



**Media release from the Southern Wood Council  
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## **CARBON SINKS SEEN AS A GOLDMINE FOR OTAGO & SOUTHLAND**

**The forests of Otago and Southland could well be thought of as green gold, thanks to the carbon storing qualities of its trees.**

A report commissioned by the Southern Wood Council on the regional carbon balance of the southern forestry and wood processing sector backs this. Calculations of carbon sinks and emissions within the region show a net credit of carbon of 19 to one.

That means carbon produced by milling and processing of wood in Otago and Southland is off-set by the carbon credits earned through absorbing qualities of the forest plantations in the region. In effect, the carbon sinks significantly outweigh emissions, which is unique to the forestry industry.

The contribution to the community and to the country is therefore substantial.

Trees are crucial in off-setting carbon emissions, a feature which not only helps the fight against global warming, but is going to be a vital component of New Zealand's commitment to the Kyoto protocol to minimise carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions. Estimates of the carbon any country has in its forests, known as carbon sinks, will be taken into account to help meet the Kyoto Protocol targets of cutting emissions by 10% by 2012.

Our 215,662 hectares of commercial forests south of the Waitati, or 12 percent of New Zealand's total forestry area, currently absorb and lock-up carbon therefore make the Otago, Southland and South Canterbury region wealthy in environmental terms.

Southern Wood Council chairman Matthew Hitchings believes that while forests have long been recognised for their economic contributions to the regional economy, people are only now beginning to realise the powerfully positive

environmental benefits the forestry and wood products industry offer. “Forestry is a very valuable asset for the people of our region; we could well think of it as green gold.”

“The industry is providing more environmental benefits than impacts, and making a positive contribution to mitigate the effects of climate change in Otago and Southland,” Mr Hitchings said. “Forestry has a strong role to play in addressing the greenhouse gas emissions from industry, for vehicle emissions and for increased farm production and agricultural land conversion. The carbon balance is a continuous cycle of growing, harvesting, using and replanting.”

“This puts forestry in a positive position as industries in New Zealand begin to examine the carbon they emit,” Mr Hitchings said.

“Putting trees in the ground provides natural filters to enhance air quality and slows the rate of global warming; its therefore critical that those forest areas stays in forest,” he added.

*Further information on the , "Regional Carbon Balance for the Forestry & Wood Product Industries" Report, the region's forestry industry and the Southern Wood Council can be found on [www.southernwoodcouncil.co.nz](http://www.southernwoodcouncil.co.nz)*

*The Southern Wood Council Inc was set up in 2001 to promote, encourage and coordinate the sustainable economic development of the forest products industry in Otago and Southland. One of few truly independent groups of its type in New Zealand, it includes all the major forest owners within the region (ownership or management of over 140,000 hectares of production forests with an annual harvest of over 1.2 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood), the larger wood processing and manufacturing companies, the port authorities and each of the three economic development agencies from local councils.*

**For further information contact Matt Hitchings on 03-204-8444.**