

8 May 2019

Northland Tōtara Industry Pilot project passes major milestone

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Tōtara logs from two Northland farms have been harvested selectively under a ‘continuous cover’ forestry model and milled as part of a two-year project to assess whether the native tree can be harvested sustainably for commercial use.

The Northland Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) project’s second harvest saw 200 m³ of farm-tōtara taken from two sites near Kawakawa in April. Some poorly formed trees were removed from the stands and have proved to yield viable timber.

“We were pleased with how the tree selection aligned with the TIP project’s long-term sustainable forest management ideals,” said project manager Elizabeth Dunningham. “We were able to get good, commercially viable timber from even the low-quality trees.”

The timber was milled by Northpine in Waipu. This was the first time that this commercial sawmill had processed native timber and yielded findings that will be of value to the project’s study into the viability of a Northland-based tōtara industry operating under sustainable principles.

It was also the first time that the project has processed farm-tōtara timber in Northland, and at scale. Previously, 100 m³ of the logs were milled at a training sawmill in Rotorua.

In May, one kiln-charge of 25 mm boards was dried successfully at Northpine. There was little drying degrade and no more than was observed at the smaller research scale. There were a few issues with fuel supply during the drying schedule, but these were resolved relatively easily.

The rest of the wet timber was transported to Scion in Rotorua for air or slow kiln drying. Several logs were sent to JNL in Kaitaia for a peeling trial, which went off smoothly.

Many thanks to all the businesses involved.

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About TIP

The Northland Tōtara Industry Pilot (TIP) is a two-year project which started in April 2018. It will assess the forest resource; harvest and process up to 500 m³ of farm-tōtara logs; collect data and research results from drying studies and trials; conduct milling trials, product and market testing; and develop and analyse the business case for a regional tōtara timber industry. The project promotes the sustainable management of tōtara on private land and Maori-owned land, for all the benefits that native forests can bring. For more information visit www.totaraindustry.co.nz.



CAPTION

The timber was milled by Northpine in Waipu. The findings will contribute to a two-year study into the viability of a Northland-based farm-tōtara industry operating under sustainable principles.