



June 2015

## Management of Swamp Kauri in New Zealand

### What is swamp kauri?

- Swamp kauri is defined as kauri logs that have been buried and preserved in swamps for anywhere between 800 and 60,000 years.
- Swamp kauri extraction is a mature industry. Operators and retailers have been extracting and selling swamp kauri for more than 30 years.

### Extraction

- The extraction of swamp kauri and the effect this has on the environment is managed under the Resource Management Act 1991. This means that in Northland, the Northland Regional Council sets the relevant rules and policies to control the entire extraction process.
- Under the Northland Regional Plan, extraction of swamp kauri requires a consent when it is being extracted from indigenous wet land. In all other circumstances, like on farm land, it is a permitted activity (that is, no consent is required).
- The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has no responsibility for issuing approvals to extract swamp kauri.
- Where necessary, however, MPI visits and inspects extraction sites in order to determine the status of the land that the swamp kauri is being extracted from. This information is necessary for MPI to fulfil its role in regulating the milling and export of indigenous timber products.
- The extraction and milling of swamp kauri should not be confused with the sustainable harvest of living kauri from private indigenous forests. In Northland, there is currently approval to harvest 121 m<sup>3</sup> of kauri from private indigenous forests.

### Milling

- If a person wants to mill swamp kauri once it has been extracted, they must apply to MPI for a milling statement under the Forests Act 1949. Without a milling statement, swamp kauri cannot be legally milled.

- Milling statements can only be issued in specific circumstances. The applicant must demonstrate that the swamp kauri has either:
  - Been salvaged from land that is not indigenous forest land; or
  - If it is salvaged from indigenous forest land (including wetlands), that (1) the trees have died from natural causes and (2) that in removing the trees the natural values of that land will be maintained.
- Since July 2012, MPI has issued 59 milling statements for swamp kauri. These have all been for salvaged swamp kauri, extracted from farm land or exotic scrub land. No milling statements in this period were issued for swamp kauri extracted from indigenous forest land.
- MPI regularly inspects all registered sawmills to ensure the timber they are milling has been properly sourced. In the past month, two such sawmill inspections have identified issues which are now the subject of compliance investigations.
- MPI appreciates and acts on any information it receives from the public regarding potentially illegal milling of any New Zealand indigenous timber.

## Exporting

- Swamp kauri cannot be exported as whole logs, sawn timber or as any unfinished product such as mouldings, panelling or furniture blanks. Swamp kauri can only be exported as:
  - whole or sawn swamp kauri stumps or roots; or
  - a finished or manufactured product that is in its final state and ready to be installed without any further working or modification.
- An export approval is required before exporting whole or sawn swamp kauri stumps or roots. Forestry Officers inspect 100 per cent of kauri exports requiring approval under the Forests Act 1949. Since 2014, all of the approved export consignments have been visually inspected as part of the approval process. In that period, six export consignments were not given approval for export because they did not meet the requirements of the Forests Act 1949.
- Since 2013/2014, 4,969 m<sup>3</sup> of swamp kauri has been exported with MPI approval.
- MPI is required to ensure that the export provisions of the Act are fully complied with. This includes visually inspecting notified exports and working directly with swamp kauri operators to ensure the exports of finished and manufactured products also meet the requirements of the Forests Act 1949. The recent example of temple poles being exported is an example of this approach. The responsibility of MPI is to assess that the product is in a

finished state and therefore satisfies the requirements of the act rather than comment on the style or quality of the work.

- MPI works with the New Zealand Customs Service (Customs) staff to ensure they are aware of any proposed exports of indigenous timber. Similarly Customs alerts MPI of any export consignments listed as containing swamp kauri or indigenous timber so that inspections can occur.
- MPI is not aware of any illegal exports of indigenous timber products. MPI appreciates and acts on any information it receives from the public regarding potentially illegal exports.

## Monitoring

- MPI takes its responsibilities for effectively monitoring and enforcing the Forests Act requirements for the milling and export of swamp kauri very seriously. In addition to site visits and inspections of sawmills and export consignments, MPI also monitors domestic and international trading sites for the sale of indigenous New Zealand timber. MPI appreciates and acts on any information it receives from the public regarding potentially illegal exports.
- With respect to the recent listings on the Alibaba.com website, MPI can confirm that the photo in question was taken in New Zealand, that the log has not been exported, and that the seller (New Zealand Forests Ltd) are fully aware of the restrictions on indigenous forest product exports under the Forests Act 1949. As per the Forests Act 1949, only finished products in their final form from the timber comprising that log could be legally exported.

## Facts & Figures

- In 2013/14:
  - MPI approved 18 milling statements for 8,361 m<sup>3</sup> of swamp kauri timber
  - All 18 milling statements were for swamp kauri salvaged from farmland
  - No milling statements were approved for swamp kauri from indigenous wetland
  - Exports of whole or sawn swamp kauri stumps or roots totalled 2,746 m<sup>3</sup>
- In 2014/15:
  - MPI approved 13 milling statements for 6,282 m<sup>3</sup> of swamp kauri timber
  - All 13 milling statements were for swamp kauri salvaged from farmland or exotic scrub land;
  - No milling statements were approved for swamp kauri from indigenous wetland
  - Exports of whole or sawn swamp kauri stumps or roots provisionally totalled 2,223 m<sup>3</sup>.