

NPA FAR SOUTH COAST VISIT JUNE 2015

Welcome to the Far South Coast. Our escarpment forest national parks were gazetted in 1997, after a campaign which began in the 1980s in response to the rapid spread of the woodchip industry. Following our rejection of the 1990 Hawke-Greiner national park offer of 50,000 ha. (essentially areas of uncontested forest of low biodiversity value) an impasse ensued until the premiership of Bob Carr which instigated a scientific process and the negotiation of a more representative park of 135,000ha. The trade off was being saddled with the RFA.

Local members have a range of issues across terrestrial and marine parks with a current focus on the Great Southern Koala Forest (GSKF), as featured in Mike Thompson's article in the Autumn edition of *Nature*. We believe that the convergence of four factors makes this the appropriate time to push for a review of the management of native forests. The koala has been a catalyst in this process, much as the campaign to save the leadbeater's possum has helped kick-start the Victorian Govt's forest enquiry.

Firstly, our koala population (best estimate 70-80 animals) is precarious and requires extensive areas of forest for dispersal and to connect with the larger Shoalhaven and Southern Tablelands populations (see map). Given the tenuousness of the situation, NPWS is attempting a koala recovery programme which includes relocating koalas from Victoria. The success of this programme is by no means assured. A major factor will be the extent to which the management of the forests can be weighted towards biodiversity protection rather than the current priority of pulpwood production.

Secondly, the native forest timber industry has declined sharply in terms of its importance to the regional economy and employment. Native forest log production in the Eden Management Area (EMA) declined 36% between 2007-13. Woodchipping is in decline due to plantation competition and a contracting Japanese market. NSW Govt. bailouts have totalled around \$40m over the past 3 years. (For a succinct overview see: Ajani, Judith, *Key Information for NSW Forest Policy Today*, Canb, ANU, Mar 2014)

Thirdly, the emergence of climate change and emissions reduction as both global and national issues offers the potential for an alternative funding model for native forest management. Proper recognition needs to be accorded the carbon stored in standing native forests and the role this could play in a national carbon emissions reduction scheme. All that is lacking is political will.

Fourthly, given that the current RFA terminates in 2017, it is essential that we start to formulate the message that an RFA rollover under a business as usual model is not acceptable. The campaign is likely to be long. The current political climate is hostile and our local members at both State and Federal level are strongly supportive of the status quo.

We welcome your support in this campaign.

Kim Taysom
(Vice President, Far South Coast NPA)
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