

**Australian Forestry Management Pty Limited (AFM)**

**2005 Softwood Project**



**2012-2013 Annual Report**

## Legal Context

This annual report has been prepared in accordance with Schedule 1 Part 3(h) of the Forestry Management Contract between Australian Forestry Management Pty Limited and the Forestry Commission of New South Wales (now known as the Forestry Corporation of NSW) for the 2005 Softwood Project.

## Background

The 2005 Softwood Project comprises seven 2006 age class plantation blocks. All of the plantation blocks are located within the Hume Region near Tumut or Tumbarumba with the exception of Vans, which is located in north east Victoria and Mingary Vale, which is located within Macquarie Region near Oberon.

## Overview

The plantations are generally performing well and are in good condition. Exceptions to this exist within sections of Parkers and Ruby Creek.

Rainfall in both the Hume and Macquarie Regions was below average, with significant dry periods during summer and autumn. Total rainfall at Tumbarumba from July 2012 to June 2013 was 831 mm compared to the long term average of 980mm, and rainfall for Yass being approximately 500mm, compared to a long term average of 584mm. Rainfall in the Macquarie Region was 531mm versus the long term average of 638mm (refer Appendix 1). Unfortunately below average rainfall occurred in the critical spring/early summer growing period from September through to December 2012 (Average: 235mm Actual: 75mm).

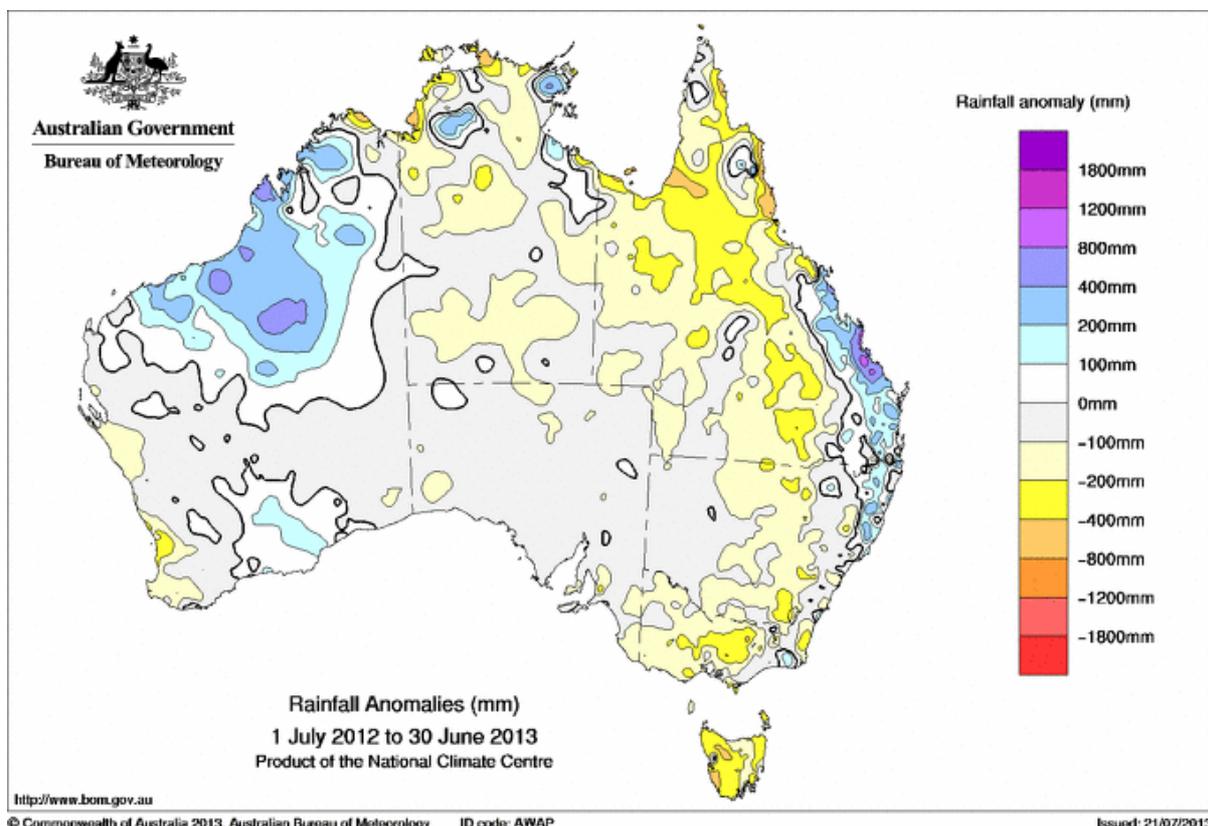


Figure 1: NSW Rainfall Anomalies (mm) 1 July 2012- 30 June 2013

Ongoing pest control remains a priority with some localised damage incurred in the majority of the plantations.

**Stand Condition**

*Mingary Vale (Transgrid)*

The plantation has grown noticeably since last year despite the poor growing season. Form is good and weeds, as noted last year, are no longer a serious source of competition.

Isolated heavy grazing by kangaroos and wallabies remains an issue.



**Figure 2: Mingary Vale 2006 AC – Good growth and vigour (June 2013)**



**Figure 3: Mingary Vale – excellent access for forest management and protection activities (June 2013)**



**Figure 4: Mingary Vale – exhibiting good growth and form**

### *Maragle Park*

Satisfactory stocking, very good condition and growth. This plantation continues to perform well.



**Figure 5: Maragle Park – very good condition and growth**

### *Paddys River*

Good stocking and growth. Small patches of heavy wattle regrowth will be reviewed for treatment.



**Figure 6: Paddy's River (in background) – July 2013**

### *Parkers*

Condition and growth at Parkers remains variable. As reported in March 2013, toppling of individual trees, predominantly around the edges of the plantation, has occurred. This damage is thought to have been precipitated by a period of very strong easterly winds in February 2013. Across the plantation, the incident rate is very low and generally affected trees with poor root development.

Low levels of Dothistroma needle blight infection is present in the low lying areas.



**Figure 7: Parkers 2006 AC May 2013 – Good tree growth and ‘toppling’ on plantation edge.**

#### *Ruby Creek*

As previously reported, stocking in this plantation is mostly adequate but variable, estimated to range from 600 to 800 stems per hectare. Replanting over the last couple of years has improved the stocking in some of the previously poorly stocked areas, however on rocky and cold air drainage sites the survival of replanted trees has been low.

An area estimated to be 25 hectares has stocking levels that are very low, despite significant replanting efforts. Generally, growth on this site has been slow and affected by the past drought conditions, feral animal grazing and the cold temperatures experienced at the site.

As previously reported, sections of the plantation were subject to a hail storm in late 2011. The condition of trees affected by this event has generally improved however an area of around 21 hectares remains badly affected. Within this area there are trees with substantial damage to their main stem and dead topping has led to some major stem growth deformities. Both of these conditions will impact on future log quality and value, particularly as the area has a below average stocking.



**Figure 8: Ruby Creek - Tree growth affected by hail damage and site conditions July 2013**



**Figure 9: Example of tree severely affected by hail damage**



**Figure 10: Example of Tree moderately affected by hail damage with acceptable recovery**

*The Valley*

The Valley plantation remains predominantly well stocked with acceptable tree growth. As previously reported, there are localised areas surrounding drainage lines which are unstocked, or have low stocking due to poor drainage and severe frost. Previously reported browse damage within Compartment 2007 has reduced stocking to low levels. These areas were assessed and rejected for restocking on the basis that they were associated with wet or rocky ground that is problematic for successful plantation establishment.



**Figure 11: The Valley 2006 AC- Well stocked (background) and localised unstocked (foreground) plantation . July 2013**

*Vans*

The Vans plantation continues to perform very well. The health of trees, affected during 2012 by *Dothistroma* needle blight infection, has significantly improved.



**Figure 12: Vans plantation – very good health and growth July 2013**

**Pest and Disease Information**

In late 2012 an aerial application of copper based fungicide was considered for treatment of plantations infected with Dothistroma. The weather and seasonal forecast at the time indicated that climatic conditions were not conducive to ongoing infection and a decision was made to not treat. Hot and dry weather conditions were subsequently experienced in the first half of 2013 and this has significantly reduced the level of Dothistroma activity, particularly in the Van's plantation.

Feral animals (pigs, deer and horses) continue to be present and subject to ongoing control.

Kangaroos and wallabies are continuing to have a minor impact at Mingary Vale.

**Fire Incidents**

There were no fire incidents within or in close proximity to the plantations.

**Summary of Activities Undertaken 2012/2013**

- Pest animal control
- Maintenance of tracks and access roads
- Fire risk reduction works and surveillance
- Grazing at Van's and Mingary Vale, to reduce the fire hazard.

**Summary of Activities Planned for 2013/2014**

- Mapping of understocked areas, Ruby Creek
- Maintenance of roads and tracks
- Fire risk reduction works and surveillance
- Grazing where fencing is available and it is assessed that there will be minimal tree damage, particularly Mingary Vale, Parkers and Vans.
- Identification and signage of plantation fire roads to comply with Plantations and Afforestation Code amendments

**Other Management Issues**

Nil to report

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Macquarie Region Rainfall July 2012 – June 2013.

