

GREAT SOUTHERN FOREST

Talking Points

1. The **expiry of the RFAs** in 2019 and 2021 for Eden and the Southern Regions presents an opportunity to change management from timber extraction to climate stabilisation and carbon sequestration which were not considered when the RFAs were last negotiated.

The Great Southern Forest proposal is based on scientific, economic, commercial and empirical evidence. It concerns over 400,000 ha of the public's native State Forests from Nowra to the Vic Border and west to Tumut.

2. **Principles** of the GSF could generate and maintain regional jobs by restructuring forest management to support the region's unique natural ecosystems. The GSF advocates investment in critically needed public forest restoration industries.

This is the chance of a lifetime to implement new management that creates and supports sustainable jobs, creates healthy forest environments and acknowledges and observes global protocols. A fundamental change in approach to managing State Forests may also take pressure off National Parks by opening up State Forest areas to tourism development.

3. **New Management** principles could embody adaptive and mitigation strategies. Adaptive strategies include resistance, resilience and response options. Mitigation strategies include options to sequester carbon and reduce overall carbon dioxide emissions. Triage approaches would accommodate rapidly changing conditions and for situations where needs are greater.
4. **The woodchip situation.** 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. 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.

5. **Facts:**

- a. The State Forests are exempt from the provisions of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Given that it takes 100 to 200 years for habitat hollows to form in trees, the term 'sustainable logging' has contradictory connotations.
- b. Existing mature plantations provide our domestic and export timber needs.
- c. In the short to medium term, ending logging in these forests 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 to earn about \$20 million per annum to fund new infrastructure and jobs.

- d. Time and money wasted on amending old, failed, forest policies such as the Integrated Forestry Operations Approval and the RFAs is going down the wrong path.

6. **Benefits** to the communities

- a. Global instances of pioneering management of degraded landscapes have boosted the tourist industry. The GSF would help increase tourists' length of stay by creating the environment for a world-class eco and cultural tourism industry capitalizing on the increase in the growing Asian tourist market. Seeking beauty, dark sky country and immersion in nature are primary motivators for inbound and domestic markets.
- b. The GSF would improve regional health by avoiding the use of poisons and post-logging burning, creating physical and learning opportunities for children and youth via easier access to forests.
- c. The GSF would support transition of existing workers into plantations and/or sustainable industries plus lots more jobs for others, particularly young and Aboriginal people.
- d. The GSF would benefit communities and businesses by protecting water catchments and reducing soil erosion.

7. For the state's 432,575ha of native forests in southeast NSW, GSF **recommends** that the State and Federal governments:

- Espouse a new, ethically responsible long-term vision based on recognition that public native forests have far wider community values than their present use as a source of wood which can now be met from plantations.
- Endorse changing management of these biodiverse ecosystems from destructive and loss-making logging under the failed RFA regimes to their crucial roles in the climate and water cycles, and to their major contributions to species diversity and community well-being.
- Develop new management arrangements for the forests and, drawing on the best scientific advice and the knowledge of Traditional Owners, train a highly skilled workforce for diverse regional jobs in forest restoration and adaptation.
- Share the value and respect regional communities have for our native forests: for their carbon sequestration and climate mitigation benefits; for their intrinsic uniqueness and beauty; and, for all their living creatures.

GSF Steering Committee, 13 August 2017

References at: www.greatsouthernforest.org.au/media/GSF_Brief.pdf



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