

Search Criteria

Model	Model D: Information Access
Industry	Private Forestry Industry
Focus/Level	Industry
Approach to information needs	Website, email
Special Interest Groups	Other

1. Project Title:

Private Forestry Information Transfer
 - Private Forestry Website
 - Farm Forestry Agriculture Notes
 - Private Forestry Update (via limited email list)
 - Customer Service Centre FAQs & referrals
 - Annual Private Forestry Extension Conference

This project supports the Private Forestry research & extension projects.

2. Funders:

Department of Primary Industries
 NHT (1998-2002)

3. Providers:

Private Forestry Staff, Catchment and Agriculture Services, DPI

4. Key Contacts:

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5. Industry/Issue/Geography:

The target audience for the outcomes of this project (to develop a fully informed private forestry movement) includes extension providers, tree growers, land managers, potential investors, students, state and local government agencies or anyone else interested in farm forestry.

More specifically, the audience varies according to the tools used to achieve these outcomes.

The Farm Forestry Agnotes series provides reader-friendly technical information aimed to assist growers in the planning and management of their private forests. The CSC FAQs are used to provide efficient and timely responses and referrals to queries from the wider community.

The 'Update' and the Annual Extension Conference were designed to keep extension professionals up to date with the latest in research, project work, publications and so on. They then transfer this information to growers and the wider community via a range of other extension methods such as field days, seminars, more targeted newsletters, etc.

Initially, the website target audience was primarily private forestry extension providers across Victoria. The web was seen as a method of storing large amounts of information and resources, readily available to extension providers (assuming they had greater capacity to access it than others) who would then transfer it to those in more remote areas or without internet access. With advancements in technology and increasing internet accessibility, the target audience has expanded to include growers, industry, students and the wider community.

Stakeholders:

- Statewide (Vic) Private Forestry Extension team, which includes DPI Private Forestry staff, Greening Australia, Melbourne University, four Private Forestry Development Committees, VFF, grower networks, grower co-ops (ie. SmarTimbers)
- Research agencies: CSIRO, PIRVic (DPI), Melbourne University
- Community (rural and urban)

Contributors:

- Statewide (Vic) Private Forestry Extension team
- Research agencies
- DPI Web Services and Communications

6. Project Context:

Private Forestry Vision:

Private Forestry will make a significant contribution to the growth of a multifaceted and dynamic Forest and Forest Products Industry with economic, social and environmental benefits for all Victorians.

- a sustainable and competitive private forestry industry
- Increase positive and reduce negative environmental impacts of private forestry
- capable private forestry communities

The project was initiated in 1998 through the NHT project *Overcoming information barriers to farm forestry*. This project enabled the:

- expansion of the Farm Forestry Agriculture Note series from five, to over 80
- improvements to and greater development of the Private Forestry website
- development of over 80 FAQs and information packs for DPIs call centre
- development of an email list (distribution of the *Private Forestry Update*) for raising awareness of new publications and research, relevant internet sites, events, etc. amongst extension professionals

- annual conference of Victorian private forestry extension providers (of which there have been 6 to date).

The project has since been funded by DPI and continues to provide quality private forestry information to a broad range of stakeholders.

7. Project Niche (Specific Objectives):

The aim of this project is to provide comprehensive and effective information transfer to develop a fully informed private forestry movement:

- to achieve cohesiveness and consistency with farm forestry information in Victoria, ensuring this information is available statewide while preventing duplication of resources and effort.

- transfer technical information - providing private forestry information in a reader-friendly format via a range of delivery mechanisms eg. on-line service delivery, email lists and Farm Forestry Agriculture Notes

Further, the website aims to produce an easily navigable Private Forestry website to enable easy access by the broad range of users/stakeholders to the latest research, investment & initiative information, publications, event details and much more.

8. Philosophy/Approach:

The project ensures up to date technical information transfer in private forestry. It is intimately linked and provides essential information for other private forestry extension projects concerned with group support and empowerment, formal training and general awareness raising.

9. Resources, Management and Staffing Structures:

Private Forestry CAS (DPI) staff member to manage and implement the project.

DPI Web Services and Communications staff assist by providing quality assurance and technical advice.

An ever-decreasing budget has meant that the project is currently under resourced.

10. Process/Methods Used:

A steering committee was established to ensure the needs of our clients were considered when identifying and filling information gaps and developing new information-sharing mechanisms. Although less active at present due to resourcing issues, it is important to ensure the committee is re-invigorated and plays an active role in the development of the project.

In the past, the steering committee has provided valuable local and regional knowledge, which assists with the development of more appropriately targeted information, better addressing community needs.

Website: DPI Web Services provides the framework and technological support, while Private Forestry manages content and site maintenance.

11. Impacts to date (and evaluation approaches used):

An evaluation plan for the project has been developed, of which two aspects have been evaluated.

Annual Conference

Participant surveys have been undertaken at the conclusion of each conference for the last five years. Evaluation reports were produced in 2002 after analysis of survey data to enable the organisers to better cater to the expectations of participants and our investors for future events.

Website

User testing and surveys are undertaken and usage reports generated by DPI Web Services for the entire DPI website, all of which assist in the ongoing development of the site.

User satisfaction surveys have been undertaken for the Private Forestry pages of the DPI website. Although no evaluation reports have been produced, comments/suggestions from the surveys have been considered and used, where appropriate, to shape the site throughout various development stages.

Web usage reports have been generated to varying degrees which demonstrate frequency of 'hits' to Private Forestry pages. However, detailed reports are lacking due to difficulties associated with pin-pointing specific pages in such a large site (DPI). Investigations into generating more specific reports are underway.

It is intended that the evaluation plan continue to be implemented in stages to ensure resources are allocated to the project.

12. Effectiveness:

Annual Conference: In its seventh year, this event is highly regarded by Victorian private forestry extension providers and invited guests. It provides an opportunity for participants to build on existing networks, share experiences and stories and learn more about current issues and new technologies to apply in their own regions.

Website: Feedback from users suggests the site is one of the most extensive sites for private forestry information in Victoria (including over 80 Farm Forestry Agnotes). Although it provides a vast amount of information, the site has often been described as "clunky". This refers to ease of navigation and the categories used in the site structure.

Improvements are currently being undertaken, which include providing a number of pathways for information retrieval, more links/references to other sites and more opportunities for users to find out about the industry and contact staff or grower networks.

Customer Service Centre: Over 80 private forestry FAQs are reviewed annually. Reporting methods to date have not provided adequate information to determine the

specific information sent in response to each private forestry related enquiry. Negotiations are taking place to increase the level of detail provided in such reports. This information will be useful in determining the need to review current information provided to the CSC or identify information gaps.

13. Project Documentation available:

The web address: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/privateforestry

Poster and brochures raising awareness of the site are used at field days, conferences, etc.

The Farm Forestry Notes series is available at:

www.dpi.vic.gov.au/privateforestry/notes

Evaluation reports of the Private Extension Conference (2002, 2004).

A PDF version of the *Private Forestry Update* (circulated through a limited email list) is available on request.

A list of Private Forestry FAQs provided to the DPI CSC is available on request.

14. Issues:

As above.

Although the website is an effective tool in the provision and storage a vast amount of information, it can be limiting when catering to people in remote areas. With advances in technology however, access is quickly becoming an issue of the past.

Acquiring knowledge regarding community expectations, requirements, satisfaction, etc. is challenging with such limited resources, yet critical to the continuous improvement of our service delivery.

15. Comments/conclusions:

The Private Forestry website (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/privateforestry) provides users with access to information to enhance their understanding of the potential uses of farm forestry, as well as the resources to assist landowners establishing plantations.

The website is reviewed regularly to ensure the information is accurate and reflects new developments in private forestry.

It provides a vast amount of information, including land capability and suitability, advice on site specific farm forestry potential, investment opportunities, farm forestry initiatives, training, research and publications available to assist novice farm foresters, a regional contacts database and links to related sites.

16. Review Methods:

The following evaluation methods are used when reviewing the project in order to ensure its continued development and improvement:

User surveys

User testing

Monitoring usage through statistical reporting.

A “suggestion box” is provided on the Home Page of the website, where users are able to report difficulties or make suggestions.

Participant surveys

Reports of FAQ usage and response.