

Increased protections for stream headwaters

Public consultation presented wide-ranging concerns about the level of protection for some stream headwaters. Stakeholders sought increases in protection for headwater streams as they provide habitat for threatened aquatic species and reduce the potential for water quality impacts downstream.

The Coastal IFOA (Integrated Forestry Operations Approval) has been amended to increase the protection of headwater streams in areas with higher erosion risk, to 10 metres from the stream bank. This provides greater protection for riparian habitat and threatened species and will further reduce any potential water quality impacts downstream. These changes better align stream protections with former IFOA requirements triggered by the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*.

Reinstatement of protection for nectar trees – winter-flowering eucalypts

There were concerns about reduced habitat protection for endangered species such as the regent honeyeater and swift parrot. Stakeholders sought protection for nectar-producing trees consistent with listed species recovery plans and the former IFOAs. Apiarists also raised concerns about reduced resources for bees.

The Coastal IFOA has been amended to reinstate existing protections for nectar feed trees – strengthening protection of feed trees for the regent honeyeater and swift parrot and supporting resources for bees. Further consultation with relevant NSW and Commonwealth agencies will be held over the first 12 months of the IFOA to ensure protections align with joint Recovery Plans for the swift parrot and regent honeyeater. These protections will also be monitored over the first 12 months of implementation of the Coastal IFOA and adaptively managed if required.

More protection for hollow-bearing trees

There were concerns about the potential loss of hollow-bearing trees and the potential lack of future (recruitment) hollow-bearing trees. Stakeholders sought enhanced protection for hollow-bearing trees that were consistent with species recovery plans and key threatening process action plans to ensure critical arboreal habitat is maintained for numerous threatened species.

The Coastal IFOA has been amended to increase the permanent retention of hollow-bearing trees. All hollow-bearing trees in the intensive harvesting zone will remain protected. In selective harvesting zones, the Coastal IFOA increases the retention rate from five to eight hollow-bearing trees per hectare, where they exist. The protection and recruitment of hollow-bearing trees, and threatened species use of them, will be a priority for the Coastal IFOA monitoring and adaptive management program.

Management of biosecurity

Strong views were expressed during consultation about the management of biosecurity risks such as phytophthora, rust, bell miner associated dieback, chytrid fungus, lantana and other weeds.

The Coastal IFOA has been strengthened to account for additional biosecurity risks, particularly phytophthora, where risks are associated with forest regeneration. This includes a requirement for the Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) to assess the risk to regeneration prior to forestry operations occurring and identify and implement necessary mitigation measures. Monitoring of regeneration and remediation works must also occur where the forest fails to meet regeneration standards.

Management of ground protection zones and track construction

Some stakeholders raised concerns that ground protection zones could adversely impact on the ability to construct tracks on narrow ridgelines and result in practicality and access issues. These stakeholders requested greater flexibility in operating in ground protection zones.

The Coastal IFOA has been amended to allow limited track construction in ground protection zones. Track construction will be subject to advice from a qualified soil conservationist to ensure the activity is necessary and actions are prescribed to rehabilitate affected areas.

This setting will be reviewed after 12 months, or earlier, if evidence suggests it is impractical to implement or it is impacting on the function of ground protection zones.

Burning provisions

Some stakeholders raised concerns about the practicality and safety of the burning provisions and requested changes to improve the flexibility around burning.

The Coastal IFOA enables FCNSW to elect to burn either under the IFOA settings or under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* – depending on the hazard reduction needs of the forest. The Coastal IFOA has also been amended to improve the workability of burning provisions. This includes the ability for FCNSW to deliberately burn environmentally significant areas (ESA) where necessary for safety reasons and where it meets certain criteria. Deliberate burning will not be permitted in any ESA that is sensitive to fire, such as rainforests and wetlands.

Management of debris and damage to retained trees

Some stakeholders raised concerns that requirements to manage damage to retained trees, or debris around retained trees, were too onerous and could result in greater environmental impacts occurring. These stakeholders requested greater flexibility when operating around retained trees.

The Coastal IFOA has been amended to expand criteria where removal of debris is not required in cases where it would result in a worse environmental outcome.

Koala protections

A significant number of submissions raised concerns that proposed protections could negatively impact on koala populations. These stakeholders requested increased protections for koalas, and restriction on certain forestry activities in core koala habitat.

The koala protection settings adopted by the Coastal IFOA were proposed by the Natural Resources Commission and remain unchanged. These settings were carefully designed to balance environmental outcomes and wood supply. The Coastal IFOA doubles the area where koala protections apply in northern NSW. High use areas applied under the former IFOA will be permanently protected. The effectiveness of the koala protections will be a priority for the Coastal IFOA monitoring and adaptive management program.

In addition, the NSW Government Koala Strategy is funding urgent research on the impacts of intensive harvesting on koalas. This research is being overseen by the Natural Resources Commission. For more information, please go to www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/koala-research.

Giant trees

Some submissions raised concerns about the protection of giant trees, arguing size limits were set too high to be effective. Some stakeholders requested the size of giant trees be reduced.

Giant tree protection is a new setting for the Coastal IFOA, putting constraints on the maximum size of trees that can be harvested for the first time. These settings were proposed by the Natural Resources Commission to balance environmental outcomes and wood supply and remain unchanged. These settings will be subject to monitoring to ensure they are delivering intended outcomes and be adaptively managed if required.

Retention of future hollow-bearing trees in harvest areas

Submissions raised concerns there was no longer a requirement to retain future hollow-bearing trees

(recruitment trees) in the harvest area. Some stakeholders sought for these settings to be reinstated.

The recruitment tree protection settings are now included in new provisions for tree retention clumps and remain unchanged. The retention and protection of recruitment trees in aggregated patches was based on advice from the threatened species expert panel, which considered this provided greater opportunity for hollow development, protection and use in the long term. The effectiveness of tree retention clumps in recruiting hollows, and promoting hollow use, will be subject to monitoring to ensure they are delivering intended outcomes and be adaptively managed if required.

Intensive harvesting

There was strong public concern on the inclusion of intensive harvesting practices and how this would impact on the maintenance of environmental values. These stakeholders requested changes to these settings.

The intensive harvesting settings are necessary to improve regeneration outcomes in blackbutt dominated forests. The Coastal IFOA places limits on when and where intensive harvesting can occur in order to distribute any potential impacts on the environment over time and across the landscape. These limits were proposed by the Natural Resources Commission to strike a balance between environmental outcomes and wood supply and remain unchanged.

The settings align with current harvesting practices applied by FCNSW in blackbutt dominated forests and will be supported by improved permanent landscape protections in areas where this harvesting technique is used, including tree retention clumps and wildlife habitat clumps.

The effectiveness of intensive harvesting settings in maintaining environmental values and improving regeneration outcomes will also be subject to monitoring to ensure they are delivering intended outcomes and will be adaptively managed if required.

Selective harvesting

There were strong public views that selective harvesting settings could intensify what has historically been lower intensity harvesting practices and could adversely impact environmental values. These stakeholders requested changes to these settings.

The selective harvesting settings were proposed by the Natural Resources Commission to strike a balance between environmental outcomes and wood supply and remain unchanged. These settings will be subject to monitoring to ensure they are delivering intended outcomes and be adaptively managed if required.

NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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