

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

ABN 48 083 197 586



23 November 2010

Ms Lisa Corbyn
Director General
Dept of Environment, Climate Change and Water

Attn: Forest Agreement Review
59-61 Goulburn St
PO Box A290
South Sydney NSW 1232
Email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Corbyn,

Re: Review of the NSW Forest Agreements and Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the above document and for extending the deadline for the Institute of Foresters of Australia's (IFA) submission. Our submission is attached.

The IFA was established in 1935 and is the peak professional body for forest scientists, forest educators and forested land managers in Australia. We are a non-profit organization with 1285 members who are committed to the principles of sustainable forest management and the processes and practices which translate these principles into outcomes.

The IFA is generally supportive of the review process and the outcome report that is the subject of this submission. We note the very short timeframe that has been provided to make comment on this very complex and multifaceted regulatory environment. This timeframe has significantly restricted the IFA and most likely the broader community's ability to make meaningful comment.

The IFA trusts that you will give careful consideration to what comments we have made and incorporate these where appropriate into the Forest Agreement and IFOA review process. The NSW Division of the IFA is available to discuss any of the matters raised in the submission should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Volker
President

IFA Submission on the Review of the NSW Forest Agreements and Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals

The review document substantially meets the Terms of Reference (a) requirement to assess achievements against nominated milestones.

In respect to the Terms of Reference (b), the IFA considers that there is little in this very large document which demonstrates that the three licences have been successfully integrated. For example, it is the IFA's understanding that riparian buffer widths that are specified within the three separate licences (TSL, FL & EPL) are different. Such inconsistencies are inefficient and difficult to implement across the landscape.

With respect to FNSW compliance with conditions, Table 4.1 does not provide any context with which to judge the tabulated performance. It is submitted that the information in this table must be related to the number of discreet harvesting plan areas per region and the associated volumes harvested. Without this context it is not possible to make any decisions about the level of compliance by FNSW or indeed the effectiveness of the audit program in monitoring compliance levels.

The review document does not provide any measure of the effectiveness of the IFOA conditions in achieving ESFM across the NSW public forest estate. It is considered that further reviews should attempt to benchmark a range of ESFM values in managed public forests against the same values in matched forest types that have been reserved within the National Parks estate.

Additionally, it is suggested that further reviews need to compare the outcomes and the implementation costs of the different regulatory regimes that apply to the private property native forest (PNF) logging operations that are conducted in accordance with gazetted Codes under the Native Vegetation Act 2003. The IFA believes that there are massively different costs associated with the two different native forest regulatory environments that operate within NSW. The ESFM outcomes of both systems need to be assessed against benchmarks to determine the relative efficiency of each system and the most efficient and effective system adopted across all native forest tenures.

While the review does not intend to specifically revisit resource decisions that surround the NSW Forest Agreements and the associated Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals, throughout the document there is reference to and linkages with log yields and log resource availability through to 2023. It is an inescapable conclusion that while there is massive emphasis on the sustainability of ecological and environmental parameters, there is minimal emphasis on the sustainability of the resource which is a fundamental input to industry. This imbalance potentially provides very serious future consequences for a decentralized regional industry with associated negative social and economic consequences for NSW.

The IFA considers that the NSW government urgently needs to prepare a Timber Industry Strategy document that defines the desired level of industry activity by sector/product and the associated log resource requirements through to 2050. The available resource in public and private native forests and the softwood and hardwood plantation areas needs to be matched to the industry requirements for volume, quality and species.

Following on from the above more general comments, following is a number of specific comments that relate to particular sections of the review document:

- Milestone 5.3, page 18 – the review document implies that logging of EECs is prohibited in the Coastal IFOA areas however the IFA understands that Clause 11 of the IFOA allows Forest NSW to harvest in EECs with consent from DECCW. Hence the statement in paragraph 3 is misleading.
- Milestone 6.5, page 22 – The milestone has been assessed as complete. While there has been significant progress in understanding the nature and causes of BMAD, the IFA is of the understanding that there has been limited action taken to redress the forest decline that results from BMAD. The IFA considers that this milestone should be ongoing and that the NSW government needs to develop and implement forest health plans with appropriate resourcing if it is to address this very significant issue which affects large areas of forest across all tenures within NSW.
- Milestone 15.1, pages 47 & 48 – The supplementation of the State Forest log resource by the purchase or lease of private property forests is substantially met and ongoing. However private property log resources are a vital input to industry, making up more than 50% of the total log input to sawmills in the north east of the state. Purchase of these resources by FNSW to supply their customers does not bring any additional log resources into the system, but merely serves to re-distribute these logs to Crown customers.
- Milestone 15.3, page 48 – The review document pointedly does not mention what the target area of new plantation establishment is. Was it 20,000 hectares of new plantation? The significant under achievement of this target indicates that the NSW Government is not delivering on the NSW Forest Agreement promises to establish new plantation areas to deal with the significant reduction of timber volumes that will occur post 2019. This lack of performance will cause significant social and economic impacts on regional communities and result in an increase in the import of tropical hardwoods from unsustainably managed developing countries. This is a major concern to the IFA. The resource situation is further exacerbated by a coincident reduction in the rate of new softwood plantation development and the backlog of second rotation establishment on existing clearfelled plantation areas. The future for the industry is bleak and not sustainable due to a looming lack of its primary resource.
- Milestone 16.7, page 54 – This milestone is also listed as complete. However the IFA believes that there is considerable doubt over whether or not sufficient resource will be available from the public production forests to meet industry commitments. Some of the many issues that impact on this situation have already been outlined in this submission. It is important that wood supply and timber volumes are continuously monitored over the life of the Forest Agreements to ensure that new EEC listings and other changing parameters do not result in unacceptable outcomes at the end of the planning period.
- Table 4.5, pages 84 & 85 – The table needs to provide column totals so that the full picture can be appreciated. It is a concern that less than 50% of the public forest is available to produce logs for industry within the upper and lower north east of NSW. When these numbers are considered in the context of the

2,421,700 hectares of other forest areas that are protected in the CAR reserve system in the same area, there is an obvious question of balance in decision making. The review document itself notes on page one that the IUCN target of 10% reservation is well exceeded in NSW with more than 30% of the forest area captured in reserves. At this level there is surely some scope to strategically review the informal reserve system on public production forests with a view to making more land available for wood production. The very large proportions of plantation land that are not available for harvest require explanation by way of text or footnote.

- TSL4, page 114 – The proposed change to the prescription is confusing and it is suggested that the last paragraph should read; *“Forests NSW is to apply an exclusion zone covering 12 hectares (equivalent to a circle of approximately 200 metres radius) where there is a record of a Hastings River Mouse or a confirmed area of suitable habitat.”*
- TSL9, page 117 – There is already an approved process administered by DECCW for the verification of HCV Old Growth under the PNF Codes / Native Vegetation Act. As the HCVOG definition is the same, the IFA believes that the already adopted process for private native forest lands should also be implemented on the public forest estate.
- TSL22, page 124 – As there is no list of additional flora species that are proposed to be added to the licences, or details of the associated protection provisions, it is not possible to make comment on any issues of impact, consistency or efficacy.
- TSL28, page 127 – The proposal to increase the survey effort for Greater Gliders to a single compartment basis is fundamentally flawed because the density of Greater Glider is dependent on 3 major drivers – suitable hollows, suitable food resources and the last time the area was hunted by a Powerful Owl. A 40 year study in the Yarrowitch area has shown that the owl hunts a sub set area of its territory until the marginal rate of prey sourcing is reached, then it goes to the next subset of its territory. To maintain its total territory the owl will do an occasional hunt through the whole territory. Hence the Greater Glider population level is effectively owl dependent and a more intensive and expensive survey effort will achieve no additional benefit to ESFM.
- TSL32, page 129 - Exclusion of thinning operations from all protected areas will in some circumstances result in a negative biodiversity outcome. DECCW and other conservation agencies in Australia and overseas are embarking on ecological thinning operations in some reserved areas to reverse this outcome. The IFOA licences need to facilitate thinning operations in reserved areas where they will increase biodiversity outcomes.
- TSL34, page 129 - There needs to be some pragmatic phase in period for new conditions of recently listed species. It is considered that new conditions for recently listed species should only apply to harvesting plan areas that are signed off after the listing date, and that harvesting operations already in progress, should not have to be amended or subject to additional survey requirements.

- NL1, page 133 – The imposition of a fixed period return time for AGS harvesting operations is not consistent with ecological processes due to differences in site productivity and forest types. It is submitted that a more effective method of governing return time for AGS harvesting is to adopt the PNF Code site based triggers that reflect the capability of the forest stand. Adopting this approach vastly simplifies compliance monitoring and allows for site variability which is not accommodated within the current IFOA proposals.
- NL6, page 139 – It is suggested that rather than revising and amending all of the administrative detail relating to responsible Ministers and departments etc that are likely to change over time, all references should relate to the agency and Minister responsible for the administration of the Forestry Act 1916 or its replacement. Surely that will be more efficient and simplify future amendments of this nature over the life of the NSW Forest Agreements and the IFOA.
