



Current state of the forestry and wood processing industries in Nelson Tasman. The Nelson and Tasman regions are located at the top of the South Island of New Zealand, surrounding Tasman Bay/Te Tai-o-Aorere. Geographically the Tasman region connects to the West Coast to the southwest, Canterbury to the southeast, Marlborough to the east and Nelson to the northeast. Nelson and Tasman have temperate climates, and rarely experience extreme highs or lows. Stats below detail both regions.

\$7.6 billion

Regional GDP for year ended
March 2024
(2% of national GDP)

\$236 million

GDP in forestry, fisheries and mining
for year ended March 2023
(3% of the GDP for the region)

\$66,293

GDP per capita for year ended
March 2024
(National GDP per capita \$78,233)

110,391

Estimated combined regional
population, 2023 Census
(2% of New Zealand's total)

492

Number of new building consents
for all construction in 2024
(-22.8% percentage YOY change)

11%

Population that identifies as Māori,
2023 Census
(19.6% nationally)

Source: [Gross domestic product - Stats NZ](#)

Land use capability

The Land Use Capability (LUC) system classifies land into eight categories based on its ability to support various productive uses over time, considering physical constraints and specific management requirements. The classification considers physical attributes of land such as climate, soil, slope, vegetation and erodibility. Classes 1 to 4 are generally suitable for all ranges of cultivation. Classes 5 to 7 tend to be suitable for pastoral farming and forestry. Class 8 has severe limitations for primary production or forestry use.

Less than 7% of the land area in either Nelson or Tasman is classified as Highly Productive Land (LUC 1 to 3). Respectively, 24.4% and 11.6% of land area in Nelson and Tasman are classified as LUC 6. In Nelson 64.9% and in Tasman 76.3% of land area is classified as LUC 7 and 8 (land with slightly to severe limitations for productive land uses). Nelson has no Class 1 or 5 land.

Sources: [Our Environment - Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research](#)

Figure 1. Area in hectares (ha) by LUC class. Source: LUC database 2021

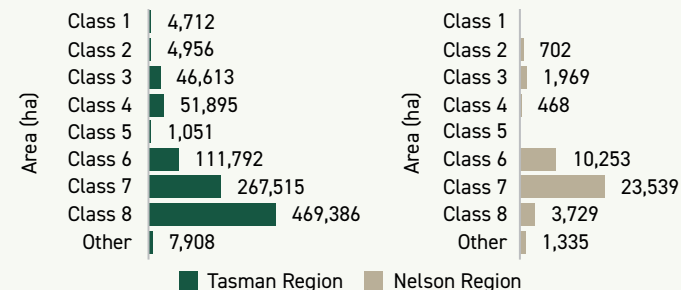
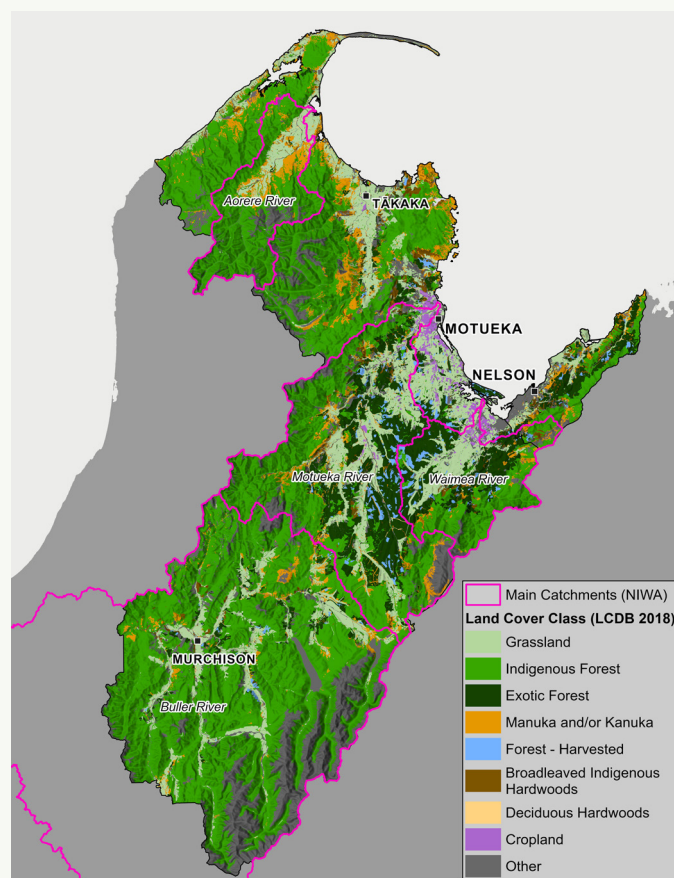


Figure 2. Map: Land cover in Nelson and Tasman. Source: [Land Cover Database \(LCDB5\) - LRIS](#).

[View a high-resolution version of the land cover map in Nelson and Tasman.](#)



Existing land cover

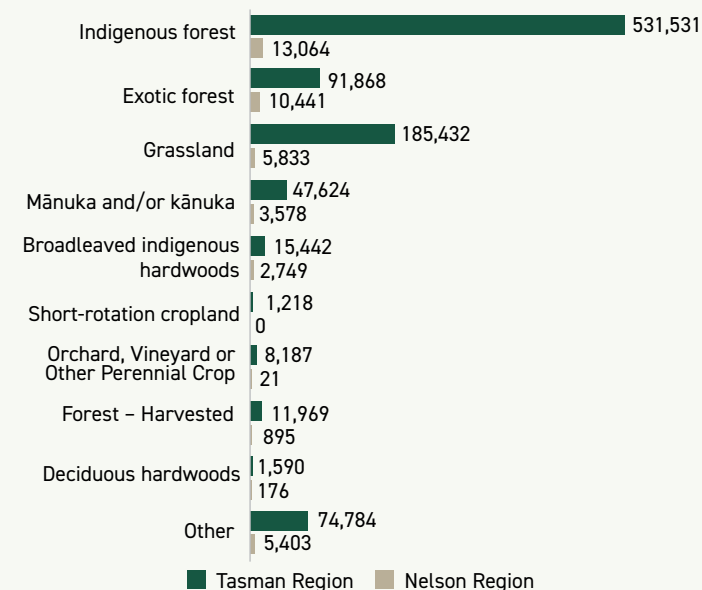
Tasman's total land area is 9,615 km² (961,558 hectares (ha)) making up 3.7% of the total area of New Zealand. Nelson's total land area is 422 km² (42,219 ha) making up 0.2% of the total area of New Zealand. Together the region is 3.9% of New Zealand's total area.

Source: [Geographic boundary viewer - Stats NZ](#)

New Zealand's regions are primarily determined by areas of water collection into rivers, known as catchments. The largest catchments in Tasman are Buller River (371,650 ha), Motueka River (205,567 ha), Waimea River (72,042 ha, with 4,883 ha in Nelson and 59 ha in Marlborough), and Aorere River (68,448 ha), all the other catchments in the regions are less than 1,000 ha. Nelson is part of two catchments – Waimea River (as above), and a small section of the Pelorus River catchment which stretches 269 ha in Nelson, 28 ha in Tasman and 88,653 ha in Marlborough.

Forests are the primary type of land cover in both regions; with the largest proportional land cover being indigenous forest, covering over half of the land in Tasman (55.1%, 531,531 ha) and nearly a third of Nelson (31.0%, 13,064 ha). Next is exotic forest which is proportionally covering more land in Nelson at 24.8% (10,441 ha) and 9.5% (91,868 ha) of Tasman. Grassland covers 19.2% (185,432 ha) of Tasman and 13.8% (5,833 ha) of Nelson.

Figure 3. Area in hectares of different land covers in Nelson and Tasman. Source: Land Cover Database (LCDB5)





Other types of existing forest cover using LCDB¹

Mānuka and kānuka, which can act as a nursery crop in a reversion towards forest, covers 8.5% (3,578 ha) of Nelson and 4.9% (47,624 ha) in Tasman.

Broadleaved indigenous hardwoods such as wineberry, māhoe, *Pittosporum* spp, fuchsia, tutu, tītoki and tree ferns, cover 6.5% (2,749 ha) of the land in Nelson and 1.6% (15,442 ha) in Tasman.

Deciduous hardwood such as willows, poplars, oaks, elms and ashes, cover 0.6% (1,766 ha) across the two regions (176 ha in Nelson, and 1,590 ha in Tasman).

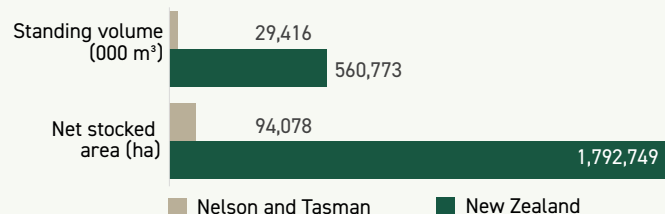
Forest – harvested includes bare ground where exotic forest was harvested or, less commonly, indigenous forest. It covers 2.1% (895 ha) of Nelson and 1.2% (11,969 ha) of Tasman.

Other includes urban settlements, gravel, rocks, lakes, rivers, sand, among others.

National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD 2024)² for Nelson and Tasman

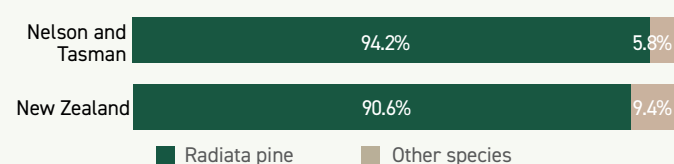
Nelson Tasman is part of the Nelson Tasman and Marlborough wood supply region. The wood supply regions are areas grouped by the National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD).

Figure 4. Comparing Nelson & Tasman and New Zealand on key exotic forestry facts for the year 2024. Source: NEFD 2024



The average age of the exotic forest in the Nelson and Tasman region is 18.2 years, compared to 18.6 years nationally.

Figure 5. Proportion of exotic forest species in Nelson and Tasman in comparison to New Zealand. Source: NEFD 2024



Radiata pine comprises 94.2% of the exotic forest in the region. Other exotic forestry species include 3.9% Douglas-fir (3,698 ha), 0.2% eucalyptus (219 ha), 0.2% cypress (203 ha), 1% other softwoods (976 ha) such as redwoods and 0.3% other hardwoods (324 ha) such as acacia and blackwood.

Of the total planted forest area in Nelson and Tasman, 15.3% (13,553 ha) consists of potentially harvestable radiata pine (aged 26–30 years). This is compared to 20.8% of the national total planted area that is of potentially harvestable age.

Figure 6. Number of hectares of pruned and unpruned regimes of radiata pine in Nelson and Tasman. Source NEFD 2024

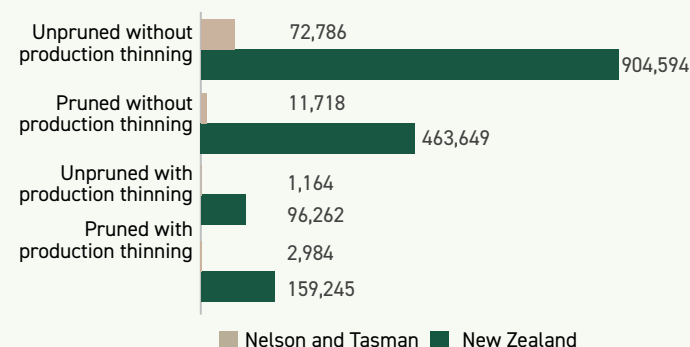


Table 1. Number of forest owners and total forest area by national size class for the Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough wood supply region. Source: NEFD 2024

	< 40 ha	40-99 ha	100-999 ha	1,000-9,999 ha	10,000+ ha
Area (ha)	25,015	11,382	25,396	30,440	86,610
Number of forest owners	NA	182	122	13	3

Wood Availability Forecast (WAF)

Figure 7. Wood Availability Forecast (WAF) scenario 3 for Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough (m³). Source: WAF 2021.

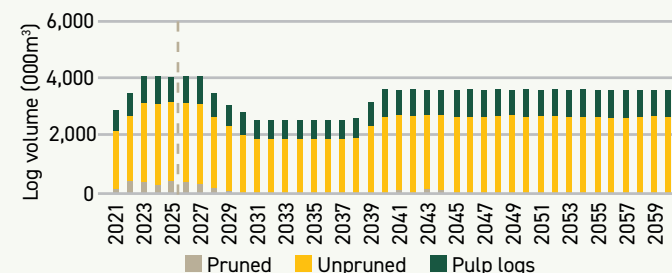
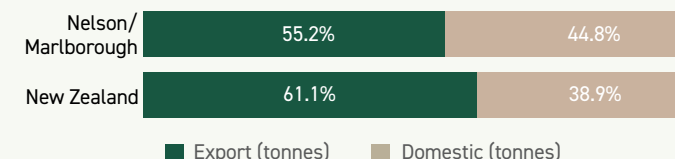


Figure 7 shows the estimated availability of pruned, unpruned and pulp logs between 2021 and 2060, for the region. Wood availability is forecast to decline in 2029 to a low of 2.5 million m³ where it may remain until 2038 when it is estimated to grow once again, plateauing for this forecast at 3.6 million m³.

Source: WAF August 2021 - Scenario 3 - Canopy

Markets

Figure 8. Percentage of exports vs domestic processing of logs for the Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough wood supply region in 2024. Source: Levy trust data 2024



In 2024:

- 1,678,055 tonnes of logs were exported from Nelson and Marlborough ports (8.8% of national log exports).
- 1,361,448 tonnes went to sawmills in the regions to supply the domestic market (11.2% of the total log volume processed in New Zealand).
- Nelson port exported 5.7% of national log exports (1,092,134 tonnes).

Forestry and wood processing supply chain

Nurseries

There are at least 7 nurseries across the Nelson and Tasman regions producing native and non-native species.

Wood processing

There are 11 major wood processing plants in the Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough regions with an output of more than 1.6 million m³ per annum of sawn timber and panels. In 2023, Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough produced 328,365 m³ of sawn timber. This is 9.0% of New Zealand's total sawn timber production for the period.

Source: Quarterly production statistics MPI. Statistics for calendar year 2023 (Jan-Dec). This data includes only mills that report data quarterly. Data from mills that report annually is not included. Production statistics classify Tasman under the region of Nelson Marlborough.

Woody biomass

The Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough regions have been using woody biomass in the decarbonising of industrial and commercial processes for heat generation. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) has estimated that there are over 300,000 tonnes of woody biomass being used for bioenergy generation in the Nelson, Tasman and Marlborough regions each year. The woody biomass is sourced from harvest and wood processing residues. It is used in boilers to generate heat and power for wood processing, to heat greenhouses in horticulture, and by Azwood Energy who collect residues locally to turn into solid biofuels such as woodchips and pellets for local and regional clients.

¹ Land Cover Database (LCDB5) – 2018

² The 2024 National Exotic Forest Description (NEFD) – MPI provides a detailed description of New Zealand's planted production forest.



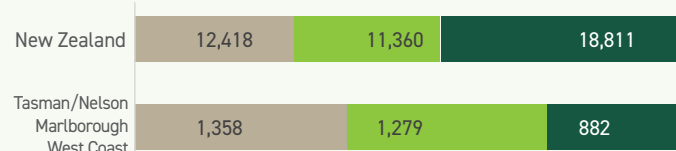
It is estimated that there are around 337,000 tonnes per annum of surplus woody biomass which could be used for energy generation in the region. The majority of this is from harvest residues (272,000 tonnes). EECA have suggested the region has significant scope to increase the use of energy generation from woody biomass.

Sources: Nelson, Marlborough, Tasman RETA | EECA

Workforce

For the year ending March 2023, an estimated 42,589 people worked in the forestry and wood processing sectors in New Zealand and 8% (3,519) worked in the Nelson, Tasman, Marlborough and West Coast regions.

Figure 9. Comparing the numbers of workers in forestry and wood processing. Source: [Forestry and wood processing – Food and fibre workforce insights](#)



Core production Core processing/manu. Strongly connected

Core production	Core production includes forestry, logging and forestry support services.
Core processing/manufacturing	Core processing/manufacturing includes log sawmilling, wood chipping, timber resawing and dressing, veneer and plywood manufacturing, reconstituted wood product manufacturing and pulp, paper and paperboard manufacturing.
Strongly connected	Strongly connected activities include wooden structural fitting and component manufacturing, other wood product manufacturing, corrugated paperboard and paperboard container manufacturing, paper bag manufacturing, wooden furniture and upholstered seat manufacturing, timber wholesaling.

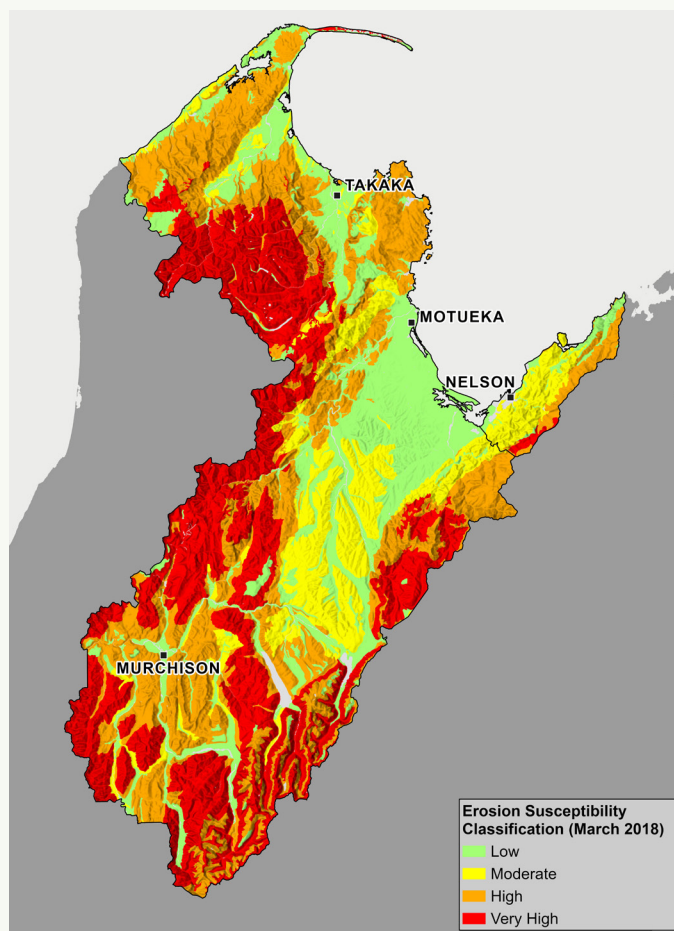
Erosion

Using the ESC (Erosion Susceptibility Classification), 33.6% (323,669 ha) of the Tasman region's land is classified as very highly susceptible to erosion with an additional 32.6% (314,064 ha) of the land classified as at high susceptibility. In Tasman, 79.1% of the land that is classified as very high susceptibility and 66.1% of the land classified as high susceptibility to erosion, is covered by indigenous forest.

Nelson has a moderate erosion profile, 4.7% (1,977 ha) classified as very high susceptibility, 26.3% (11,056 ha) classified as high susceptibility and 49.3% (20,693 ha) of the land in the region classified as moderate susceptibility. In the Nelson Region, just under a third (29.1%) of land that is of very high susceptibility to erosion is covered in indigenous forest, and over half (56.3%) of land at high susceptibility is covered in indigenous

Figure 10. Erosion Susceptibility Classification (ESC). Source: MPI.

[View a high-resolution version of the Nelson and Tasman Erosion Susceptibility Classification map.](#)



forest with a further quarter of high susceptibility land (25.1%) covered in exotic forest.

Specialist wood processing

These regions have the highest concentration of specialist wood processing in New Zealand, especially for laminated and structural wood products. A high proportion of structural timber is grown in the region. An example of this industry is the redevelopment of the Nelson Airport which used structural wood products as a primary building material in the visible structural beams, and columns. In total, 440 m³ of local timber was used in the project. The timber was milled locally and transformed into laminated veneer lumber.

Source: [Nelson Airport](#), [Nelson Tasman Forestry Sector Profile](#)

Biodiversity, indigenous forests and ecosystems

Combined 62% of the Nelson and Tasman regions are covered in indigenous vegetation (forest and scrub, such as kānuka, but not including grassland like tussock). Nelson has 44% indigenous vegetation cover, and Tasman has 63%. More than half of the land in the Tasman region is protected public conservation land in steep mountainous terrain. The Tasman region has the largest and most diverse range of limestone and marble landscapes in the country, with some supporting distinct populations of tree species. For instance, in the Kahurangi National Park, beech dominates much of the higher altitude land, but in lowland areas there remain remnants of original mixed broadleaf and podocarp forests. In Kahurangi there are also saltmarsh and wetlands, including Mangarākau Swamp, and the internationally significant wetland of Farewell Spit – one of only seven Ramsar recognised wetlands in the country.

The Nelson region, though significantly smaller than the Tasman region, includes a rich diversity of ecosystems stretching as it does from Cape Soucis in the north and the Waimea Inlet in the south, and includes lowland and coastal forests, estuaries, dunes, streams, rivers, and the mineral belt of the Dun Mountain Range. Both the Tasman and Nelson regions support rare species including Powelliphanta snails, green gecko, native bats, and the kākāriki parrot. The 3,462 hectares Waimea Inlet links the two regions, and though extensively modified still retains 33% indigenous forest. It is home to internationally significant migratory bird species including bartailed godwits, white herons, spoonbills and the Australasian bittern. Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service supports the restoration of the Waimea Inlet through a 1BT grant to the Tasman Environmental Trust.

Source: [Waimea Inlet Billion Trees Phase Two project updates](#) | [Tasman District Council](#)

Peneāmine Restoration Project

The Peneāmine Restoration Project aims to restore a wetland ecosystem in the Maitai Valley, Nelson. The Project is managed by Ngāti Koata Trust, who are the landowners, with the support of Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service, Tasman Pine Forest, Nelson City Council, Ministry for the Environment, and the Department of Conservation. The project was boosted by Jobs for Nature funding, and has planted approximately 10,000 natives, including rongoā species, over three years, funded from the Matariki tu Rākau fund. The area is popular with mountain bikers and is within an active forestry site. Despite damaging floods that occurred in the catchment in August 2022, work continues with the removal of pest trees and a further 5,000 trees to be planted in 2024. The nearby Tekateka Restoration Project, also managed by Ngāti Koata on the Trust's land, is tackling historical weed burdens in the mature forest on the slopes above Peneāmine, and controlling animals, to help ensure that Peneāmine thrives into the future.

Peneāmine is part of the wider Project Mahitahi initiative, which falls within the suite of restoration projects in Te Taihū supported by Kotahitanga mō te Taiao Alliance.

Source: [KMTT Projects Dashboard](#) ([arcgis.com](#))



Steepland Harvesting Initiative

In 2010, the Steepland Harvesting Primary Growth Partnership was set up to invest in the development of innovative forestry machinery across New Zealand to reduce cable logging costs, make harvesting jobs safer as well as expanding the machinery manufacturing sector. Jointly funded by Future Forests Research Ltd (now Forest Growers Research, \$3.93 million) and Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) (\$3.68 million), the programme saw several Nelson and Tasman businesses develop new machinery. Some of these included the ClimbMAX a steep slope harvester which improves the tractive capacity of ground-based felling machinery on steep slopes. The Falcon Claw, and Winch assist, and the HarvestNav navigation units. The region's innovation in machinery has helped promote a safer logging industry and has seen machinery use spread across New Zealand and internationally.

Sources: [Steepland Harvesting Programme \(fgr.nz\)](#)

Government funding

One Billion Trees Programme: As of December 2023, \$349,565 in funding has been approved for partnership grants in Nelson with a total of 77.8 ha being planted. As of December 2023, \$4.8 million in funding has been approved for direct landowner and partnership grants in the Tasman Region with 426 hectares in Tasman using the One Billion Trees fund. The One Billion Tree fund, part of the One Billion Trees Programme, is now closed to new applications. The programme's goal is to plant a billion trees by 2028.

[Progress towards planting one billion trees](#)

Hill Country Erosion (HCE) Programme: Since 2018, \$2.32 million in funding has been agreed. Between 2019 and 2023, the funding helped protect over 80 ha of erosion-prone land in Nelson. The funding supported mainly native (indigenous) reversion projects to retire some of the most vulnerable forestry and farmland. Tasman has had \$0.74 million in funding agreed. Between 2019 and 2023, the HCE Programme helped protect 94 ha of erosion-prone land in Tasman. The funding supported a native (indigenous) reversion project to retire areas of the most vulnerable areas of "Separation Point Granite" forestry land. The HCE Programme is a partnership between MPI, councils and landowners to support regional erosion-control projects.

[Hill Country Erosion Programme for councils – MPI](#)

Indigenous forestry

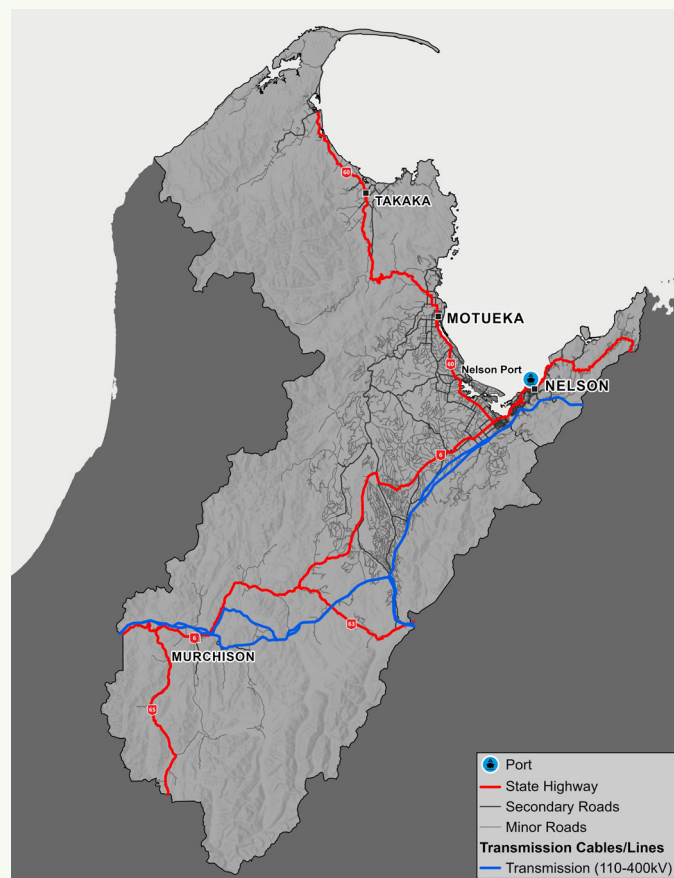
Up to 2022, rimu was the indigenous species with the most volume delivered to mills in the region.

Table 3. Log volumes in m³ delivered to mills in 2022 in Nelson and Tasman. Source: Indigenous Forestry - MPI.

	Rimu	Red beech	Silver beech	Tōtara	Hard beech	Mātai
m ³	1765.9	905.1	837	392.2	371	213.5

Figure 11. Map of key infrastructure across Nelson and Tasman.

[View a high-resolution version of the infrastructure map in Nelson and Tasman.](#)



The power lines information on this map may be incomplete. The information that is currently displayed is what MPI had authorised access to at the time of creating this fact sheet.

Table 4. Port Nelson export volumes and value (Free on Board - FOB) for forestry and wood products for year ending December 2024. Source: Overseas Merchandise and Trade

Product ¹	Unit of measure	Volume	Value – FOB (NZD)
Logs	Cubic metre	1,104,904	167,501,196
Panels	Cubic metre	176,054	125,393,503
Paper & paperboard	Mixed ²	–	368,972
Sawn timber & sleepers	Cubic metre	27,044	27,817,355
Other forestry products	Mixed ²	–	3,679,189
Total	–	–	324,760,215

1 – Port Nelson did not export pulp in 2024.

2 – Quantity cannot be provided as products are reported in different units of measure.

Infrastructure

Roads

State Highway 6 (SH 6) connects Nelson to Marlborough to the east, after Nelson SH 6 turns south passing through Tasman as it connects to the West Coast/Te Tai Poutini. SH 60 connects Nelson to Tasman traversing along the Tasman Bay/Te Tai-o-Aore to the northwest parts of Tasman including Motueka, Abel Tasman National Park, Golden Bay, and Farewell Spit. SH 63 connects Tasman to Marlborough in the east. SH 65 connects SH 6 and 7.

Electricity

Transpower owns the transmission lines in the region which consist of:

- one 110 kV double circuit tower line;
- one 120 kV single circuit pole;
- one 220 kV double circuit tower line;
- three 50/66 kV single circuit poles;
- two 50/66 single circuit tower lines.

There are four substations in the region: Stoke near Nelson, then Motueka, Upper Tākaka, and Motupipi in Tasman.

Power is primarily generated in the region by Cobb hydroelectric (34.3 MW), operated by Manawa Energy.

Port Nelson

Port Nelson is jointly owned by the Nelson District Council and Tasman District Council. The volume passing through the port is primarily exports 67%. Production in the region is mainly forest products, seafood, pip fruit and wine, all of which are exported through the port. The port offers bulk cargo, containerised and cruise ship services (source: [Port Nelson](#)).

Rail

Nelson is one of five New Zealand urban centres without rail links. Similarly, Tasman also does not have rail links. The closest rail links are in the Marlborough region to the east.

Sources: Port Nelson, Transpower, Contact Energy, Genesis Energy, Manawa Energy, New Zealand Transport Agency / Waka Kotahi.





Useful links

Forestry

[New Zealand forest data – MPI](#)

[Afforestation and deforestation intentions survey 2022 – MPI \(PDF, 943 KB\)](#)

[Forestry and Wood Processing Nelson Tasman](#)

[Tasman District Overview – New Zealand Farm Forestry Association](#)

[Plantation forestry activity | Tasman District Council](#)

[Forestry-Nelson City Council](#)

[Top of the South Forests – Top of the South Wood Council](#)

Wood processing

[Invest in New Zealand wood processing \(March 2020\) – NZTE](#)

Regional statistics

[Place Summaries | Tasman Region | Stats NZ](#)

[Place Summaries | Nelson Region | Stats NZ](#)

[Regional economic activity report – Tasman – MBIE](#)

[Regional economic activity report – Nelson – MBIE](#)

[Te Taihuhu – Top of the South | NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi](#)

[Top of the South / Te Tau Ihu | Kānoa Grow Regions](#)

[Long term plan and annual plan | Tasman District Council](#)

[Climate and Weather of Nelson and Tasman – NIWA](#)

Feedback

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