

Referenced Version of Old-Growth Forests Leaflet

Old-Growth Forests Under Attack

The NSW Government is pushing ahead with plans to open up thousands of hectares of beautiful old-growth forests to logging.¹ These forests are places of living Aboriginal cultural heritage and critical habitat for koalas, gliders, quolls, frogs, owls and other threatened wildlife.² Old growth forests are important for recreation and tourism, they reduce climate pollution by storing vast amounts of carbon and are crucial to our clean water supplies.

The NSW Government must end all plans to log these areas and commit to maintaining and extending protections for our precious forests.

We acknowledge the spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance of lands and waters to Aboriginal peoples. We pay our respects to Aboriginal peoples and their Elders past and present who hold the authority, memories, knowledge and traditions of living Aboriginal cultures.

Old-growth forests on the chopping block

The NSW Government ordered an investigation to see how much more timber could be made available by remapping and rezoning old-growth forests, stripping protections and opening them up for logging.

A Natural Resources Commission pilot study across the north coast found 88% of protected old-growth forests would be opened up for logging.³

The NSW Government now plans to put at least 15,000 hectares of protected forest on the chopping block.

If we don't stop old-growth remapping, tens of thousands of hectares of forest could lose protection.

We don't have enough protected forests as it is — we should not be removing protections from any areas currently off limits to logging.

Living Aboriginal cultural heritage

¹ Terms of Reference: Reassessment of old growth mapping and environmental values on coastal state forests, NSW Natural Resources Council, viewed 12 September 2019, <https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/literature_245570/TOR>

² High Conservation Value Old Growth forest State Heritage listing, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, viewed 12 September 2019, <<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/iewHeritageltemDetails.aspx?ID=5051503>>

³ Natural Resources Commission 2018, Supplementary Advice on Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval Remake - Old Growth Forests and Rainforests - North Coast State Forests, <https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/literature_240609/Final%20report>

“Gumbaynggirr people believe that every part of the universe is connected. When we look after our totems and special places we protect the universe. If these protections are removed – scar trees and other totems like yams, quolls and koalas will be directly threatened. For us not to look after these animals and plants is sacrilege to our culture and to the way we have lived for thousands and thousands of years.” - Uncle Micklo

Nurturing Biodiversity

Old-growth forests are critical wildlife habitat, large carbon stores, a vital part of the water cycle and important for fire suppression⁴. Wildlife in NSW is being pushed towards extinction by deforestation.⁵ Sixty per cent of native mammals in NSW are at risk of being lost forever.⁶ Old-growth forest, with large hollows, provide essential habitat for koalas, gliders, quolls, and other threatened wildlife. We need to protect forests to stop the extinction and climate crises we face.

Economic sense

Spending \$3 million to remap old-growth is another government subsidy to the public native forest logging industry, which is environmentally and economically unsustainable. The economic benefits from tourism and recreation, as well as the ecosystem services of native forests, far outweigh those from logging⁷. Plantations are more economically viable and supply almost 90% of sawn timber in NSW⁸.

We're calling on the NSW Government to:

1. Keep all protected areas protected
2. End remapping and rezoning of old-growth forests
3. Protect forests wildlife, and invest in carbon stores, recreation and tourism

Take action

The decision to remove protections from old-growth forests to allow logging must be stopped. Together we will demand action from the government and apply pressure at every opportunity.

- Collect petition signatures to force a debate in parliament
- Meet with your local MP to put old-growth forests on the political agenda

⁴ Taylor, Chris, McCarthy, Michael & Lindenmayer, David. (2014) Nonlinear Effects of Stand Age on Fire Severity, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/conl.12122>>

⁵ “The main threats to listed species in NSW are habitat loss due to the clearing and degradation of native vegetation and the spread of invasive pests and weeds” - NSW EPA, NSW State of the Environment Report 2018, viewed 12 September 2019 <<https://www.soe.epa.nsw.gov.au/all-themes/biodiversity/threatened-species>>

⁶ NSW EPA, NSW State of the Environment Report 2018, Table 11.1a: Number of listed threatened species in NSW under the Biodiversity Conservation and Fisheries Management Acts (at 1 December 2017), viewed 12 September 2019 <<https://www.soe.epa.nsw.gov.au/all-themes/biodiversity/threatened-species>>

⁷ Keith et al. (2017) Ecosystem accounts define explicit and spatial trade-offs for managing natural resources, <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-017-0309-1>>

⁸ Forestry Corporation of NSW Sustainability Report 2017-18: 88.4% of sales by Forestry Corporation for sawlogs in 2017/18 were from plantations.

- Make a submission to the Natural Resources Commission

Go to nature.org.au/actnow to take action today

Key facts and figures

- A pilot study by the Natural Resources Commission found remapping would open 88% of high-conservation value old-growth forest to logging.
- Old-growth forests contain vital hollows that take hundreds of years to form⁹. The loss of hollow-bearing trees is a major threat to the survival of many species, including at least 46 mammals, 81 birds, 31 reptiles and 16 frogs¹⁰.
- Remapping forests on private land is already happening and has opened 29,000 hectares of previously protected old-growth forests to logging.
- The government plans to spend up to \$3 million remapping and rezoning old-growth forests¹¹. The cost of buying out existing contracts is estimated to be only \$1.47 million¹².
- Forests absorb more than 30% of our carbon emissions, and older trees store more carbon than younger ones¹³. We should be protecting and restoring forests to increase their carbon-storing capacity¹⁴.
- Globally, we need to expand our forests to increase carbon sinks to curb climate change and Australia is one of only five countries that can do so on the scale needed¹⁵.

⁹ Gibbons, Philip & Lindenmayer, David. (2002). Tree Hollows and Wildlife Conservation in Australia,

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331065461_Tree_Hollows_and_Wildlife_Conservation_in_Australia>

¹⁰ NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee (2007) Loss of hollow-bearing trees - key threatening process listing,

<<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/threatened-species/nsw-threatened-species-scientific-committee/determinations/final-determinations/2004-2007/loss-of-hollow-bearing-trees-key-threatening-process-listing>>

¹¹ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage Science Division, Recurrent Funding Proposal & Approval, received through a Government Information Public Access request: Full cost recovery for NVIS - VEGETATION MAPPING is \$3,002,044 and the price to client (NSW EPA) is \$2,460,626

¹² This costing is based on \$19 per cubic metre, the price paid by the NSW government in the 2014 timber buy-back overseen by Minister Katrina Hodgkinson. It is calculated on the government buying back the maximum timber shortfall identified by the NRC of 8,600 cubic metres of timber per year over the 9 year period of Forestry Corporation's Wood Supply Agreements with cement and wood supply corporation Boral (2020-2028). The true figure is likely to be lower because all other Wood Supply Agreements (except Boral's) expire in 2023 and so committed volumes of wood could be dramatically reduced at no expense to the government.

¹³ Stephenson et al. (2014) Rate of tree carbon accumulation increases continuously with tree size,

<https://doi.org/10.1038/nature12914>

¹⁴ Lewis, Simon and Wheeler, Charlotte. "Regenerate natural forests to store carbon" *Nature* 4 April 2019 view 12 September 2019 <<https://www.nature.com/magazine-assets/d41586-019-01026-8/d41586-019-01026-8.pdf>>

¹⁵ Griscom et al., Natural climate solutions, PNAS October 31, 2017 114 (44) 11645-11650; first published October 16, 2017 <<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1710465114>>

- The Natural Resources Commission says the forecast wood supply shortfall may never happen¹⁶.
- The NSW Government had planned to also open protected rainforest for logging but dropped this without explanation. They can do the same for old-growth forests.

4 key reasons remapping and rezoning old-growth forests is indefensible

- 1. Remapping high-conservation-value old-growth breaks the NSW Government's commitment to maintain environmental values under new logging laws.** The government wants to remap the forests to access more logs and this has nothing to do with the ecological value of the forests. Many species of wildlife in NSW are facing extinction and forests are vital habitat for their survival.
- 2. These forests have been protected for decades** as part of the national comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system. We need to add to it, not dismantle it.
- 3. The timber supply impacts of new logging rules are not verified and probably do not exist.** The NRC has advised the projected shortfall is based on figures that "represent the worst case scenario, and may never be realised".
- 4. The cost of remapping exceeds the value of buying out the wood supply contracts.** The government should buy back existing wood supply agreements, at a cost of only \$1.47 million. This is at least \$0.5 million less than the \$2-3 million being spent on the remapping old-growth forests.

¹⁶ Internal NSW Government brief, *Coastal Integrated Operations Approval Questions and Answers- Internal*, received through a Government Information Public Access request: "NRC have advised us that these wood supply impact figures represent the worst case scenario, and may never be realised"