

Submission to Department of Primary Industries ON THE FUTURE OF OUR PUBLIC NATIVE FORESTS

1 message

To: forests@industry.nsw.gov.au

Thu, Feb 8, 2018 at 7:35 PM

Dear Department of Primary Industries,

Climate change is the greatest economic and environmental challenge we are facing. It is reckless to continue logging when we know it reduces carbon stores of forests.

Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles needs to be highly considered, in particular **carbon loss** through woodchips for paper.

"Sustainably managed forests play an important role in mitigating climate change by taking carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it as wood. Forests also produce timber, a natural and renewable resource that itself stores carbon for the life of wood products. Taking into account the energy required to transform raw materials into building products, timber has a smaller carbon footprint than concrete and steel, other popular building materials."

In the short to medium term, ending logging in the forests of the southern forest region would result in between 1.2 and 1.5 million tonnes of avoided emissions per year. At a conservative price for carbon of \$10 per tonne, there may be the potential for these public forests of south east NSW to earn about \$20 million per annum to fund new infrastructure and jobs. *Logging or carbon credits*, The Australia Institute, 2013.

The RFAs are a failed model

The RFAs must not be renewed. The RFAs have failed to protect the environment, failed to result in a thriving timber industry and are driving climate change. The RFAs are therefore a failed model for forest management.

This public asset must be managed for the public good. Logging is robbing future generations. The progress report for the RFA review fails to provide any data to support the assertions that logging is conforming to environmentally sustainable forest management. In contrast, there is lots of evidence that forest wildlife is in decline, we know logging reduces carbon stores and water supplies and we know the majority of people support protecting forests.

We can implement **Alternative models** for forest management. We can do better than industrially logging diverse, living ecosystems. The Great Southern Forest plan seeks to protect forests to facilitate carbon sequestration and climate mitigation.

The failure of the RFAs to protect the environment led to the Great Southern Forest proposal at http://www.greatsouthernforest.org.au/media/GSF_Brief.pdf which presents recommendations for alternative forest management.

The Great Southern Forest recommends that, for the State's 432,575ha of public native forests in the Eden and Southern Regions of NSW, the State and Federal Governments:

1. Espouse a new, ethically responsible long-term vision based on recognition that our public native forests now have greater environmental and economic value if left standing than being logged for woodchips; and acknowledge that plantation timbers surpass our domestic and export wood needs.
2. Endorse changing management of these biodiverse ecosystems from destructive and loss-making logging under outdated, failed RFA regimes, to their crucial roles in the climate and water cycles, and halt and reverse declines in their major contributions to species diversity and community well-being.

3. Develop new management arrangements by drawing on science and Aboriginal land management knowledge to empower Traditional Owners and others to participate in a highly skilled workforce in diverse regional jobs in forest restoration and adaptation.
4. Acknowledge the respect regional communities have: for our native forests and the life they support; for their carbon sequestration and climate mitigation benefits; and for their intrinsic uniqueness and beauty.

The Government should also end native forest logging on private land.

RFAs fail on ecological, economic, social and climate fronts.

Almost 20 years after the RFAs were signed, there is extensive evidence that the RFAs have failed to facilitate Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management; failed to result in an economically sound timber industry; and a network of forest ecosystems has not been delivered. RFAs are therefore a failed model for forest management and should not be renewed.

Climate change was not considered as part of the RFAs, but is now the largest social, economic and environmental challenge we face. It is reckless to continue logging when we know it reduces carbon stores of forests.

The RFAs removed public oversight of logging by excluding 'third parties' from taking legal action on logging breaches. This has resulted in a lack of accountability and transparency in their implementation and has favoured industry over the public interest.

We know that the value of carbon, water and tourism from forests is much greater than timber, and that protected areas are important for the economy. The Government must assess these trade-offs as part of a genuine review.

Transitioning out of the Regional Forest Agreements.

There must be a clear and workable plan within any new RFAs to manage the closure of the woodchipping industry. When the time inevitably comes, woodchippers must not simply walk away from the environmental destruction they have caused or their obligations to workers, as mining companies have done in the past.

Some obvious measures would include, but not be limited to:

1. A remediation bond payable by the owners of the Eden woodchip mill to cover costs of restoring the chipmill site for other purposes once the chipmill closes.
2. A levy on the Forestry Corporation per hectare logged to provide for the restoration of native forests logged between now and the closure of the native forest industry.
3. A water quality levy imposed on all logging operations undertaken in estuary catchments such as Wonboyn and river catchments.
4. A road maintenance fee to ensure that roads used by log trucks cease to be a financial burden on other road users, councils and taxpayers until logging ends.
5. A retraining fund payable by industry employers to entitle all workers currently employed in the logging industry to a retraining package to acquire new skills.
6. A fire control levy payable by the industry to the Rural Fire Service per hectare logged, in recognition of the fact that dense regrowth forests are more fire prone than mature unlogged forests.
7. Twofold Bay seabed damage prevention and remediation levy on woodchip carriers using loading facilities at the chipmill, in compensation for degradation of habitat of species such as the weedy sea dragon and green sea turtle by woodchip carriers.
8. If the RFAs are renewed, Wood Supply Agreements should be for realistic timeframes (no more than 5 years), should not contain "take or pay" clauses and not carry unwarranted penalties for any early cessation of access to wood supply.

Cost to taxpayers, the economy and the environment

The NSW **taxpayer** has paid millions of dollars to a multi-national corporation to buy-back non-existent timber because of over-estimated timber volumes by Forestry Corporation. This is one of a series of subsidies that the logging industry receives.

- The predominant logging for **woodchips** in south east NSW is a long-term contested practice, creates social discord, environmental and financial loss and disrespects Aboriginal culture.
- Combined, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is only the 9th employer in the region and forestry jobs are a small proportion of that total, becoming less and less, replaced by machinery. Between 30 and 40 people are employed at the Eden chipmill and fewer than 100 in total forestry operations.
- Less than 10% of logs are milled for sawlogs. More than 90% of native trees logged in these regions goes to the chipmill and are exported to Asia at a **loss to taxpayers** of \$79 million over the past 7 years and at the **expense of the environment** and iconic species.
- The logging industry is one of the most mechanised and most dangerous. The number of direct jobs in the industry has steadily declined and is now estimated as under 400 across NSW.
- Existing mature plantations provide our domestic and export timber needs.

The damage done to the environment from logging over the past 14 years is extensive and definitely not sustainable forestry.

Logging needs to conform to environmentally sustainable forest management. There is lots of evidence that forest wildlife is in decline, we know logging reduces carbon stores and water supplies and we know the majority of people support protecting forests.

Failure to comply with reporting requirements would result in devastating loss of native trees, animal habitat and increased Climate Change. The transition to plantation forestry is essential as an alternative to native forest logging.

Sincerely

?Think before you print:

1 reem paper = 6% of a tree and 5.4kg of CO2 in the atmosphere; 3 sheets of A4 paper = 1 litre of water



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