



CLELAND

23 Albert Street
Windsor Victoria 3181
Australia

Telephone 0419 116 731
Facsimile 03 9510 0939
Email m.cleland@bigpond.com

NTT MAHOGANY PROJECT 2006-2008

Responsible Manager Inspection Report - M'Oganwo Property 10-12 March 2010

Abstract

A programmed inspection of the NTT Mahogany Project 2006-2008 (Project 2) plantation was conducted over the period 10 – 12 March 2010. The aim of the visit was to assess management activity over the preceding three months of the 'wet' [busy] season thereby ensuring sufficient time was left for remedial action should it be required. Activity for the forthcoming 'dry' season was also discussed and planned with key plantation staff and consultants.

Present

Mr Greg Hooker	Operations Manager
Mr Ian Knobel	Project Forester
Mr Malcolm Cleland	Responsible Manager

Mr Stephen Brosman	M'Oganwo Manager
Mr Peter Perks	Elderslie Manager

Inspection Dates

M'Oganwo NT	10 - 11 March 2010
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M'OGANWO, NT (Project 2)

Summary

The 297 ha 2006 Growers (Project 2) planting is well managed with generally very good weed control. The trees appear to be responding to last season's application of fertiliser and the pruning work has improved tree form. There are some limited areas where growth is below the average and this is being investigated,

The 243 ha 2007 Growers (Project 2) planting which was replanted in the 2009 wet season has been further infill planted in 2010 with some 20,000 seedlings. In parts of this area there are now three age groups of trees which will complicate management over the next two years however the overall prognosis for this area is sound to good.

The instigation of formal nutrition trials and growth rate trials is a significant step forward for these plantings. The first annual measurement will be taken in August 2010.

There are some areas of erosion that remain a source of concern to the Department of Primary Industry and will require attention.

Overall maintenance, construction of fire breaks, weed control etc, is underway and the property is well maintained.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Project Forester, Mr Ian Knobel, produce an updated Management Plan for the M'Oganwo property. This plan should include input from the Operations Manager, Mr Hooker. As these Projects are now well established future activity and requirements can be anticipated more accurately and in a timely manner. The plan should therefore be a simple and concise document setting out the anticipated future objectives, procedures and activities for the Projects with special attention to the next two years.

The plan is to be signed off by the Responsible Manager and implemented as soon as possible.

2. Mr Knobel is to prepare a budget for the forestry and general property costs for the forthcoming two years based on the Management Plan.
3. It is recommended that a tree density trial be designed and implemented this year. This will add significantly to the value of the nutrition and growth rate trials that have been established.

Inspection

2007 Growers (Project 2) Planting 243ha - Planted 2008

The property inspection commenced with the 2007 Growers planting area, first planted in March 2008. This area was replanted entirely in 2009. The area was inspected 6 months after replanting and was progressing well with an estimated seedling density in excess of the required minimum tree survival. Since then the Operations Manager replanted a further 20,000 trees in January 2010 due to losses.

At the time of this inspection there are ample trees to meet the minimum expectation of tree establishment.

There are however three plantings of trees on this site spanning some 24 to 26 months in age and these trees vary in height from 30 to 40 cm to 1.5 meters. The less robust trees will inevitably be overwhelmed by the more established trees. In time a sound forest will emerge from this tree stock but in the next two years special attention will be required for effective weed control as there is a risk that the younger trees may be more susceptible to damage by herbicide than older plants. Therefore weed control may require more expensive and selective herbicide than those generally in use.



Fig 1: 2007 Growers Planting



Fig 2: 2007 Growers Planting

An active control program for termites is required for this area. It is considered that many of the planting losses in August to December 2009 may have been as a result of termites.

There are several areas of erosion to be attended to in this planting. This will involve detailed mapping and photographing of the areas concerned to develop and instigate a management program.

2006 Growers (Project 2) Planting 297 ha - Planted 2007

This planting is progressing well with trees reaching 7 meters in height. Overall there is reasonable uniformity in the plantings. In late 2009 an appropriately mixed fertiliser was spread along the tree lines and consequently the trees are a uniform colour and appear to be actively growing. There is no variation on tree colour that was observed in April 2009.

Weed control is good to excellent. It is considered that there has been sufficient retention of ground cover to reduce the risks of erosion while the prolific growth of weeds that would compete with the trees has been checked. This is an excellent outcome.



Fig 3: 2006 Growers Planting



Fig 4: 2006 Growers Planting

A severe windstorm came through the property in the Spring of 2009 causing a number of trees to bend in the wind. Some of these have not recovered and remain curved and will not regain a vertical form. These trees will be removed over the course of the year and will represent an early non commercial thinning. The numbers are small (less than 1% of the total and will not materially affect the final log yield. Measures to reduce this problem in the future are being investigated.



Fig 5: Wind Effected Trees

An area of the planting known as the Airstrip is not especially strong and will be specifically tested to assess the status of both macro and micro nutrients. These tests will be conducted as part of the annual plant tissue analysis program scheduled for August 2010.

Termite damage is a significant but manageable risk in growing African Mahogany in the Northern Territory and committed attention to termite control is a feature of the industry. The management of termites in this plantation is good.



Fig 6: Termite Damage

In the planting known as the Bull Paddock there is a significant area of erosion in some case rendering tracks un-trafficable. As indicated these areas will be mapped and photographed and a plan for their remediation set in place.



Fig 7: Trial Plots



Fig 8: Trial Plots

As with the previous planting termite control has been competent but will require consistent annual action to remain so.

Fire Breaks and Maintenance

The maintenance program is well advanced with all boundaries sprayed and the roads in good order.

Observation and Comment

This report is by necessity critical of the management of this property over the last few months. However it must be noted that, provided immediate remedial action is taken, there should be no or little long term consequence for the Project.

Malcolm Cleland
15 March 2010