



From the Bega River mouth to Mumbulla and Gulaga Mountains | www.richardgreen.com.au

14 December 2014

The Hon. Robert Gordon Stokes, MP, Minister for the Environment

cc: The Hon. Luke Foley, MLC, Shadow Minister for the Environment and Climate Change;
Mr David Shoebridge, MLC, Greens Member of the NSW Parliament

Dear Minister Stokes,

PROPOSAL FOR THE GREAT SOUTHERN KOALA FOREST

a diverse wildlife reserve for the south east

The South East Region Conservation Alliance believes the time has come for action to ensure the future of the koala, and other forest dwellers, by establishing a *Great Southern Koala Forest* as part of the national conservation initiative. This belief has proven to be justified by the compelling evidence presented at the IUCN's World Parks Congress (WPC) from many countries which have overcome huge environmental challenges; connected fragmented landscapes, restored degraded ones and watched wildlife return. This *Great Southern Koala Forest* would unify all forest landscapes and range from the mountains to the coast—from Kosciuszko, through the national parks and state forests and, ideally, across the Victorian border.

Koalas were common on the NSW Far South Coast before 1940. Today they teeter on the brink of extinction.¹ Our last remnant population of about 50 vulnerable long-haired koalas struggle to survive in State Forests being logged between Bega and Narooma. Further south, re-establishment plans start by translocating 20 koalas at risk from logging in South Gippsland. These koalas are released into the same tree species now protected within the NSW South East Forest National Park. These koala habitat tree species are not re-growing naturally after logging and expensive extensive restoration is required.

Wildlife mobility and resilience challenges, in the face of climate change, demands continuous forest habitat connectivity across Australia's most extreme altitude gradient—from Kosciuszko to the Coast. Unique opportunities exist for the government to form a rich wildlife system for the southeast forests of NSW and to protect all threatened flora and fauna.

The plantation timber industry in South East NSW is thriving, with over 200 jobs around Bombala and Tumut. In contrast, the Eden woodchip mill employs about 30 people and unsustainably devours 90% of our native forest logs. SERCA opposes logging of native forests.

Natural wet forests (well over 100 years old) are being reduced to more fire-prone dry forests (under 50 years old). Australia's unique hollows-dependent animals are in decline because hollows don't normally appear in Eucalypts before 100 years of age.

¹ *South coast koalas stage a comeback, but logging restart looms.* Matthew Raggatt. 5th January 2014.
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/south-coast-koalas-stage-a-comeback-but-logging-restart-looms-20140104-30b58.html>

Carbon credits can fund the *Great Southern Koala Forest*. Today over 60% avoidable emissions from logging are depleting our valuable natural carbon stocks, whilst only around 4% of carbon is finally stored in solid wood products. State Forests can become profitable natural carbon capture and storage assets.²

Other consequential benefits of this vital high altitude to sea level biodiversity conservation strategy include: acknowledgement of respect for the cultural significance of the forests; creation of new jobs in forest management and restoration, wildlife protection, and nature-based tourism; conservation of water, soil, wildlife and carbon; safeguarding hundreds of threatened faunal species existing within the fragmented forests; restoration of resilience, beauty, and unique flora; and protection of the forest from the threat of biomass burning.

We look forward to discussing this proposal with you. Please contact either of our representatives.

Yours sincerely,

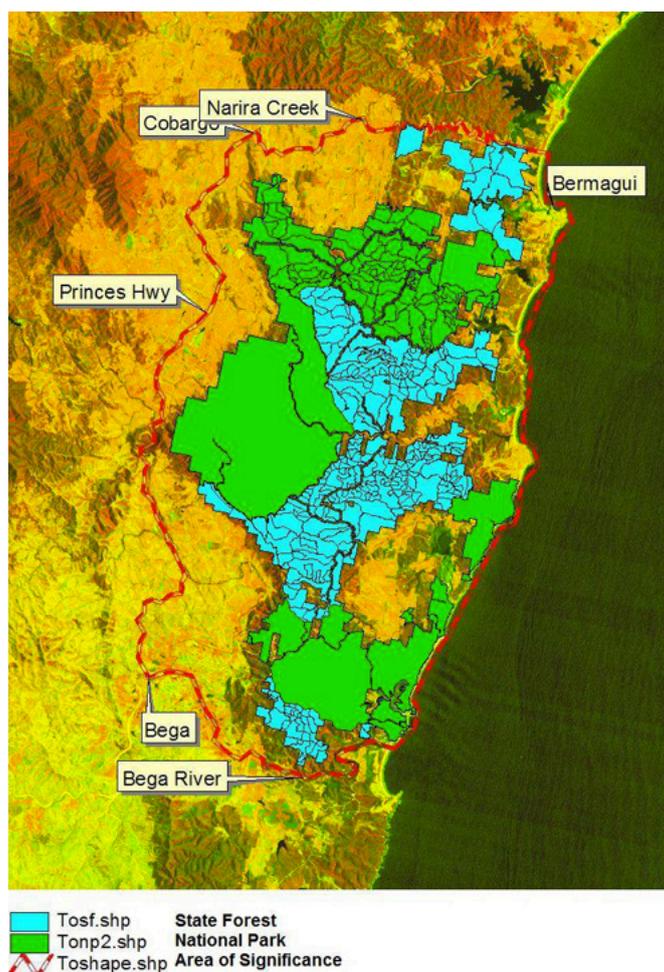
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An example of a fragmented landscape in SE NSW. Topographic map of Mumbulla Mountain including Biamanga National Park, State Forest's logging coups, and private land.



² *Logging or carbon credits*. Frances Perkins & Andrew Macintosh. 8th July 2013.
<http://www.tai.org.au/content/logging-or-carbon-credits>