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Submission ID: 205167

Organisation: *Sustainable Forest Management*

Location: *New South Wales*

Supporting materials uploaded: *N/A*

Submission date: 10/13/2024 8:46:16 PM

Topic 1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Over the past 30 years I have worked with over 2,500 private native forest landholders (predominately North Coast, NSW) in one capacity or another. I first worked as a manual faller in forestry operations for several years, then onto saw-milling and value adding, before settling into my current role as a Private Native Forest Manager for the past decade.

I currently inspect and appraise the access; type; condition; and value of around 150 , 200 small to very large privately owned forests each year.

I have been managing between 7 and 10 operations for the past 5 years, supplying greater than 340,000 tonnes of sawlog to the sawmills of the north coast in that time.

In my 30 years I've seen the continuation of high grading; little to no progress with necessary residue markets; vast eucalypt plantations established but not maintained; and both a progressive and worrying move away from fire management.

There is the agenda by some members of the broader community to cease harvesting NSW State Forests, but private native forestry alone is not sustainable and there needs to be several changes made if we want productive forests on private property in perpetuity.

The model used by Forestry Corporation on State Forests is by far and away the best system. It is essentially tree farming on crown land that is proven to be conducive to growing healthy, productive forests. Not to mention the carbon sequestration benefits.

A lot of private native forests on the other hand need to be either rested OR reset through intense harvesting (down to the minimal tree retention requirements under the relevant regulations), followed by the implementation of a long-term and consistent fire management plan.

To be clear, we do not need to 'farm forests' for them to be sustainable. We take from our forests to build communities. Ultimately, we want to extract this natural resource with minimal impact on the environment. This can be achieved through ,

1. Ensuring that everyone who undertakes 'tree farming' on both state and privately-owned land has a permit that demonstrates they are competent with both essential silvicultural practises and applying the regulations.
2. Every private native forest that is given a PNF Plan (an approval to carry out a forestry operation) is first assessed and properly qualified. It is not acceptable that every property that is eligible for a PNF Plan is given one. Far too many privately owned forests today need to be rested and/or managed by fire for an extended period and/or a reset harvest is carried out and then also managed by fire thereafter. Private forests have been over-managed (and in some cases where forestry is not permitted , under managed) and high graded for far too long.
3. Hazard reduction burns (HRBs) as often as required and where practical to do so. Logging (as it is more commonly known) adds fuel to the forest floor, in addition to the natural build-up of fuel loads. HRBs will help prevent wildfire and assist with the regeneration of ground and shrub species. Ecological burns are another form of controlled burn used to stimulate native plant regeneration and increase biodiversity.
4. Financial assistance to help with the forest residue that is accumulated when a forestry operation is undertaken on private property. We are still high grading most private native forests

today. Taking only the healthiest trees for a commercial gain. Profits continue to cast a big shadow over sustainable practices. Biofuel, pulp and firewood markets where the harvesting sector is subsidised would help to reduce the amount of high grading that takes place, as well as reduce the risk of wildfire.

5. There is currently limited funding for establishing new plantations and no funding for maintaining those that were established by Forestry Corporation or Forest Enterprise Australia Limited between 1995 and 2010. The funding for new and established plantations (that desperately need thinning and still have potential) needs to be revised.

Australia is around a half a century behind with both plantations and native forest practices. Whilst our current regulations for private native forestry stack up against the practices of many countries around the world, the fact that over 80% of the private native forests of the east coast of NSW are in poor to very poor condition is proof that we still have plenty of room for improvement.

Do we have the land available for establishing new plantations and will we be able to harvest them in 50 to 60 years if threatened species are found to have occupied them?

Wildfire is the greatest threat to the habitat and waterways. HRBs reduce the chances of a wildfire and protects our habitat and ecosystems.

We already import billions of dollars of timber products to meet our needs and that is only going grow as the domestic supply continues to be reduced and/or depleted, and the population continues to grow at 10% every decade.

As it stands now, 'we cut and run' when it comes to our private native forests, and we underutilise our State owned land.

We need improved pre-harvest and post-harvest systems for our private native forests and for the government to acquire more land that is conducive to growing high quality forests.

Or is hardwood timber doomed to the Australian way , to import everything (we can)?

I personally believe that if anyone does not agree that private native forests can be better managed, then they are only thinking short term (about there own lifetime working in the timber industry).

Know better, do better. Responsibility and accountability.

Thank you.

Topic 2. Environmental and cultural values of forests, including threatened species and Aboriginal cultural heritage values

Not my area of expertise, so best if I leave this to the experts.

Topic 3. Demand for timber products, particularly as relates to NSW housing, construction, mining, transport and retail

Topic 4. The future of softwood and hardwood plantations and the continuation of Private Native Forestry in helping meet timber supply needs

I've covered my views on this in: 1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW

Topic 5. The role of State Forests in maximising the delivery of a range of environmental, economic and social outcomes and options for diverse management, including Aboriginal forest management models

I can not speak for the Aboriginal forest management models, because I'm not familiar with them. But as I've stated at 1. Sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW, it is the ultimate system for procuring the necessary hardwood to build communities. Yes, there is always room for improvement, but it is very workable and suitable as it is, and we should be doing more tree farming on State owned land.

Public submission

Topic 6. Opportunities to realise carbon and biodiversity benefits and support carbon and biodiversity markets, and mitigate and adapt to climate change risks, including the greenhouse gas emission impacts of different uses of forests and assessment of climate change risks to forests

I'm not experienced enough in this field to comment a great deal. I do look forward to seeing more progress in this space. It has so much potential!