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Private Native Forestry Review
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Caldera Environment Centre gives the following recommendations to the Private Native Forestry Review.

As part of the application and approval process there needs to be a full assessment of the environmental values and constraints on the land proposed for private forestry, including on ground surveys undertaken by qualified and experienced botanists and ecologists to assess presence of threatened ecological communities, threatened flora and fauna species, old growth forest and old growth trees, location of any environmental zone, habitat corridor and waterways of all stream orders. No exemptions to full assessment should be granted on any different scale and intensity of logging.

Desktop surveys as assessment are not adequate alone as mapping and records are not current or complete. Accuracy can only be achieved through on-site assessment by qualified and experienced ecologists and botanists.

Aboriginal cultural heritage should be protected. The application process should include investigation of cultural heritage objects and sites on the land and specify means to avoid damage to these objects and sites.

Waterways should be protected through buffers implemented on unmapped streams, and logging exclusion areas of at least 20 metres implemented on all unmapped, 1st, 2nd and 3rd order streams. Waterway buffer widths should progressively increase in steeper and more erosion prone country.

Monitoring needs to include photographs before, during and after the logging, the number of monitoring points dependant on the size of the subject land. Site visits should be undertaken by NSW government staff administering the private native forestry agreement at quarterly intervals or at designated project milestones.

Before works commence logging contractors need be informed of the environmental values and constraints of the land and conduct their work accordingly. Contractors should be provided with ecological assessments, mapping and monitoring points and meet with NSW government staff before works commence.

A timely response is needed from NSW government staff to questions or complaints from community as well as staff site inspections immediately following complaints of any environmental damage.

Penalties for breaches of private native forestry agreements should be increased to give incentive to landholders to adhere to their agreements and better understand the importance of protecting the environment.

The public should have access to the details of approved private native forestry agreements so community can know where works are being undertaken and that environmental values have been considered and protected prior to approval and during works. This same information should be shared with Councils who are employed by community to represent our interests and protect our assets.

As part of the application to conduct private native forestry the NSW Government needs to inform landholders of the biodiversity values of the land and the options for their land other than logging, such as private land conservation, conservation grants, stewardship payments and funding for avoided carbon emissions etc. This advice is best given at an initial site visit to the property by NSW government staff.

Training for landholders is available through Landcare, Council and Local Land Services. Training on environmentally sustainable operation for contractors working in the logging industry needs to be mandatory and a course developed that issues a qualification valid for a certain period and updated regularly as a requirement to continue work in this field. NSW government staff working in private native forestry must have natural resource management knowledge and training adequate to help landholders understand the environmental values of their land.

The case of the many unlawful activities during private native forestry at Limpinwood, within our shire, by Hewitville Pty. Ltd. shows that private native forestry does not currently protect the environment.

Unlawful activities include unauthorised clearing of native vegetation during construction of a road on a Crown Road Reserve within the identified property boundary and in part a Council 7(d) Environmental Protection Zone without consent, causing significant and ongoing pollution of a creek and Hopping Dicks Creek. At the same time clearing of riparian vegetation along 5 mapped streams and Hopping Dicks Creek was undertaken, including the filling of one stream for a house site. This private native forestry venture has caused great damage to the environment since 2013 causing Tweed community to lose faith in administration of the private native forestry program by the NSW State government.

A proper application and assessment process, information and guidance for landholders, trained and qualified operators, improved monitoring and reporting, timely and adequate response to community questions or complaints and oversight by NSW government staff in future private native forestry would go a long way to prevent the people of the Tweed from living through further environment destruction that the above case describes.

Caldera Environment Centre fully supports submissions to this Private Native Forestry Review by the North East Forest Alliance and the NSW Environmental Defenders Office.

Yours sincerely,



Claire Masters

On behalf of Caldera Environment Centre