

## FOREST MANAGEMENT FOR TOURISM

### SUMMARY

This section highlights that the far south coast has unexplored tourism opportunities which could be generated by focussing on the holistic beauty of the region; uninterrupted by vistas of environmental damage caused by unsightly industrial logging of native forests.

The New Zealand experience is exemplary. When native forest logging ceased in 2002, the Government created a \$120 million fund to develop ecotourism industries. As native forest logging ceased, wildlife and habitat gradually returned, as in other parts of the world. New Zealand now earns \$11.8 billion per year from tourism which is primarily based on the natural experience<sup>1</sup>.

With careful management, new industries in southeast NSW can bring economic growth from increased demands by tourists seeking the thrill and excitement of immersion in nature, trails, coastal experiences, explorations, music events, heritage; Indigenous lore, culture, crafts, bush tucker and histories, and glimpses of our unique and precious fauna.

### Post-Logging Tourism Industry

Given that research shows the primary motivator for attracting tourists is direct experience of nature and opportunities to visit pristine environments, the cessation of logging in the southeast State Forests would have a direct benefit for tourism in the region. The lure of natural attractions of the region counters the economic and environmental deficits of native forest logging. Tourism is already a primary employer in the region, with potential for expansion particularly into the international tourism market through promotion of the region during off-peak seasons. In the Bega Valley and Eurobodalla Shires, tourism contributes more economic benefit than the combined traditional resource-based industries of forestry, fisheries and agriculture<sup>2</sup>. Growth in tourism in both Shires well exceeds growth projections for national domestic tourism. These Shires, with Shoalhaven, the Monaro and East Gippsland (Victoria), work in partnership to deliver nature-based tourism experiences.

Tourism Australia's<sup>3</sup> research has repeatedly identified 'immersion in nature' as the primary motivator for travel, across all of Australia's inbound and domestic markets. The natural beauty of the southern region forms the heart of the tourist experience. The rapidly expanding cruise market, based in Eden Port, is also a significant development in presenting the region to the world; but people need eco-tourist experiences to entice them to stay longer as opposed to unsatisfactory 'Mars Bar and Coke tourism'<sup>1</sup>.

Opportunities exist for forest-based tourism such as on the Kosciuszko to Coast Indigenous Heritage Bundian Way, for more adventure tourism, family-based tourism, and for a great north-south walk. State forests could complement the region's National Parks in forming the backbone of outstanding nature-based experiences in Australia's Coastal Wilderness.

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<sup>1</sup> Tourists who get off a cruise ship, buy refreshments, and get back on the ship without experiencing culture, sights or culinary delights.



Image 1: Looking east towards Wallaga Lake with Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) on the left. Richard Green [www.richardgreen.net.au](http://www.richardgreen.net.au)

## Tourism Benefits in Other Countries Post Native Forest Logging

### New Zealand

*From this saddle we look across river upon river of green bush then burnt bush russet colour—blue distance—and a wide cloud flecked sky ... at the head of the great valley the blazing sun uplifts itself ... it is all so gigantic and tragic—and even in the bright sunlight it is so passionately secret.* Katherine Mansfield

As in the southern forest region of NSW, contention between the social and economic considerations of the industry and conservationists' ideals in the South Island of New Zealand's (NZ) logging history was inevitable. Yet, pressure from conservation groups in NZ was influential in forest protection.

Two large pulp and paper mills began production in the South Island of New Zealand in the 1950s. By 1960, more exotic sawn timber was being produced than native timber, and despite this, logging of native forests continued. In some cases the Forest Service completely cleared areas of native forest, which regenerated slowly, and so faster-growing exotic forests were planted in their place.

In the early 1970s, the Forest Service planned to log beech forests and the logs would be made into chips for the Japanese pulp sector. Some areas would be allowed to regenerate, but others would be clearfelled and replanted with exotics. This logging gained government support but was opposed by conservationists.

Conservationists correctly argued that trees could not be selectively logged without damaging the complex structure of the surrounding forest. The Forest Service stopped logging kauri, but insisted that other native forests were still needed for timber. There were clashes, first over beech forests on the West Coast and in Southland, then over the central North Island podocarp forests at Pureora and Whirinaki. Public opposition to logging swelled. *The Maruia Declaration*, calling for the protection of native forests, had 341 159 signatures when it was presented to Parliament in 1977.

The Labor Government was elected in 1984 and supported both conservation concerns and deregulation. Although the production of exotic timber exceeded that of native species by

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1960, and continued to increase, native forests were still logged steadily into the 1970s but, from 1975 to 1987, production of native timber from publicly owned forests declined dramatically. Political change then led to a decline, and now only a minuscule amount of native timber is now produced in New Zealand. <sup>4</sup>

The West Coast Forest Accord of 1986 aimed to ease the transition from logging native forest in the region. Some native forest was reserved, but clearfelling was to continue in North Westland and Buller until the exotic forests there had matured. This compromise was unacceptable to some conservationists, and there were protests. In 1999, the Labor Government announced that logging would end by 31 March 2002.

To compensate locals, a \$120 million fund was set up to create other local industries and jobs, such as in ecotourism.

The paper *Impacts and effectiveness of logging bans in natural forests* in New Zealand by Alan Reid describes that:

...studies on the contribution from tourism to employment in the West Coast region [of New Zealand] show that, in 1992, about 8% of the local full-time jobs in the West Coast region were supported by tourism. Figures also indicate that expenditure on tourism in the region increased substantially between 1987 and 1994, suggesting equivalent increases in employment. By 1994, the tourism sector in the region, in terms of total numbers employed, was second only to pastoral farming and was substantially ahead of forestry. <sup>5</sup>

Eco tourist operator and Conservation Ambassador for Forest and Bird, NZ, Dr McSweeney reflects:

We have lived here for 22 years and in the last 13 years we have noticed a major increase in larger bird species such as NZ pigeon, kaka, kea, falcon, tui, whio/blue duck and morepork. Perhaps the most striking increase has been in the number of small birds such as bellbird, tit, fantail, rifleman and warbler. We guide dawn bird walks with our eco tourists every day. We are therefore acutely aware of changes in bird diversity and abundance. The regeneration response seen in vulnerable plant species such as rata, fuchsia, mistletoe and wineberry has been equally spectacular where deer numbers have been controlled. <sup>6</sup>

Ecotourism has boomed in many other countries after logging of native forests stopped. At the World Parks Congress in Sydney in 2014<sup>7</sup>,

### Mozambique

Greg Carr told how the Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique was destroyed by war, mines, guns and bombs, so species destruction was extensive. Restoration was spearheaded by the public sector. Recently, rangers in helicopters counted 72 000 animals roaming the park. This project proved that distressed ecosystems can be restored and attract tourism. Greg proved that ecotourism is a powerful force which helps conservation. "If you visit Gorongosa, you help save it!" Mozambique now boasts it is one of the world's top five most biodiverse ecosystems.

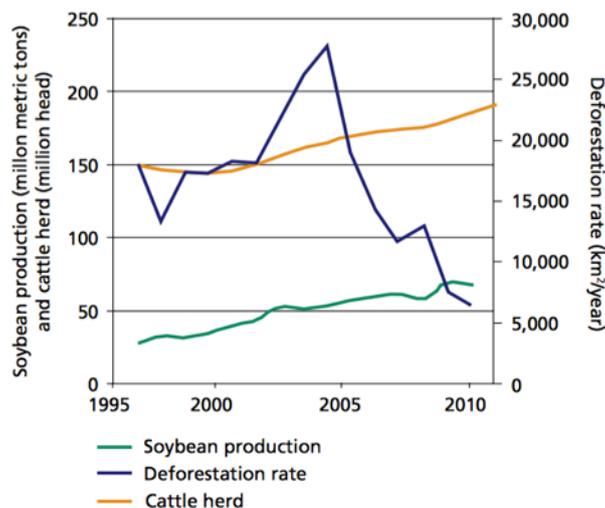
### Brazil

*Brazil has already achieved a reduction in global warming pollution comparable to the reductions that both the United States and the European Union have only pledged to achieve by 2020.*

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Brazil has reduced deforestation in the Amazon enough over the past five years to lower heat-trapping emissions more than any other country on Earth<sup>8</sup>. This success demonstrates the enormous potential of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation as well as conserving and re-growing tropical forests (the international effort known as REDD+). Between 2005 and 2010, Brazil nearly met its goal—a full decade ahead of schedule. Data from 2009–2010 showed that Brazil's area of deforestation, which averaged 19 508 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>) per year during the baseline decade of 1996–2005, had dropped 67 percent, to just 6 451 km<sup>2</sup>. The Union of Concerned Scientists' analysis of this change, using a formula for converting deforested area to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions based on the work of the research institute IMAZON, estimated a reduction in Brazil's global warming pollution of nearly **1 billion tons**. Brazil has achieved this success while simultaneously increasing agricultural production and significantly reducing hunger and poverty.

Brazil's dramatic reduction in deforestation is attributed to agreement by both state and federal levels of government. The country greatly expanded its network of Indigenous reserves and protected areas (including sustainable-use reserves), which now encompass more than half of Brazil's Amazon forest. Indigenous people control more than 20% of the Brazilian Amazon.



Graph 1: Rate of deforestation in Brazil compared to soya bean and cattle production

### Taman Negara

The sight of logging activities has a detrimental effect on the tourism industry. In the Taman Negara, Titiwangsa Mountains, Malaysia, the local people are calling for a stop to logging to their ancient rainforests, because of the negative impact the sight of logging trucks is having on the local tourism industry<sup>9</sup>. Pahang National Park Tourism Operators Association chairman Abdul Jalil Rahman said although the logging was outside Taman Negara, the effects were turning tourists away. He continued:

From the feedback I received from tourists, they already got a negative impression upon entering Taman Negara because they had seen so many trailers carrying logs. The tourists expected to see a pristine rainforest but they left disappointed, complaining that they did not even see any animals. In the past, some tourists would even cry when they left Taman Negara but these days, repeat visitors are rare.



Image 2: Forest logging

## Benefits and Opportunities

Tourism is the most rapidly expanding sector of regional economies, employing more people and providing more economic value than the declining native forest logging sector. For example, it is estimated that in the Eden area, jobs in tourism outweigh those of native forest logging ten-fold. Furthermore, tourism has the potential for growth, particularly through the expansion of the international market, which is still underdeveloped in regional Australia, where 96% of visitors comprise the domestic market. A modest total of 22,000 international visitors indicates that expansion into that market is feasible provided that their preferences for nature experiences become the centre-piece for marketing strategy.

Nature is the number one driver of visitors to Australia, and is in the top five factors taken into consideration by potential tourists when selecting a tourist destination (along with beauty, safety, security and value for money). The region is well placed to compete for the local and international tourism dollar, given that the strength of Australia's Coastal Wilderness lies in its largely undeveloped natural environment, including pristine parks and coastal areas.

An analysis of what is already available for both local and international tourism in the region reveals a broad range of nature-based experiences plus a developed network of cultural and historical events which are organized throughout the region. Amongst these are a diverse range of music festivals (classical, jazz, blues and folk).

The state-of-the-art Four Winds Amphitheater and Windsong Pavilion at Barragga Bay invites world-class musicians and supports local ones as well. The Pavilion is the only purpose built, indoor recital hall in southeast NSW, seats 160 people, is equipped with cutting edge acoustic capabilities and has flexible space for performances and workshops.



Historic and heritage attractions such as the Montreal Goldfields (Bermagui), the Eden Whale Museum and Annual Whale Festival, and the Tilba National Trust Village are favourite haunts for regular visitors. There is a Killer Whale Tail in Eden, comprising day trips to sites relating to whale history. Regional food and wine are celebrated through the Oyster Festival at Narooma, the Bega Cheese Factory and a growing winery trail. There are now well-recognized art gallery trails from Bateman's Bay to Victoria, and increasingly, professionally organized local and specialized museums specific to the region's history.

There are innumerable nature experiences such as visits to the Pamboola wetlands, whale and dolphin watching, visits to National Parks, bushwalking and bird-watching, aquatic activities in the ocean and network of lakes and rivers in the region. Environmental education opportunities are currently provided for local and international students through The Crossing Land Education Trust (Bermagui) and through the Sapphire Coast Discovery Centre in Eden. Opportunities for hands-on encounters with animals are provided by the Mogo Zoo, Montague Island Nature Reserve and the Potoroo Palace Native Animal Sanctuary at Merimbula.

### Opportunities for Expansion

Strategic plans are in place to build on the strengths already identified and designed to increase the number of visitors, extend the length of their stays and encourage return visits. For example, a recent initiative is the production of materials relating to four distinct journeys within the Wilderness Coast, focusing on walking tours, visits to National Parks, heritage tours and earth history. Plans are underway to capture more of the lucrative short cruise market, with short trips organized to the port of Eden. Other initiatives include forming partnerships with the ACT and the Alpine region with the objective of extending visitor nights and building up the off-season trade. To facilitate ease of planning and bookings, more online resources are being developed and better use is planned of social media. Another potential growth area is through the promotion of the Sydney-Melbourne coastal drive.

Each of these potential growth areas rely heavily on sustainable land management, support for recreational industries rather than those related to the exploitation of native forests, and above all, responding positively to the expressed desire for tourism to be based on nature, coastal experiences, journeys of exploration, events and heritage tourism.

### Challenging Issues

As with all sectors of the economy, tourism faces some formidable challenges. One is the competition with other regions for the tourist dollar, hence the need to maximize the

advantages of relatively undeveloped nature of the region. A second challenge is the lack of public transport into the region, and the high cost of air travel. A third is how to balance strong demand for accommodation and services during peak periods with relatively quiet times in the winter (hence the need to build partnerships with, for example, the Alpine region).

The over-riding challenge is the need to shift from an economic base reliant on exploitation of forests and fishing, and maximize all the advantages the region has in terms of its pristine nature.

*Heather O'Connor, Bronte Somerset*

## Conclusion

This section demonstrates the numerous and unique opportunities that can be initiated and then promoted to new and existing markets. The far south coast could be a destination much sought by emerging audiences across the world seeking 'back to nature' experiences. The GSF approach has a strong emphasis on identifying and caring for the resources to make these opportunities come to life. The recommendations herein outline credible ways to achieve the economic and reputational benefits to the region and Australia as a whole: we hold respect for nature and its part in our health, wealth and prosperity.

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- <sup>1</sup> Tourism New Zealand, Visitor Experience  
<http://www.tourismnewzealand.com/markets-stats/research/infographics/visitor-experience/>
  - <sup>2</sup> Destination NSW. <http://www.destinationnsw.com.au>
  - <sup>3</sup> Tourism Australia. <http://www.tourism.australia.com>
  - <sup>4</sup> Logging native forests. Sustainable forest management New Zealand  
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/graph/12901/production-of-sawn-timber-1921-2005>
  - <sup>5</sup> *Impacts and effectiveness of logging bans in natural forests: New Zealand*. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Corporate Document Repository. Alan Reid. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x6967e/x6967e05.htm>
  - <sup>6</sup> McSweeney, G., (2011) Saving West Coast and New Zealand Native Forests and Birds. *NZ Journal of Forestry*, November 2011 Vol. 56 No. 2
  - <sup>7</sup> World Parks Congress, IUCN. Sydney Olympic Park, 13-19 November 2014
  - <sup>8</sup> Brazil's Success in Reducing Deforestation (2011). Union of Concerned Scientists.  
[http://www.ucsusa.org/global\\_warming/solutions/stop-deforestation/brazils-reduction-deforestation.html#.VjKBFri8E](http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/solutions/stop-deforestation/brazils-reduction-deforestation.html#.VjKBFri8E)
  - <sup>9</sup> *Stop the logging around Taman Negara*. Nation. 27 July 2015. <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2015/07/27/Stop-the-logging-around-Taman-Negara/>