

Southern Regional Forest Forum

consensus issues

January 2000

What is the Southern Region Regional Forest Forum?

The Southern NSW RFA Region Regional Forest Forum is a group of 26 representatives from key stakeholder groups with an interest in the Southern Region's forests, including staff of State and Commonwealth agencies. The groups represented on the Forum are listed below; you'll see that they cover the diverse range of interests in the Southern Region's forests.

The Forum was established in mid-1997 by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. The key role of the Forum is to ensure that specific regional and local issues are recognised and addressed in the RFA process, and to communicate these issues to the wider community.

What does the Forum think is important for the RFA?

The Forum has already agreed on a variety of issues that it believes the RFA should address. These consensus issues are listed in this document. The Forum is also looking to reach consensus on other issues once it has been able to consider the data generated by the Comprehensive Regional Assessment and the Governments' RFA proposals.

Southern Regional Forest Forum consensus issues

The Forum agrees that a Regional Forest Agreement for the Southern NSW region should:

be built on an open, transparent and consultative process:

- be based on meaningful community consultation;
- emerge from a negotiation process to which all stakeholders have been able to contribute;
- provide adequate resources to achieve agreed outcomes;

acknowledge the rights and interests of Aboriginal people in relation to forests:

- respect the rights and interests of Aboriginal people in relation to forests, including their exclusive ownership of intellectual and cultural property;
- recognise Aboriginal peoples' knowledge and custodianship of the land as integral to forest resource management;
- establish processes through which appropriate Aboriginal groups are consulted about land use and forest management;
- support amendment of the NSW NP Act to allow land to be vested in traditional owners;
- promote economic opportunities and benefits for Aboriginal people;

deliver forest conservation and environmental protection:

- protect biodiversity, through both the establishment of a CAR reserve system based on the JANIS criteria and appropriate off-reserve mechanisms;
- promote incentives and other mechanisms for conservation on private land;
- protect catchments to maintain the integrity of hydrological cycles, water quality and quantity, and to prevent land degradation;
- ensure that forest management does not prejudice aquatic or riparian biodiversity
- address the impacts of feral animals, fire regimes and weeds;
- address the impacts of potentially damaging agents through good planning, and adequately resourced cooperative arrangements, which recognise the responsibilities of land owners/managers to not adversely affect their neighbours.

ensure the ecologically sustainable management of all forests:

- develop functional and verifiable indicators of ecological sustainability as it applies to forest management;
- deliver ecologically sustainable management of forests on all tenures, using efficient and verifiable mechanisms;

support best-practice, value-adding forest-based industries:

- recognise the diversity of forest-based industries and uses, and foster their sustainable development; maximise economic opportunities, value recovery and local benefits from forest products and uses;
- create safe, secure and rewarding employment opportunities in forestry and the forest-based industries;
- ensure adequate transitional economic and social support for any communities adversely affected by RFA-related decisions;
- provide appropriate low impact recreational opportunities within the framework of regional adaptive management strategies with adequate resources for implementation;

promote plantation and farm forestry:

- promote the expansion of plantation and farm forestry on sites previously cleared of native vegetation, for a diverse range of benefits – including but not limited to biodiversity restoration, carbon sequestration, income generation, land rehabilitation, local employment, and wood production;
- promote the planting of native species, where appropriate, and recognise the important role of exotic species;
- reduce bureaucratic impediments to and improve the infrastructure for plantation expansion;
- provide appropriate financial and technical incentives for plantation expansion;

educate the community about forest values, their conservation and sustainable use, drawing on Aboriginal, local and scientific knowledge.

- establish culturally appropriate¹ cooperative approaches for education and training of guides

¹ cooperative arrangements would include 2 Elders (one man, one woman) to emphasise cultural and heritage customs together with one or two Departmental people to emphasise scientific knowledge

and rangers between agencies and Aboriginal communities

What has the Forum done?

The Forum has met on 24 occasions since June 1997. Meetings and field trips have been held throughout the Southern Region – at and around Batemans Bay, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Jervis Bay, Kioloa and Canberra - to help members become informed about the range of issues relevant to the RFA process. At these meeting and field trips, the Forum has heard from representatives of local communities, industries and interests, from agency staff responsible for forest conservation and management, and from researchers working in the Southern Region's forests.

Over the past two and a half years, the Forum has communicated a number of issues of shared concern to the NSW and Commonwealth governments. These issues have reflected the Forum's unanimous concern about vandalism in the forest, about Aboriginal peoples' involvement in the RFA process, the conduct of the CRA and RFA process, and the means by which the broader public are informed and invited to comment on governments' proposals for the Southern Region's forests.

What is the Forum doing between now and the conclusion of the RFA process?

The Forum is working with the organisations its members represent , and with the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, to promote public knowledge and understanding of the proposed RFA outcomes. We strongly encourage you to come to one of the information sessions during the public consultation period and to communicate your interests and views to Forum members and staff of NSW and Commonwealth agencies who will also be there.

If you have a particular interest in the views of one of the groups represented on the Forum, you may wish to speak with one of their representatives at the information sessions.

How can you help the Forum represent your views?

You can help us represent your views by telling us what they are. Come to one of the information sessions or contact one of the representatives of the stakeholder groups on the Forum.

Representation in NSW Southern Region Regional Forest Forum

- Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry Australia
- Apiarists Association
- Australian Forest Growers
- Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs
- Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union (CFMEU)
- Forest Protection Society (Timber Communities Australia)
- Institute of Foresters of Australia
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils/ Aboriginal communities
- Local Government & Shires Association NSW
- National Association of Forest Industries
- National Parks and Wildlife Service NSW
- Nature Conservation Council NSW
- NSW Farmers
- NSW Forest Products Association
- NSW Minerals Council
- Regional Development Group
- State Catchment Coordinating Committee
- State Forests NSW
- Tourism NSW
- Universities (ANU, Wollongong)

The Forum is chaired by Peter Kanowski, Head of the Department of Forestry, Australian National University. His telephone number is 02 6249 2667.