

Draft

Slide 2: Intro to EWC

- Thank you for the kind invitation to speak on behalf of The Eastland Wood Council - Te Kaunihera Pororākau o Te Tairāwhiti
- The EWC represents around 80% of plantation forestry in the Tairāwhiti region (130,000 hectares) and our members reflect the supply chain, including the wood processing industry - I see some of our members here today.

Slide 3 – 4 – 5: Impacts of Cyclones Gabrielle AND Hale on the Forestry sector in Tairawhiti

- The summer of 2023 will go down as another one of those memorable summers for all the wrong reasons for us on the coast.
- The two cyclones - Hale followed soon after by Gabrielle, have devastated our region, and we are still recovering.
- We estimate tens of millions of dollars of trees have been lost - and the scary thing about these storms; the severity has shifted not only the young and vulnerable trees, but hillsides, with stands of 10 - 18 year old trees have shifted.
- Cyclone Gabrielle in particular caused damage to plantations and associated landscapes at levels not previously seen inside forestry gates, and the extent of debris movement from the collapse of younger aged trees during recent storms is unprecedented. These weather events are directly related to climate change.
- As you will no doubt have seen, forestry has been in the firing line as a result of this summer's devastating weather.
- While the extremely vulnerable soils of the coast - which are some of the most erodible soils in the world - are widely acknowledged, the increasingly severe storms we are experiencing are not, and yet they are becoming more common.
- We have lost our social license to operate on the coast.
- We know that we need to change what we do with some of the highest risk land and slopes that we have across Tairawhiti - and we will.

Slide 6 – 7: Clean-up efforts

- As CEO of the Eastland Wood Council, I was proud of how our sector immediately mobilised to clean up woody debris from beaches, farmland, roads, reserves, and other public spaces.
- We did this once, in the aftermath of Cyclone Hale, and before we were able to finish that job, we were hit with the even more severe Gabrielle.
- And, we did this despite some (not an insignificant amount) of the wood debris, not coming from forestry blocks, for example; poplar and willow from farm and council riparian strips, macrocarpa, wilding pine, natives from conservation land; including tanalised posts, rails, fences etc.
- And then there were the entire hillsides of young, and what was previously considered safe trees, that have come down in its entirety.
- But we cleared it up...twice... because Regardless, a tree is a tree, and our people have the tools and skills to help the community to deal with this.
- So, our members aided by staff, kaimahi and contractors got stuck in to clear up the mess, investing thousands of hours and millions of dollars to do so.

Slide 8: Ministerial Inquiry into land use

- As you will have seen, given the severity of the storms, the devastating impact of wood debris and sediment movement, the Prime Minister announced a Ministerial Inquiry into Land Use.
- The inquiry has closed, after extensive consultation with our industry and local community, and EWC in conjunction with members have provided the inquiry panel with a fulsome submission. I am sure many of you will have filed a submission too.
- An important point to note, and one we have focused on in our submission; this inquiry is just looking at forestry 'slash' it's much bigger than that,
- It is looking at the whole range of land uses across the Tairawhiti, and Wairoa areas, and that includes forestry, farming, horticulture, native conservation land and everything in between.

- While the term forestry slash has become the catch all for all sorts of debris, including in some cases the piles of sediment, this is not a forestry witch hunt.
- That is why, EWC's submission was focused on identifying viable solutions for the changes the forestry sector can make that will help mitigate the impact of the increasingly severe weather and changing climate we are now facing.
- It is worth remembering of course, in Tairāwhiti the majority of plantation forests were established by the Government or under Government-funded schemes in response to past significant land erosion and slope failures.
- The forests were established for soil and land conservation purposes as well as to bring long term economic wellbeing, and in many cases, this has been achieved.
- Forestry is an important part of the East Coast economy, a big local employer, and a the lifeblood to the region.
- I do encourage any of you here today who are interested, to have a look on the EWC website for our full submission, which traverses a range of short, medium, and long term.

Slide 9: Solutions

- One of the points we did make in our submission, which may be of some interest to this audience here today, is the potential to establish wood processing or manufacturing in Tairāwhiti.

Slide 10: Types of solid wood fuels

- MPI commissioned the publicly available report... **"NZ Wood Fibre Futures Project Stage Two"**
- In terms of investment returns for the technologies investigated, wood pellets looked the most attractive across all scales, across a range of measures.
- A wood pellet processing facility in Tairāwhiti is an option that has been identified and due diligence is underway as we speak with the intention of providing an important part of the solution to utilising slash and woody debris (unmerchantable wood).

Slide 11: Acknowledgement of issues to establishing a viable market for woody debris

- By way of example, of what this might look like, Genesis Energy and Fonterra have signed a *Biomass Collaboration Agreement* to work together on exploring the viability of biomass as a substitute for coal.
- Genesis has recently completed a trial with torrefied wood (black pellets) and is actively looking to build a domestic supply chain for its Huntly power station, pictured here.
- Local interests in Tairāwhiti are looking to support this domestic growth and work has commenced on preparing an investible business case.
- There is interest from both domestic and offshore organisations to invest in the opportunity.
- There is wide-ranging, pan-government agency support from TUR, NZTE and EECA
- However, we too acknowledge there are some challenges to standing up a viable market for woody debris, and it will require a range of stakeholders, including the government, to be involved if we are going to be successful this time.
- Not least, of course is the challenge of just how far this wood resource is from industry; many of the largest forests are even more remote and our roading network is fragile and has many challenges.
- We must also acknowledge the economics need to stack up - there is no shortage of equity in the industry, but building a sustainable business model that will deliver returns is a challenge.
- An industry is not going to build itself, and for this to work, there would need to be collaboration across the sector - including with some of you here in this room today.

End: Last Slide - Conclusion

- Thank you again for the opportunity to join you here today.
- I hope that my reflections have provided you with another perspective on what you may have seen in the media, and I look forward to meeting with many of you throughout the rest of the day.