

Fiends of the Mau Watershed (FOMAWA)

Newsletter No: 2, August 2002

We have been busy since our April newsletter. In those four months, we have felt our way forward, seeking to spend time and money to the best effect. We are conscious that if we cannot help to bring about change, and that means improvements, on the ground, then we are not achieving the aims we have set ourselves.

- The anticipated meeting duly took place with the President on April 13th. Hugo Douglas-Dufresne who had been instrumental in doing the aerial survey work explained what the maps showed. For example, and taking a situation as near to Nakuru as possible, it was seen that only two pieces of indigenous forest remained within the Lake Nakuru catchment area, and both of these had been degazetted. The President demonstrated a sound understanding of the geography of the Mau area, and said that he was pleased to have evidence before him that showed the true position. He declared a determination to ensure that things did not get worse; with the protection of the indigenous forests a priority. He acknowledged that the plantation forests also had to be preserved, and where they were felled they had to be replanted. This was all good news, and the policing of the forests does seem to have been tightened up. **BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES ARE RESULTING IN THE SUCCESSFUL PLANTING OF MORE TREES.**
- Around Molo it is said that some 24,000 trees were planted under the shamba system in April/May on Forestry Dept land, on which the trees had been felled at least three or four years ago. With weather in May, June and July, which was remarkably, dry the FD's officers report that almost all the trees have died. **THERE WAS NO CAPABILITY TO KEEP THE PLANTS ALIVE WHEN THE WEATHER BECAME HOSTILE.** Yet much of the planting with which FOMAWA has been involved has been a success, the result of determination and planning; and no preparedness to shrug off failure with the words 'Shauri ya mungu'. We are aware that the FD has drawn up plans for replanting on a massive scale (it is said that there is a backlog of around 24,000 hectares), but plans do not themselves produce results and we cannot believe that it will be a success unless there is a radical change in attitude. We are strongly doubtful about using the shamba system in the future; the growers have an interest in ensuring that the trees do not survive.
- The need for a farmer to obtain permission from an agricultural officer, and then to take the AO's note to the Chief, before he can cut down a tree on his own land is counter productive, and is causing a lot of resentment. **FARMERS MUST BE ENCOURAGED TO GROW TREES BOTH FOR THEIR OWN USE, AND TO SELL. THEY WILL BE DISCOURAGED FROM DOING THIS IF THEY HAVE TO WASTE TIME AND MONEY (How does the AO visit the site unless the farmer gives him the matatu fare?) IN OBTAINING PERMISSION TO DO SOMETHING WHICH IS THEIR RIGHT.**
- We have seen the Forestry Dept's ambitious plans to replant the backlog of some 12,500 hectares. These plans were discussed at a meeting on **August 22** chaired by the PS in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. If achieved they will result in replanting being up to date by the end of 2004 in which case the help of the Private Sector will not be required. However we have said that we do not

believe that the plan will be achieved, and we have restated our view that we could help to find private investors who would only be prepared to put their cash out if the conditions were attractive and watertight. We emphasized that a situation was possible where the Government would be better off in cash, the country in timber and jobs, while the investor made a satisfactory return. The passing of the new Forestry Bill may be a turning point but we are told that private investors could become tenants of FD land before the Bill goes through. The ball is in the Government's court.

- The provincial Forest Officer, the DFO, the DOs from Molo and Rongai and some farmers doing nursery work met at Doune Farm on August 23rd and spent the morning seeing the Cypress and Eucalyptus which have been planted with FOMAWA help. There was general agreement that quality of work set standards for others to aim at, and that "seeing was believing". We are encouraged that the Forestry Dept and the Administration want to work with us to share the knowledge that we have.
- On August 20th evening, FOMAWA team (Johnny Onslow and Jacob Mwanduka) held a meeting with 12 business men from Nakuru Town at Rift Valley Sports Club. The purpose of the meeting was to create awareness to environmental degradation facing Mau Forest Complex and that there is need for collaborative effort to address the problem.
- The recent ban on the movement of timber does nothing to solve the shortage and has resulted in much hardship. Timber which had been felled, paid for, but not extracted deteriorated in quality. Most of the primary sawmills closed (notable exceptions being Raiply and Timsales) with great loss of income for the owner, and no jobs. BANS OF THIS KIND DO NOT PUT MORE HEALTHY YOUNG PLANTS IN THE GROUND. THAT IS WHAT IS NEEDED IF THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE TIMBER REQUIREMENTS ARE TO BE MET. FURTHER, IF AFTER CAREFUL THOUGHT SOME DIRECTIVE IS CONSIDERED NECESSARY THEN IT MUST APPLY EQUALLY TO EVERYONE.
- There is a welcome honesty in the Government's acknowledgement (direct from both the PS in The Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, and the Chief Conservator) that the obligations to replant have not been fulfilled, and though there appears to be a willingness to accept that it would be sensible to embrace the involvement of the private sector, which we think would be forthcoming if the conditions for an investment were attractive, we have seen no positive steps towards this becoming a reality; and while we have put forward discussion papers, and have been told that a meeting must take place to talk them over, nothing has happened. AND IN THE MEANTIME THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO GET WORSE.

Now to record our achievements

SCHOOLS.

- Helped with planting 6,815 trees in 17 schools, in holes dug with the FOMAWA post hole digger
- Designed and produced cartoon posters on tree planting. Thanks to Helen Onslow for the art work

- On August 6th held a workshop attended by 40 headmasters from the area round Rongai to explain how FOMAWA is trying to help, and to launch the posters.
- In all this we have been greatly assisted by Margaret Nyawira Githinji of Action Aid, Rift Region-Nakuru, both financially and with moral support. ActionAid have funded the purchase of a generator, video and TV so that films on environmental matters can be shown in schools. We are grateful to them.
- Trees R 4 U signboards will advertise our involvement.
- Kenneth Kirui of African Highlands Produce (AHP) has supported tree planting in schools in Kericho while Robin Davies has supported tree planting around Nandi hills.

FARMERS

- We have continued to stress that THERE IS MONEY IN TREES, and have tried to persuade some of the local farmers, both small and large scale, that with our help trees can be planted well and will be a good investment. There have been some resounding successes, (and some disappointments), and we intend to have an open day to show the doubters just what can be achieved. We have a brief paper on the commercial viability of tree planting.
- Supported 12 farmers to plant 16,200 tree in their farms, holes dug with FOMAWA post hole digger

CHARCOAL

- Charcoal is here to stay as the favourite fuel of a large proportion of the population. There is no point in branding charcoal makers as criminals; but it is important that charcoal is not made from resources that are not sustainable, and that is where policing is required. The greater the amount that is made from renewable resources the less the pressure will be on the indigenous forests and we are pleased that we were able to arrange for the Provincial Forest Officer to visit Soysambu and agree in principle that charcoal should be made from the dying fever trees, which will be replaced naturally. It is expected that efficient kilns will be used.

THE ADMINISTRATION

- We have involved the local administration, from the PC down, in what we are doing, and have liaised with the agricultural officers and chiefs. We have visited Egerton University and Baraka Agricultural College where our advice and help has been welcomed.

STAFF

- Jacob Mwanduka leads the team with patience and perseverance. Beatrice is in charge of the office, now firmly located among friends on Gogar Farm, between Salgaa and Rongai; David has done wonders with the tractor and hole digging, and James is out in the field spreading the gospel and following up on what has been done on the ground.

FUNDING

- African Highlands Produce has been the main supporter. Thank you. While Action Aid has given most welcome support for particular projects. Several individuals and companies have also put their backs behind us with help in cash and in kind. It shows that they know that their own prosperity is linked with the health of the Mau and the whole environment. But, sadly, the view appears to persist among the majority that what happens to the rivers and the rainfall is nothing to do with them; and even if it was, what can they do about it? Perhaps it is all about education. Nakuru is a town whose prosperity is linked to the health of agriculture. Businessmen complain that trade is dull and yet when we explain that matters could get worse with the drying of the rivers and changes in the rainfall distribution - not to mention the shortage of good water for humans and stock- many are disinclined to lend their support. IF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE WITHIN THE MAU CATCHMENT DO NOT MIND ABOUT A DETERIORATING SITUATION THEN THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO EXPECT OUTSIDE DONORS TO COME TO THE RESCUE. Please spread the word and tell your friends that they can help; and put the sticker on your car.

We will continue in our efforts to convince the Government that THERE IS A BETTER WAY FORWARD; AND THAT THE COUNTRY DESERVES ONE, and on the ground, where the ability to get things done is within our own control we intend to expand our activities.

Very best wishes to those who mind from one who minds.

Richard Muir,
FOMAWA Chairman,
Doune Farm, Molo