

LETTER FROM THE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY
05.08.2017

Dear Dr Somerset, Dr Beaumont, Mr Taysom and Dr Perkins

Thank you for your email to the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Mark Speakman, about the proposal to establish a Great Southern Forest in NSW for carbon capture and biodiversity conservation. Your correspondence was referred to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and I have been asked to reply.

The NSW Government recognises the importance of native forests for threatened species conservation. The Government recently established **four new Flora Reserves** on the far south coast of NSW to boost habitat connectivity and management consistency in coastal forests, adding almost 12,000 hectares of native forest to the reserve system, in Murrumbidgee, Mumbulla, Tanja and part of Bermagui State forests. The new reserves will support the last known far south coast koala population as well as 25 threatened species. The unique nature of these forests means they will be managed for conservation as part of the state forest estate, utilising evidence-based and scientific landscape management principles and rigorous monitoring of outcomes.

The Government also remains committed to delivering ecologically sustainable forestry management in NSW under the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs). The Government considers that there is an ongoing need for RFAs in NSW, and will work with the Commonwealth to determine the most appropriate form going forward. The 10 and 15-year reviews of the current RFAs and NSW Forest Agreements will be commencing soon, and will **involve significant public consultation**. The details of the review are currently being finalised and I encourage you to engage in the review process when it commences.

As you note in your letter, forests play an important role in the global carbon cycle. The Government recognises the potential of public land to reduce levels of carbon in the atmosphere. **The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has started planning for the rehabilitation of five sites in the national park estate, which are part of a pilot project that will generate Australian Carbon Credit Units and, subsequently, revenue for NPWS. The national parks involved are Gwydir Wetland State Conservation Area, Brindabella National Park, Kosciuszko National Park, Willi Willi National Park and Tinderry Nature Reserve.**

Through this pilot project, **NSW is the first state to take part in the Commonwealth Government's carbon credit scheme on national park land after being successful in the Emissions Reduction Fund auction held in April 2016.** The project involves planting more than 200,000 trees over 520 hectares of national parks and reserves over five years, which will result in almost 80,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide being sequestered from the atmosphere over 10 years. On-ground work is expected to begin later this year when endemic seed collection and propagation of seedlings gets underway. **Given this success, the NSW Government is considering how to use the approach in other locations where rehabilitation will improve the environmental values of national parks and other state owned lands.**

The NSW Government has written to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment asking that priority be given to developing new Emissions Reduction Fund methods related to forestry. These methods would cover sustainable forest harvesting, avoided forest harvesting and improved forest management, which have potential to assist in the cost of managing both public and private forests.

Should you or members of your organisation wish to meet to discuss this matter, please contact Ms Jackie Miles, Manager Strategic Regulation and Reform - Forestry, EPA, on 02 9995 6701 or at jacquelyn.miles@epa.nsw.gov.au.