



tasmanian conservation trust inc

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Letter to the Editor
The Mercury

27 September 2011

Weakening of Native Forest Clearing Controls on private land

Last week the state government announced it had changed how it regulates clearing and conversion of native forests on private land. This hardly rated a mention in the media because Minister Bryan Green's announcement related to forest 'clearing' and not 'logging'. As bad as logging is (where felled forests are regeneration with native species) for forest values such as oldgrowth dependent animals and wilderness, 'clearing', which results in the native forest being replaced by pasture, crops, plantations or houses, is much worse because nothing survives and the impacts are permanent.

The government has committed to retaining the same statewide cap on how much native forest can be cleared before it is banned in 2015. Under the changes, we will not lose more native forest in total but the environmental impacts of the remaining clearing will be greater. Weakening of controls at a property and regional level will mean clearing will be more concentrated in a few regions and forest types which have already been most heavily cleared. Forest types which are less common and more heavily depleted will now be easier to clear, will become more depleted and may become threatened. Damaged landscapes will suffer more damaged.

The policy changes were designed primarily to enable dairy interests, particularly in the heavily cleared north-west, to clear native forest which they have previously been refused permission to clear. The Forest Practices Authority figures show that 56% of all native forest cleared in Tasmania in 2010-11 was from the far North-west and the recent changes will enable even more rapid clearing in this area. This is one sure way to taint the dairy industries' environmental reputation.

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Letter to the Editor
The Advocate

27 September 2011

Increased forest clearing threatens dairy industry threatens environmental reputation

Last week the state government announced it had changed how it regulates clearing and conversion of native forests on private land. Ironically, this hardly rated a mention in the media because Minister Bryan Green's announcement related to forest 'clearing' and not 'logging'. As bad as logging is (where felled forests are regeneration with native species) for forest values such as oldgrowth dependent animals and wilderness, 'clearing' which results in the native forest being replaced by pasture, crops, plantations or houses, is much worse because nothing survives and the impacts are permanent.

The government has committed to retaining the same statewide cap on how much native forest can be cleared before it is banned in 2015. Under the changes, we will not lose more native forest in total but the environmental impacts of the remaining clearing will be greater. Weakening of controls at a property and regional level will mean clearing will be more concentrated in a few regions and forest types which have already been most heavily cleared.

The policy changes were designed primarily to enable the dairy industry, particularly in the heavily cleared north-west, to clear native forest which they have previously been refused permission to clear. The Forest Practices Authority figures show that 56% of all native forest cleared in Tasmania in 2010-11 was from the far North-west and the recent changes will enable even more rapid clearing in this area. This is one sure way to taint the dairy industries' environmental reputation.

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Letter to the Editor
Tasmanian Country

22 September 2011

Weakening of Native Forest Clearing Controls on private land

The state government has changed the Tasmanian Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy (the Policy) to make it easier for private land owners to clear native forest in excess of the 40 ha per property per year limit and to exceed regional limits in respect to less common forest communities – both now at the discretion of the Forests Minister.

We acknowledge that the government has retained the overall statewide cap on clearing of native forest, but it is vital to have strict limits at a property and bioregional level because some parts of the state and some forest communities are more heavily impacted by past clearing.

The weakening of property and regional limits on clearing of native forests on private land will lead to an acceleration of native forest clearing, with most clearing being focused in a few areas or regions which have already lost most of their native vegetation.

Overall we may not lose more native forest in Tasmania but the environmental impacts will be greater. Forest types which are less common will now be easier to clear, will become more depleted and may become threatened. Damaged landscapes will suffer more damage.

The policy changes were designed primarily to enable dairy interests, particularly in the north-west, to clear more rapidly and to clear forest which they have been refused permission to clear. The FPA figures show that sixty per cent of all native forest cleared in the state in 2010-11 was from the Woolnorth Bioregion in the North-west and the recent changes will enable even more rapid clearing in this area.

Although the government has put in place a process to assess applications from land owners who want to exceed property and regional clearing limits, the power to do this has been taken away from the independent Forest Practices Authority and is now in the hands of the Forests Minister. We have little confidence that the Forests Minister will demonstrate the appropriate independence to be able to balance the environmental and economic interests when assessing clearing applications.

These changes are clearly motivated by the government's desire to assist a few larger 'corporate farming interests' but the majority of smaller farmers will be disadvantaged. The policy changes will result in a few big properties clearing large areas and we will rapidly reach the statewide or bioregional limits – and every other land owner misses out. This will mean that most land owners will not have the same economic opportunities as the bigger corporate farmers and this may push some into attempting illegal clearing.

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