
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 20 August 2012 4:52 AM
To: EHPP Landscapes & Ecosystems Section Mailbox
Subject: Comments on the Draft Native Forestry Code of Practice for Southern NSW

Native Vegetation Regulation Review

Environment Protection Authority
PO Box A290
Sydney South NSW 1232

Comments on the Draft Native Forestry Code of Practice for Southern NSW

Dear Environment and Protection Authority

We are landowners in an area where some landowners have obtained PNF approvals. As an affected property owner we thank you for this opportunity to comment and hope our views will be considered on any upcoming forestry legislation.

Our land was purchased in the Mount Rae forest area as a place to build a home, start a family and operate an eco-tourism venture. The non-wood values of Mount Rae forest – its trees, wildlife and peace and quiet – were the assets we valued. Our proposed business would have highlighted the biodiversity of the area, not placed in under threat by logging. We believe surrounding villages would have benefitted through increased tourism to the Shire.

We were thankful when the Department of Conservation stopped a non-resident firewood seller from clearing in this forest and when local councillors voted to prevent the removal of any more trees for commercial firewood. Imagine our surprise that firewood logging on an even bigger scale has now been approved under the Private Native Forestry Code. In 2005 we attended a field day in this forest and spoke to government ecologists who informed landholders of rare orchids, threatened wildlife species and spoke of the need to mitigate against impacts on the area because of these values. I would ask the EPA and the Environment minister why this scientific information has now been ignored? What makes the matter worse is that the approved logging is for commercial firewood. How is this intended to provide clean air, clean water, help store carbon and prevent greenhouse gas emissions as the same departments urge everybody else to do? We have been told that forestry groups in the area intend to use PNF to start such firewood operations on a grand scale and promote firewood into Canberra and Sydney from native forests as being environmentally friendly and sustainable since it carries biodiversity certification from the Environment Minister. We ask that the future forestry act remove these negative aspects of the current act and ensure that this cannot happen in the future.

Surveys conducted on our property by a professional consultant found eight bat species, two of which were listed as threatened in NSW. One of the initial attractions of this forest was the number of Gang Gang Cockatoos (another threatened species) that would drink from our spring fed dam and feed on the surrounding eucalypts. Large trees, demonstrating old growth characteristics containing large hollows provide some of the breeding habitat required for both these cockatoos and the powerful owl, another threatened species that was identified in this forest. Under PNF lands that applied for logging were not required to conduct any surveys before approval. Without meaningful surveys what protections are afforded these species? Not only do they need all of this forest intact for foraging and roosting but we are informed that in the final draft code for Southern NSW the Gang Gang Cockatoo is not even listed? Why do the OEHS not require surveys (as anybody else would be required to undertake) and ignore threatened species such as the Gang Gang?

Our land also contains leasehold crown lands and lands protected from clearing because of the degree of slope. It is amazing to be informed that under PNF such crown lands have had past protections removed and can be logged under PNF up to 30 degrees. PNF is definitely in conflict with all previous protections that were in place here. Of course we could choose to log our property for firewood like others with OEH approval but this would be contrary to our desire to see such areas protected. It is sad that the OEH no longer seems to share these same principles.

Our dreams of a business, which we were assured would be protected with the introduction of the Native Vegetation Act, have been ruined with the introduction of the PNF interim act. We have now placed our property on the market and can only hope that any subsequent purchaser doesn't mind the whining of chainsaws and also decides to act in the best interests of the existing ecosystem and does not approach the EPA and OEH to conduct clearing for firewood that will cause run off, erosion and the introduction of weeds into this area.

We can only hope that one of the unhappiest experiences we have undergone will serve to send a message to government departments of the on ground impacts and strange outcomes happening as a result of PNF in its current form.

Regards
Jason and Melanie Walsh



(Please withhold address from public viewing)