

Breaches of the Tasmanian Forest Practices Code 2000

Brief report on breaches in the last 3 years in the Central North

The first thing to clarify in this matter is that there are differing opinions on what constitutes a breach of the Forest Practices Code and that the Forest Practices Board claim the right to interpret the code in their own way. I will try to present the matter in as balanced a way as is possible from one persons point of view and refer to the Code in all cases.

The statements in italics are direct quotes from the code.

“In the Basic Approach sections of the Code there are two different types of statements: the “will” and “should” statements. The “will” statements are to be applied in a practical manner to forest operations covered by the Forest Practices Act. The “should” statements show the desirable practice for most situations and are to be interpreted by a Forest Practices Officer taking into account local contitions. “should” statements will be applied unless there are good reasons for making exceptions, and acceptable environmental outcomes are acheived.”

The main breaches that I observe in my studies and audits are:

- Sub Standard Roding
- No culvert sumps or energy dispersion on outfalls of culverts
- Streamside reserves ignored
- Inadequate gripping on tracks and cable draglines
- Logging machinery taken into swamps
- Damaged Myrtle trees not being removed to prevent Myrtle wilt

The photo below shows a class 3 road , this photo was taken approximately 3 months after the road was made. According to the code this road in highly erodible soil should have had 375 mm culverts and at minimum 150mm of gravel on it in order to be a wet weather road. As you can see the culverts were not well placed, there are no culvert sumps or energy dispersion, the soil is highly erodible silty clay with signs of waterlogging and the road did not last.





This is the same road showing obvious signs of being used in wet weather. The clay from the surface has already been washed away leaving a sandy silt behind. The photo below shows the amount of silt built up in 3 months. Obviously the culvert was not sufficient for the job. (the contractors were made to dig all culverts out and change them)





This drain takes water from a road and also drains a swampy area. The definition of “swamp” is open to discussion so this may instead be called an area of “surface seepage”

The forest practices code states that machinery “*will not be taken within 10 metres of the border of a swamp or an obvious surface seepage except at properly corded crossing points.*” This coupe is planned to be converted into eucalyptus Nitens plantation.





Above wheel tracks through an area of surface seepage or swamp. Breach of FPC.
Below Dalgarth Hill near Branch's Creek. The erosion was caused by cable logging anchor points not being properly drained and gripped. Again in Breach of the Forest Practices Code. The soil erosion is excessive and not conducive to the sustainable logging practices that are required under the code.





This creek is a class 4 stream, the Forest Practices Plan for this coupe stated that

- *“Where timber is being hauled across the class 4 streams the logs are to be fully suspended where possible. Where this is not possible lift is to be applied to elevate the leading edge of the logs to minimise damage to the stream bed”*
- *“every effort must be made to minimise disturbance and sediment input to streams”*
- *“there should be no disturbance to vegetation within the streamside reserves”*

There are some “should’s “and where possible’s here but one could be easily led to believe that as the statements are in the Forest Practices Plan that it is possible to do what is asked. The creek downstream from the coupe is full of Sassafras trees and Tree Ferns, many tree ferns were destroyed and burnt on the coupe. By not complying with the requirements of the Forest Practices Plan this operation is in breach of the Forest Practices Act

Section 21 of the act states:

21 (1) Where a forest practices plan has been certified by the Board in respect of forest practices on any land and is in force under this Act -

(c) any owner of land who causes forest practices on that land or any operations associated with forest practices on that land to be carried out in contravention of the provisions of the plan - is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 150 penalty units or a daily fine not exceeding 10 penalty units



Smoke , particulate and chemical pollution above, below waste, useful logs that were burnt 2 weeks ago



This is a small summary of the breaches that I have documented. They are in the central North of the State at Blackwood Creek, Branchs Creek, the Dazzler Ranges and Caveside. It is not possible in such a short article to document all the evidence and because of space restrictions to include pasted sections of the relevant codes . If anyone wants to verify my statements it is an easy matter to obtain a copy of the code and read the statements.

It is very dissapointing that our forests are being subject to such treatment. Obviously humans are prone to taking shortcuts where they can . In the forest industry with contracts being cut, time constraints being tightened and very large machinery to pay for it is possible that short cuts are taken. I am sure that some of the short cuts are forced upon the contractors by large companies in order to get the job done.

I have spoken to logging contractors who have told me that they were fined for small pieces of charcoal in the end of logs. It did not matter that when a tree is damaged and burnt then heals over that there are large areas of charcoal present in the wound. My take on that situation was that the woodchippers were making the small contractor pay for their operations and cutting his pay to force him out. From the work he was doing he was obviously a careful log faller and cleaned up after himself. This is not really encouraged from my observations.

I have been told that new workers are asked to work on cable logging operations with minimal or no training. This is the most dangerous work in the forest. Some of the slope readings I have taken were in the vicinity of 35 degrees plus. Even walking down these hills was difficult after logging, not to mention the effort of lugging a chainsaw around cutting trees down and hooking them onto a cable logger. It is a wonder that more loggers aren't killed doing this work.

Most of the coupes that I have audited have been primarily logged for woodchip. With expected tonnages in the order of 85 to 95% woodchip. Many of those logs would have grown out into very valuable sawlogs if left in the ground.

My estimate is that at least 50% of the logs that are chipped are suitable for other more highly valued purposes. I have used laminated finger jointed beams in my work, these are made from small pieces of hardwood approximately 50mm by 35mm finger jointed and glue laminated. No piece of timber was longer than 600mm yet these beams are available in extremely long lengths. We have bought them in 8 and 11 metre lengths. It is possible to mill many of the logs destined for the chipper and produce such beams. Another product that is coming on line now is veneer, we have two veneer mills proposed for Tasmania and our premier told us that the logs they will use would have been destined for the chipper. One wonders why our government or some other entreprising company have not thought to value add to these logs in the past.

My take on the idea of calling woodchipping value adding is that it is ridiculous. We have timber that is being cut down and the chippers are paying \$12 per tonne for it. They sell it for approx \$150 per tonne. If the trees were left to grow out the resultant product would sell as green hardwood for approx \$500 per cubic metre. Or as dried hardwood for \$1500 per metre.

We are allowing our valuable resource to be carted away for minimal value, maximum destruction and the worst long term impact on the environment.

Our soils are depleted and polluted by chemicals, the waterways and air are polluted by, chemicals, smoke, particulate matter, soil transport and carbon. We are unnecessarily adding to the greenhouse effect by burning huge amounts of valuable logs. The soil is being degraded by erosion and the addition of bark which breaks down slowly and acidifies the soil depleting it of nutrients. The animals are being poisoned by 1080 mostly unnecessarily.

I say this because the most up to date science on 1080 use in forestry stated that :

There was no corellation between browsing animals numbers and the damage to the tree seedlings, the damage mostly happens when winter comes and the animals run out of feed. The report recommended that the trees be planted later in spring when the grass was already growing, that the coupes should not be sprayed to kill grass before planting and that cover crops should be considered as decoys.

So for the convenience of Tax breaks the trees are still being planted in winter in spite of best science.

So much for "Worlds Best Practice"

I am sure that some will want to take me to task on my assertions but that is their choice. I do not expect that all who read this will agree and accept that you have the right to your own opinions . These are mine.

Pete Godfrey