

Science and Business News March 2005

Forest Research retain Pesticide Safety Directorate Accreditation

Pesticide Safety Directorate (PSD) auditors visited Alice Holt in February to check Forest Research's (FR's) compliance with the requirements of the PSD system. After a thorough check of our record keeping, FR has retained its official accreditation as a Recognised Testing Station for new chemical and other plant protection products. 'This is an important achievement, which confirms FR's ability to carry out high quality plant protection trials,' noted Kate Fielding, FR's Quality Assurance manager.

TimberTherm software attracts international attention

FR has been collaborating with BHR Group, Cranfield over the past two years, to develop a software model for prediction of heat transfer in wood. Funded by the Carbon Trust, the work aims to enable kiln operators to save energy, while still meeting ISPM 15 regulations on treatment of packing wood. TimberTherm, the software package, was recently demonstrated to FC's Plant Health Service staff, by Hugh Evans, from FR, and Emily Ho and Jenni Ferrans, from BHR. Plant Health's approval of the software package will assist the development of the software into a commercial product. The software was demonstrated at the ISPM 15 Implementation Workshop in Vancouver in February. We hope to provoke interest in having the software officially recognised internationally, which would obviously assist the future marketing of the package.

Improved Sitka spruce

In February, at Kielder, Steve Lee and Barry Gardiner (FMD) and John Morgan (Plant and Seed Supply Division) demonstrated to senior Forest Enterprise (FE) managers the benefits of planting improved Sitka spruce stock. A new generation of vegetatively propagated planted stock, known as 'full-sib families', is about to enter the market place. These are families with a known mother and father. The genetic base is narrower and consequently uniformity is greater. The FE managers saw the vast improvements in quality, and more importantly quality traits, offered by such families when they visited a 20-year old trial. Barry had earlier demonstrated, using data collected from another trial, the increase in green logs could be up to 50% relative to unimproved material. Initial indications show no decrease in the strength of the timber and further research is planned.

Tree breeding is a long-term investment and it is heartening to see the fruits of earlier investments finally reaching the market place. Feedback from the participants was good, and all are now looking forward to receiving some of this new stock. Following these seminars Hugh Insley, Chief Executive, Forestry Commission Scotland has issued new policy guidance. This states that improved Sitka spruce will be planted on all sites where Sitka spruce is being grown for timber production, subject to stability constraints. Further presentations to FE and private sector are planned in the summer.

Social Forestry

Research concerning trees and their impact on the emotional well-being of local residents of two inner London social housing estates' is nearing completion. This is part of a partnership project between Trees for Cities, the Peabody Trust and the Forestry Commission. Liz O'Brien, from Forest Research's Social Research Group, is carrying out the research and evaluation of the project. The aim is to examine the ways in which local residents value their local woodland and engage and involve residents in making improvements to the woodland. A report is due in April 2005.

Urban pollutants contract

Tony Hutchings and Danni Sinnott (E&HSD) have successfully led the Forest Research bid for funding under the EPSRC PuRE consortium. The PuRE aim is 'to provide a scientific understanding of the behaviour of pollutants in the urban environment, so enabling valid assessments of sustainable development scenarios'. Forest Research is involved in mapping the flow of pollutants associated with human activities; modelling the fate and transport of chemicals in the environment and understanding the impacts of urban pollutants on human and ecological health. This is a joint project with the Universities of Surrey, Sheffield, Cardiff and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Forthcoming Events

Full details of FR's events are available on FR's internet site:



www.forestresearch.gov.uk/events

5-8 April, IUFRO Conference, 'Sustainable Forestry – Theory and Practice', University of Edinburgh.

This conference aims to demonstrate how scientific knowledge has evolved to address challenges posed by sustainable forestry. FR's Duncan Ray is organising the conference.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-64dh2h>

8-10 April, Lepidoptera as indicators of biodiversity conservation, Southampton

Butterfly Conservation's 5th International Symposium.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-6AKKFT>

21-22 April, Climate change in the Scottish uplands, Perth

One in a series of transdisciplinary seminars on sustaining mountain landscapes: conflict and compromise in British uplands. <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-698E77>

22 April, 13:30 NRS Staff Seminar

Fine root dynamics and C sequestration. Douglas Godbold, School of Agricultural and Forest Sciences, University of Wales, Bangor. www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-64TF45

31 May to 3 June, ForestSAT 2005, Sweden

Conference about the operational tools in forestry using remote sensing techniques.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/website/forestresearch.nsf/ByUnique/HCOU-4Z2KQ6>

8 June, Pests and Diseases of Amenity Trees, Milton Keynes

A workshop to raise awareness of pests and diseases which can affect amenity trees.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-6AQKQX>

14–15 June, Trees in a Changing Climate, Surrey

A conference to bring home the implications of climate change to all those who plant trees.

<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-64GGZJ>

14-16 September, Atlantic Oakwoods Symposium, Oban

Collating current knowledge with a view to identifying the need for further research and the role of these woods in conservation planning. <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-6A5HK4>

New Publications

Forest Research 2005. *Accessibility of woodlands and natural spaces: addressing crime and safety issues.*

Report of a seminar organised by Forest Research supported by Lancashire Constabulary, CABE Space and English Nature by Liz O'Brien, Paul Tabbush, Social Research Group. 48 pages. Price £7. Enquiries to Jenny Claridge, Editor and Publications Manager at Alice Holt.

Newsletter Team

Editors:

Alison Melvin

Eleanor Harland

Kirsten Hutchison

Production:

Alice Holt Typing Group