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LET'S STOP LOGGING THE LITTLE THAT'S LEFT

Conservation Groups Call for the End to Native Forest Logging

South Coast New South Wales conservation group South East Forest Rescue is calling for an immediate halt to native forest logging.

The Forestry Corporation NSW has just released a document '2019–20 Wildfires NSW Coastal Hardwood Forests Sustainable Yield Review 2020'¹. This document sets out that 80%-85% of south coast state forests have been burnt. That is, in 2019/20 in the South Coast RFA areas 80% in the Eden Region, 85% in the South Coast Sub-Region and 69% in the Tumut Sub-Region were burnt.

"We find it incredulous that this equates to such a small decrease in what the Forestry Corporation say they have available to log," said SEFR spokesperson Mr Scott Daines.

SEFR is questioning the integrity of this 'review'. The Forestry Corporation themselves say that they have not undertaken proper review: A comprehensive review incorporating full remeasurement of inventory plots in fire affected forests will be undertaken once it is safe and logistically possible to do so.

"The Forestry Corporation often use the word 'safe' or 'safety' to sidestep many legal requirements," said Mr Daines. "Again, we wonder if it is so unsafe for FCNSW to enter post-burnt forests, it follows that logging activities in those burnt forests must be as equally unsafe and should cease."

Professor David Lindenmayer from the Australian National University has said the fires should be used as a trigger to transition away from native forest logging and woodchipping.²

The Environment Protection Authority ('EPA') has attempted to regulate the Forestry Corporation given the state of the forests after the bushfires; however, the Forestry Corporation has walked away, telling the EPA it would not comply with the rules set up to protect forests. In turn, the EPA have said that they cannot regulate when they have no knowledge of what rules the Forestry Corporation are logging under. Last week the Forestry Corporation resumed logging in fire-affected areas.

"This is the equivalent of saying that I am going to drive my car on your roads, but not abide by the Road Rules and instead, make up my own rules," said SEFR spokesperson Scott Daines. "Then after police put up road blocks to try to avoid damage after the floods I drive straight through, and then the police say they cannot do anything because they don't know what the rules are."

¹ https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1299388/fcnsw-sustainable-yield-report-2019-20-wildfires.pdf

² <https://www.futurefocusproject.com.au/story/6823666/fire-hit-timber-towns-should-become-carbon-sinks-expert/>

On Monday, government Minister and Bega MP Andrew Constance told the ABC that the Forestry Corporation was "out of touch" with what south coast residents had been through³.

"Before the fires there was abundant evidence that the Forestry Corporation's estimates of what wood was available to log were grossly overstated and unreliable," said Mr Daines. "The rate of native forest logging had exceeded levels which could be permanently sustained.

Now after the fires it is obvious that there is no long-term future. This logging isn't sustainable or lawful, it destroys the ecological integrity of the forests and contributes significantly to the catastrophic effects of climate change. The time has come to follow New Zealand's lead, honour Australia's international obligations, save the little that is left and end native forest logging altogether."

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³ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/31/nsw-urged-to-stop-logging-native-forests-after-fires-wipe-out-up-to-30-of-timber-supply>