

**From:** Steve Charters [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, 17 May 2024 7:32 am  
**To:** haveyoursay  
**Subject:** Proposed Rate Increase for Forestry Blocks

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I am a part-owner of a forestry block in your district and my submission is to protest the proposed increase in rates.

While I acknowledge that loaded logging trucks may damage roadways not constructed to bear their weight, that does not mean that other lighter vehicles, or heavy vehicles other than logging trucks, using the roads more frequently do not also cause damage. You cannot simply state that roads have been damaged by logging vehicles alone. A fair levy to mitigate roading costs might be imposed on all road users based on vehicle weight, mileage and roads traveled; the technology exists to calculate this.

Forests are harvested only once in their lifetime after 20-25 years. The only acceptable rationale for such an impost would be to charge it during the period in which the forest is harvested, since during the preceding 25 years roading damage has patently NOT been caused by loaded logging trucks as there haven't been any. A blanket rate doesn't allow for the possibility that a forest is never harvested because, for example, of fire, cyclone damage or shareholders decision not to harvest but instead to continue sequestering carbon.

If such a rate were imposed a rebate should also be provided for the preceding period when Forestry Block owners have not used roads but have instead made use of otherwise non-productive land to provide local employment, mitigate climate change and stimulate the wider economy. "The Waikato District is ... located in the heart of the 'golden triangle' - the economic zone encompassing Auckland, Hamilton, and Tauranga, which generates over 50% of New Zealand's gross domestic product (GDP) and is home to over 50% of NZ's population." (Taiao Strategy Document - Waikato District Council 2023)

The extensive planting of indigenous tree species in Waikato is a forestry activity, whether or not the trees are left alone, managed or used as a resource. The proposed rate increase appears to target exotic forests and must be seen as punitive and discriminatory unless indigenous forests are also liable. This alone is sufficient reason for imposing a rate increase only when forests are harvested.

The proposed rate increase would be a disincentive to future investment in forestry in Waikato District resulting in a downturn in the local economy with well-maintained but little used roads traversing a bio-diverse wilderness.

Yours faithfully  
Steve Charters