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South Coast forests a ‘fire bomb’ ready to ignite

A number of long-standing NSW conservation groups have banded together to warn that heavy logging in South Coast forests has created conditions that could create a ‘fire bomb’ over summer.

Convenor of ChipBusters, a member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Noel Plumb, said the intensity of logging in forests north of Batemans over the last two years had greatly increased the fire risk to coastal communities for several decades.

He said Forestry Corporation had been heavily logging just north of Batemans Bay, in the Benandarah and Boyd State Forests, right down to the Princes Highway.

“As a result Termeil, North Durras, South Durras, Long Beach and Maloneys Beach are all threatened, as well as the prized Murramarang National Park and Lake Durras which are major attractions for visitors,” Mr Plumb said.

“Dangerous logging practices are repeated right along the coast and hinterland down to Bega and Eden. I note The Rural Fire Service has also criticized Forestry Corporation for irresponsible and dangerous logging,” he said.

Mr Plumb said contributing to the dangerous fuel pile up in the logged forests was the failure to complete post-logging burns in many compartments. This meant wood waste, or logging slash, became piled up against remnant trees.

“This is a clear breach of logging regulations,” Mr Plumb said.

“Even if these burns are completed, and it is too late this year, the forests are a much greater fire risk for decades as the intensive logging removes 80 or 90% of the canopy – effectively clear felling the forest. This dries the forest out and then the massive regrowth of saplings from the post logging burns provides a highly combustible fire mass for decades to come.

Convenor of the Friends of Durras John Perkins said, “This is reckless and ugly forestry which undermines years of work by the tourism industry to promote Eurobodalla Shire as the Nature Coast. Imagine how they feel as they see this brutal logging at the very entrance to the Coast.”

“The tax-payer subsidised native forest logging is a direct threat to a major employer in the Shire, tourism and related holiday-making and recreation. People simply do not want their experiences blighted by intensive logging and woodchipping or their beloved holiday spots made more and more vulnerable to wildfire because of logging.”

“It’s not only our communities at risk but this intensive logging, mainly for woodchips, is a disaster for forest wildlife. It removes most of the older trees with hollows which are essential for such benchmark species as the Greater Glider and the Yellow Bellied Glider.

These forests were once home to koalas but they have now disappeared under the impact of the clear-felling over the last two decades. We fear the gliders will also become locally rare or extinct unless the logging stops,” Mr Perkins said.

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