

Letter to the Editor, Bega District News. 23.07.2016

Re: Extreme weather opportunity

Dear sir/madam,

Nature recently made a statement that has rocked some parts of our region yet, it has revealed a silver lining: the chance to take a realistic look at what we have and do.

Trees were damaged and felled and among other structures, Eden woodchip mill's loading facilities took a direct hit. Unfortunately for a few, the export of woodchips stopped, gathering of native logs slowed and some jobs have been threatened. Though some noise has been made by politicians about emergency funding to enable the industry to revive and survive, what will actually happen on the ground and when?

Well, since the Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) were signed about 18 years ago to continue the woodchip industry, albeit strongly contested, things have changed dramatically: Climate Change is an accepted reality, native species continue to decline, consumer patterns have radically altered (ethical timber sourcing is now mainstream) and carbon banks are universally sought to mitigate global warming.

Blindly supporting an industry because that's what has always happened isn't what a smart society does. Many experts, indigenous and other credible community groups, NGOs, and long term residents In the Far South Coast, see this as an opportunity to review what is occurring and seek solutions for a better future.

The whaling analogy is a cautionary tale: there certainly were conniptions from authorities and industry with vested interests when whaling was banned. Yet now, Australia is a leader in policing whaling around the world. Can we show the same global leadership on forests and take commonsense steps to reduce Climate Change, before we lose more iconic species of fauna and flora?

The Great Southern Forest strategy is a dynamic, innovative and exciting approach to preserving our natural resources and building community cohesion and resilience. Jobs would be create and revenue based on tourism, management and education. GSF is a joint venture of National Parks Association and National Trust - Far South Coast branches and South East Regional Conservation Alliance.

Visit www.greatsouthernforest.org.au for a fuller understanding and let's work together on a prosperous, harmonious and healthy region.

Worth considering, I feel.

Sincerely,
Paul Payten