

# CRA FOREST NEWS

Welcome to the fourth issue of the *CRA FOREST NEWS*.

There has been a great deal of progress since our last edition back in November. With the East Gippsland RFA in place, the Tasmanian RFA nearing completion and the CRA process underway in new regions of NSW, Victoria and Queensland, this edition brings you up to date with latest developments in each State. Also in this issue we bring you international forest news, the latest Community Coordinator Profile, and some ideas for surfing the net.

## **EAST GIPPSLAND RFA A TRAILBLAZER**

**H**istory was made on February 3 with Australia's first Regional Forest Agreement - the RFA for East Gippsland.

Signing the agreement in Melbourne with Premier Jeff Kennett, the Prime Minister, John Howard, described the East Gippsland RFA as a 'trailblazer' for forest agreements around Australia.

Mr Howard said it was a 'win-win agreement'. "It is a win for jobs in regional Australia in generating investment of \$150 million in the industry and the creation of 400 additional jobs at least in the industry," he said. "It is also a win for the preservation of environmental values because the nationally agreed criteria under the Agreement have been reached or exceeded."

Describing the East Gippsland RFA as a model for other States, Mr Howard said it was "an example of how if you sit down in good faith and with good will you can negotiate resource security while preserving environmental values".

Premier Kennett said the agreement's life of 20 years gave industry, environmentalists and governments

alike 'a sense of security in terms of industry policy that we haven't seen in this area for very many years'.

That certainty was celebrated by the local community with a street party in Orbost on February 21.

### **East Gippsland Information Kit**

An information kit containing a copy of the East Gippsland RFA and map, together with fact sheets, questions and answers and contacts, has been mailed to all stakeholder groups.

Press releases on the RFA from the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Anderson, the Minister for the Environment, Robert Hill, and the Australian Heritage Commission are included.

Anyone who would like a kit and has not already received one should ring the Forests Taskforce in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on (06) 271 5182, or fax the Taskforce on (06) 271 5511. Or you could leave a message on our tollfree number, 1800 650 983.

The full contents of the kit, which details the additions to the CAR

reserves system and answers questions on the impact of the RFA on all aspects of the region's forests can be viewed

on the internet. The address is <http://www.erin.gov.au/land/forests/rfa.html>

## State Progress Reports

### VICTORIA

#### Pace steps up in Central Highlands

With the historic East Gippsland RFA now in place, the Comprehensive Regional Assessments are being finalised for Victoria's second RFA - the RFA for the Central Highlands. The reports are expected to be released for public comment in May, when consultations will be advertised in the local media for regional stakeholder groups and interested individuals.

Meanwhile, peak State stakeholder groups have been invited to discuss with Commonwealth and State officials how best to ensure their participation in the remaining four Victorian RFAs through a proposed Stakeholder Reference Group.

#### Work under way in new regions

Some research projects for other RFA regions have already commenced, including vegetation and old growth mapping for the North East region. For cultural values, initial projects to direct more focused studies have been undertaken to cover three regions. These include an audit of historic data records and a community profile of all the regions, giving an overview of the organisations, communities and individuals who may have a significant

interest in Victorian forests and the RFA process.

#### Community Heritage Projects in the North East

Community heritage workshops are planned to start in the North East Region in May. At this stage, it is proposed that the workshops will be held in Bright, Corryong, Wodonga and Mansfield. An additional workshop will be held in Melbourne to tap into the knowledge of forest users ranging from motorcycle riders, and fourwheel drive clubs and shooters to botanists, bushwalkers, and campers. Participants will be invited to identify places of meaning to them, their group and the local community.

They will also have an opportunity to find out about the RFA process.

Ultimately the workshops will produce information which may lead to the nomination of heritage places to the Register of the National Estate. As well, they will provide an inventory of places which will be a useful resource for tourism and local planners, and will be publicly available at libraries, councils and other community centres.

For more information about the workshops, ring Juliet Ramsay at Environment Australia's Environment Forests Taskforce on 06 274 1496.

### TASMANIA

## **On track for June signing**

A paper is currently being prepared outlining strategic approaches to resolving key issues in the formulation of the Tasmanian RFA. The paper is scheduled for public release in early April, and the final RFA should be signed as expected by the end of June.

The paper will be circulated widely in the community over a consultation period of six weeks, and all interested groups and individuals will be welcome to discuss it at a series of public meetings. Watch your local press for details of the meetings, which will be convened by the joint Tasmanian/Commonwealth Steering Committee.

## **Margules Report forecasts strong industry growth**

A report released for RFA comment earlier this month by the Tasmanian Public Land Use Commissioner, Bruce Leaver, suggests that Tasmania's forest industry could almost treble in value by the year 2020, creating up to 6,500 jobs.

The report, "Tasmanian Forest Industry Growth Potential to 2010 and 2020", was prepared by consultants Margules Groome Poyry and describes commercial possibilities given the current resource, expected market opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region and Tasmania's competitive position relative to other potential suppliers.

Covering three areas - hardwood resource supply; wood-based product competitiveness and potential markets and industry development options (including solid wood products, reconstituted panels, and pulp and

paper products) - the report suggested there were opportunities for Tasmania in:

- developing sawnwood and veneer reprocessing, and adjustment of operations to utilise the increasing supply of regrowth eucalypt sawlogs;
- expansion of reconstituted panel (MDF) production;
- expansion of printing paper production, both in the woodfree printing and writing paper section (based on chemical pulp) and in the mechanical printing paper sector (based partly on mechanical pulp);
- building worldscale production units as allowed by the forest resources for achieving full economies of scale;
- integrating chemical and mechanical pulp mills with paper mills for achieving full cost benefits of integration.

The consultants suggest that estimated total new investment required in Tasmania's wood processing industry could reach around AUD 3.5 billion by 2020, of which about AUD 2.3 billion would need to be invested before 2010.

Injection of capital could see the industry almost treble in value by 2020, generating an estimated 1,500 direct jobs, and an additional 5,000 indirect jobs.

## **QUEENSLAND**

### **South East under way**

Prime Minister John Howard and Queensland Premier Rob Borbidge

have announced a June 1998 target for the State's first RFA - the RFA for South-East Queensland.

Premier Borbidge hailed the scoping agreement for the State as good news for both the timber industry and the environment, and said it had been developed in cooperation with all major stakeholders, including the timber industry, the conservation movement, unions, graziers and community organisations.

The Southern Brigalow Belt will be the next priority region for an RFA.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES**

### **CRA's in full swing**

**C**omprehensive Regional Assessments are under way throughout NSW RFA regions, ranging from systematic and targeted fauna and flora surveys to a cultural heritage data audit and specialised social and economic assessments.

The CRA projects for NSW include some innovative work, including an new approach to indigenous consultation, and a trial of multi-attribute aerial photographic interpretive project, which uses state of the art technology to assess from a single photograph the old growth, vegetation, and disturbance of forest areas. *CRA News* will bring you more on the science of these and other CRA projects in future issues.

### **Commonwealth commitment to science**

Meanwhile, the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, John Anderson

and his Government colleagues from regional NSW have reaffirmed the Commonwealth's commitment to the science of the RFA process.

A press release issued by the eight MPs in February stressed that the science-based process in the State would strike a balance between conservation objectives and the national imperative of having a sustainable native forest based industry.

### **Eden community workshops**

With the Eden RFA scheduled to be the first of four Agreements signed by Premier Carr and the Prime Minister, John Howard, the CRA process in the region is well advanced.

The Social Assessment for the region will draw on a series of community workshops conducted in early March, with the community coordinator for South East NSW, Sue Richards (see profile page 8) due to report back to participants shortly.

The workshops were held in Eden, Bega, Wyndham, Bombala, Merimbula, Womboyn and Cobargo. Participants were invited from a broad cross section of the community, contributing expertise in fields as diverse as health, education, emergency services, tourism, industry, environmental management, women's groups, Aboriginal communities and youth affairs.

As well as the workshops, the social assessment will involve a regional household attitudinal survey and in-depth surveys of local forest industry workers and their families to give a detailed picture of how changes in forest policy may impact on every

aspect of community life, from employment to education.

### **Regional Forest Forum in Eden**

The town of Eden will also be the venue for the first Regional Forest Forum for NSW in April.

The forum draws on a broad cross section of the community with an interest in the management and use of the region's forests, with nominated representatives of farming, science, industry, tourism the environment and other community bodies.

The Forum is designed to be a direct channel from the community to the government/community committee managing the Comprehensive Regional Assessments for the region.

Regional Forest Forums will be established in each of the four NSW CRA regions.

### **Western Australia**

Following the Western Australian election, the new Western Australian Environment Minister, Mrs Cheryl Edwardes met with Federal Environment Minister Senator Hill in Canberra in late February. Both Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to undertaking a RFA for Western Australia.

Western Australian and Commonwealth officials are finalising environment, heritage, economic and social projects for approval by the Steering Committee.

Meetings of the Steering Committee and Stakeholder Reference Group are scheduled for early April.

## **International news**

### **Consultations on proposal for International Convention**

States, territories and stakeholder groups will have the opportunity to put their views on a proposal before the United Nations to establish an International Convention on Forests.

At the fourth and final session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development's (UNCD) Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF-4) in New York in February, it was agreed that this issue would be referred to the UNCD in April. A final decision is likely to be made at the

Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in June.

Coming five years after the Rio Earth Summit, the General Assembly Special Session will be a Heads of Government meeting, and will be held in New York.

Australian delegates to the IPF-4 report that European Union countries, Canada, Russia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea were among countries pushing for the establishment of an International Convention.

Other countries believe that the continuation of an international group such as the IPF may be a more

appropriate forum for discussion of global forest issues, including the need for a forests convention.

The Federal Government is keen to canvass the views of States, Territories and stakeholder groups before developing an Australian position and is considering how best to conduct the consultation process.

Australia was well represented at the IPF-4 by delegates from Environment Australia, the Department of Primary Industries and Energy and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and one official from the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management.

The panel was established in 1995 to pursue consensus and coordinated proposals for action to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests with 12 program elements:

- National forest and land-use plans
- Underlying causes of deforestation
- Traditional forest-related knowledge
- Ecosystems affected by desertification and pollution
- Needs of countries with low forest cover

- Financial assistance and technology transfer
- Forest assessment
- Valuation of forest benefits
- Criteria and indicators
- Trade and the environment
- International organisations and multilateral institutions and
- Legal mechanisms.

The panel concluded with more than 100 proposals for action.

### **ANZIF Conference to convene in Canberra**

Canberra will be the venue for a joint conference of the Institute of Foresters of Australia and the New Zealand Institute of Forestry (ANZIF) from April 21-24.

Leading foresters and specialists from within and outside the industry in both countries will address a theme of particular interest to RFA stakeholders: "Preparing for the 21st Century".

Chaired by Professor Peter Kanowski, of the Australian National University, the conference will have a strong policy focus on changes in the legal, societal, economic and institutional frameworks within which forestry operates.

### **NEW ON THE NET**

RFA stakeholders may be interested in new internet sites, including two opened recently by the Department of Primary Industries and Energy.

One is for the **Montreal Process Working Group**. Established to inform Australian interest groups of the

developments within the Montreal Process Working Group on Criteria and Indicators, it includes background on the process itself, the countries involved, the framework for the criteria and indicators, Australia's involvement, stakeholder consultation, forthcoming events and a newsletter.

Its address is:

<http://www.dpie.gov.au/agfor/forests/montreal/index.html>

The other is for the **Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation (FWPRDC)**, which is one of a number of Research and Development Corporations established to assist industry to become and remain competitive in Australia and overseas. The site outlines the Corporation's goals and functions, with a list of Board members, the 1996 Annual Report and 1997 Operational Plan. Its address is

<http://www.dpie.gov.au/fwprdc/index.html>

Net surfers with a passion for forest history may also be interested in a new **international environmental history discussion list** based on a server at Canberra's Australian National University. With other lists focusing on North American environmental history, this one aims for a broader focus and Richard Grove at the ANU is happy for it to be a vehicle for discussion of Australian forest history at: [majordomo@coombs.anu.edu.au](mailto:majordomo@coombs.anu.edu.au). Attach a one-line message: subscribe environhist-1 <your first name> <your second name>

## COMMUNITY COORDINATOR PROFILE

### SUE RICHARDS

#### Community Coordinator for South East NSW

Sue Richards moved to Canberra from NSW to work on the Commonwealth's contribution to social assessments for Regional Forest Agreements in NSW. She brings to the job almost 20 years experience in development and community issues in greater Western Sydney.

Her expertise includes social planning, consultancy work for State Governments, community development and organisational management, particularly in the non-government sector.

In the past few weeks, Sue has been putting her skills to work at intensive community workshops, collecting information on organisations and services in the Eden region and

organising household surveys. Next year, she will be concentrating on the forest region south of Sydney to the Eden border.

"People in these communities know how valuable the information we collect really is," Sue says. "Forest decisions can affect how many students there will be at a school, whether a hospital will be downgraded or not, whether a town can support a variety of retail outlets.

"Services like schools, hospitals and shopping in rural and regional communities have a

**Sue Richards has 20 years experience in community issues**

profound effect on people's quality of life.

“Before acting on any particular option for a Regional Forest Agreement, decision makers need to have a clear idea of what its social and community consequences will be.”

Sue says that while there are many similarities between her social assessment work for the Eden RFA and planning and development in urban areas, she welcomes the opportunity to be involved in decisions involving natural resource management.

“I am particularly keen to represent the voices of rural and regional communities in the forest issues debate,” she says.

Having assisted at community workshops in Tasmania, East Gippsland and the Central Highlands, Sue says it has been fascinating to see the subtle differences between communities



## **YOUR CONTACTS AT THE FORESTS TASKFORCE**

Andrew Tytherleigh is now the Forests Taskforce stakeholder contact, with a couple of minor changes in personnel. The new line up is:

### **STATE PROJECT LEADERS**

<b>VIC:</b> Tom Aldred	06 271 5082
<b>NSW:</b> Richard Webb	06 271 5577
<b>TAS:</b> Charlie Zammit	06 271 5487
<b>WA:</b> Andrew Tytherleigh/Catharine Masters	06 271 5183
<b>Qld:</b> Robyn Bromley	06 271 5587

**For more general information, or to be placed on our mailing lists, please contact the Taskforce on 06 271 5130.**

**Readers who are on the World Wide Web can view background information, fact sheets, reports and papers released during the RFA process on the Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories' Environmental Resources Network (ERIN):**

**<http://www.erin.gov.au/land/forests/rfa.html>**