REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT for the SOUTHERN REGION of NEW SOUTH WALES

Progress on the implementation of the Regional Forest Agreement for the Southern Region

1 July 2002 – 30 June 2003

REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENT

for

SOUTHERN

NEW SOUTH WALES

ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2002 – 30 June 2003

Introduction

Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are separate Agreements between the Australian Government and the State Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia. Based on good science and extensive consultation, the Agreements set out broad strategies to achieve a balance between conservation and a sustainable and competitive forest industry. The Agreements are in place for 20 years.

In NSW there are three RFAs in place covering the North East, Eden and Southern regions. The Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP and the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon Bob Carr MP, signed the Southern RFA on 24 April 2001.

The RFAs are subject to annual reporting during the first five years and thereafter five-yearly reviews, to report progress against milestones. Progress reporting by the Australian and New South Wales Governments (the Parties) on the implementation of the NSW RFAs has been aligned to a financial year basis, being the period 1 July to 30 June each year.

This is the second Southern annual report and provides details on the achievement of milestones for the period 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003.

Progress on Milestones

Note: References to NSW government agencies are as 30 June 2003.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
6	The Parties to determine the process for extending the Agreement for a further period.	As part of the third five-yearly review	Not required until the third five-yearly review.
34	NSW will have in place a forest agreement covering the Southern region and grant an integrated forestry operations approval applying to the Southern region.	30 June 2001	The NSW Forest Agreement for the Southern Region came into effect on 3 May 2002. The Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) for the Southern Region was granted on 3 May 2002 and commenced on 13 May 2002.
37	Parties to report annually on the achievement of milestones in this Agreement.	Annually for the first five years	This is the second annual report on the achievement of milestones contained in the Southern Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) and covers the period from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003.
40	The Parties to determine the mechanism for the five yearly review.	Before the end of the five yearly review period	Milestone not yet required. However, approach is likely to draw on that under development for the five yearly review of the RFAs for the North East and Eden regions of NSW.
41	Commonwealth will table the signed RFA in the Commonwealth Parliament.	Following signature	The signed RFA for the Southern Region was tabled in both Houses of the Federal Parliament on 20 June 2002.
41	Commonwealth will table in the Commonwealth Parliament the annual reports of achievement of milestones for the first four years.	Annually	This is the second annual report for the Southern RFA Region to be tabled in Federal Parliament.
41	Commonwealth will table in the Commonwealth Parliament the first five yearly review on performance against milestones and commitments.	Following first five yearly review	Not required until after the first five yearly review.
47 (c)	NSW to complete and publish plans of management for areas dedicated under the <i>National Parks</i> and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW).	31 January 2006	Plans of management for areas dedicated under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> are being progressively completed. There were 117 national parks/nature reserves/state conservation areas (SCAs)/historic sites/Aboriginal areas in the Southern region that required management plans to be prepared. At 30 June 2003, 21 plans of management had been adopted (including one that was being revised). Plans adopted included Morton National Park. A further 31 plans were in preparation (including six draft plans that had been prepared, one of which had been publicly exhibited). Preparation of the remaining 65 plans of management had not yet begun.
			Note: Increases in the total number of management plans required across the estate since the last reporting period generally reflects the addition of new areas.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
47 (d)	NSW to complete and publish Regional ESFM Plans for State forests.	31 December 2001	At 30 June 2003, final drafts of the Regional Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) Plans for the Southern region were awaiting outcomes of the September 2000 public exhibition of the plans for the North East (Upper North East and Lower North East regions and Eden regions. This will ensure consistency between the regions.
			The final plans are scheduled for completion in early 2005, following which a public exhibition period will occur prior to publication.
47 (e)	NSW to implement the Forest Management Zoning system for the Southern region.	31 December 2001	The Forest Management Zoning (FMZ) system for State forests was publicly announced in March 1999 with the release of the document entitled, <i>Managing Our Forests Sustainably: Forest Management Zoning in NSW State Forests</i> .
			A Geographic Information System (GIS) operational layer was agreed at the time of signing of the NSW Forest Agreement for the Southern Region and applied. These areas will be illustrated on maps to be attached to SFNSW' draft Regional ESFM Plans to be publicly exhibited in 2005. The maps will illustrate the areas of State forest to be managed for conservation purposes and those to be managed for timber production by applying the FMZ system. The FMZs have been progressively implemented across State forests in the region, including minor changes to some FMZs.
47 (g)	NSW to implement the review and monitoring processes and develop the strategic and operational requirements of Sustainable Yield systems and processes to enable a review of Sustainable Yield.	1 December 2006	Most of the effort to date concerning improvements to FRAMES (Forest Resource and Management Evaluation System) and enhancements of the sustainable yield analyses has focussed specifically on the North East region. Nonetheless, the research, development, and improvements of tools and procedures used in the analyses are readily transferable to the Southern region. Consequently, once begun, reviews of sustainable yield in the Southern region will be able proceed more quickly than the first analysis in the North East region.
			It is intended that the members of the former North East Wood Resources Working Group (EPA, PlanningNSW, NPWS) will reconvene in 2005 to discuss and review SFNSW' work on FRAMES improvements in all RFA regions. Subsequently, the FRAMES improvements will also be discussed with stakeholders to enable broad understanding and acceptance of an improved FRAMES throughout the community.
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Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
47 (h)	NSW to develop and implement environmental management systems.	30 April 2004	Development of the NPWS environmental management system (EMS) is progressing. The EMS is intended to cover all areas of NPWS operations. A major component of the system will comprise the <i>State of the Parks</i> report. As part of <i>State of the Parks</i> , trial and implementation of indicators to measure management effectiveness on a sample of parks throughout the State was undertaken during the year. At 30 June 2003, a framework for the expansion of the program was under development. [Refer Att 6 Point 1(o)]
			SFNSW' Native Forest Management System (NFMS) was renamed the Native Forest Environmental Management System (NFEMS) to better highlight the intent of the system. Following a gap analysis and 'roll out' to SFNSW regions during 2001/2002, SFNSW has continued to develop the EMS to ISO 14001 standard. Once fully implemented the system will ensure management plans and processes are consistently applied across State forests, providing a framework for the achievement of ESFM, ensuring continuous improvement in the management of State forests. Completion of the EMS has taken longer than expected due to the size of the task.
			Development of an EMS for planted forests also continued throughout the year. This system is also being developed with the objective of obtaining ISO 14001 certification.
			SFNSW is working towards certification of a corporate EMS (ISO 14001) by early 2006 for both planted and native forests.
50	NSW to report on compliance of the <i>Integrated Forestry Operations Approval</i> applying to the Southern region and furnish the Comonwealth with a copy of these reports.	Annually	Annual reporting on compliance with the IFOA for the Southern region has been incorporated into the NSW forest agreement reports completed for each financial year (1 July to 30 June). [Refer Att 6 (2g)]
			The NSW Forest Agreement Implementation Report 2002/2003 (in preparation) is the first report to include details on compliance with the IFOA for the Southern region, following its commencement in May 2002.
52(d)	Both Parties to further develop, review, and if necessary revise Sustainability Indicators.	In time for the first five-yearly review	Sustainability indicators (ESFM criteria and indicators) referred to in clause 48 of the Southern RFA and described in Table 1 and Attachment 7 of the NSW Forest Agreement for the Southern Region were developed consistent with the Montreal Process criteria.
			Monitoring of the sustainability indicators commenced in mid-2002 following the implementation of the NSW forest agreement for the region. Results of monitoring are to be reported each financial year (1 July to 30 June) with those for the North East and Eden regions, in the ESFM criteria and indicators monitoring reports. The report for 2002/2003 will contain the results of the first year of monitoring of the indicators for the Southern region.
			A summary of the results of monitoring to be presented in the above report, will also be summarised into the NSW forest agreement reports. [as described in clause 50 and Att 6 2(h)]
			Results of monitoring of the sustainability indicators will feed into an evaluation of their appropriateness at the five yearly review.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
56	NSW to produce a code of practice for Timber Harvesting of native forest on Private Lands.	By the first five-yearly review	The Interim Best Operating Standards for Harvesting of Private Native Forestry, under <i>Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997</i> were released in June 2001. The Standards replace existing draft Best Management Principles and other standards used by vegetation officers. The Standards were prepared to guide forestry operations on private lands requiring consent. In April 2002, a Private Native Forestry Reference Group was established to examine the regulation of forestry on private lands and make recommendations for a workable exemption and consent framework. Recommendations were accepted by the Minister in September 2002. The Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) have since been progressively implementing the recommendations, including the development of a draft Exemption Operations Standard (for forest operations that may be undertaken without consent) and a Forest Operations Standard (to guide operations where consent is required).
57	NSW to complete Code of Practice for Plantations on Private Land.	30 June 2001	The <i>Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999</i> and Code of Practice for Private Plantations came into effect in December 2001. The Act and Code are due for review in 2004.
98	NSW to establish a Research Liaison Committee and publish a list of research priorities.	30 September 2001	The Committee was formed in October 2000, and held its first meeting in November 2000. The Committee includes representatives from NPWS, Planning NSW and SFNSW. Representatives were to identify current research being undertaken by their agency and priorities for future research. Since then, Planning NSW has coordinated contributions from a range of land management agencies, research organisations and universities on current research being undertaken, future research priorities and published research related to forests. Information on current research and future research priorities will be compiled to create a list for inclusion in the compendium of forest research. At the end of 2002/2003, this work was continuing. [Refer also clause 100]
100	NSW to prepare a Compendium of New South Wales Forest Research.	By the first five-yearly review	Development of the Compendium continued throughout 2002/2003. [Refer also clause 98]
103	NSW and the Commonwealth to lodge archival copies of data.	30 June 2001	Data archive in progress. Completion of this milestone was delayed due to technical difficulties.
Att 1 Point 4	NSW to prepare Plans of Management for Crown Reserves.	31 January 2006	During 2002/2003, all but six Crown reserves managed by the NPWS in the Southern region were reclassified as SCAs. The reclassification of Crown reserves to SCAs avoids duplication of land use categories and solves some of the management anomalies that exist with Crown reserves and which affect the preparation of plans of management. The principle anomaly is that the legislation under which Crown reserves are established does not allow for the responsibility for the reserves (and therefore the plans of management) to rest with the NSW Minister for the Environment. Plans of management for SCAs will now be prepared progressively and will be included in the figures reported for clause 47(c). Specifically, at 30 June 2003, no plans for these areas had commenced.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
Att 1 Point 5	NSW will finalise boundaries of CAR reserve with the exception of the Forest Management Zoning System.	30 June 2001	Boundaries have been established following the assent of the <i>National Park Estate (Southern Reservations) Act 2000</i> on 13 December 2000, and adjusted by notice in March 2001.
Att 1 Point 5	NSW will finalise the Forest Management Zoning System.	31 December 2001	Refer to clause 47(e).
Att 1 Point 8	NSW to establish all Dedicated Reserve components of the CAR Reserve System.	30 June 2001	All dedicated reserve components were established with the passage of the <i>National Park Estate</i> (Southern Region Reservations) Act 2000. Resolution of those lands marked as 'Proposed Reserve, boundaries to be finalised' in the RFA await the determination of Aboriginal land claims.
			The passage of the Act established seven new flora reserves on State forest. These areas are in addition to flora reserves already established.
Att 1 Point 8	NSW to establish all Informal Reserve components of the CAR Reserve System.	31 December 2001	All informal reserve components were established with the passage of the <i>National Park Estate</i> (Southern Region Reservations) Act 2000.
			FMZ 2 areas finalised with the NSW Forest Agreement for the Southern region in May 2002.
Att 3 point 4	NSW will complete the Threat Abatement Plan for the European Red Fox.	31 December 2001	The draft plan was publicly exhibited in July 2001, and a final plan was approved by the NSW Minister for the Environment in December 2001.
Att 3 Table 1	NSW to develop Recovery Plans for species listed in Table 1.	Within five years of signing	At 30 June 2003, preparation of 79 of the 121 recovery plans listed in the Southern RFA were at various stages of preparation. Seven plans had been approved, nine draft plans had been publicly exhibited, a further six draft plans had been completed. A further 40 plans were in preparation and another 17 plans were at the initial planning stage. Preparation of the remaining 42 plans had yet to commence at the end of the reporting period, although three of these had national plans prepared under the <i>Endangered Species Protection Act 1992</i> (Cwlth).
Att 4 Point 14	NSW will identify and assess cultural heritage values in areas excluded from CRA assessments.	31 December 2001	NSW completed the assessment of the Goulburn sub-region in early 2002/2003. The assessment recommended appropriate management and use of public lands in the sub-region, and included consideration of cultural heritage values. This process was a NSW-based process coordinated by an inter-agency working group. Recommendations were that there would be minimal change or impact on cultural values. The assessment incorporated a consultation process with the local Aboriginal people.
Att 6 Point 1(o)	NSW to publish a State of the Parks report.	31 August 2001	The first <i>State of the Parks</i> report was released in November 2001. The report provided an overview of the conservation values of NSW and their management within the parks system. This was supported by a series of case studies for parks around the State.
			State of the Parks is an ongoing program. During 2002/2003, this program included the trial and implementation of indicators of management effectiveness on a sample of parks throughout the State. A framework for the expansion of the program is under development. The next report is due for release in early 2005.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
Att 6 Point 2(b)	NSW will publish Eco Field Guides for Southern region.	31 December 2001	Preparation of a draft Eco Field Guide for the Southern region is continuing. The Guide is expected to be complete in 2005.
Att 6 Point 2(c)	NSW to document the basis for silvicultural practices and publish the <i>Native Forest Silviculture Manual</i> (SFNSW).	31 March 2001	SFNSW published a <i>Native Forest Silviculture Manual</i> in 2000. The manual documents the basis for SFNSW' silvicultural practices and complements its field guides and training programs.
Att 6 Point 2(d)	NSW to document and publish a description of the NSW Forest Management System covering Public and Private Lands.	In time for the first five-yearly review	Approach is being developed. It will likely update the overviews of each of the NSW agencies were contained in the Comprehensive Regional Assessment/Regional Forest Assessment (CRA/RFA) ESFM report entitled, Description of Management Systems and Processes for Achieving Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management in NSW.
Att 6 Point 2(e)	NSW to publish a description of the methods and results of calculating Sustainable Yield on Public Land.	1 December 2006	Refer clause 47(g).
Att 6 Point 2(e)	NSW to publish independent audits of Sustainable Yield as outlined in Attachment 8.	For the second and subsequent five-yearly reviews	Milestone not due until the second five yearly review.
Att 6 Point 2(f)	NSW will produce annual reports of progress for meeting targets in regional ESFM plans.	Annually	Reporting will commence following the full implementation of the Regional ESFM Plans. [Refer also clause 47(d)]
Att 6 Point 2(g)	NSW will report on the forest agreement covering the Southern region and on compliance with the IFOA applying to the Southern region	Annually	The first report on the implementation of the NSW Forest Agreement for the Southern Region and compliance with the IFOA for the Southern Region is being prepared for 2002/2003. [Refer also clause 50]
Att 6 Point 2(h)	NSW to table in each House of Parliament an annual report on the New South Wales Southern Region Forest Agreement in accordance with the Forestry and National Park Estate Act 1998 (NSW) which will include an ESFM report and the outcomes of compliance with any Integrated Forestry Operations Approval for the regions.	Annually	Reporting for the NSW forest agreements provides progress on: Significant achievements made by participating NSW agencies. Achievement of milestones in the NSW forest agreements. Monitoring of ESFM criteria and indicators (sustainability indicators) by the NPWS and SFNSW. Compliance with the IFOAs. Reporting for the NSW Forest Agreement for the Southern Region will commence in 2002/2003 following its implementation in May 2002. Reporting for the Southern region will be included in the one report, which will also deal with the NSW forest agreements for the Upper North East, Lower North East and Eden regions. The report for 2002/2003 is being prepared. A supplementary report which provides details on the monitoring of the sustainability indicators contained in the NSW forest agreements for each region will also include results of monitoring for the Southern region from 2002/2003. [Refer clause 52(d)]

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
Att 8 Point 2(b)	NSW NPWS will develop an Environmental Management System for lands dedicated under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> .	30 April 2004	Refer clause 47(h).
Att 8 Point 2(c)	SFNSW to develop a Native Forest Management System as an Environmental Management System.	30 April 2001	Refer clause 47(h).
Att 8 Point 2(1)	NSW to incorporate provisions that address in an integrated fashion bush and other fires within Regional ESFM Plans and plans of management for areas dedicated under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW).	By the first five-yearly review	Addressed through District Fire Committees under <i>Rural Fires Act 1997</i> where consideration of these values is undertaken prior to finalisation of District Hazard Reduction Plans. Bushfire management is also addressed through NPWS plans of management. ESFM principles are also being incorporated into bushfire risk management plans. SFNSW and the NPWS have statutory obligations for fire management arising from the <i>Rural Fires Ac</i> . SFNSW is recognised as one of four fire authorities under the <i>Rural Fires Act</i> , is a member of the NSW Bush Fire Coordinating Committee, and is subject to the Coordinated Fire Management provisions of the <i>Rural Fires Act</i> . SFNSW Draft Corporate Fire Plan (to be completed in early 2006 with the finalisation of the EMS) and Regional Fire Plans are designed to dovetail into section 52 (<i>Rural Fires Act</i>) plans of operations and bush fire risk management plans to present a coordinated response to hazards and fires across the landscape by all fire authorities in NSW. The NSW approach to bush fire risk management planning essentially complies with the recommendations of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) process. It is based on a risk management process that is coordinated state wide via the Bush Fire Management Committees and the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee.
Att 8 Point 2(m)	NSW to incorporate within the Regional ESFM Plans and Plans of Management under the <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974</i> (NSW) integrated feral animal and weed control programs.	By the first five-yearly review.	At 30 June 2003, SFNSW was finalising the model (strategic) management plans for weeds, feral animals and introduced predators following discussions with NSW regulatory agencies. The model plan will be used in all regions to maintain consistency. The model plans are scheduled for completion in late 2005, following which region-specific plans, based on the model plan, will be progressively developed. NPWS manages feral animal and weed control according to programs included in its plans of management, recovery plans and threat abatement plans. [Refer clause 47(c) and Att 3 Table 1]

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
Att 8 Point 2(n)	NSW to establish a process, including public reporting, for regular audits of compliance and reviews of Codes of Practice, Eco-Field Guides and Regional Prescriptions.	31 December 2002	An overview of SFNSW audit process was included in its draft NFMS Overview, publicly exhibited in 2000 (since renamed the NFEMS). The audit process has since been put in place following the implementation of its Operational Compliance Monitoring and Audit Manual. The final audit process will be included in the EMS when complete.
			SFNSW continues to publicly report, at a statewide level, compliance and monitoring results in its <i>Social, Economic and Environmental (SEEing)</i> report each year.
			The NPWS assess compliance with the Threatened Species Licence in accordance comprehensive guidelines and procedures that were endorsed in March 2002. The guidelines and procedures were compiled into handbook form and are used across the NPWS to ensure a consistent approach to compliance monitoring and enforcement.
			The EPA has developed an active audit program of SFNSW' forestry operations. The audit program ensures that SFNSW is taking the required measures to protect the aquatic environment through responsible planning and operational activities. Non-compliance with conditions of the Environment Protection Licence are dealt with through meetings with senior SFNSW officers, issuing feedback or warning letters, clean-up notices, penalty notices or prosecution actions as appropriate at the circumstances.
			NSW Fisheries carry out opportunistic threatened species compliance activities in relation to forestry operations where they coincide with other fishery compliance duties. NSW Fisheries investigate complaints when received.
			Public reporting of compliance audits is provided in the NSW forest agreement reports each year, as described under clause 50.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
Att 8 Point 2(n)	NSW to undertake audits as described above.	By the first and subsequent five-yearly reviews of the Agreement	Monitoring and auditing of compliance with the IFOA for the Southern region commenced in May 2002 (following the implementation of the approval). Within the IFOA for the Southern region, there are two Threatened Species Licences specific to the South Coast and Tumut sub-regions. During 2002/2003, the NPWS received two new complaints from the public concerning alleged breaches of the Threatened Species Licence for the South Coast sub-region, related to two separate harvesting operations. No contravention of the Threatened Species Licence was identified in one investigation and the other investigation is ongoing. No complaints were received from the public regarding alleged breaches of the Threatened Species Licence for the Tumut sub-region. The EPA conducted six audits of operational and planning activities undertaken by SFNSW in the Southern region. Results of these audits identified 48 breaches of planning requirements of the Environment Protection Licence. A further 15 breaches related to non-compliance with operational conditions for roads within the regions, and 56 breaches related to non-compliance with harvesting. Action taken by the EPA in response to these audits included feedback to SFNSW and the issuing of warning letters outlining non-compliance with licence conditions. Remedial work was required to be undertaken at four sites and a request to seek expert soil conservation advice for one site. Enforcement action is currently being determined in relation to three audits. An audit of SFNSW complaints, compliance and operations registers was also undertaken, which identified 77 breaches relating to the Operations Register. In response, the EPA issued a warning letter to SFNSW outlining the noncompliance with conditions of the Environment Protection Licence. NSW Fisheries report there were no known contraventions of the Fisheries Licence during 2002/2003. SFNSW undertake internal monitoring of its compliance with the conditions of the IFOAs and where better management/processes need to be implement
Att 8 Point 5	SFNSW will publish all FRAMES CRA reports for the Southern region.	30 September 2001	All FRAMES CRA reports for the Southern region have been completed. The reports are available from Planning NSW.
Att 8 Point 6(b)	NSW will develop a model to predict recruitment and maintenance of habitat trees.	By end 2010	Milestone under development.

Clause	Action	Timeline	Implementation
Att 8 Point 6 (d)	Report production of all timber products.	Annually	Included in the NSW Forest Agreement Implementation Report 2002/2003 (in preparation).
Att 8 Point 6(e)	Undertake additional FRAMES plot inventory measurements.	By the first five yearly review.	Some planning for additional inventory plots was begun in the Tumut sub-region, but actual establishment of plots throughout the Southern region was delayed until after other FRAMES work was completed. SFNSW has completed, work plans and the establishment of inventory plots should begin in October 2005 and be completed by June 2006.
Att 8 Point 6(f)	Monitor FRAMES performance through comparison of actual versus predicted volumes.	Annually	Included in NSW Forest Agreement Implementation Report 2002/2003 (in preparation).
Att 8 Point 7	NSW will establish and implement an ongoing FRAMES development program.	1 December 2006	Milestone under development.
Att 8 Point 8	NSW agrees to commission and publish an independent review of the enhanced FRAMES systems and processes applying to both the South Coast and Tumut sub regions.	1 December 2006	Milestone not due until 2006.
Att 11 Point 7	NSW will have long term wood supply contracts in place for South Coast and Tumut.	By 1 January 2001 and 1 January 2002 respectively	Agreement on South Coast sub-region customer contracts has been completed.

Acronyms

CAR reserve system

Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative reserve system

COAG Committee of Australian Governments

CRA/RFA Comprehensive Regional Assessment/Regional Forest Agreement

DLWC Department of Land and Water Conservation

EMS Environmental Management System
EPA Environment Protection Authority

ESFM Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management

FMZ Forest Management Zone

FRAMES Forest Resource and Management Evaluation System

GIS Geographic Information System

IFOA Integrated Forestry Operations Approval

NFEMS Native Forest Environmental Management System

NFMS Native Forest Management System
NPWS National Parks and Wildlife Service

RFA Regional Forest Agreement SCA State Conservation Area

SFNSW State Forests of New South Wales