

SOUTH COAST CALL TO STOP LOGGING NATURAL NATIVE FORESTS AND PROTECT CLIMATE

Public meetings in Bega and Bermagui on the weekend have demanded that the Government recognise the carbon stored in native forests and stops logging them. The forums, organized by the South East Conservation Alliance (SERCA) heard expert speakers, Margaret Blakers from The Green Institute and Dr Judith Ajani, ANU economist and author of “The Forest Wars” explain the new science and politics around the climate change issue. About 130 people attended the two forums.

The far south coast forums are seeking a similar approach from the Government as former NSW Premier, Bob Carr, as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald today. They coincided with growing anti-logging sentiment focusing on the Bermagui area and the passage through the region of the Walk Against Woodchips by Ms Keri James and her young daughter, Clover, who are walking from Canberra to Tasmania to protest against woodchipping.

At the forums, Ms Blakers stressed the importance of Australia adopting full carbon accounting and argued for a way to enable both developed and developing countries to reap an economic benefit from the carbon storage potential of their forests.

Dr Ajani provided an analysis of trends in the timber industry which show that Australia has enough plantation resource to allow an end to native forest logging. She said that the carbon storage potential of native forests made it more urgent than ever that Australias timber industry makes the transition from native forests to plantations. The forums also heard a message read from Professor Brendan Mackay, ANU and co-author of Green Carbon.

Professor Mackey’s research, published last month reveals that if we stop logging and land clearing greenhouse gas emissions saved would be equivalent in size to 24% of current carbon dioxide emissions each year for the next 100 years. It would also improve water supplies and restore a resilient, biodiverse ecology.

His research on Australian forests has since been supported by similar findings in northern hemisphere studies.

Spokespeople: John Hibberd 64940135

Prue Acton 64945144 m.0419393203 (coverage poor)

Chips are down for loggers

Marian Wilkinson

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THE constant dull roar of heavy machinery was regularly punctuated by the loud cracking of a tree. The loggers in the state's south-eastern forests were going about their business uninterrupted. At Eden a new Japanese vessel headed into the harbour to load woodchips for Nippon Paper Industries and the Itochu Corporation, two of Japan's biggest paper manufacturers.

A handful of anti-logging activists, including the former fashion designer Prue Acton,

surveyed some of the flattened coupes with dismay.

"We have decided our campaign," she said. "Natural native forests are part of the essential solution to climate change, water and biodiversity." The forestry industry fears some activists are planning a blockade next month when logging moves to a new site near Bermagui.

"Green groups have indicated they are likely to physically oppose this harvesting operation and blockade general access," said Vince Phillips, of South East Fibre Exports, which is owned by the Japanese paper companies.

The industry is aware it is facing a far bigger challenge than a blockade, however. New scientific research is threatening to reshape the toxic politics of the forestry debate. Australian National University researchers, led by Brendan Mackey, have found that native forests store far more carbon dioxide than previously thought and could be crucial to climate change policy. It is called the "green carbon" argument.

A study by the university's Dr Judith Ajani also argues that Australia is about to face a bumper supply of plantation timber that could allow it to hugely scale back native forest logging while still producing enough hardwood and softwood for domestic use and export.

Deforestation and native forest degradation are estimated to account for some 20 per cent of Australia's annual net greenhouse gas emissions. Dr Mackey says the Government cannot ignore the carbon benefits of protecting Australia's native forests. "We need a broader, more sophisticated debate that recognises green carbon," he said.