

Forest Management Planning

IFA Forestry Policy Statement 2.6

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) advocates the development and use of strategic and operational forest management plans to guide sustainable forest management.

The Issue

Forest management plans provide for the diverse range of forest uses and values. Management occurs at several levels: from State and regional, to operational, depending on the relevant law and land tenure. In recent years there has been an increasing demand for stakeholder participation in plan development for public forests, as well as for effective planning for forest management certification schemes.

Background

Management plans are drawn from data from extensive environmental and resource surveys and inventories. They assist in the balanced use and care of forests to meet conservation, resource use, social and cultural requirements.

In Australia and internationally there is recognition that sustainable forest management requires meaningful and effective input from stakeholders who have an interest in forest management or who will be affected by management decisions. Preparation of forest management plans for public land now includes input from botanists, zoologists, ecologists, soil conservationists and other specialists. With more production forestry occurring on private plantations, foresters need to consult stakeholders such as local government, catchment authorities and local communities in plan development.

Generally, strategic forest management plans describe the forest area including its resources, uses and values. They identify any legal requirements and planning requirements, and identify the management objectives. Strategic plans describe the strategies, zoning and any prescriptions needed to achieve objectives and to protect values. They provide opportunities for public comment and participation in the planning process and monitor and assess the plan, reviewing after five to ten years.

Operational forestry plans generally describe the area including topographical features and boundaries. These plans outline the operation needed to achieve desired outcomes and indicate any significant sites to be excluded from the forest operation.

Policy

The IFA supports and encourages:

- Forest planning appropriate to the scale, ownership and type of forest and its management intent
- Monitoring and reviewing strategic management plans every five to ten years, in addition to regular auditing of operational plans
- Appropriate criteria and indicators as a framework for monitoring sustainable forest management.

The IFA considers that:

- Strategic forest management plans should be integrated and holistic, taking into account the risks and threats to the range of environmental, cultural, social and economic forest values at a landscape level, as well as the management strategies on any adjoining forested land
- Operational plans should encourage operational forest management and protection of important values
- Forests have multiple and diverse uses and values that need to be sustainably managed
- Strategic plan development for forests will benefit from appropriate stakeholder input on all tenures.