



tasmanian conservation trust inc

Tasmanian Conservation Trust Forests Policy

14 February 2012

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide Tasmanian Conservation Trust (TCT) members and other interested persons with a brief description of the TCT's position in regard to the conservation of Tasmania's forests and the management of the forestry industry in Tasmania. This document does not address the TCT's current priorities or campaign activities but does provide a link to documents which do so (see page 5 of this policy).

The TCT is committed to the conservation, on both land and sea, of Tasmania's natural resources, native species and ecosystems. In particular, we seek to conserve biodiversity across all ecosystems. Forests form part of our interests, but are not dominant over all other considerations.

The TCT has not taken a high profile in the Tasmanian forestry debate which focuses primarily on reservation of wilderness forests on public land. The TCT has instead focused on working to protect high conservation value forests on private land, improving forestry practices, working with forestry companies interested in gaining FSC certification, improving protection of threatened species and improving management of forests within the public reserve system. While we do not particularly focus on protection of forests on public land, we support the need for protection of all high conservation value forests, public and private.

TCT Forests Policy

A. Overall vision – All high conservation value forests (HCVF – see 'Section K') on both public and private land should be protected from logging and other processes which threaten their integrity. These forests should be actively managed and protected to ensure they retain their conservation value.

B. Clearing and conversion – The TCT opposes any further clearing and conversion # of native forests or other natural ecosystems (as opposed to native forest logging – see Section C) except for small-scale vegetation clearing which is essential for conservation management, human safety or essential infrastructure construction and management. Any such clearing and conversion must not occur without planning approval and must be subject to an improved and stringent regulatory system including caveats regarding clearing thresholds.

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Clearing and conversion means the total removal of a natural forest or other ecosystem and its permanent replacement with pasture, crops, plantations, roads, housing etc.

C. Native forest logging – The TCT does not oppose native forest logging *per se*.

The TCT accepts that native forest logging* may be environmentally acceptable and commercially desirable, provided that the logging is properly planned, managed and regulated to ensure HC VF (see 'Section K') are appropriately identified and protected.

The TCT accepts that re-growth native forests can produce some products that currently cannot be produced from plantations. Native forest logging can also have positive environmental advantages compared with plantation forestry e.g. having less reliance on chemical control of weeds and pests.

The TCT favours Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) certification for logging of regrowth native forests.

* *Native forest logging means the harvesting of all or most trees from an area of native forest and reestablishing native forest shortly after through natural or assisted regeneration using local species.*

D. Silvicultural methods – The TCT does not necessarily oppose any particular logging practice, including clearfelling, provided there is a strong forest practices system in place to address the conservation concerns.

E. Native forest logging transition – Any decision to halt logging across all or a large proportion of state forest must be based on an established set of environmental and conservation principles and on the scientific identification of HC VF. The automatic opposition to logging for commodities such as woodchips or to a particular logging method is not supported by the TCT.

F. Plantations – The TCT does not necessarily support the development of a plantation-based forest industry over an industry based on native forests, but believes that both can continue to be an important part Tasmania's forestry industry if properly planned, managed and regulated.

G. Pulp mills – The TCT does not oppose the construction of pulp mills in Tasmania, *per se*, but it does oppose the Tamar Valley pulp mill proposed by Gunns Limited because it will have unacceptable environmental impacts and it was not assessed under the normal planning processes. We also note that, primarily for these reasons, there continues to be high levels of community opposition.

H. Public forest governance and management – The TCT believes that there is a fundamental conflict of interest in Forestry Tasmania's roles as a manager and conservator of forests on the one hand, and on the other its role as a provider of wood resources for the forestry industry. There is an urgent need to reform the administration and legislation governing the management of publicly owned reproduction forests to address this conflict.

I. Public reserve governance and management – To ensure that reserved public forests are appropriately and actively managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service, the TCT recommends a significant increase in funding and a reform of its structures and legislation.

J. Private forests – A primary concern of the TCT with respect to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Tasmania's Forests is the potential impact that reserving more public forests may have on privately owned forests. Private forests span a wide range of ecosystems which need protection and which, as a result of the agreement, may come under great logging pressure. The TCT believes that private landowners should be encouraged and supported to protect and actively manage the HCVF that they own and it has been working for many years to achieve this end.

K. Identification and protection of high conservation value forests – The TCT believes that Tasmania's forests, along with important non-forest biodiversity and landscape values, should be prioritised for protection on the basis of their relative conservation values i.e. priority should be given to protection of high conservation value forests (HCVF).

The assessment of whether forests have HCV should be carried out based upon transparent criteria applied in a rational and scientific manner. Cultural and social values cannot be identified solely through a scientific approach but a systematic, reliable and replicable approach can and should be used. The TCT believes that HCVF are those with one or more of the following attributes:

Biodiversity:

- Habitat of threatened species (listed on state and/or national legislation)
- Habitat of other non-threatened priority species e.g. RFA priority species, EPBC Act migratory or marine species
- Threatened vegetation communities (listed on state and/or national legislation)
- Areas of forest with mature and oldgrowth elements
- Areas of forests containing significant concentrations of endemic species, refugia or unique populations of species

Landscape, World Heritage and wilderness:

- Areas which contain World Heritage values
- Areas of high quality wilderness
- Areas required for maintenance of landscape and ecosystem processes, including:
 - providing basic services of nature in critical situations such as erosion or salinity control and watershed protection
 - representative examples of all ecosystem types
- Areas containing high concentrations of stored carbon.

Social and cultural:

- Areas of special cultural and/or social importance to local communities and the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

Examples of each HCVF attribute may also be prioritized. For example, swift parrot breeding areas that have more nesting sites and are closer to rich food sources required to feed young parrots, are likely to be more productive and are therefore a higher priority for this HCVF attribute.

However, one HCVF attribute cannot be compared or prioritized over any other attribute e.g. wilderness is not more important than threatened species habitat.

If an area of forest has HCV, this does not necessarily mean its conservation is incompatible with all forms of logging or other uses and it does not necessarily mean it can only be protected within a formal reserve. Forest attributes vary in terms of the compatibility with logging and the appropriateness of formal reservation for protection.

Protection of HCVF can occur through a range of mechanisms including:

- formal reservation such as national parks on public land and conservation covenants and private reserves on private land;
- informal reserves such as stream-side buffers set aside under the Forest Practices System; or
- prescribed management approaches.

Some forest values are more appropriately protected in formal reserves, such as wilderness, whereas other values such as small fragmented habitat patches and stream buffers may be more appropriately protected through informal reserve status or by management prescriptions.

The way in which mechanisms for protection of HCVF are determined needs to be clearly and transparently stated.

L. Forest Practices System – The TCT believes that many forest values are potentially compatible with some forms of logging and there are situations where forests values could survive within an area subject to an approved logging regime. However the current forest practices system is not adequate to ensure all natural and cultural values are protected from the negative impacts of logging and believes it should be strengthened particularly to ensure protection of forest biodiversity.

M. Forests as stores for carbon – Forests store significant amounts of carbon and the TCT supports management of native forests that maximize carbon retention, including the foregoing of logging intact native forests.

N. Burning of wood from native forests – The TCT opposes the burning of wood material from native forests for industrial-scale energy production.

O. Return on investment – The state government must not give direct or indirect subsidies to artificially increase the value of trees above their standing carbon storage value. The return to the state from trees cut from state forests must be greater than the carbon storage value of those trees if left standing.

TCT's current priorities and campaign activities

This document does not address the TCT's current priorities or campaign activities but most of these are outlined in 'TCT's Position Statement on the Tasmanian Forests Statement of Principles'. Pages 4-5 of that document contains a list of 16 recommendations required to make the Forests Statement of Principles a complete plan for the future of Tasmania's forests'. This document is available at: <http://www.tct.org.au/media/policies.htm>