

Paul Payten

Submission:

The long-term sustainability and future of the timber and forest products industry.

Coming to live of the far south coast of NSW in Bermagui was strongly influenced by its wonderful native forests, beaches and mountains. Arriving here in 2011, I was surprised and shocked to know of the decades old attempts by locals to protect them, our state owned heritage.

Since then, I have seen first-hand the results of clear felling and burning of destroyed habitat, which is still declared to be 'ecologically sustainable forest management' carried out by Forestry Corporation NSW (FC).

Over the last ten years I have only found continued distress and frustration at the unwarranted, unethical and loss making logging of these invaluable and beautiful ecological resources. To me, to treat public owned heritage, not to mention essential habitat of flora and fauna, in many cases threatened or endangered, as FC currently does is tantamount to criminal and such practices need to be halted.

As a Friend Corunna State Forest several years ago, I was familiar with our group's interaction with employees and administration of FC. Those working on the ground seemed to be driven almost against their will at times for fear of losing their job. The office staff were cooperative yet limited in their assistance being guided by policy or lack of acceptance that existing logging was so industrial in nature. The fact that police were involved on occasions showed the force and intimidation FC saw as normal behaviour for them, when in fact it is unconstitutional, if seen as lawful.

I then became a committee member of the South East Region Alliance and discovered that they had documented over 4,000 breaches of EPA regulations by FC over a period of only a few years. We submitted these records to the EPA some time ago trusting they would aid them in overseeing FC. It is now openly known that FC treats EPA directives and protective constraints with complete disdain and cannot in any way to relied on to be accountable for their blatant and ruthless destruction of native forests into the future.

Our community's response to the fires and the impact of fires on local forests and animals is one of grief, put simply. Though Bermagui itself was left untouched by fires, the residents all felt the impact of having thousands coming for refuge and bringing with them shock, horror and disbelief at the huge number of animals, birds and reptiles that were destroyed, not to mention later, when the extent of the fires' footprint. It is only early days of recovery for so many in personal, practical and psychological way.

I am fortunate to have experienced a presentation by Prof David Lindenmayer and several other internationally respected ecologists and I have accessed further national and local research on managing and the nature of native forests. All these experts, scientists and the research, have shown from their various angles and levels of knowledge, that logging native forests makes them more vulnerable to damage from fire.

Forests are not a source only of timber for products for diverse uses, they are essential in maintaining health and wellbeing of all inhabitants from the coast to the mountains as part of the natural cycle. Clean air and water and productive soil are all based on healthy forest environments and termed 'ecological services'. These are invaluable for our very existence and though some have quantified them in dollar terms, we cannot afford not to be more practical and purposeful in caring for and regenerating them. When forests are 'thinned' the soil is exposed to more heat and the subsequent drying effect. Fewer trees mean less rain is developed, so adding to dehydration of the area.

As many birds and arboreal animals rely on hollows in trees, the more logging the fewer older trees remain to create homes and this in turn alters the ecosystem by reducing pollination, predation on invasive insects and plants which then allows trees to become more vulnerable in general. All in all, logging on any scale, other than truly selective for artisan or cultural purposes, is counter intuitive and counterproductive.

When it comes to private native forestry operations, they are integral to the rest of our environment and I feel they need far greater overseeing and could in fact be brought under the GSF regime – see below

From 2016, I have become active in developing and presenting genuine y sustainable alternative recommendations that include consideration of the local communities and their need for recreational amenities, economic benefits via employment in various fields, such as and education and eco and nature based tourism, as well as enabling of First Nation custodianship and cultural determination.

Please see attached Great Southern Forest (GSF) document or visit www.greatsouthernforest.org.au