



TASMANIAN FARMERS & GRAZIERS ASSOCIATION

Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement
Department of State Growth
Hobart TAS 7001

Email: reviewrfa@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

TFGA Submission – Extending the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement (RFA)

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) is the leading representative body for Tasmanian primary producers. TFGA members are responsible for generating approximately 80% of the value created by the Tasmanian agricultural sector.

The TFGA appreciates the opportunity to make comment to the extending the Tasmanian RFA questionnaire.

What improvements could be made to the five-yearly RFA review process to make it more outcomes focused?

TFGA is very supportive of extending the Agreement on the basis of a rolling 20-year life which, all other things being equal, will provide additional security and confidence to the industry through longer investment horizons given that it will eradicate the current diminishing resource security timeline.

We believe this approach in concert with a continuation of the 5 yearly review process and will ensure that the full social, economic and environmental benefits of the RFA will be maximised and the industry and dependent communities will have the security necessary for long term decision making.

TFGA believe that an enhanced approach needs to be considered for the renewal of the RFA wherein all elements of a triple bottom line approach to the sustainable management of forests in Tasmania are placed on an equal and equitable footing and that there ought to only be extremely limited capacity for changes to the established balance once in place.

Environmental:

- Active management of native forests is necessary for these forests to survive
- Active management of native forests enhances the biodiversity in the drier native forests when compared to similar forests that are not managed
- Active management of our forests enables greater carbon to be sequestered compared to the forests not being managed
- Active management enables the State to contribute to carbon sequestration and, when added to the contribution farmers really make, it may well mean that the state is now carbon positive

- The capture of solar energy by our forests may enable the State to produce liquid fuels to replace petrol and diesel currently derived from oil

Economic:

- Active management of our native forests provides a platform for innovation that may lead to a range of new industries capable of replacing or substantially replacing the traditional industries. (We cannot think of a better platform for innovation than to be able to say our State is carbon positive.)
- Industries based on our native forests are the most sustainable industries we can think of.
- Our native forests are one of, if not the, major competitive economic opportunity the State has.

Social:

- Active management of our native forest requires a lot of labour, offering the opportunity of maintaining the diversified demographic in the State, offering the opportunity of worthwhile jobs for people who want to work out-of-doors and in the industry.
- The discussion of these opportunities may provide a mechanism to heal the social divide that has racked the State for the past decades.

What research and development priorities are important to Tasmanian forestry industry stakeholders?

Under the RFA it states there are priority research areas that are to be used as a guide by the Parties when they are examining research proposals and establishing research programs.

Our ongoing steadfast commitment to the RFA is predicated on the original promise of security of access to a high quality resource of sufficient quality and quantity to sustain the industry's needs along with the potential for additional value-adding to the State's valuable natural timber resource through investment in technology and downstream processing.

Areas of research and development for consideration include:

- High conservation areas/values – what are the State's areas and values; and for what purpose do we have them in place?
- Management of private native forests – system developed to pay private landowners an annual stewardship for managing native forests.
- Socio economic impact/benefit – development of a matrix to assist assessment of Forest Practice Plans consideration of public versus private benefit.
- Good Neighbour Charter – development of a charter on how the commercial forestry sector communicates with its neighbours, including fire, weeds and pests, and boundary fences.

What socio-economic data and analysis is important to Tasmanian forest industry stakeholders?

It would seem that responsible forest managers and environmental groups often want the same thing. Both seek to have a healthy, productive, vibrant and diverse forest for future generations. The difference tends to emerge with economic expectations. Forest managers see the extraction of timber as a cornerstone of sustainable forest management. Environmentalists see it as the main destructive force for all the potential forest values.

To have a healthy, productive, vibrant and diverse forest for future generations we all need to consider and understand the triple bottom line approach. To get the community interested we need to consider: why we have a forest industry; why it is important to the environment; why it is important to the social fabric of regional and rural communities; and why it is important to the Tasmanian (and mainland) economy.

We need to move away from the old model where we have one side who see the forest as an amenity resource for the purpose of recreation and aesthetic enjoyment and then there are those who perceive it as a product resource, to be managed so as to optimise the output of timber and the useful range of by-products. The two sides should be adjoined, and the only way to do this is to get back in touch with the community.

Over half of Tasmania's 6.84 million hectares is under conservation reserves. This means as a state we have vast areas of land and forest to manage with less resources that also add to the problem for neighbouring landowners.

It needs to be pointed out to the public that simply locking up land and assuming that somehow it will revert to its pristine, pre-settlement condition is a fallacy, if such a thing ever existed. Without proper management of weeds and wildlife, and without the development of appropriate measures to manage fires, conservation areas simply become havens for pests and infernos.

For every job lost in the forest industry, it is likely that another one or two jobs are lost in the broader economy, as a result of reduced spending by forest industry businesses and workers. Loss of spending by forest industry businesses and workers will flow on to businesses that service the industry, such as mechanics, engineers and other suppliers of goods and services. Loss of spending by forest industry workers impacts many retail businesses dependent on the spending of workers' wages.

This means if we have a strong forest sector we have a strong rural and regional communities and a sound regional economy.

Further socio-economic analysis needs to be undertaken to consider the benefits of forestry to the State. Further analysis needs to be undertaken to consider the comparison of putting further forests in reserve or manage (harvest) these resources sustainably.

How could the governments improve outcomes-focused monitoring and reporting on threatened species and biodiversity, as part of extending the Tasmanian RFA?

If threatened species and biodiversity are found on private land it is the landowner who has to put an area of their property in reserve to protect the species or biodiversity community, as this is seen as a community benefit to maintain that area so as to not threaten the native vegetation or species.

If the community wants to maintain certain native vegetation communities or species, then they should pay the landowner. It is they who are providing a benefit on their property by not being allowed to clear or convert that area. This should be in the form of an annual stewardship payment to assist the landowner manage the resource and in recognition that it is being done for the whole community.

What other improvements could be made to the RFA framework?

RFAs are only completed after a process of extensive public consultation and a thorough investigation of the wide range of environmental, heritage, social and economic values present in the forests of the region. The assessments include consideration of:

- biodiversity, including endangered species;
- wilderness;
- old-growth;
- national estate;
- the sustainability of forest management practices;
- social values and dependencies;
- economic values of forest resources; and
- Industry development options.

As an industry this information could be provided to the community in a format that they can readily understand, that the forest industry has an extensive controlled process it undertakes before trees are felled for wood products.

The TFGA feel that the opportunity is there to build a picture of the industry that demonstrates its sustainability and the importance it has across the community. Be it for conservation, tourism, bioenergy, fuel, wood products, housing or habitat for our terrestrial species. Communication is vital going forward to build a sustainable forest industry.

Please contact the TFGA if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Skillern', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Peter Skillern

Chief Executive Officer

22nd December 2016