



South East Queensland RFA News

The newsletter of the South East Queensland RFA Steering Committee

Edition 1, May 1998

Interim Forest Management Agreement for RFA

Prime Minister John Howard and Premier Rob Borbidge have signed an Interim Forest Management Agreement (IFMA) for the forests of South East Queensland while the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) is developed for the region.

The interim agreement clarifies how forests will be managed until the RFA is signed by the Prime Minister and Premier later this year by setting out a 'Go Zone' in which timber harvesting can continue.

The IFMA will have a minimal impact on forest-based industries while protecting conservation values.

It maintains options for a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System under the RFA, without cutting off supply to the industry. It is a balanced agreement that reflects the full involvement and support of key stakeholders.

Mr Borbidge said the agreement was significant in that key conservation and industry stakeholders had been prepared to cooperate and respect each other's views.

"There's no doubt that some difficult decisions have had to be made," he said in a statement. "But both sides have worked with the Government with a single aim to achieve good outcomes for the community."

Mill owners were individually consulted as the agreement was developed and assistance will be available to those affected under a joint Commonwealth-State Queensland Forest Industry Development and Assistance Package.

Queensland and the Commonwealth agreed to

implement interim forest management arrangements as part of the Scoping Agreement for the RFA last year. Similar arrangements are in place in other regions of Australia where RFAs are under way.

During the life of the IFMA, governments are undertaking a Comprehensive Regional Assessment which will provide the scientific information base for the RFA. The CRA involves detailed studies of the uses and values of the region's forests from their biodiversity, wilderness, old growth and cultural heritage values to their economic and resource values and importance to the local community.

The South East Queensland region covers about 6.2 million hectares from the NSW border, north to Gladstone, and west to Toowoomba.

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RFA News - A Message from Project Managers

Welcome to the first edition of the South East Queensland RFA News, the newsletter of the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) Steering Committee.

If you're interested in the future of native forests for whatever reason - as a timber worker or tourism operator, as a landowner or small business operator, as a student, nature lover, bushwalker or other recreational forest user - we hope you will find this newsletter a useful way to keep up to date with the development of the RFA.

We will be aiming to produce at least four editions of SEQ RFA News between now and the finalisation of the RFA between the State and Commonwealth governments later this year.

The Steering Committee hopes it will be a useful way to keep people in the region informed of key events, like the release of major reports and the holding of RFA Open Days throughout the region. It does not represent the views of the Commonwealth or State governments.

The newsletter will be mailed to all groups and organisations with an interest in the RFA process, as well as to all those people who requested information at the series of public meetings held last September.

Please let us know of any community groups or members of the general public, particularly residents of the South-East Queensland RFA region, who would like to be added to the mailing list.

We would also be interested to hear of any issues you'd particularly like to see covered, or questions you'd like answered. Your feedback will be much appreciated.

Robyn Bromley

**RFA Joint Project Manager
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Alf Said

**RFA Joint Project Manager
Department of Natural Resources**

Praise from industry and conservation groups

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The Interim Forest Management Agreement has won support from both industry and conservation groups.

In a joint statement, Boral Timber and the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society (ARCS) welcomed the agreement and said they were pleased to be able to play a significant role in its development. They acknowledged the challenge faced by the State and Commonwealth governments.

What happens now?

Reports for the Comprehensive Regional Assessment are now being finalised and are expected to be publicly released within the next few months, when the data collected will be widely circulated in the community.

The Steering Committee is planning public information sessions throughout the region so that people will have a chance to examine the maps and data collected for the assessment and have their queries answered by RFA technical officers.

The process will then move into the options development and impact assessment phase, followed by the release of a report outlining possible approaches to an RFA.

There will be another eight week public consultation period before governments finalise the RFA.

News from the Comprehensive Regional Assessment

Surveys find rare and endangered species

Zoological surveys undertaken as part of the joint Commonwealth-Queensland Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) of the forests of South East Queensland are more accurately assessing the status of rare and endangered species.

Department of Environment Forest Assessment Unit Senior Principal Conservation Officer Peter Young explained that the surveys provided the first systematic assessment of fauna in our forests.

"No one has ever looked at fauna in a systematic way before. In the past, the way things have been discovered has been ad hoc," Mr Young said. "The CRA has provided a chance to have a good look and to fill in a lot of gaps in our knowledge.

"We can now build up a much stronger picture of where species live, how they live and how they are doing. Some species appear to be less restricted than previously thought, but many others were not found at all during the surveys.

"We are also looking at forest types and how much is in reserves. We are finding that some of our forest types are very well represented in reserves, while others are not. These surveys are steps in ensuring that we have representative samples of all forest types in reserves."

Zoologist Geoff Smith of the Department of Natural Resources' Ecological Assessment Section took part in the surveys.

He said three teams of four scientists from Natural Resources and the Department of the Environment had systematically sampled 267 sites throughout the region's publicly owned forest looking for vertebrate fauna - mammals, birds, frogs, and reptiles.



The pebblemound mouse, found in greater numbers than expected. The pebbles are thought to provide either protection or insulation.

"We found greater numbers of many species than previously found, and in many more localities; but some creatures are not occurring as frequently as we thought," Geoff said. "The marbled frogmouth and black-breasted button quail are two rare species where we found more than expected, and we discovered more pebblemound mice than had previously been seen.

"The pebblemound mouse looks much like any other mouse, but it is distinguished by its habit of building mounds out of pebbles."

Geoff said scientists are not sure why the pebblemouse builds its mounds, but believe it could either be to protect them from predators or as a cooling device. The mice were found mainly in State Forests, with a few on private land.

The surveys also found that a skink, previously only known from one State Forest near Kilkivan, has

been discovered in another nearby State Forest.

"As a result of the CRA surveys, we now have a better picture of which species are rare and endangered, and this information will be used in conjunction with the Response to Disturbance (RTD) project outcomes to draw up recommendations for the management of fauna habitat in forested areas in the region," Geoff said.

The RTD project has assessed the distribution, habitat requirements and management needs of 112 fauna and 105 flora that are rare or threatened in forests of South-East Queensland.

A number of recovery planning teams have also been created to assist in the management of endangered species and threat abatement in accordance with the Commonwealth Endangered Species Protection Act 1992.

Forests and people - the Social Assessment

How important are forests to the people and communities of South East Queensland (SEQ), and how will a Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) affect them?

Laurel Johnson, a social planner with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, and Bronwen Burke, the Commonwealth's Community Coordinator for the SEQ RFA, are attempting to answer questions like these for the Social Assessment and Social Impact Assessment of the SEQ RFA.

The Social Assessment is an important part of the Comprehensive Regional Assessment and reflects increasing awareness among government, industry and the community of the importance of considering the social dimension of land use decisions.

The Social Impact Assessment will be undertaken after RFA options for SEQ have been announced by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

The Social Impact Assessment will look at the effects of any changes in forest use on:

- people's way of life (how they live, work and interact with one another on a day-to-day basis), and
- their community (its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities).

With a population of two and a half million living in over 40 different local government areas, the sheer size and diversity of the SEQ region makes this one of the most challenging jobs for the RFA.

The social assessment uses a range of tools, including desktop research to analyse the statistics and demographics of the region; a random telephone survey of 2000 households on the importance of forests to the community, surveys of forest industries and mill employees, and community workshops and focus groups with a broad range of stakeholders, from timber workers to cattlemen and beekeepers.

Laurel and Bronwen are currently analysing the returns from surveys of forest user businesses and their employees including sawmillers, timber workers, contractors, graziers and beekeepers.

The analysis is expected to be finalised in April and the report written by early May.

This analysis will describe the links between the mills and towns where forest user businesses and employees live and spend their money.

Their social impact assessment work will begin in earnest later this year, when the governments develop options for the RFA.

RFA, CRA what does it all mean?

The jargon of the RFA process can be daunting to the layperson. Here is a short guide to the most commonly used acronyms. A full glossary of forest policy terms is available on request.

RFA: Regional Forest Agreement.

CAR Reserve System: A Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) Reserve System to conserve all native forest types as well as the plants and animals that depend on them.

CRA: Comprehensive Regional Assessment - the scientific information base for the development of the RFA.

ESFM: Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management. Managing forests so as to maintain their diversity of plants and animals (biodiversity) and their health and integrity, and to ensure the natural and cultural values are considered for current and future generations.

IFMA: Interim Forest Management Agreement. (See story on page 1).

JANIS: Joint Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council/Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture Implementation Committee. A joint Commonwealth-State sub-committee responsible for preparing reports on the implementation of the National Forest Policy Statement for the information of relevant ministerial councils.

NFPS: The National Forest Policy Statement. The Statement was signed by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments in 1992.

Cultural Heritage Assessment taps local knowledge

The cultural heritage assessment is providing a fascinating account of how the region's forests contribute to our cultural heritage, and which places have special significance for the community.

Local groups and organisations have contributed their knowledge and expertise to projects investigating and assessing a range of different cultural heritage values.

The non-indigenous projects have been run concurrently, and include an overview history; a study of travel routes, forest towns and settlements; a study of sawmills and tramways; reports on historic, social and aesthetic values of forests; and the development of a set of guidelines for managing cultural heritage places. Projects are under way to address Indigenous cultural heritage issues.

History in tapes and photos

More than 100 oral history tapes were recorded and 10,000 photos collected for research into the historic values of the forests.

This project records, assesses and thresholds historic cultural heritage places for potential listing on the Register of the National Estate.

Approximately three quarters of the inventory of over 800 places were identified as important be-

cause of their use in forest-based industries or recreation, including forestry-related buildings and structures, farming and grazing, and mining and mineral processing activities.

The historical research projects also include an overview history of the South East Queensland biogeographic region based largely on secondary material; travel routes, forest towns and settlement of areas associated with forestry and timber industries and an historical overview of sawmills and tramways.

Thirteen community workshops focussed on forested places with special associations and meanings to local communities and interest groups, to ensure that places they value are taken into account in future decision making.

Participants ranged from representatives of local government, education, tourism, conservation, recreation and industry to arts and historical societies. Locations included Nerang, Miriam Vale, Monto, Gympie, Nambour, Crows Nest, Murgon, Kingaroy, Dayboro, Bundaberg, Maryborough, Bris-

bane and Boonah.

National Estate

Some 100 places in the cultural heritage inventory are proposed for inclusion in the Register of the National Estate for historic or social values.

Sub-projects of the aesthetic values project were undertaken to investigate literature and music, visual arts and film, historical photography and tourism images.

Following integration of data, a total of 163 places were identified for aesthetic value.

Significant areas

A number of areas stand out as having cultural heritage significance.

They include Lamington, Springbrook and Tamborine National Parks; the D'Aguilar Range; Crows Nest/Ravensbourne; the Bunya Mountains; the Yarraman district; the Beerwah/Beerburrum district; the Mary Valley; the Great Sandy region including Cooloola and Fraser Island; Maryborough/Howard/Cordalba; and the Many Peaks/Calliope area.

Forests on the web - some useful bookmarks

There is a host of useful forest-related webpages for readers who have access to the internet.

This newsletter along with all the fact sheets, press releases and reports published for the South-East Queensland RFA will be available on the web as soon as possible after publication.

Most of the peak stakeholder groups have web pages as well, as do agencies involved in scientific research, like the CSIRO. While the homepages listed below do not necessarily reflect the views of the RFA Steering Committee they are handy bookmarks for anyone interested in forests and forest policy.

<http://www.forests.qld.gov.au>
This is Queensland's RFA homepage and the most useful address for people wanting to keep up with RFA developments. Links to other State government forestry pages.

<http://www.rfa.gov.au>
The Commonwealth's RFA homepage. As well as all Queensland information, it publishes all RFA reports and releases. The place to go if you want to see what other RFAs look like, or what's happening in other States.

<http://www.dpie.gov.au/dpie/forestry/html>
The Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry and Energy's forests page has the latest news on Federal forest policy initiatives such as Plantations 2020 Vision, farm forestry, and the Wood and Paper Industry Strategy.

<http://www.csiro.au/>
The CSIRO is Australia's largest scientific research agency and is involved in research into both forestry and wood products, and forests as part of the environment. A useful page for students.

www.uq.oz.au/~dnpolak/rainfore.html
The homepage of the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society. Includes details of ARC's objectives, achievements and projects as well as membership information and benefits.

<http://www.dnr.qld.gov.au/fiqweb/welcome.htm>
Jointly produced by Queensland's DPI Forestry and Department of Natural Resources this site has a wealth of information on forest types and management, research, tree care, recreation and events, publications and links to forestry organisations throughout Australia.

<http://www.dnr.qld.gov.au/fiqweb/forind/qtb/qtb.htm>
The homepage of the Queensland Timber Board gives an overview of the Board and its Timber Vision 2000. The page is currently being updated.

Full time RFA Communications Officer to start work soon

A full time Communications and community liaison officer has been appointed for the SEQ RFA, providing a first point of contact for media and community organisations in the region.

The officer will start work in early May. The position is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the State, and while the job will be based in the Department of Natural Resources' Indooroopilly offices it involves extensive travel throughout the region.

The position involves direct liaison with communities, aiming to ensure an efficient and constructive information flow between media and members of the public and the RFA Reference Panel, Steering Committee and other technical bodies involved in the agreement's development.

RFA joint project managers Robyn Bromey (Commonwealth) and Alf Said (State) said the multitude of groups and individuals working on the agreement made it difficult for people interested in forests to access information quickly and have their queries referred to the appropriate person.

"We hope the creation of this position will fill that gap and encourage greater participation in the RFA," they said.

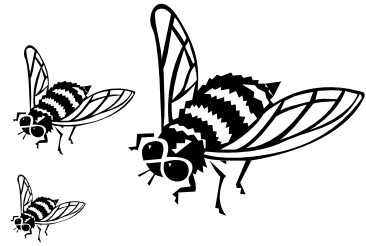
They thanked Judith Aitchison, for her work on the RFA communication strategy in a part-time capacity over the past five months.

Communications initiatives under way include the establishment of a telephone information line and the production of brochures and posters for widespread display.

The next edition of SEQ RFA News will have more details.

Beekeepers

A Forest User Profile



Assessments for the RFA are providing valuable information about commercial users of our forests, from the timber industry to ecotourism. Each edition of RFA forest news will profile a forest user business group. In this issue we look at the industry of beekeeping.

The RFA process is already reaping rewards for one small but very significant stakeholder group - Queensland's beekeepers, or apiarists.

The resource assessment for the RFA is providing a clearer picture of the industry and its connection with forests. In the process, it has identified new areas of forest that could be suitable for beekeeping.

Apiculture is not one of the State's biggest industries. Of the 5000 or so registered beekeepers in Queensland, about 200 are commercial producers and the industry's farmgate value is estimated at between \$10 million and \$14 million each year. "Not what you would call really big bikkies", as Queensland Beekeepers' Association Resource Committee Chairman Don Keith admits.

But, as Mr Keith points out, the most important benefit of beekeeping to the community has always been the role honey bees play in crop pollination, particularly in horticulture. He says this makes it a highly significant industry worth around a quarter of a billion dollars annually in Queensland.

And he sees long term benefits

emerging from the RFA process, through better identification and valuing of the forest resources.

The SEQ RFA region is a highly intensive area for beekeepers. Statewide, they produce about 40 per cent of their honey from forests and timber reserves, where they pay to place their hives.

"While we produce honey from all sorts of land tenures, State forests and timber reserves are absolutely critical," Mr Keith says.

As part of the assessment process, all Queensland beekeepers with more than 50 hives were surveyed on their use of forests. Two workshops were held at which beekeepers identified on detailed vegetation maps of the forests of South East Queensland the types of forests they used for hives.

"With 36 or 37 maps showing up to 80 different forest community types, it was a very detailed exercise," Mr Keith says. "The CRA people did a lot of preparatory work making the maps user-friendly for beekeepers and we were very encouraged by the detail and effort that went into it.

"From our point of view, the benefit is that within the South East Queensland area there are areas of forests that probably haven't been heavily utilised by beekeepers and our knowledge of the vegetation types in some of these areas has increased significantly through this process."

The learning process has worked both ways for State and Commonwealth officers working on the assessment.

Department of Natural Resources Forest Resources Officer Pauline Stewart worked with the beekeepers as they went through vegetation maps of south-east Queensland. Pauline has the job of collecting data for forest-dependent industries in the region including apiculture, grazing, timber and other forest products.

"The resource assessment reflects the different ways in which beekeepers use the forest," she says. "For example, beekeepers look not only for areas where they can put their hives to produce particular types of honey, but also for what they call "build" areas - places they can put their hives simply to build up the strength of the bees and the hive.

"They might put their hive in these build areas before putting them on a farmer's crops for pollination, or before sending them to another area of forest to collect the honey."

A decline in pollinators has meant that farmers will pay beekeepers to bring their hives to pollinate their crops. They will put more hives there in the hope that the bees will pollinate every square inch of crops, but this is hard on the bees and their numbers decline. For this reason the hives need to be built up to their optimum condition before being put to work in this way.

The President of the Queensland Beekeepers' Association, Duncan McMartin, is a member of the SEQ RFA Reference Panel. His contact details are on the back of this newsletter. Don Keith can be contacted on (076) 524 164.

Your Contacts on the Reference Panel

The contacts listed below are the Stakeholder members of the SEQ RFA Reference Panel and will have latest information on the RFA from the point of view of their own organisations.

Industry

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General Manager
Queensland Timber Board
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Fortitude Valley BC
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Norm Forbes
Hyne and Sons
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MARYBOROUGH QLD 4650
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Bonny Banks
Cattleman's Union
"Sunrise", INJUNE QLD 4454
Phone: 076 263 571
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Local Government

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Local Government Association of Qld
Caboolture Shire Council
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Union

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Australian Workers Union
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Community

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Government

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