

15th March 2024

Unique or Special Wildlife Values Report

Unique or Special Wildlife Values – Part 4 of the Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999

Section 32 of the *Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999* (the Act) sets out the meaning of unique or special wildlife values.

For the purposes of this Act, land has unique or special wildlife values if:

- (a) any unique or special wildlife grows on or inhabits the land, or
- (b) any such wildlife is likely to grow on or inhabit the land.

Unique or special wildlife is:

- a) any endangered species, endangered ecological community or extinct species, within the meaning of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, being a species of (or ecological community that includes) a vascular plant, amphibian, bird, mammal or reptile, or
- (b) any endangered species, endangered ecological community or species presumed extinct (within the meaning of Part 7A of the Fisheries Management Act 1994), being a species of (or ecological community that includes) fish.

Unique or special wildlife does not include any tree or shrub that is planted on an authorised plantation in the course of establishment or other operations on the plantation.

It is a condition of the authorisation that the plantation owner or manager notify the Minister (or delegate) as soon as they become aware that plantation operations have or are likely to have impact on unique or special wildlife values on the land concerned. Under section 34 of the Act the Minister (delegate) is required as soon as notified, or otherwise becomes aware is to arrange for:

- An evaluation of any such impacts or likely impacts of the plantation operations and
- A report to be provided addressing matters in section 34(2) of the Act.

The Minister administering the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* is to be notified of such arrangements.

This document provides information that addresses the matters set out in Section 34(2) of the Act and an evaluation of the impacts or likely impacts of plantation operations on the unique or special wildlife the Minister (delegate) has been notified or made aware of. The report refers to following.

Land subject to this report: NE0503P Chichester State Forest – Compartments 51, 52 and 53

Date the Minister first became aware/ notified: 29th January 2024

Report prepared by: NSW DPI Plantation Regulation Unit

Trees or shrubs planted in the authorised plantation: *Eucalyptus laevopinea* (Silvertop Stringy Bark)

Plantation operations on the plantation evaluated in this report: Plantation operations in Compartments 051-053 referred to in Harvest Plan Map 200004678/HP_CHICHESTER_Plantation_051_052_053_2024 (Attachment A).

Unique or Special Wildlife Values Evaluated

Table 1: Unique or special wildlife likely to grow on or inhabit the land

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i>	Koala
<i>Mixophyes balbus</i>	Stuttering Frog
<i>Petauroides Volans</i>	Greater Glider
<i>Senna acclinis</i>	Rainforest Cassia
<i>Rhodamnia rubescens</i>	Scrub Turpentine

A report is required to be prepared evaluating the impacts or likely impacts on USWV when the Minister or Department is notified by the plantation owner or manager of impacts or likely impacts on USWV or otherwise becomes aware.

The Department was made aware of the possible impacts from plantation operations on unique or special wildlife values (table 1) within NE0503P, Compartments 51, 52 and 53. Those listed in Table 1 may possibly be growing or inhabiting the 148-hectare plantation land subject to operations. This report will address the unique or special wildlife values relating to these species in Table 1 and was prepared by the NSW DPI Plantation Regulation Unit.

The existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values

Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) has undertaken an assessment of the existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values (USWV) for land subject to plantation operations within Chichester State Forest compartments 51, 52 and 53, part of authorisation NE0503P. The assessment involved searches of relevant databases, field inspection and identification of any available habitat for compartments 51, 52 and 53 in Chichester State Forest. The NSW DPI Plantations Regulation Unit verified the findings with a combination of desktop and field assessment following receipt of the FCNSW assessment report (Chichester 51 52 53 Assessment and Management of Wildlife Values in Plantations). The following are the findings of that assessment.

Unique or special wildlife values relating to the Koala - *Phascolarctos cinereus* inhabiting or likely to inhabit the land concerned

The existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values relating to the Koala - *Phascolarctos cinereus*

Koalas have an extensive range in NSW and can be found in most eucalypt woodland and forest environments according to the NSW Government's threatened species profile.

High quality Koala habitat is locally abundant in many parts of the Chichester Dam catchment area which includes Chichester State Forest and south east sections of Barrington Tops National Park (2022 State of NSW and Department of Planning and Environment).

No individuals or scats were detected on-site during inspections; however, from neighbour reports and historical incidental observations and records, they are known to occur on the land concerned. Due to no evidence of koalas inhabiting the land and no koalas having been recorded within the plantation boundary, it is unlikely that they will be impacted by harvesting or re-establishment work.

Koalas are highly mobile, with home range sizes varying with the quality of their habitat. Home ranges can range from a few hectares to several hundred hectares in size, depending on factors around the individual koala, such as sex and age, as well as the habitat.

The species composition of the plantation is predominantly *Eucalyptus laevopinea* (Silvertop Stringy Bark), which is not a preferred koala feed tree (NSW Environment Website). However, vegetation protected by the drainage feature prescriptions within the Plantations and Reafforestation (Code) Regulation 2001 together with over 21,000 hectares of adjacent native forest in Chichester and Barrington Tops National Park to the west and north which covers an area of 74,567 hectares enables extensive connectivity with varying quality of koala habitat and primary feed trees such as *Eucalyptus microcorys* (Tallowwood).

The extent to which plantation operations are likely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the Koala - *Phascolarctos cinereus*

As per the FCNSW Plantation Harvest and Haul Plan for Chichester State Forest Compartments 51, 52 and 53 (Harvest Plan No. 200004678/HP_CHICHESTER_Plantation_051_052_053_2024), advised that the following standard mitigations and operational protocols will be adhered to:

Standard Mitigations:

- Connectivity to adjacent habitat: Areas of native forest or non-harvested native plantation are present within 500m of the plantation harvest area.
- Riparian vegetation will be retained on all mapped drainage lines following FCNSW standard mitigations applied in plantation harvesting, in excess of the Plantations and Reafforestation (Code) Regulation 2001 (the Code) requirements.

- The area will be re-established with local native eucalypt species as soon as practical after harvesting operations.

Operational Protocols:

The harvest crew must look for koalas, and evidence of koalas (scats), throughout the operation and make a record of this search via plan notes or the MapApp.

If a koala is located within the Authorised plantation during harvesting the following sequence of notification is to occur immediately;

Crew →Harvest Coordinator →DPI Plantation Regulation Unit:

The immediate action to be taken;

The inhabited tree must be marked and a 50m buffer (or greatest extent available) instigated around the inhabited tree and a temporary corridor of unharvested vegetation retained (collectively referred to as the temporary protection zone (TPZ)) to link the inhabited tree to the nearest retained native vegetation. Harvesting operations may then proceed around the TPZ whilst awaiting advice from DPI. When the koala has moved from within the TPZ, all available trees within this area may be harvested. Refer to the Koala Search Guide and Koala Emergency Response Plan in FCMapApp module documents.

These mitigations are sufficient and will allow the proposed plantation operations to have minimal impacts on the unique or special wildlife values in relation to the koala.

Whether plantation operations in all or part of the authorised plantation must be prevented, suspended for a period or modified so as to minimise the adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the Koala - *Phascolarctos cinereus*

For the identified USWVs that are likely to grow on or inhabit the land to which the authorised plantation applies, there are modified harvesting measures that must be implemented to minimise any adverse impact.

The recommended modification to Harvest Plan No. 200004678 operational protocols for koalas is to include a minimum width (or greatest extent available) of 100m for the temporary corridor of unharvested vegetation to be retained. This will ensure there is a clear standard for FCNSW to implement in the linkage of the inhabited tree 50m buffer and the nearest retained vegetation.

In the circumstance that USWV are confirmed on-site, further evaluation will be required to assess whether plantation operations on all or part of the authorised plantation must be prevented, suspended, or modified.

Unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Mixophyes balbus* - Stuttering Frog growing or likely to grow on the land concerned

The existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Mixophyes balbus*- Stuttering Frog

The NSW Government's threatened species profile and the NSW Scientific Committee's final determination for *Mixophyes balbus* highlight that the species occur along the east coast of Australia from southern Queensland to north-eastern Victoria. Considered to have disappeared from Victoria and to have undergone considerable range contraction in NSW, particularly in south-east NSW. It is the only *Mixophyes* species that occurs in south-east NSW and in recent surveys it has only been recorded at three locations south of Sydney. The Dorrigo region, in north-east NSW, appears to be a stronghold for this species.

No historical records of the species within the compartments were identified.

No individuals were detected on-site during inspections.

The extent to which plantation operations are likely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Mixophyes balbus* - Stuttering Frog

Harvest Plan No. 200004678 states that all streams and drainage lines where the frog habitat is located will have the appropriate buffers applied as required by the Code and all other environmental requirements followed during operations. The FCNSW USW Assessment Report indicate 5 records within 2km of the plantation footprint.

Whether plantation operations in all or part of the authorised plantation must be prevented, suspended for a period or modified so as to minimise the adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Mixophyes balbus* - Stuttering Frog

As per the Code prescriptions for the standards relating to the protection of soil and water, buffers on drainage lines, Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Mixophyes balbus* - Stuttering Frog therefore the plantation operations are not required to be prevented, suspended or modified.

Unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Petauroides Volans* - Greater Glider inhabiting or likely to inhabit the land concerned

The existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Petauroides Volans* - Greater Glider

The NSW Government's threatened species profile indicates the species occurs in eastern Australia, in eucalypt forests and woodlands, where it has a broad distribution from around Proserpine in Queensland, south through NSW and the Australian Capital Territory into Victoria. They are an aboreal mammal and shelter during the day in tree hollows and will use up to 18 hollows in their home range.

Greater Gliders are highly mobile and occupy a relatively small home range with an average size of 1 to 3 ha.

No individuals were detected on-site during inspections. No large hollow-bearing trees were detected during the inspection.

No historical records of the species within the operational area.

The extent to which plantation operations are likely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Petauroides Volans* - Greater Glider

Harvest Plan No. 200004678 Remnant Tree Section states that ALL NON-PLANTED trees greater than 80cm DBHOB – with hollows present MUST be retained. Native remnant trees which contain hollows should be retained during harvesting where they exist and where it is safe to do so (refer to clause 23 of Code). Individual remnant trees within the plantation that are clearly an older age cohort than the planted trees must be retained during harvesting. These remnant trees must be marked on the FCMapApp by the contractor. This does not include plantation ingrowth (trees that have grown within the plantation boundary since the time of planting) which may exceed the size of the crop trees. Notwithstanding the above, dangerous trees can be removed provided this is documented. FCNSW LFO must be consulted on removal of any individual remnant trees. The FCNSW USW Assessment Report indicates 30 records within 2km, but outside the operational area.

Whether plantation operations in all or part of the authorised plantation must be prevented, suspended for a period or modified so as to minimise the adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the *Petauroides Volans* - Greater Glider

The plantation which was planted to *Eucalyptus laevopinea* (Silvertop Stringy Bark) in the 1970's has no trees that are hollow bearing which is the preferred habitat of the *Petauroides Volans*. There is suitable habitat in the adjacent native forest areas of Chichester State Forest and in the Barrington Tops National Park to the west and north boundaries.

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Petauroides Volans* - Greater Glider therefore the plantation operations are not required to be prevented, suspended or modified.

Unique or special wildlife values relating to the Scrub Turpentine - *Rhodamnia rubescens* growing or likely to grow on the land concerned

The existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values relating to the Scrub Turpentine - *Rhodamnia rubescens*

The NSW Government's threatened species profile and the NSW Scientific Committee's final determination for *Rhodamnia rubescens* highlight that the species is known to exist in coastal districts north from Batemans Bay in New South Wales to areas inland of Bundaberg in Queensland. *Rhodamnia rubescens* is found in coastal regions in littoral, warm temperate, and subtropical rainforests and wet sclerophyll forests, usually on volcanic and sedimentary soils.

No historical records of the species within the operational area.

5 individual plants were observed in CHC053. The location was the north end of 43-1 trail at - 32.150637, 151.726847. The plants were not in good health, had minimal foliage and possible myrtle rust with yellowing leaves. Diameter at breast height over bark (DBHOB) of the shrubs was between 2 to 5cm.

The extent to which plantation operations are likely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the Scrub Turpentine - *Rhodamnia rubescens*

Harvest Plan No. 200004678 states that if individuals are identified during operational activities, the harvesting coordinator must be notified. Operations must cease in the vicinity until the Senior Field Ecologist has determined conditions under which operations can continue. The FCNSW USW Assessment Report indicates 17 records within 5km, but outside the operational area

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on the values of the land in relation to *Rhodamnia rubescens*.

Whether plantation operations in all or part of the authorised plantation must be prevented, suspended for a period or modified so as to minimise the adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the Scrub Turpentine - *Rhodamnia rubescens*

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Rhodamnia rubescens* therefore the plantation operations are not required to be prevented, suspended or modified.

Unique or special wildlife values relating to the Rainforest Cassia - *Senna acclinis* growing or likely to grow on the land concerned

The existence and extent of unique or special wildlife values relating to the Rainforest Cassia - *Senna acclinis*

The NSW Government's threatened species profile and the NSW Scientific Committee's final determination for *Senna acclinis* highlight that the species occurs in coastal districts and adjacent tablelands of NSW from the Illawarra in NSW to Queensland.

No historical records of the species within the compartments were identified.

No individuals were detected on-site during inspections.

The extent to which plantation operations are likely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the Rainforest Cassia - *Senna acclinis*

Harvest Plan No. 200004678 states If individuals are identified during operational activities – the possible record must be retained and protected, operations must cease, and the Senior Field Ecologist must be notified immediately such that appropriate operational conditions can be determined.

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on the values of the land in relation to Rainforest Cassia - *Senna acclinis*.

The FCNSW USW Assessment Report indicate 4 records within 5km but outside the operational area.

Whether plantation operations in all or part of the authorised plantation must be prevented, suspended for a period or modified so as to minimise the adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values relating to the Rainforest Cassia - *Senna acclinis*

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to Rainforest Cassia - *Senna acclinis* therefore the plantation operations are not required to be prevented, suspended or modified.

In the case of an authorised timber plantation – the extent of the direct financial loss, if any, arising from harvesting operations on the plantation being so delayed, restricted or prevented altogether in order to protect unique or special wildlife values

The extent of any direct financial loss arising from harvesting operations being delayed, restricted, or prevented is unable to be determined at this time because no area of authorised plantation is proposed to restrict harvesting, other than the implementation of temporary harvest exclusion zones should a USWV species be confirmed on-site, however, there would be negligible financial impacts as a result of TPZ's being established.

Evaluation of any impacts or likely impacts of plantation operations on the unique or special wildlife values

In summary, plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Mixophyes balbus*, *Petauroides Volans*, *Senna acclinis* and *Rhodamnia rubescens*. The evaluation of any impacts or likely impacts of the plantation operations on the unique or special wildlife values for each of the aforementioned species is detailed below.

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Mixophyes balbus* due to the habitat being retained as per Code requirements. In addition, FCNSW have introduced conservative drainage line harvest prescriptions relating to machinery entry into drainage line buffer areas (FCNSW Harvest Plan No. 200004678 -Section 9).

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Petauroides Volans* due to the lack of habitat and suitable hollow bearing trees in the operational area. Any remnant trees with hollows located within the operational area will be retained under the FCNSW Harvest Plan No. 200004678.

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Rhodamnia rubescens* as its primary threat and listing as endangered was due to threats from Myrtle Rust. If any plantation operations including roading and establishment activities are to impact the land where the *Rhodamnia rubescens* grows FCNSW is required to notify DPI.

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Senna acclinis* as no records were detected and if detected they will be managed to minimise impacts as per the prescription within the FCNSW Harvest Plan No. 200004678.

In relation to koalas, connectivity to adjacent habitat is sound and extensive, with 21,000 hectares of native forest surrounding the plantation operational area. The immediate areas adjacent to the plantation are shown on the Operational Map (Appendix C) and the areas consist of Forest Management Zones (FMZ) that include native forest (FMZ 4), High Conservation Old Growth (HCOG) and Rainforest areas. All these connectivity areas will enable a safe dispersion of koalas out of the operational areas (Hynes, Whisson & Stefano 2021).

Koalas moving through the adjacent native forests and protected area of Old Growth will also be able to take advantage of higher eucalypt species diversity and feed trees.

Also, located in the north and western boundaries to the Chichester State Forest is the vast extent (74,567 hectares) of Barrington Tops National Park which contains areas of high-quality koala habitat (State of NSW and Department of Planning and Environment 2022).

All these reserved areas will provide habitat linkages and allow individuals to move through the 148ha Plantation footprint.

Report outcome

Plantation operations are unlikely to have an adverse impact on unique or special wildlife values in relation to *Phascolarctos cinereus*, *Mixophyes balbus*, *Petauroides Volans*, *Senna acclinis* and *Rhodamnia rubescens*.

With the inclusion of mitigation measures included in the FCNSW Harvest Plan No. 200004678 no further measures are proposed in relation to *Phascolarctos cinereus*. The implementation of modified harvesting protocols and the cessation of operations if USW is confirmed on-site will alleviate the likelihood of an adverse impact on the values of the land concerned in relation to these species.

It is a condition of the plantation authorisation that the owner or manager of the plantation notify the Minister as soon as the owner or manager becomes aware that plantation operations on the plantation have or are likely to have an impact on unique or special wildlife values of the land concerned.

It is a condition of the plantation authorisation that the owner or manager of the plantation notify the Minister as soon as the owner or manager becomes aware that plantation operations on the plantation have or are likely to have an impact on unique or special wildlife values of the land concerned.

Position of delegated officer	Name	Signature	Date
Group Director – Forestry Policy Research & Development	Nick Milham	 Noted and agreed that no additional conditions be prescribed	15 March 2024

Attachments

Attachment	Title
A	Regulatory controls for plantation operations impacting the critically endangered <i>Rhodomnia rubescens</i> and <i>Rhodomyrtus psidioides</i>
B	Determination of likely impact of plantation operations on the endangered species, <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> (Koala)
C	Harvest Plan Operational Chichester State Forest Compartments CHC 051, 052, 053

Attachment A – Regulatory controls for plantation operations impacting the critically endangered *Rhodornia rubescens* and *Rhodomyrtus psidioides*



Department of
Primary Industries

OUT19/14030

Mr Nick Roberts
CEO Forestry Corporation of NSW
121-131 Oratava Avenue
West Pennant Hills NSW 2125

Dear Nick,

Regulatory controls for plantation operations impacting the critically endangered *Rhodornia rubescens* and *Rhodomyrtus psidioides*

Mr Matt Dobson, FCNSW Senior Ecologist, has requested formal confirmation of the advice provided by DPI Forestry Plantations staff relating to additional regulatory controls and the management of the critically endangered species, *Rhodornia rubescens* and *Rhodomyrtus psidioides*.

After considering the reasons for the threatened species listing and information provided by the DPI Forest Science team, I am satisfied that FCNSW plantation operations won't, or aren't, likely to impact the populations of these species at this time. As a result, we do not propose to apply any additional regulatory controls on FCNSW plantation authorisations.

It would be appreciated if FCNSW could collate distribution information for these two species wherever they occur on FCNSW plantations. Any information you collect may assist with any discussions about impacts on these two species into the future.

If your plantations operations change and have, or are likely to have, an impact on either of these species, FCNSW must notify DPI Forestry as required by section 33 of the *Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999* (attached).

If you require any further information, please contact me on 02 6391 3613.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Milham'.

Nick Milham

Group Director Forestry Policy, Research and Development

18 October 2019

Attachment B – Determination of likely impact of plantation operations on the endangered species, *Phascolarctos cinereus* (Koala)



Department of
Primary Industries

CM9 reference: RDOC22/105098

Forestry Corporation of NSW
Anshul Chaudhary

Dear Mr Chaudhary,

Determination of likely impact of plantation operations on the endangered species, *Phascolarctos cinereus* (Koala)

After considering the reasons for the threatened species listing and information regarding Koala habitat and ranges, I am satisfied that plantation operations undertaken in the circumstances outlined in Table 1 won't, or aren't likely to, impact the *Phascolarctos cinereus* (Koala) at this time. As a result, DPI does not propose to apply any additional regulatory controls on plantation operations consistent with the mitigation criteria outlined in Table 1.

Adjacent habitat	Areas of native forest or non-harvested native plantation are present within 500m of the plantation harvest area.
Re-establishment	The plantation is replanted within 1 year of plantation harvest completion.
Mitigation measures for harvest operations	The plantation owner must undertake an inspection across the plantation prior to harvest or thinning operations commencing. A record of the inspection must be retained and made available to DPI. Where the plantation owner finds a koala or evidence of the presence of a koala (eg., scats or scratches on trees) the plantation owner must temporarily cease operations within 50 metres of the location of the koala or where evidence was found and contact DPI.

You will need to notify the DPI Plantations Regulation Unit of any Koala sightings within the plantation boundary. It is recommended that any information regarding distribution of the Koala in plantation areas is collated and supplied to DPI. Any information you collect may assist with discussions about impacts on this species into the future.

You will need to notify the DPI Plantations Regulation Unit of any Koala sightings within the plantation boundary. It is recommended that any information regarding distribution of the Koala in plantation areas is collated and supplied to DPI. Any information you collect may assist with discussions about impacts on this species into the future.

If your plantations operations change and have, or are likely to have, an impact on Koalas, the plantation owner must notify DPI Forestry as required by section 33 of the *Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999* (attached).

If you require any further information, please contact Nick Myer on 0419970627 or nick.myer@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Milham', written in a cursive style.

Nick Milham

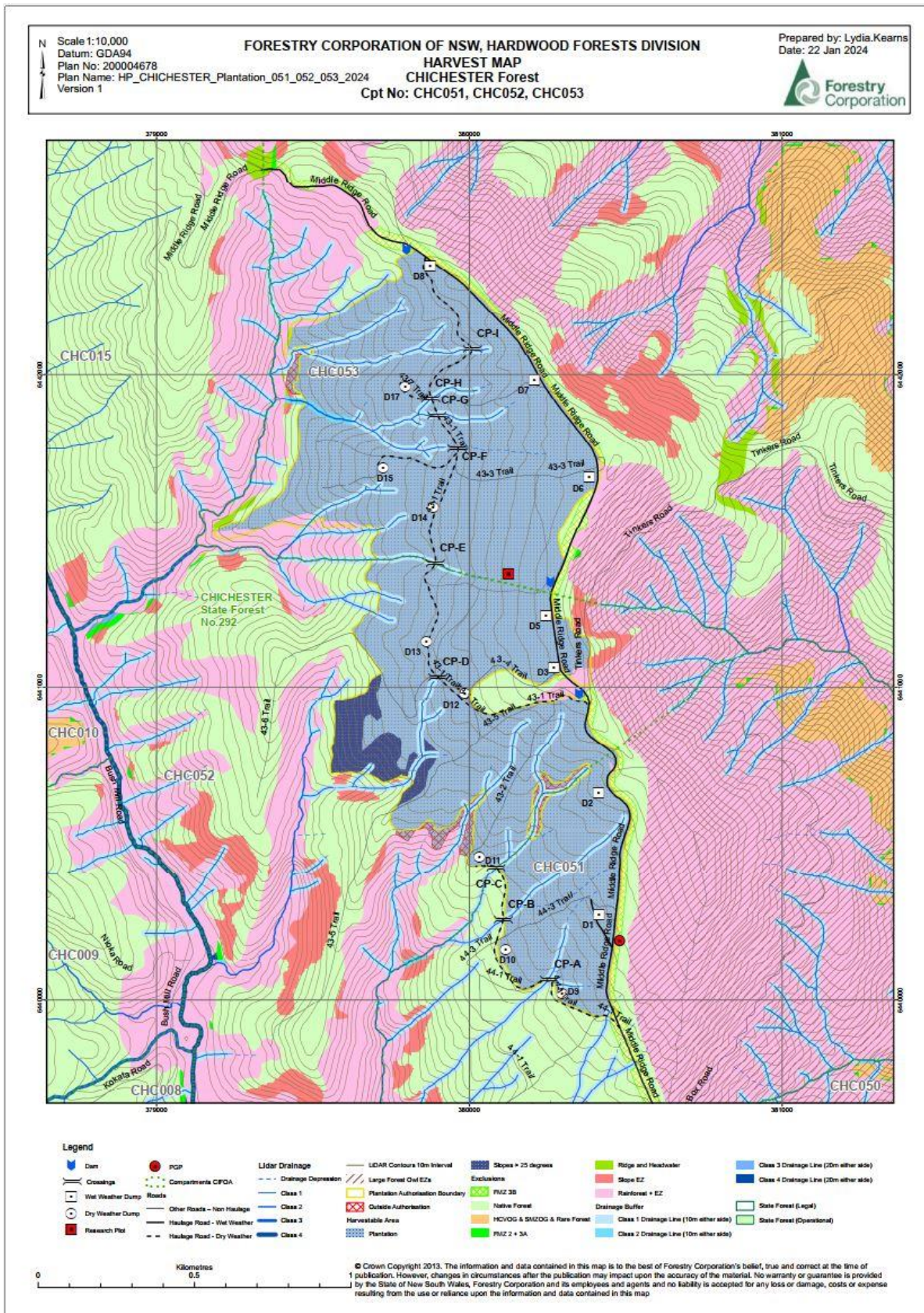
Group Director Forestry Policy, Research and Development

17 June 2022

Appendix

Appendix	Title
A	Harvest Plan Operational Map Chichester State Forest Compartments CHC051, 052, 053

Appendix A – Harvest Plan Operational Map Chichester State Forest Compartments CHC 051, 052, 053



References

Hynes, Emily F., Whisson, Desley A., and Stefano, Julian Di (2021). Response of an arboreal species to plantation harvest. *Forest Ecology and Management* 490, 119092.

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State of NSW and Department of Planning and Environment (2022) - Barrington Tops National Park, Mount Royal National Park and Barrington Tops State Conservation Area Plan of Management

State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2023. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing March 2024. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.