



think climate. think forest.

10 August 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

“2,000,000,000 TONNES OF CARBON INTO FORESTS”

There was a buzz of excitement at the South-East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA) meeting in Bermagui on Saturday where new Australian National University (ANU) research into Green Carbon was discussed and highly commended by all present.

The groundbreaking, world-first research, published last week in the ANU report “Green Carbon – The Role of Natural Forests in Carbon Storage”, shows that south-eastern Australia’s eucalypt forests are among the most carbon dense in the world and store three times more carbon than official UN climate change figures suggest.

Lead author of the study, Professor Brendan Mackay, one of four scientists from the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society who conducted the study, said that their findings increase the value of forests in fighting climate change. “Protecting natural forests serves two purposes,” he said. “It maintains a large carbon sink and stops the release of the forest’s stored carbon.”

However, the excitement within the meeting came when the scientific details of the report and the implications for our future were explored in detail. The intact natural forests of south-eastern Australia are shown to hold an average of 640 tonnes of carbon per hectare (t C/ha) with some forests holding more than 1,200 t C/ha average and over 2,000 t C/ha maximum – figures for the Eden and Southern regions are not yet available separately.

As logged forests only hold an average of 60% of their carbon sequestration potential, the impact of stopping logging operations and letting our native forests grow is huge. The report shows that 2 gigatonnes (that’s 2,000,000,000 tonnes) of carbon can be returned to the native forest estate – that equates to reducing the equivalent of 24% of our total 2005 carbon emissions across all sectors for 100 years.

SERCA Convenor, John Hibberd, said “This ANU research finally lays to rest the old erroneous adage that young forests are better for climate change mitigation than mature ones.” “Many recent forest management decisions have resulted in damaging outcomes that have actually increased carbon emissions,” he added.

The meeting called on Federal and State governments to act NOW in securing the future of the native forest estate as highly efficient carbon sinks. SERCA believes that the information is now available to demonstrate unequivocally that cutting carbon removal from public native forests is in Australia’s best interests; environmentally, economically and especially in response to public demands for climate change mitigation.

As participant Prue Acton stated after the meeting, “Deforestation and degradation of our forests are shown to be 20% of this country’s carbon emission problem so it needs to provide 20% of the solution.” “This means that it needs to get 20% of the attention from our governments in finding a solution to climate change,” Prue said.

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ANU Green Carbon report: http://epress.anu.edu.au/green_carbon_citation.html