-production zones and site productivity.

Criterion 3. The Maintenance of Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality indicators were considered relevant across all workshop locations but may require further detail regarding specific impacts and the scale of events. Participants listed a number of different biotic and abiotic issues relevant in their regions and noted that there are cross-boundary issues and cost implications associated with the indicators.

Criterion 4. The Conservation of Soil and Water was generally considered relevant across the workshop locations. Comments suggest that soil



and water conservation has been a focus of regulatory authorities and larger forestry companies for some time and as such there are existing regulations, codes of practice and reporting requirements that guide forestry activities. The relevance of specific indicators at a regional level appeared to vary based on local environmental conditions (e.g. level of soil degradation, water quality measures).

Criterion 5. Comments made about the Maintenance of Global Carbon Cycles suggest that participants view these as national level issues and some see them as compulsory at a regional level. Some participants noted opportunities and implications for regional carbon accounting and the use of forestry by-products.

Criterion 6. The Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-term Multiple Socio-economic Benefits elicited the most discussion and varied opinion amongst participants across the workshops. The relevance of the criteria and indicator set appears to be strongly linked to the management approach and philosophy of the individual companies and local authorities in each region and, to a lesser degree, social factors such as population density and proximity to forests. The results show that indicators relating to subsistence, forest dependent communities and distribution of revenue are considered to be largely irrelevant in the N.Z. forestry context, and that production, consumption and employment indicators are considered to be relevant. Indicators related to recreation, tourism, cultural, social and spiritual values require clarification and definition both at a national and regional level.

Criterion 7. Legal, Institutional and Policy Frameworks are considered relevant to the N.Z. forestry context in all but one of the workshop locations where participants noted that these were national rather than regional issues. A number of issues were raised in response to the indicators of this criterion including the need for certainty of property rights, measurement of forest ownership, and policies and taxes that encouraged afforestation.

Conclusion

The New Zealand forest industry and territorial authorities found that while the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators were developed internationally, the majority of the indicators are relevant to sustainable forestry in the country (Table 3).

The indicators not considered relevant were in the biological diversity criterion (Criterion 1) and some of the indicators with a social focus in the socio-economic criterion (Criterion 6). Actively facilitating management approaches that enhance social benefits were considered difficult.

Forest managers were wary of the potential costs of indicators. Cross-sectoral issues were raised with tensions between forestry and other sectors regarding regulations, environment impacts and quality land resources.

Overall the applicability of some of the terminology to New Zealand was questioned, with a call for the indicators to be written in a way that is more meaningful to the forestry industry. It may also be useful to provide a definition for each indicator to promote consistency and understanding.

Reference

Barnard, T.; Spence, H.; Crawford, K. 2006: New Zealand Montreal Process Review: Forest Values in New Zealand. Contract Report to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ensis Environment, Rotorua.



Montreal Process Criteria	Forest industry and territorial authorities consider this:
Criterion 1: Conservation of biological diversity	generally less relevant
Criterion 2: Maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems	relevant
Criterion 3: Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality	relevant
Criterion 4: Conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources	relevant
Criterion 5: Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles	relevant at national level
Criterion 6: Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socio-economic benefits	indicators relating to subsistence, forest dependent communities and distribution of revenue considered largely irrelevant; production, consumption and employment indicators considered relevant
Criterion 7: Legal, institutional and economic frameworks for forest conservation and sustainable management	relevant

Table 3. Evaluation of the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators by New Zealand forest industry and territorial authority representatives