

AUSTRALIAN FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PTY
LIMITED (AFM)

2005 SOFTWOOD PROJECT



2017-2018 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 (*FCNSW*)) for the 2005 Softwood Project.

Background

The 2005 Softwood Project comprises seven 2006 age class plantation blocks. Most of the plantation blocks are located near Tumut or Tumbarumba within the Tumut Management Area (TMA) of FCNSW Snowy Region (formerly Hume Region). The exceptions include Vans which is located in north east Victoria, and Mingary Vale which is located near Oberon within Bathurst Management Area (BMA) of FCNSW Northern Softwoods Region (formally Macquarie Region).

Plantation Area Review

A review of the net stocked area of plantation within the 2005 Softwood Project was undertaken in June 2015 using aerial photo coverage (Table 1). The review captured mortality and natural attrition that has occurred since plantation establishment.

Table 1 –Net Stocked Area 2015

Plantation	Net Stocked Area in 2015 (ha)
Maragle Park	193.8
Paddy's River	186.0
Parker	196.1
Ruby Creek	127.9
The Valley (2006 age class)	199.6
The Valley (2008 age class)	1.2
Mingary Vale	169.6
Vans	76.2
Total	1150.4

The updated net stocked area which includes Forestry Right Land and Adjoining Land constitutes a change of minus 4.8% from planting.

2017-18 Growing Season

Rainfall has been below average across NSW (Figure 1). The Tumut Management Area (TMA) had average rainfall in the latter half of 2017 and a very dry autumn in 2018. Total rainfall at Tumbarumba for 2017-18 was 797 mm compared to the long-term average of 976 mm. Rainfall for Burrinjuck Dam was 791 mm compared to a long-term average of 927 mm (refer Annexure A).

The TMA plantations have continued to perform well and are in good condition. As noted in previous reports, exceptions to this exist within sections of Parkers and Ruby Creek.

The Bathurst Management Area experienced a long, extremely warm 2017-2018 growing season (Figure 2). Annual rainfall was 30% below annual average (Figure 1, Annexe A). Despite the well below average annual rainfall, the summer growth period was within the seasonal average (Annexe A).

New South Wales Rainfall Deciles 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

Distribution Based on Gridded Data
Australian Bureau of Meteorology

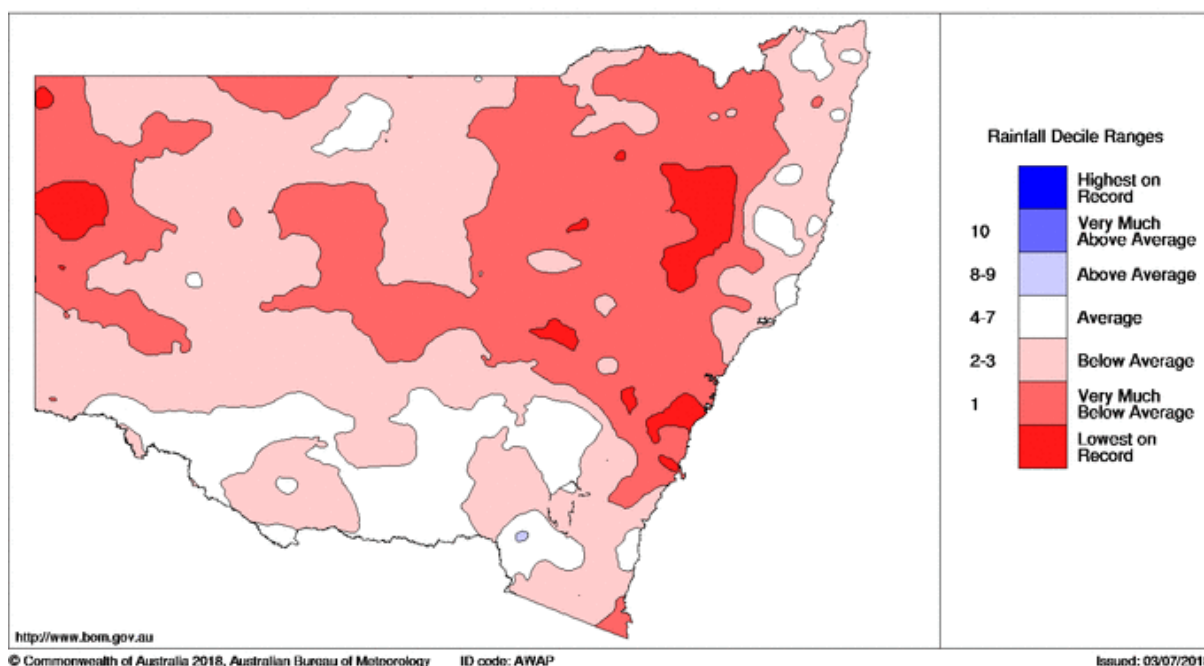


Figure 1: New South Wales Rainfall Deciles – 2017-2018

Mean temperatures were above average (Figure 2).

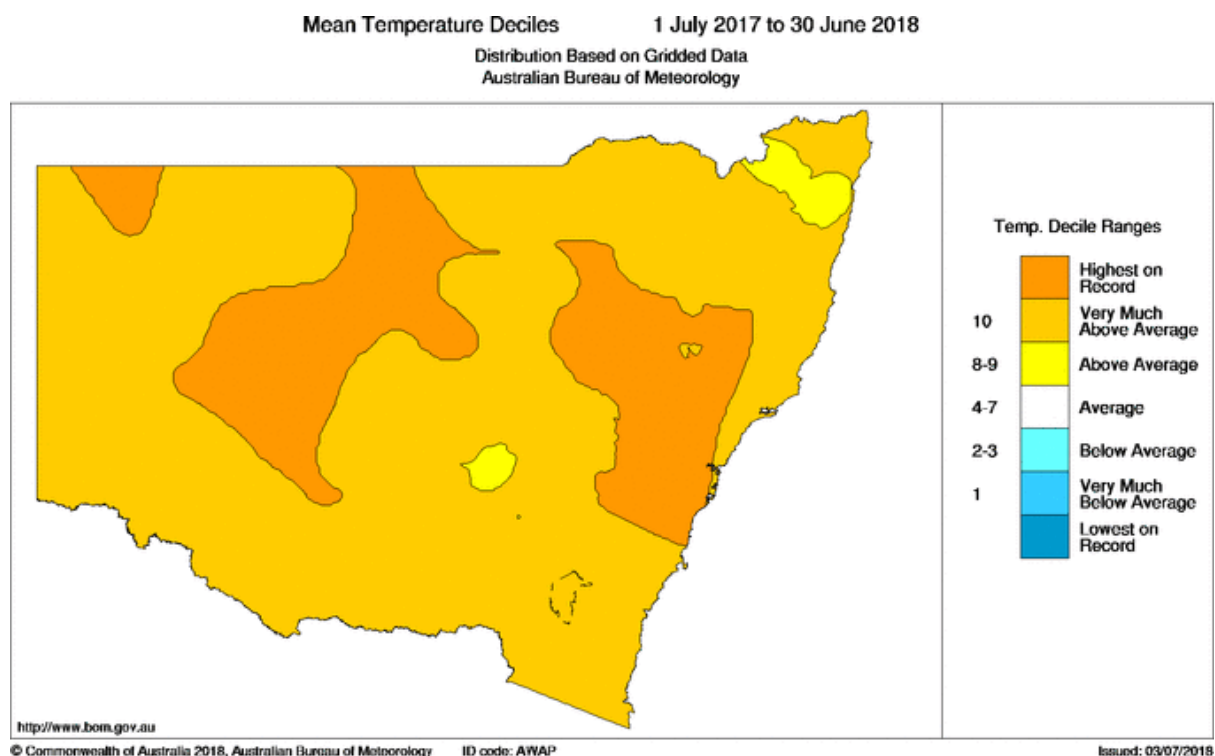


Figure 2: New South Wales Temperature Deciles – 2017-2018

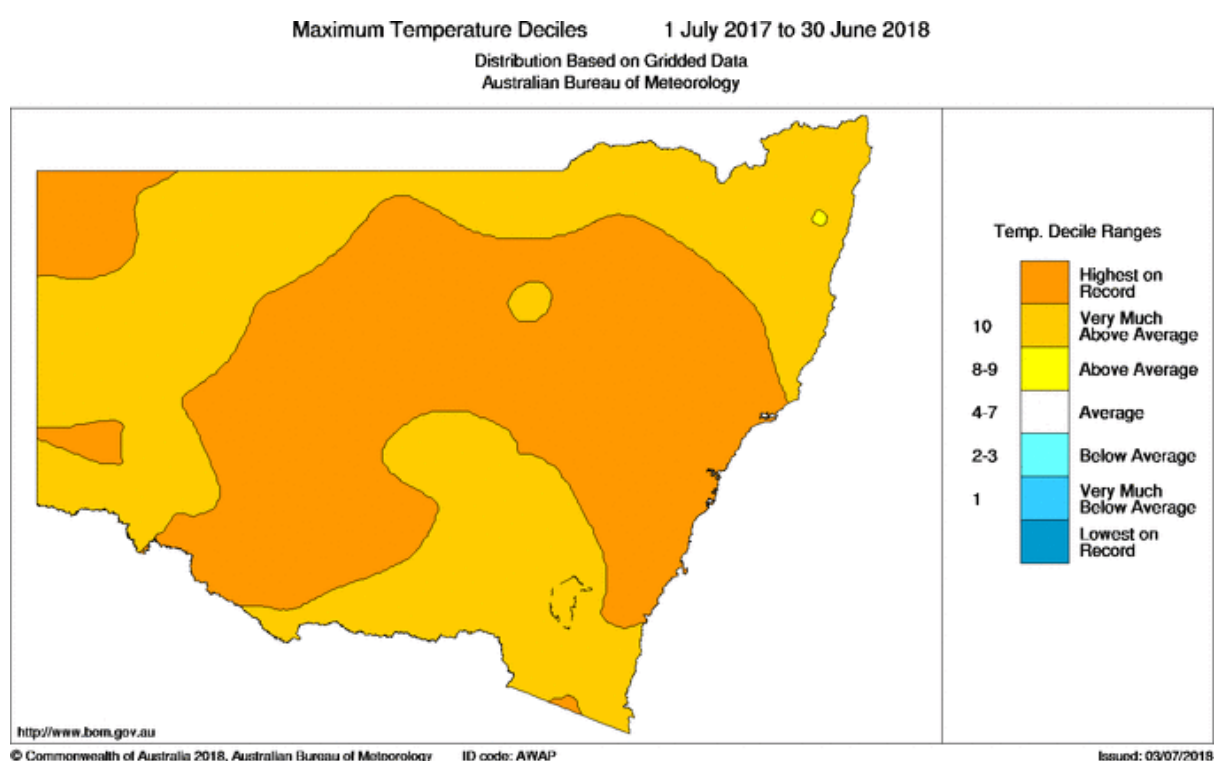


Figure 3: New South Wales Maximum Temperature Deciles – 2017-2018

Stand Condition

Mingary Vale (Transgrid)

The condition of the stand continues to be reasonable. It remains well stocked, healthy, vigorous and with moderate form. There is some lower quality trees and poorer stocking surrounding drainage features. When the stand was inspected in August 2018 the crop did not appear to have been subjected to any conditions that had impacted on survival, health or form (see Figures 4 - 7 below).



Figure 4: Mingary Vale. Roadside pruning of lower branches was undertaken over the summer of early 2018 to maintain stand access.



Figure 5: Mingary Vale – August 2018. Uniform crop of good health, good growth and reasonable form. Some blackberry beginning to appear in power line easement.



Figure 6: Moderate form of twelve-year-old trees in Mingary Vale. The presence of moderate form due to sweep in lower stems is consistent throughout stand.



Figure 7: Mingary Vale. Trees show good health. There continues to be good access around the block.

Maragle Park

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



Figure 8: Maragle Park. Very good growth and plantation condition – July 2018

Paddys River

The Paddys River plantation also continues to exhibit very good condition, growth and tree form. No significant changes to the plantation condition have occurred during the reporting period.



Figure 9: Paddy's River - July 2018 – good growth, tree health and tree form

Parkers

The Parkers plantation has continued to grow well during the year where stocking and tree form are satisfactory, with good tree health observed. Areas where initial tree stocking was low generally have poorer tree form usually associated with lower tree stocking and poor tree height growth. These areas are generally sites with poorer drainage or rocky outcrops, as noted in initial reports.



Figure 10: Parkers 2006 AC July 2018 – trees growing well, however with variable tree form.

Ruby Creek

This plantation remains affected by stocking and growth issues as previously reported. Growth and tree health during 2017-2018 has been good, considering the overall condition of this plantation.



Figure 11: Ruby Creek – area of below average stocking and growth. July 2018

The Valley

The Valley plantation has continued grow well during the year, with well stocked areas having good tree health and form.

As previously reported, there are localised areas that are unstocked.



Figure 12: The Valley 2006 AC plantation – July 2018

Vans

The Vans plantation continues to grow very well, with generally good tree health. In this plantation there is a proportion of trees with poor form, distributed throughout the plantation. It is expected that the first thinning harvest shall remove a significant proportion of the trees with poor stem form, with an adequate stocking of trees with reasonable form being available to grow on to final harvest.

Like previous years *Dothistroma* needle blight has been present at low infection levels during the year. With similar dry autumn conditions to last year, the impacted on overall tree growth for the majority of the plantation as not been significant during the current year, with lower levels of infection being observed.



Figure 13: Vans plantation – July 2018

Biosecurity & Forest Health

Aerial forest health surveillance was undertaken in June 2018 over Tumut Management Area (Figure 14) and Bathurst Management Area (Figure 17). Aerial forest health surveillance was followed up with ground inspections. No significant forest health issues are presenting in the 2005 Softwood Project properties in Tumut or Bathurst.

Dothistroma needle blight is present, at low levels, in lower lying areas of the plantation in the Tumut Management Area, similar to other plantation areas in the region. Infection levels are generally low, following seasonally dry conditions during late summer and early autumn. Treatment of Dothistroma is not recommended for the low level of infection currently observed.

Sirex wood wasp is present throughout plantations in Southern Australia. Ruby Creek, Paddy's River and Maragle Park properties are included in FCNSW's routine control program to release and monitor biological control agents (Figure 18). A new sirex plot was established in January 2018 and inoculation carried out in May with Billets to be sampled in October 2018.

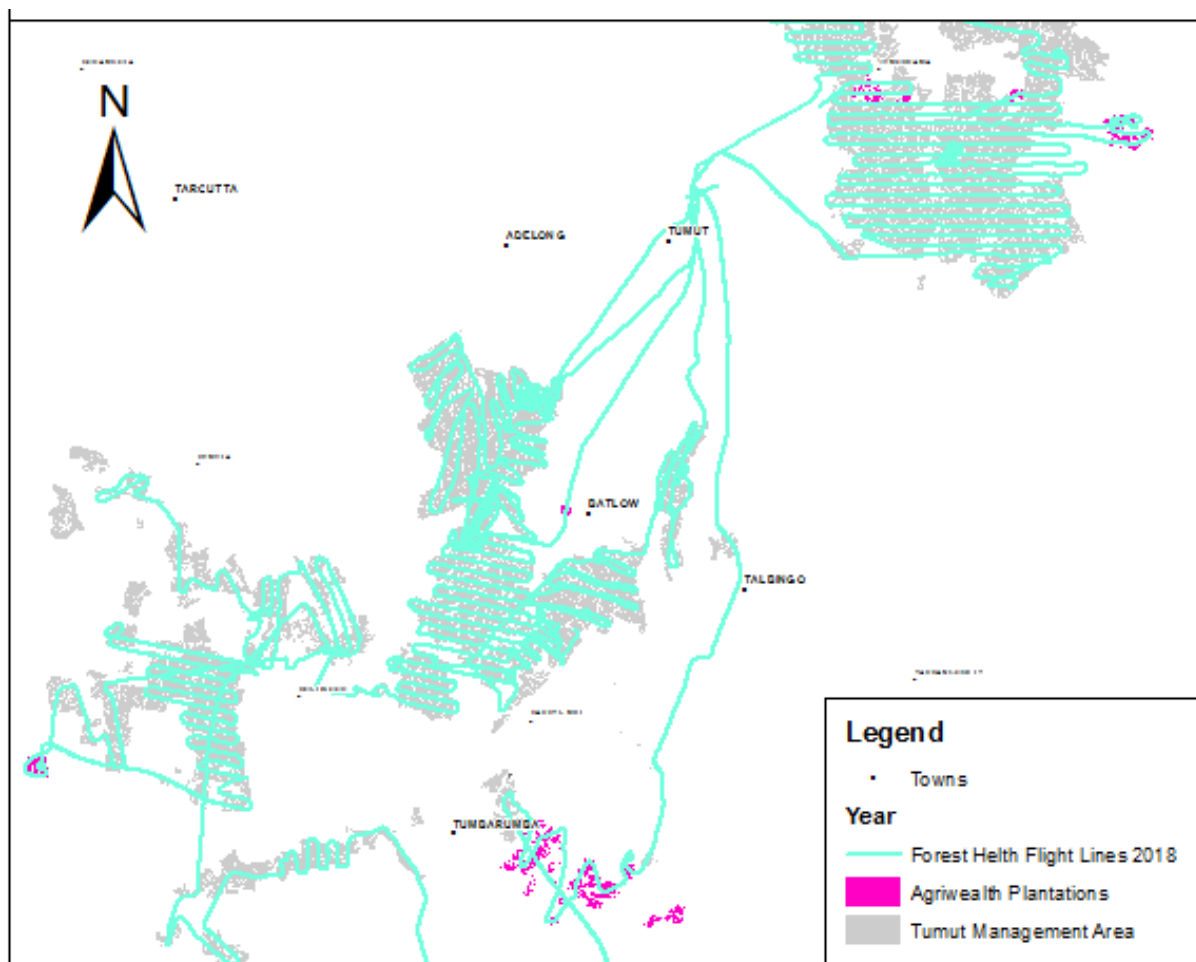


Figure 14: Tumut Management Area forest health aerial surveillance flight path – June 2018.

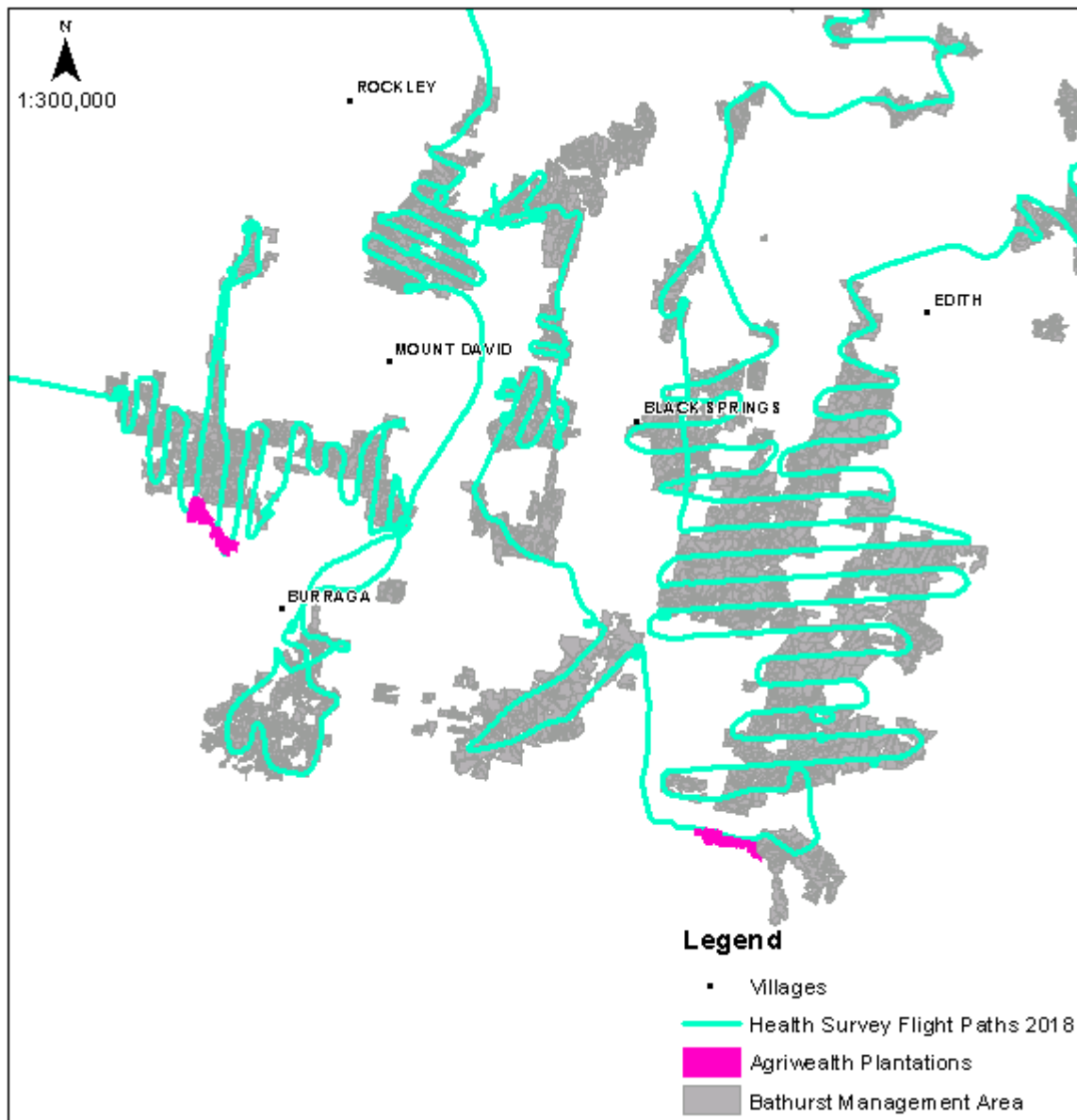


Figure 17: Bathurst Management Area forest health aerial surveillance flight path – July 2018.

Fire Management

There were no fire incidents within or near the plantations. Routine fire risk reduction works and surveillance were undertaken during the reporting period within the Tumut Management Area.

In the Bathurst Management Area further to the road clearing undertaken over the 2016/2017 fire season, roadside pruning was completed over 2017/2018 fire season. The Mingary perimeter road remains on the strategic fire trail maintenance program.

Other Management Issues

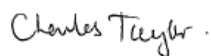
Thinning of the majority of the plantations in the Tumut Management Area is currently scheduled for Financial Year 2020 and 2021, subject to the condition of the plantations.

Thinning will remove a significant proportion of trees with poor stem form, which promotes growth of the better trees, allowing them to grow on to produce a higher proportion of saw logs at final harvest. The reduction in tree stocking following thinning also reduces drought stress on individual trees and reduces the risk of more significant tree loss and susceptibility to pests and diseases, including sirex wood wasp and *Dothistroma*.

Summary of Activities Planned for 2018/2019

- Pre-harvest road planning
- Aerial forest health surveillance and monitoring
- Maintenance of roads and tracks
- Fire risk reduction works and surveillance
- Grazing where fencing is available

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STEWARDSHIP AND FIRE MANAGER

SNOWY REGION

Sally-Anne Walker

FOREST MODELLER

NORTHERN REGION

Monthly Rainfall Statistics

