Comment on Proposed National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry June 2011

To: Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10 362
Wellington 6143

From: Jim & Audrey Walker

We submitted earlier to the Ministry for the Environment on the proposed National Environmental Standard for Plantation Forestry and now make comment on the revised Proposed NES published in May.

Our primary concern is the effect on neighbours through the boundary separation being too close at the proposed 10 metres and the separation from dwellings being too small at the proposed 30 metres.

In our view the stakeholders group put together to consider these issues was not representative of neighbouring working and residential landholders and have thus not given these issues due consideration, perhaps because they are not qualified to do so or do not consider the issue to be of importance.

1)Regarding the proposed separation of 30 metres specified for a dwelling.

Have those who are deciding on the NES really considered the impact if a forest was planted 30 metres from their house? Such close planting of a forest, with the inevitable growth of the trees, would change the environment and living conditions of resident neighbours due to enclosure, shading, pollen fall and the ever present fear to falling trees and branches.

Imagine a forest of 35 metre high pine trees on a slope 30 metres from the northern wall of your home. The shading effect would be terrible and if any tree should topple in a strong wind (as they do) it would be capable of landing on the house and grounds with possible tragic consequences for the family.

We acknowledge that many dwelling owners plant shelter and landscape trees around their homes but they can choose the aspect, the species and can cut or trim them at will. Not so with someone else’s forest planted next door.
We request again that the set back from dwellings be 100 metres and from other buildings 50 metres.

2) **Proposed boundary separation of 10 metres**

We regard this 10 metre set back as totally inadequate.

The reasons behind this were covered in the Ruapehu Federated Farmers submission which we supported in our personal submission.

One of the objectives of the NES is reduced litigation of plan provisions. We note that litigation is already progressing in our area over damage caused at harvesting and replanting due to trees planted 5 metres from the boundary. A move to 10 metres will not prevent the serious problems that have arisen.

We reiterate our view that a larger set back for boundaries be considered, say 30 to 35 metres, with the ability to negotiate between neighbours down to 10 metres or even less. Such agreements to be registered on titles.

**Explanation:** There are a myriad of issues surrounding damage to boundary fences and neighbouring property during preparation, planting, growth and harvest. Often this causes a lot of disruption, undue stress and cost to the neighbour.

We consider our proposal would facilitate neighbours and foresters sitting down and hammering out good commercial solutions to such problems prior to work commencing.

The assembled stakeholder group needs to consider neighbours land use is financially important to them and could be extremely varied, from sheep and beef farming on hills to dairying, orchards and horticulture elsewhere.

We are concerned that neighbours have not been given due consideration in the NES revised proposal and suggest that either our proposed changes be made or local Councils be granted the ability to be more stringent on boundary separation issues.

It is not a “one size fits all” situation and different areas with differing neighbouring land use will need different outcomes.

It appears to us that plantation forests are being given priority consideration over people, communities and districts.

It would be helpful for the Ministry to get an understanding of these issues. To do this either neighbours need to be given a position on the stakeholder group considering the NES proposal or a separate consultation be convened with neighbours to cover this gap in knowledge.
Until such work has been done boundary separation should be left entirely with District Councils, in our view.

Table 1 (Page 9 of the proposed NES document) **Environmental Outcomes**

**Social Issues** “Consider the use of indicators developed under the Montreal Process as part of a possible framework for settling outcomes” This is very airy fairy to us.

We see that the working group has developed an outcome statement “Bringing about the consistent and sustainable management of natural and physical resources using good forestry practises.”

The proposed boundary and dwelling separations are neither sustainable nor good forestry practise and the proposed NES fails its outcomes on this basis.

**Desired Outcome:**

That District Councils be given the ability to be more stringent on boundary separation issues.