

Afforestation approval

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Forest owners encouraged to check the regulations to keep planting plans on track

Planting trees can have positive benefits if they are set in the right environment. Those planning to plant must seek approval from their local and regional council before planting, to make sure the land, plan and plants are suitable for planting.

All afforestation (new forest planting) plans need to meet legislative requirements of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and regional and district rules – this also includes all afforestation plans carried out with funding from the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) [One Billion Trees programme](#).

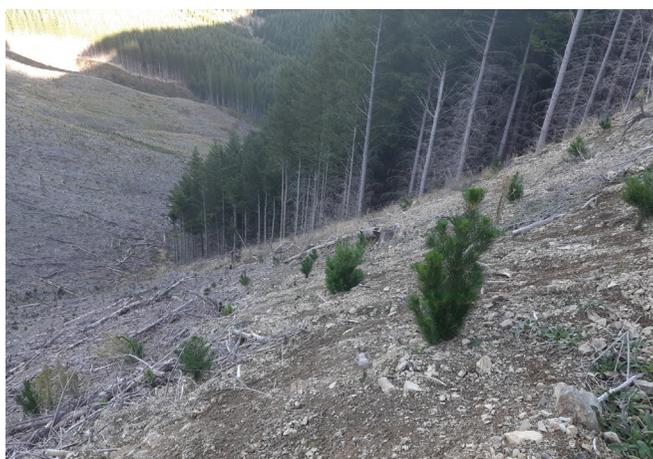
Anyone planning to plant must apply to Environment Canterbury and their local council to check the planting plans fit the planting regulations for that area.

A successful One Billion Trees funding application does not automatically mean the planting under regional and district rules can commence straight away. The local and regional council will be in touch with the applicant to inform them of the application outcome, and any other relevant guidance.

What kind of planting needs approval?

Afforestation (new planting) is defined in the [National Environment Standards for Plantation Forestry \(NESPF\)](#) as:

- a) planting and growing plantation forestry trees on land where there is no plantation forestry and where plantation forestry harvesting has not occurred within the last five years; but
- b) does not include vegetation clearance from the land before planting.



Why is approval needed?

Planting can have both negative and positive effects on the environment. It is essential to ensure any planting carried out in Canterbury meets legislative requirements so the negative impact on the environment from planting is minimal to none.

Potential negative effects are not generally related to the planting itself, but the longer-term effects relating to the location of the plantation. These can include:

- soil slip erosion caused by the weight of trees established on steep sites with shallow soils
- landscape and amenity effects, such as shading, or modification of outstanding natural features and landscapes; and
- potential for wilding conifer spread into vulnerable areas, which can have adverse effects on landscapes, and the productivity of other land uses.

When establishing a new plantation forest, consideration of its location and design is needed to avoid long-term environmental, safety and operational issues (e.g. the ability to safely harvest the crop with limited effects on neighbouring properties and receiving waterbodies).

What is the process for approval?

The NESPF comes under the RMA and its regulations. Within the NESPF, all afforestation must be notified in writing to both the local and regional authorities (councils).

The notification must include the location, area, planting dates and setback requirements (as set out in the NESPF), as well as a Wilding Tree Risk calculation completed by a suitably qualified forester to determine the risk of possible wilding tree spread.

This notification must be received at least 20 working days and no more than 60 working days before the date in which the afforestation is to start.

You may then be required to apply for a resource consent for your plantation under Environment Canterbury's regional plans if it is found that it is occurring within a flow sensitive catchment. District councils also have strict rules around planting in Significant Natural Areas (SNA) and outstanding visual landscapes. Those planning to plant can contact the local council to find out more about their rules.

What if planting is carried out without local and regional council approval?

Any breach of local and regional council afforestation rules is a breach of the RMA, which could be subject to enforcement action such as a fine or having to remove all the planting carried out without consent.

It is important that landowners, foresters, consultants and anyone involved with the planting of a new forest is aware of these obligations, particularly because the planting season is short and applications need to be approved before planting can begin.

Find out more

For any further information on the afforestation requirements for landowners under the NES, including how to apply for consent, please contact Resource Management Officer for forestry, Sarah Helleur Sarah.Helleur@ecan.govt.nz

- [NESPF User Guide](#) – see Section 5.1 for information on afforestation and what is controlled under each Council
- [Environment Canterbury's Land and Water Regional Plan \(LWRP\)](#) - has plan rules around afforestation (see rule 5.73 and 5.189 of Plan Change 7)