



The Sustainable Log

ROADING UPDATE

When the new Bam mill project started the only way of getting from Bonoabo camp to Bam mill site was by banana boat. If one was lucky it was the new twin-engine job, which had more speed, making the crossing time shorter.

Then 12km from camp to Lorianne jetty, board the boat, head up for a 20 minute ride to Robinson river jetty, and then hope and pray that the message sent to pick you up at the jetty got through, or was remembered, and that the ute was waiting. Many a traveler waited hours for the connecting ute. No cell phone connections here either!

Then a 15 km ute ride to Bam Sawmill site. On a good day this whole trip would take about 90 minutes. The building of a 22km road connection was always on the cards, and was started in November 2009. Before the construction could begin the route was plotted on aerial photo maps, by Henry, and the road line was walked, checked and rechecked by Colin, Steven and Greg. Many land disputes had to be entertained, delaying the progress by four months.

Being inside the FMA very strict environmental rules had to be applied to the route as well as construction techniques. Once the road line was established, and the disputes settled Sailas and his crew of road makers were able to begin, with machinery being split up, and work progressing from both the Bam and Bonoabo ends at the same time, with Sailas looking after the Bonoabo end and Francis the Robinson River end.

Progress was slow, with the rain being our biggest deterrent, turning what road had already been shaped, into muddy quagmires very quickly. Rainfall patterns in Papua New Guinea are very difficult to predict, and dry spells are virtually non-existent. When the mill shut down in November 2009, the harvesting skidders were released to assist on the road, allowing for more work to be done when the sun did eventually shine long enough to dry the soil. On 8th March 2010, a ute driven by mechanic Sanana Gado, with Colin as passenger, was the first vehicle to drive between the two mills. It was a hairy ride as Gado described it, and he did not think that they would make it up the very steep hill near Apaeva village. Colin got out at that point and Gado went through to Bonoabo.

On 11th March, Rob de Fegely and Mike Janssen were on a site visit, and experienced the rough ride first hand. We were through, and the road was becoming a reality.

It took another 4 – 5 weeks to complete the gravelling, and install cross drains, and still today, after every good rainstorm repair work is undertaken. Maintenance and upgrading will continue for many years as the road surface settles. The road allows the trip between the mills to take less than 30 minutes, and has been open to heavy vehicles since mid April 2010.

We call the road the Sailas highway, as besides all the people who had an input, Sailas and his crew had the mammoth task of moving the earth to create the road.

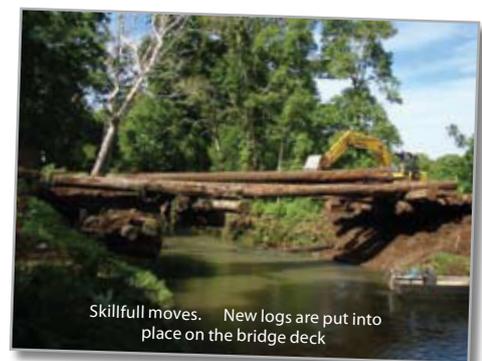
Well done to all the participants in this project, and when we drive so comfortably between Bam and Bonoabo, just remember those who sweated many hours in harsh conditions to make it possible. The road will eventually be upgraded to a grade 1 road, linking into the national grid, as part of the Magi highway. The villages of Segiri and Apaeva and surrounding communities now have a road which means transport right on the doorstep, changing rural lifestyles for ever.



BRIDGE REPAIRS AT THE CLOUDY BAY FMA

Recent heavy and continuous rains have played havoc at Cloudy Bay. The most recent upset was when a routine bridge repair took longer than planned. The road crew had to replace some rotten logs on the Deben River bridge. This bridge is on the only road between the FMA and Port Moresby, so it is important to keep it in good condition. All the timber from the Deman TA also crosses this bridge. When the old logs were removed it was found that the buttress logs on the south bank were also rotten and needed replacing. The decision was made to do this and work late to complete the job. Unfortunately there was heavy rain that afternoon and the Deben River flooded, stopping all work until a day later. This caused quite a few problems.

Contractors who were on site had to get out to catch flights to other jobs and villagers from Port Moresby travelling on PMV's had to sit and wait.



Skillfull moves. New logs are put into place on the bridge deck



Another large log fits into place on the bridge