

## What is the Southern 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.

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;
- address the impacts of feral animals, fire regimes and weeds;

**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;

**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.**

## What has the Forum done?

The Forum has met on 19 occasions since June 1997. Meetings and field trips have been held throughout the Southern region – at and around Bateman's 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 years, the Forum has communicated a number of issues of shared concern to the New South Wales 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?

An issue of great concern to the Forum is the timeline for finalisation of the Southern Region RFA

(31 December 1999). In the Forum's view, this restricts the time for and extent of public consultation and discussion. Nevertheless, the Forum is continuing to promote opportunities for public involvement through information sessions in mid October, described in the attached list. We strongly encourage you to attend one of these sessions, and communicate your interests and views to Forum members

and staff of New South Wales and Commonwealth agencies who will also be there.

The Forum will be using comments and suggestions from these information sessions and from its own discussions to represent views into the RFA negotiation process in November.

## 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 via the Forum's Liaison Officer, Helma Brandlmaier, on 02 9391 2053.

## Representation in the 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
- 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 of NSW
- Tourism NSW
- Universities (ANU, Wollongong)

The Forum is currently chaired by Professor Peter Kanowski, Head of the Department of Forestry, Australian National University