



SOUTH EAST FOREST RESCUE

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Logging has been halted in Tantawangalo State Forest near Bega this morning. A tree sit is suspended 35m by steel cables connected to 3 logging machines. Evidence of systematic damage to forests in southern NSW as a result of government-supervised logging has forced the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to again investigate the state-run logging agency, Forestry Corporation of NSW, Australian Natural Wood Exports (ANWE, the Eden woodchip mill) and their logging contractors.

Recent inspection of native forest logging practices in several compartments of Tantawangalo State Forest by conservation group South East Forest Rescue (SEFR) has uncovered fresh evidence of illegal logging of rocky outcrops in the escarpment forest. The logging contractor has been caught red-handed parked right next to the breach in what should have been an exclusion zone.

Six years ago half of the coups in the compartments in this area were logged and SEFR reported numerous breaches, which were confirmed by the EPA. One concerned the logging of a rocky outcrop that continued into an adjoining coup. A year ago when SEFR became aware that Forestry Corporation was to log the remaining coups we notified the EPA of our objection to this operation because of the extremely high probability of further breaches and specifically the half logged outcrop.

Despite this Forestry Corporation has logged what should have been a 40m exclusion zone. SEFR has also identified several other probable breaches that need to be further investigated. Forestry Corporation has gone rogue and the EPA has failed to enforce compliance of the rules.

“This situation is outrageous” said SEFR spokesperson Mr Scott Daines. “All these breaches should never have happened after we notified the EPA a year ago. These are systemic breaches; past audits have exposed illegal logging of endangered ecological communities, old-growth and rocky outcrops, we have proven systemic re-occurring breaches on the south coast that show a pattern of wilful non-compliance.”

The EPA has handed out penalty notices to the Forestry Corporation in the past for breaking these logging rules, and is now prosecuting over breaches in Glenbog State Forest, yet despite this, SEFR today confirmed that the illegal logging of native forests continues by Forestry Corporation.

SEFR has reported on rocky outcrop breaches in this area as far back as April 2010, and still there has been no noticeable change in the practices of logging contractors.

“The chipmill ANWE and the Forestry Corporation have gotten away with actions the average person would be fined hundreds of thousands of dollars for,” said Mr Daines.

Damage similar to that at Tantawangalo State Forest was identified by South East Forest Rescue in other Tantawangalo compartments as well as Glenbog and Yambulla State Forests, after ANWE and Forestry Corp’s logging operations.

“These regulations have been in place for 18 years, they are simple to follow and yet they are being broken regularly,” said Mr Daines. “The EPA has tried ‘education’, warning letters, and it has tried fines, but nothing is working. Citizens can’t take FCNSW to court. It’s time the NSW Government cut the cord and

ended destructive native forest logging.”

This peaceful action has also taken place because deforestation is one of the biggest causes of climate change and Forestry Corp is incurring a massive financial loss in native forests.

“South East Forest Rescue calls on the state government to suspend all native forestry operations on the south coast immediately. The unsustainable wood supply agreements have surpassed the tipping-point of credibility and integrity. The citizens of the state of NSW have been defrauded, and the forest-dependant species of our region have been the silent victims,” said Mr Daines.

The time has come to follow New Zealand’s lead and end native forest logging once and for all.

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