



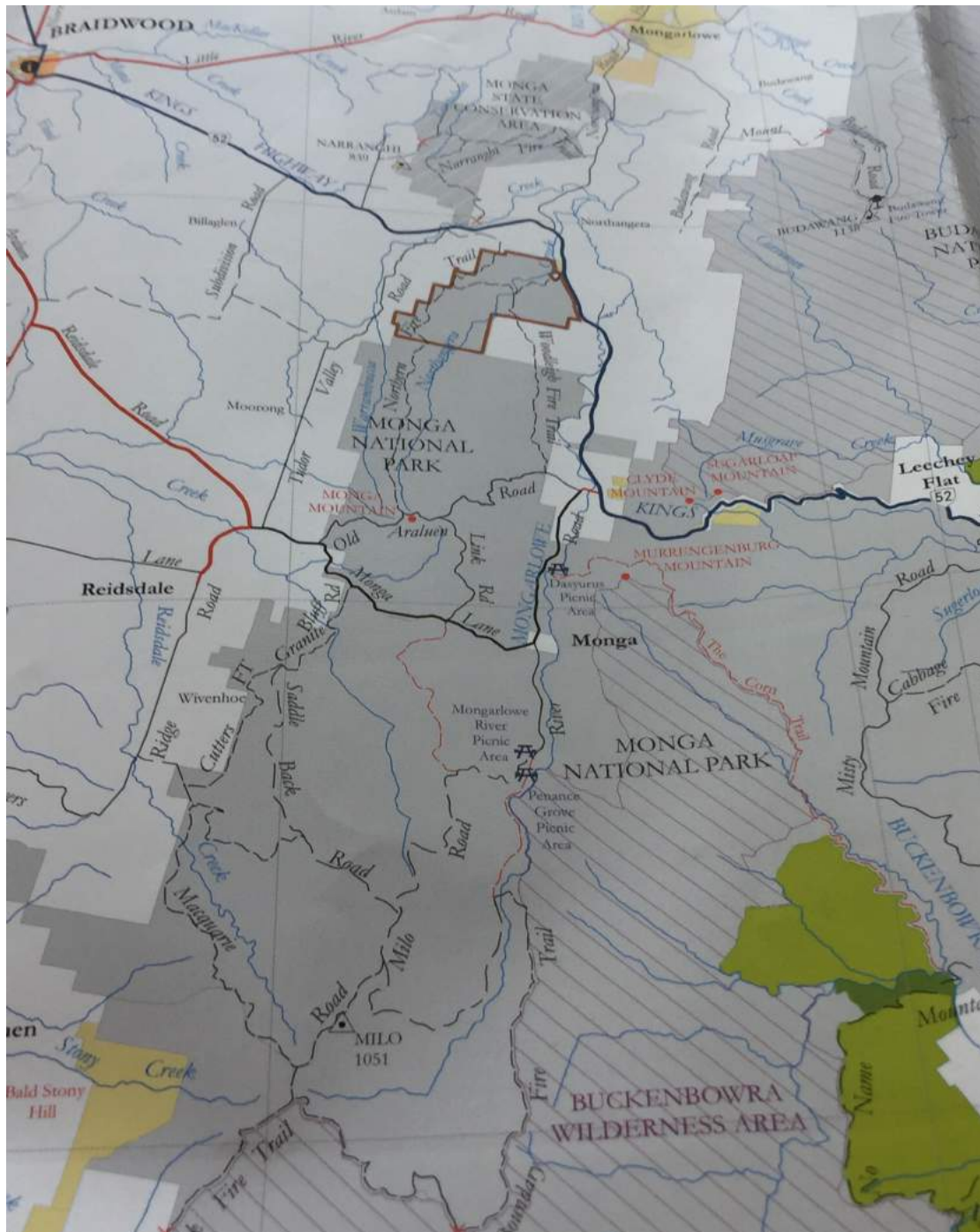
HELP

STOP LOGGING ALONG OUR HISTORIC CORN TRAIL





Excerpt from South Coast Forest Map, Forestry Corporation, June 2013





HELP STOP LOGGING ALONG OUR HISTORIC CORN TRAIL

FACT SHEET

This paper has been written by locals to assist you to take action to stop the logging now happening above our beloved Corn Trail and the Buckenbowra river that flows to the coast.

It aims to achieve three goals:

1. An immediate Moratorium on logging in compartments of the Buckenbowra State Forest known as #516 and #517;
2. Commitments to incorporate compartments #516 and #517 into the surrounding Monga National Park;
3. Commitments to assist the transition of the logging industry from native forest logging to plantation sources.

Thank you for joining the diverse group of people who believe that these forests need to be protected for their own sake as well as for us and for a future our children need us to protect.

WHAT IS THE CORN TRAIL?

The Corn Trail is a track, long used as a trade route, taking produce from the Clyde River near Batemans Bay on the NSW south coast to the high country near Braidwood. Noel Butler, Elder of the Dhurga language group, the traditional custodians of this land, confirms that this track is an ancient pathway. Understood to be used for at least 20,000 years by Yuin people for gatherings at the time of the Bogong Moth migrations to the high country; a Bogong Dreaming Track that linked coastal people to what was to become the nation's capital.

The track passes through remote country: a Declared Wilderness Area that includes the Monga and Buckenbowra National Parks (NP). The Mongarlowe and Buckenbowra Rivers rise in these NPs, the former feeding Sydney's water supply and the latter providing drinking water to the Bateman's Bay community. Their headwaters seep from the cool temperate Gondwanan rainforest here, relying on constant cloud-fed mists that are soaked into the forest's spongy soil. Some flora found here are not found elsewhere (Monga waratah) and some are very old (Pinkwoods have been estimated to be 3-5000 years of age). These days the track is a popular recreational destination for bushwalkers, pack-saddlers, day-trip horse riders, birdies, endangered wildlife spotters, campers, and young people's organisations such as Scouts.

There are two ways to access the Corn Trail, one from the high country (upper access) and one from below (lower access). Upper access: From the Dasyurus picnic area beside the upper reaches of the Mongarlowe River in the Monga National Park. This walk will take approx: 5-6 hours (16 kilometres) Lower access: Turn off the Kings Highway 7 km below the top of the Clyde Mountain descent and drive 40 minutes along Misty Mountain Rd to a clearing sufficient to park approximately 5 cars. The walk begins down a gravel track, at the Buckenbowra River; a 6 hour walk up to the Mongarlowe River.

HOW HAVE THE FORESTS BEEN PROTECTED?

The Friends of the Mongarlowe River (FMR), established by Judith Wright, is now in its 33rd year. FMR successfully dedicated itself during the 1990s to protecting the forests from which the Mongarlowe river rises. After sustained lobbying during the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process they were, along with many others, successful in having the bulk of Monga and Buckenbowra State Forests (SF) gazetted as National Park. In 2003, after further protest, the remaining portions of Monga SF were converted to a combination of National Park and State Conservation Area. The logging compartments of concern now (516 and 517 bright green on the Forestry map) were left out and one small area that straddles the Buckenbowra was classified as Preserved Forest Area (dark green on the map)

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EACH OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND STATE GOVERNMENTS?

FMR was represented in the Federal government's Regional Forest Assessment (RFA) process. The Federally funded RFA process was Australia wide with varied results. The aim of this process was to establish a comprehensive and representative forest reserve system while providing certainty and compensation for the timber industry's 20-year transition out of native forest logging and into plantations. It was designed by the Federal Government to end what was called the 'Forest Wars.'

The RFA process took 5 years to complete, beginning with a moratorium on logging contentious areas for the duration of the consultation and assessment process. These were known as 'Deferred Forest Areas'. Setting up a government funded consultative committee representing all the stakeholders followed this. FMR compiled a submission about protecting the Mongarlowe River and won a seat on this committee.

All involved came to recognise that we had far more in common than the things that threatened to divide



us. Like the RFA consultative committee we sat on, we could all see the merit of a locally based management structure that required consultation and agreement on forest management plans. Stakeholders identified the need for a forest management structure that did not pit conservationists and the timber industry against one another or lock local government interests out of the process. RFAs were agreements between the Commonwealth and State governments. These were renewed (despite opposition from FMR) in 2018.

Forestry operations in a region subject to an RFA can be undertaken without the need for approval from the Commonwealth Minister provided there is compliance with the text of the RFA.

We now have a system where, since the *Forestry Act 2012* (NSW), decisions are made centrally by the NSW Forest Corporation. NSW Forestry Agreements are not the same as the RFAs. Four twenty-year NSW Forestry Agreements were made covering some parts of the state including the NSW Forestry Agreement for this South region, made in 2002 and due for renewal in 2022. Once a NSW Forest Agreement is in place a license to log known as an IFOA can be granted.

WHERE IS LOGGING NEAR THE CORN TRAIL?

Adjacent to the lower entrance to the Corn Trail, and stretching approximately one-third of its length, is a State Forest licensed for logging known as Compartment 517 (348 hectares) and its neighbour 516. These are steep sided slopes rising above the Corn Trail and the Buckenbowra River. The gradient of these slopes in 517 can be summarised: 26% at 20-25 degrees, and 16% at 25-30 degrees. Of 348 hectares, 294 hectares are earmarked for logging.

It is important to note that in order to protect waterways on the western side of the Great Dividing Range no logging is permitted on slopes greater than an 18 degree gradient in accordance with *The Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*. An adequate supply of fresh water has long been a problem for Batemans Bay. It is therefore surprising that the same rule does not apply on this side of the Great Divide.

A narrow bushy buffer has been left beside the Trail partly concealing the damage to the forest, but the area that has already been logged includes steep slopes about 50m immediately to the south of the Corn Trail and just above the Buckenbowra River.

The Forestry Corporation's harvest plan for 517 claims no cultural heritage sites were located during surveys but it does not say what areas were surveyed. An Aboriginal scar tree was located in

October 2018 by bushwalkers about 300 metres east of the end of the road labelled 517/4 on the Forestry Corporation map.

WHAT LOGGING IS GOING ON?

Compartment 517 being logged now was logged only 30 years ago. It has not been thinned since then so most trees are of similar age. A regrowth forest needs more water than a mature forest, especially after clear-felling. 517 is in the process of clear-felling, leaving gaping holes in the forest canopy and converting the forest floor to churned-up dirt.

Expected yields are: Pulp: 2500 cubic m (34%), Firewood: 2050 cubic m (28%), Large sawlogs: 1600 cubic m (22%), Small sawlogs: 400 cubic m (11%), excluding treetop which is left behind for burning.

Due to the steep slopes in much of compartment 517, the harvest of timber so far has left the compartment criss-crossed by multiple tracks and piles of debris including logs, heads and butts of a substantial size. According to the harvest plans Firewood will be taken from this compartment and there are plans to burn off post harvest. By working on very steep slopes, logging and firewood contractors are also being exposed to increased work health and safety risks.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION?

Early in its first term the current NSW Lib/Nat government passed *The Forestry Act 2012* (NSW) establishing the NSW Forestry Corporation that controls operations. It appears that none of the objects set for the Corporation are being met by this logging operation. Certainty for the logging industry was the driver. The Act

- established the Forestry Corporation which is exempt from the Corporations Act;
- closed off access to the courts for citizens seeking a remedy/ to stop native forest logging (in Australia the environment does not have standing in the courts unlike NZ);
- exempted licensed loggers from the *Wilderness Act*, Stop Work orders in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*, *Threatened Species Act*, *Local Government Act* unless activity is likely to harm an endangered population or endangered ecological community – animal or plant – or damage the habitat of an endangered population, or it is found to be an Aboriginal object or place. Offences under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* may apply in these situations;
- ended the requirement for Environment Impact statements and Species impact statements to be produced for IFOA regions even if circumstances change and new ecological information comes to light and



even if conditions of the license to log itself are varied.

The Corporation issues IFOAs. An IFOA can be amended, suspended or revoked at any time by joint agreement of relevant ministers. There is no requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for this to happen.

DO THE ECONOMICS STACK UP?

It is revealing that most of the native forest logs to be cut down and hauled out of compartment 517 will not be used to make timber logs, but instead used for waste products. The largest percentage of logs, according to the harvest plan, will be used for pulp (34%), with the next largest for firewood (28%). Less than 22% of logs removed from this area of the forest will be used as quality sawlogs, with another 11% used as salvage sawlogs, so less than one third of the total logs removed will be used for timber.

Even including the pulp and firewood, the total logging yield from this area of native forest will be only 25 cubic metres per hectare, which is less than 5% of the yield obtained from a softwood plantation near Braidwood. This comparison shows that harvesting of timber from native forests such as compartment 517 is not commercially viable, and continues to occur only because of massive public subsidies.

In a detailed analysis of the forestry estate the Australia Institute has shown that for the six years, 2009-2015, the native forests of NSW were harvested by FCNSW at a massive loss that was cross-subsidised by \$79 million from the Corporation's softwood plantations.

It is surely well overdue now to question why native forests are still being logged for little or no commercial gain, when **leaving the forests intact will contribute positively to Australia's international obligations to reduce carbon emissions** and financially benefit the FCNSW. This is highly pertinent in the light of current reports that Australia's *per capita* carbon emissions are the second highest in the World.

WHAT ABOUT ENDANGERED FLORA & FAUNA?

Recent validated discoveries of threatened species by the public have recorded Australia's top marsupial predator, the Spotted-tailed Quoll (December 2018) and a pair of vulnerable Greater Gliders (January 2019) in the area known as 517.

Like the koala, the greater glider is very selective in the species of *Eucalyptus* it will eat at any particular time of the year. During the summer breeding season greater gliders feed only on species with the highest nutritional content, particularly *Eucalyptus viminalis*, and *E. fastigata* and at other times on *E. radiata*, *E.*

obliqua, *E. cypellocarpa*, *E. muellerana* that are growing new shoots.

Greater Gliders are living very close to the line and any disturbance of their special environment is fatal to their survival. Studies done 50 years ago on the effects of forest logging on 1105 greater gliders showed that less than 6% survived and those were animals for whom part of their original habitat was still standing; no displaced gliders survived the loss of their original home. This has been confirmed by later studies when radio tagged gliders were followed after logging; none moved into other unlogged forest.

Integrity of the forest is critical for the survival of Greater Gliders; they are wholly dependent on the forest, unlike other species such as brushtail possums and ringtail possums. In this sense the Greater Glider is a good indicator species of the health of the forest.

In Compartment 517 before it was logged the 4 species of eucalypt trees present were all favoured species of Greater Gliders and, on 283ha would have supported about 200 adult gliders; **all these gliders are now probably dead.**

In Compartment 517 before logging there were:

Yellow stringy bark, *Eucalyptus obliqua/muellerana* 131ha, Brown barrel, *E. fastigata* 47ha, Ash, *E. sieberi* 105ha, Coastal dry forest 108ha, Rainforest 17ha.

WHAT INDUSTRIES and ACTIVITIES ARE AFFECTED?

The growing population of Batemans Bay relies on the clean flow of the Buckenbowra for its fresh water supply. In heavy rain loss of top-soil from these steep gradients of the slope will affect the water quality in the Buckenbowra affecting fishing/oyster growers.

Tourism and recreation is affected including bushwalkers. Plans have been underway for the development of a walking track from Canberra to the Coast. Also mountain bikers, pack-saddlers, day horse-riders' safety and enjoyment are threatened.

Scouts, Venturers and Duke of Edinburgh Award participants make regular use of the Corn Trail. A local group called Access For All has already fought hard for peaceful recreational use of the Parks.

Logging workers themselves are being exposed to risk working on very steep-sided slopes.



THE CAMPAIGN CASE

The Facts support 4 key arguments:

1. Native timber harvesting is not a viable commercial activity;
2. Current forest management practices are not sustainable;
3. Local activities and industries will be affected;
4. Poor public policy and short-sighted legislation have protected vested interests ignoring climate change.

WRITE, PHONE or VISIT YOUR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT and ELECTION CANDIDATES.

Demand from current members of NSW parliament NOW:

1. **immediate moratorium** on logging of 517 and 516;
2. start the process of **revoking the licences** for 517 and 516;
3. start the process of **transferring compartments** 516 and 517 into the National Parks that surround them;
4. an answer as to whether animals, plants, rivers and forests and the communities and industries who enjoy our wild places must continue to play second fiddle to, subsidise and frequently be sacrificed to, the native forest logging industry when plantation logging could provide a far more certain and lucrative opportunity to sustain its future? Ask what plans are in place for the transition;
5. an **end to any plans to renew the NSW southern region Forest Agreement** recognising the greater value of forests as carbon sinks;

Ask your NSW Election candidates

1. will you support an **immediate moratorium** on logging 517?
2. what will you do to **stop logging and transfer compartments** 516/7 into the neighbouring national parks; and
3. what plans do you have for a **total transition from logging public native forests to plantation logging**; and
4. what plans do you have to **reform the Forestry Act** (NSW) in order to
 - restore citizens' access to the courts
 - ensure effective and up to date environmental impact research and
 - ensure transparency and accountability in government.

CONTACT

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NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Regional Water, Trade & Industry:

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#517 Logging is located in the State seat of Bega and Federal seat of Gilmore.

Contact your NSW Election candidates and favourite media.

NB: for more detailed material and references please email secretaryfmr@gmail.com