

SOUTH EAST FORESTS CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Dear Supporters

This letter provides a quick summary of the NSW Government's position on Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) renewal and logging, an update of our activities and a brief look at the next steps.

Thanks to all who participated in the July campaign to send a message on native forest logging to the NSW Government. Their response has been predictable:

- The NSW and Commonwealth governments intend to rollover the NSW RFAs beyond their current expiry from 2019, without community consultation. (You may be aware that Tasmania's RFAs have recently been rolled over).
- The NSW and Commonwealth governments are currently preparing an RFA review report (ten-and-fifteen-year review of current RFAs) which will be released later in 2017 for public comment. "Information on a process for consultation will be available when the RFA review report is released". (Letters from NSW Department of Industry/Lands and Forestry and the NSW Environment Protection Authority).

The NSW Government will attempt to restrict consultation to procedural matters within a framework of continued industrial scale logging of native forests rather than address the issue of policy alternatives. By ensuring that the RFA review is controlled in-house by pro forestry interests and by excluding intellectual rigour, scientific input and any credible form of peer review, the government will conclude that native forest logging is consistent with its requirement that it delivers "economic and environmental sustainability".

The time for procedural tinkering has passed. Fundamental questions of environmental and economic sustainability need to be addressed **NOW**.

Following the June Forest Forum in Tathra, a similar event, organised by Coastwatchers, was held in Moruya on 23 August, with 80-90 people attending. This constituted a further step in building an alliance of regional communities and entities. Allied organisations include the South East Region Conservation Alliance, the National Parks Association, Coastwatchers and the National Trust NSW, all supporting the Great Southern Forest (GSF) campaign and the NPA Forests for All plan. Representatives from these groups continue to lobby government on your behalf.

One of the resolutions passed at the Moruya forum condemned the inadequacy of a mere 18-man hour pre-logging faunal survey for 400 ha of forest. The validity of the

survey was further undermined by limits placed on night time track access because of OH&S concerns, which hampered the search for nocturnal species. Bad as this is, things could get worse. Dawn Walker (Greens MLA), who was at the forum, referred to leaked government memos in which Forestry Corp calls for the scrapping of pre-logging faunal surveys and a reduction in streamside reserves. She observed that the NSW government is already focussed on the next election in 18 months and that native forest logging is on their radar as a potential issue. Dawn's advice was to keep sending comments and photos of logged forests in your area to the Facebook page of the Premier and senior Ministers. Following a strategic lobbying campaign by the Eurobodalla community, logging crews have withdrawn from a number of compartments in the Mogo area a month ahead of schedule.

The forest campaign we continue to promote should be viewed in the wider context of the NSW Government's abysmal environmental record. The dismantling of restrictions on native vegetation clearing, the drastic cuts to NPWS, the support for feral horse populations in Kosciuszko and the back-door gifting of Murray-Darling environmental flows to NSW irrigators give an indication of the government's current mindset.

Despite these difficulties, we are not about to fold our tents. There is a NSW State election in 18 months and electorates are extremely volatile. The fluidity of social media assists issues to gain traction. The message is that we need to hang in there for the long term. In the meantime, it would help if we try to win over as many contacts as possible to support our stance, whether by merely "liking" Facebook or Twitter input or by taking a more active role.

We will contact you all again once the RFA review report has been released, together with the process for consultation. No matter how inadequate and limited the review process is, it is important that we mount a strong and co-ordinated response. For that, your ongoing support is vital.

Useful references

Great Southern Forest: - www.greatsouthernforest.org.au/media/GSF_Brief.pdf

NPA Forests for All: - <https://npansw.org/what-we-do/our-work/campaigns/end-native-forest-logging/>

Understorey: - <https://www.facebook.com/Understorey-a-film-on-the-east-forest-campaigns-940034452718427/>

NSW Premier, Gladys Berejiklian: www.nsw.gov.au <https://www.facebook.com/gladysnsw/>

Dawn Walker, NSW Greens MLA: <http://www.dawnwalker.org.au/forestry>

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