

Australian Forestry Management Pty Limited (AFM)

2005 Softwood Project



2013-2014 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. Most of the plantation blocks are located within the Snowy Region (formerly Hume region) near Tumut or Tumbarumba. The exceptions include Vans, which is located in north east Victoria and Mingary Vale, which is located within Bathurst management area of Northern Softwoods region (formally Macquarie Region) near Oberon.

Overview

The 2013-2014 season in the Bathurst management area was challenging for growth and asset protection. It was characterised by below average rainfall, above average temperatures and some of the worst fire weather conditions recorded in NSW.

In contrast rainfall in the Snowy Region was average albeit with a significant dry spell during summer and above average rainfall in autumn. Total rainfall at Tumbarumba from July 2013 to June 2014 was 997 mm compared to the long term average of 979 mm. Total rainfall at Browning, near Yass, from July 13 to June 14 was 595 mm compared to the long term average of 663 mm.

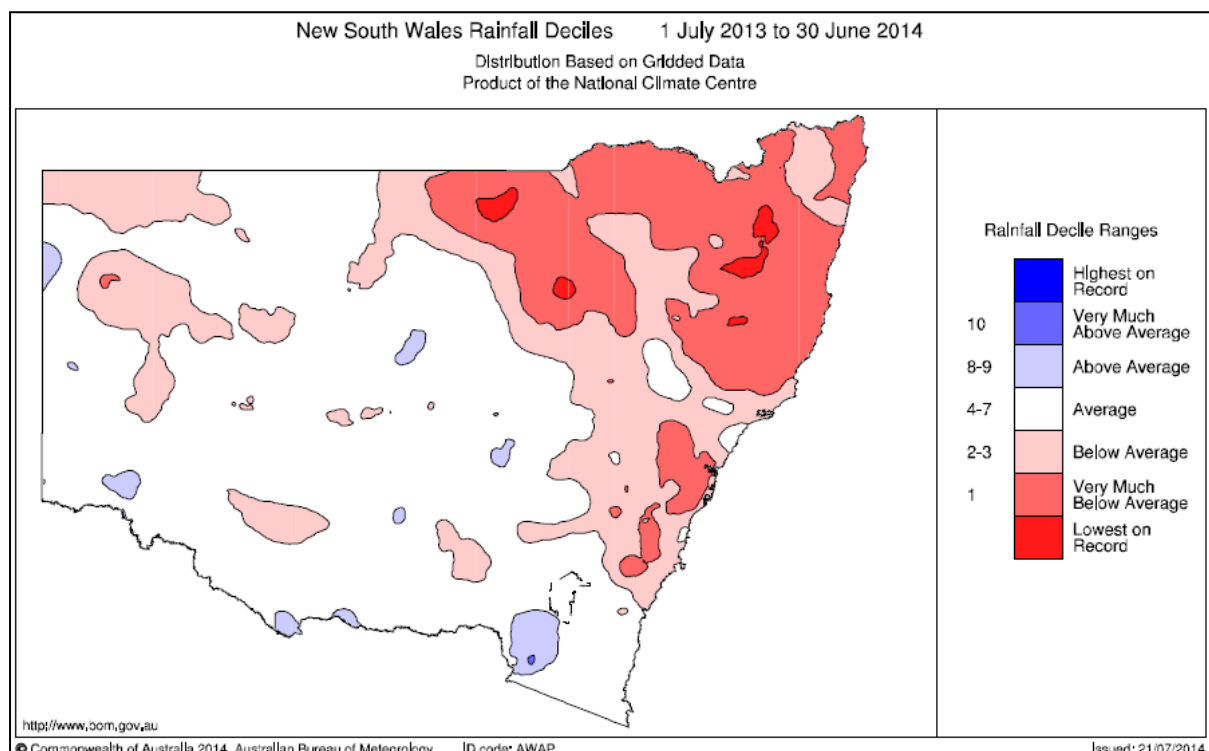


Figure 1: NSW Rainfall deciles - 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014

Both regions experienced ‘above average’ or ‘very much above average’ temperatures, refer figure 2.

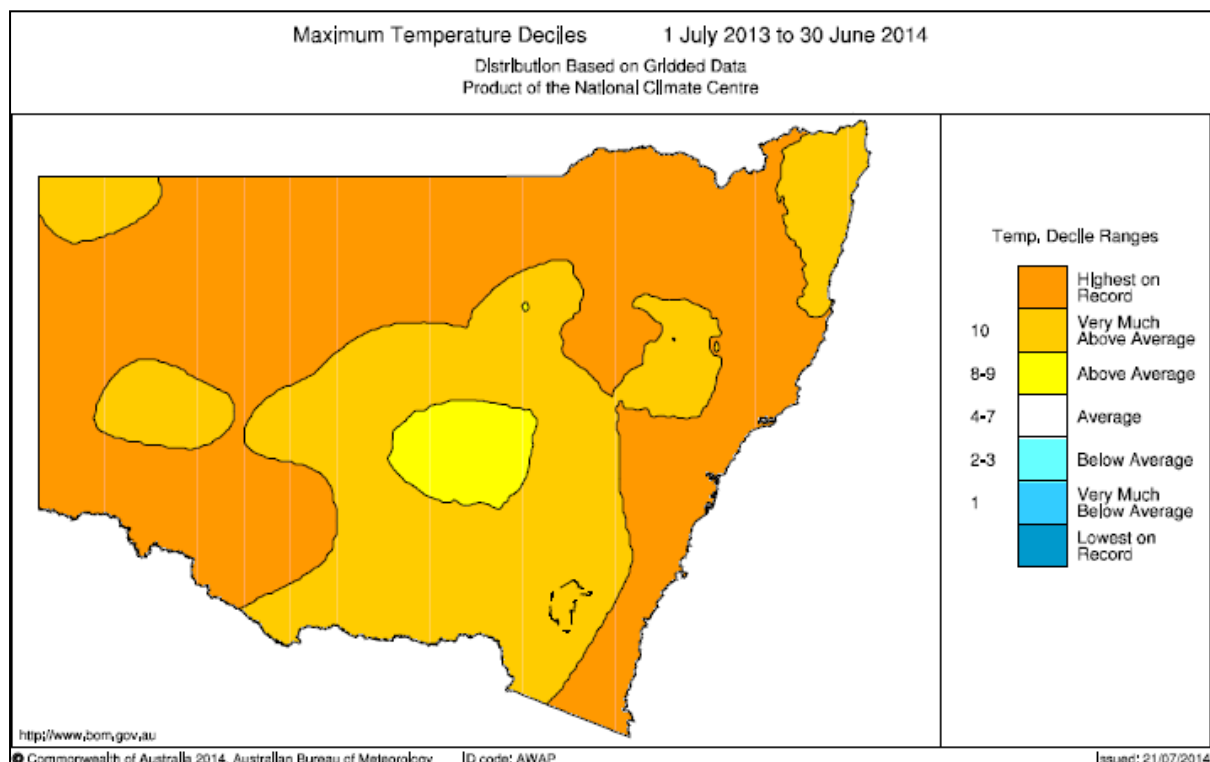


Figure 2: NSW Maximum temperature deciles - 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014

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

Stand Condition

Mingary Vale (Transgrid)

In general the stand is in excellent condition. It remains well stocked, healthy, vigorous and with reasonable form. The 2013-2014 growing season was very challenging with above average temperatures and below average rainfall. This will have limited stand productivity for the season. However, when the age class was inspected in June 2014 the crop does not appear to have suffered with respect to survival, health or form (see figures 3 and 4 below).



Figure 3: Mingary Vale 2006 AC. Excellent access for forest management and protection activities (June 2014)



Figure 4: Mingary Vale 2006AC. Good growth, form and vigour (June 2014)

Maragle Park

This plantation continues to exhibit very good condition and growth. No significant issues have been observed during the reporting period.

Paddys River

This plantation continues to exhibit very good condition and growth. No significant issues have been observed during the reporting period. Small patches of wattle present in the plantation have become less competitive as the trees have continued to grow and establish site dominance.



Figure 5: Paddy's River (in background) – May 2014

Parkers

Condition and growth at Parkers has been very good during the reporting period. There is no evidence observed of continued toppling of edge trees reported in 2013, with the overall plantation condition continuing to improve. Areas where initial tree stocking was low have evidence of poor tree form usually associated with lower tree stocking.

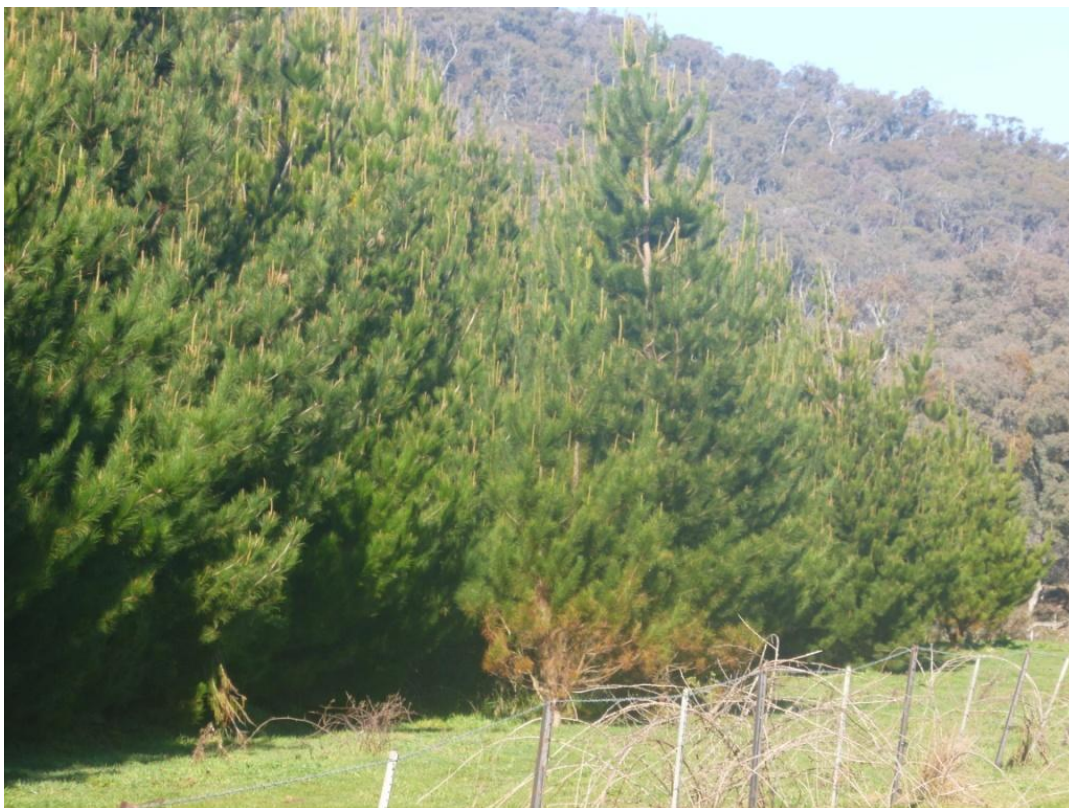


Figure 6: Parkers 2006 AC July 2014 – Good tree growth during reporting period

Ruby Creek

This plantation has improved in growth and condition over the reporting period, noting that it remains affected by poor stocking and a damaging hail event which occurred in late 2011, as previously reported.



Figure 7: Ruby Creek – Improved tree growth and vigour May 2014

The area affected by hail was 20.4 ha and remains the subject of an insurance claim.

Inspections in 2014 have shown that the hail damaged trees have mostly recovered in external appearance and their growth is similar to unaffected trees. The extent of internal damage will be assessed as soon as reasonably possible in 2014 to assist in the final decision of whether to clear and replant the affected area. Figure 8 provides an example of where the hail damage was less severe. In this case tree growth and bark occlusion is likely to minimize the effect on future tree growth and quality.



Figure 8: Tree moderately affected by hail damage with acceptable recovery

The Valley

The Valley plantation continues to exhibit acceptable tree growth and vigour where stocking levels are adequate. Localised areas that are unstocked, or have low stocking have been detailed in previous reports.

No other significant issues have been observed in this plantation



Figure 9: The Valley 2006 AC- plantation - May 2013

Vans

The Vans plantation continues to grow well, with tree form improving with tree age and growth. Evidence of *Dothistroma* needle blight is low and did not impact on tree growth during the reporting period.



Figure 10: Vans plantation – good health and growth July 2014

Biosecurity & Forest Health

Forest health aerial surveillance and monitoring occurred over all properties in the Bathurst and Tumut management areas in Winter 2013. No new or emerging issues were identified (refer figures 11 and 12).

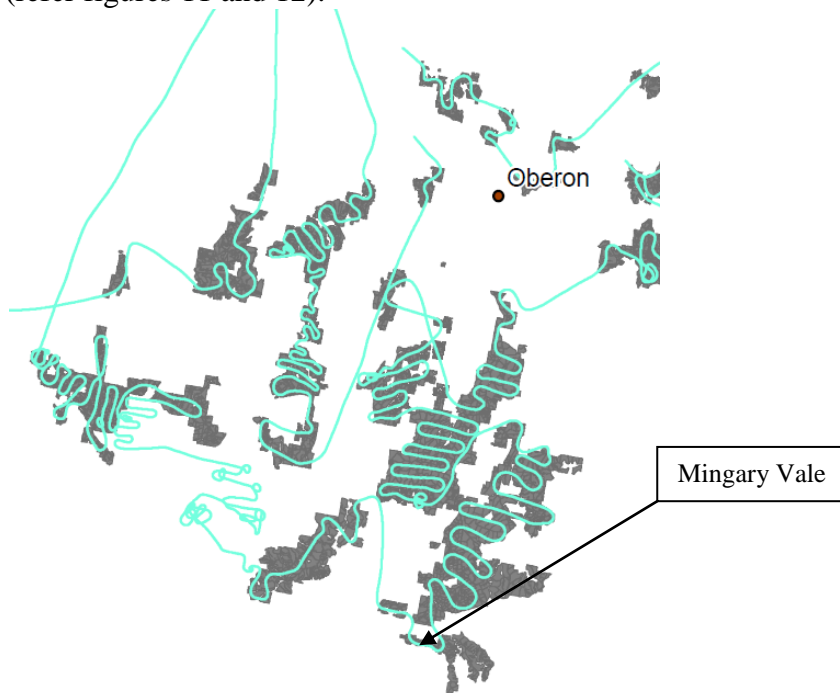


Figure 11: Bathurst management area forest health aerial surveillance flight path – winter 2013

Historically there were concerns about kangaroo and wallaby grazing at Mingary Vale. The trees are now of a size where they appear to be no longer troubled by these animals.

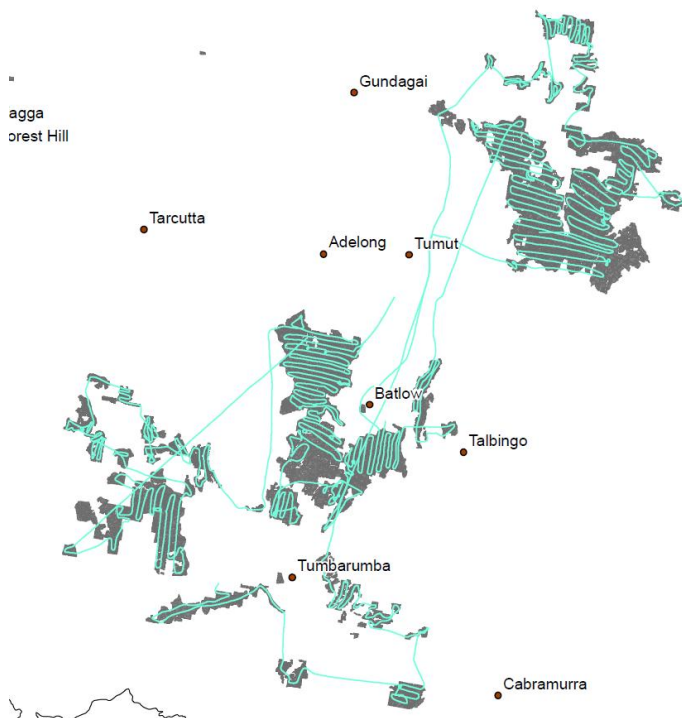


Figure 12: Tumut management area forest health aerial surveillance flight path – winter 2013.

No significant pests or diseases affecting tree growth and health were observed on the plantation blocks within Tumut management area. Feral animals (pigs, deer and horses) continue to be present and subject to ongoing control.

Fire Management

There were no fire incidents within or in close proximity to the plantations. Fire risk reduction works and surveillance was undertaken during the reporting period

Mingary Vale (Transgrid)

Access through the forest is good with roads being clean and weed free. This will greatly assist fire attack and containment should the need arise.

Summary of Activities Planned for 2014/2015

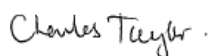
- Aerial forest health surveillance and monitoring
- Further assessment of Ruby Creek hail damaged plantation
- Maintenance of roads and tracks
- Fire risk reduction works and surveillance
- Grazing where fencing is available
- Identification and signage of plantation fire roads to comply with Plantations and Afforestation Code amendments

Other Management Issues

Nil

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