

new silviculture for oldgrowth

in Tasmania's State forests

April 2005



Forestry Tasmania
GROWING OUR FUTURE

Context

In September 2003, the Tasmanian Government asked Forestry Tasmania to provide advice on the phase-out of clearfelling within oldgrowth forest on public land by 2010.

The advice was requested in the context of the following performance criteria:

1. Maintenance of a minimum supply level of 300 000 cubic metres of high quality eucalypt veneer and sawlog material
2. Maintenance of contracted commitments to veneer, sawlog and pulpwood customers;
3. Maintenance and enhancement of occupational health and safety
4. Safe processing and removal of forest harvesting residues;
5. Regeneration which meets stocking standards for sustainable forest management; and
6. Maintenance of the jobs of Tasmanian timber workers.

Public consultation

One hundred public submissions were received in response to five Issues Papers that were made publicly available for comment early in 2004. There were many issues raised by a broad cross-section of the community. Comments covered silviculture, regeneration and bio-diversity; sustaining wood yields; financial, economic and community considerations; and safety considerations.

Australian Government (*Tasmanian Forest Policy*)

As Forestry Tasmania's advice was being finalised, the Australian Government negotiated its *Tasmanian Forest Policy* announced during the 2004 Federal election.

The State and Federal Governments have agreed to the protection of additional oldgrowth forest and to reduce reliance on clearfell silviculture. Investment to mitigate social and economic impacts was also agreed.

Wet oldgrowth forest





A cleared fairway in an aggregated retention coupe in tall old-growth forest near the Frankland River (Temma 014A) in northwest Tasmania. 18% of the forest was retained in aggregates that ranged in size from (0.2 to 1.1 ha). At the completion of harvesting, over 90% of the cleared area was within a tree-length of standing forest.

Forestry Tasmania's recommendation:

Forestry Tasmania's advice to the Tasmanian Government recommends the adoption of a strategy of *mixed silviculture* which seeks to significantly reduce the reliance on clearfelling in defined old-growth coupes.

Mixed silviculture would include SGS (single tree/group selection) applied to nominated mixed forest/rainforest in STMUs, (Special Timber Management Units) variable retention, and limited CBS (clearfell, burn and sow) in steeper eucalypt forest. In drier forests, partial or selective systems as currently practised are recommended.

A program of hardwood plantation establishment and pruning to ensure long-term maintenance of sawlog supply will support the adoption of the new mixed silviculture strategy. The recommended target was to establish an additional 10,000 ha by 2010, with a further 6,000 ha to be added as a result of the new conservation reserves established under the Tasmanian Forest Policy.

The target for full implementation of the strategy is 2010, subject to a publicly reported review in 2007 and confirmation that progress across the range of initiatives is being made.

This review would include:

- Report by an expert panel on safety and job impacts and mitigation.
- Scientific review of the results of the Warra harvesting alternatives.
- Evaluation of progress, including technology testing in mills and harvesting research.
- Evaluation of progress in solid wood plantation establishment.

It is proposed that a scientific panel of internationally recognised experts in forest and conservation science be established to immediately provide ongoing advice to Forestry Tasmania on the implementation of this programme.

Summary of New Tasmanian Forest Policy

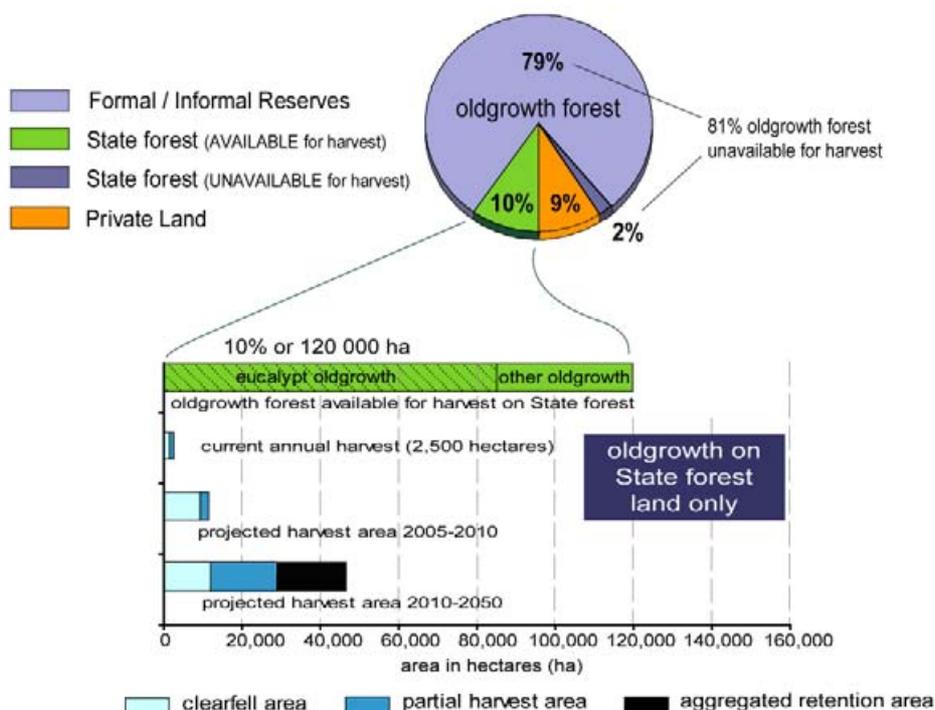
Under this Policy:

- The Australian and Tasmanian governments have agreed to protect a further 120,000 ha of oldgrowth forest on public land in a total new reserve area of 148,400 hectares.
- 47% of the remaining area of State forest is unavailable for timber harvest in conservation reserves (forming part of an enhanced State CAR reserve system) or generally outside coupes.
- The area of STMUs has been reduced by 50% to 71 000 ha. These areas will be developed and managed for long-term production of special species using SGS regimes.
- Harvest using CBS will be limited to 20% of the oldgrowth forest harvest, with the remaining 80% harvested using variable retention techniques.
- Harvesting in dry oldgrowth forest coupes will continue to use partial harvest (non-clearfell) techniques. Non-oldgrowth coupes will be managed in accordance with current practice, using both CBS (tall wet eucalypt) and partial harvest (dry eucalypt) regimes, depending on the character of the stands.

Eucalypt timber supply

- High quality sawlog supplies to meet short-term contracts and longer term requirements for 300 000 m³/yr will continue to be maintained.
- Coupes containing oldgrowth will provide around 35% of sawlog supply for the next 20 years. Volumes from partial harvest (dry forest) and variable retention will make up the major component from 2010.
- From 2022, the reliance on plantation sawlogs will increase from around 75 000 m³/yr under current practice to around 115 000 m³/yr, an increase of 53%.
- An additional 16, 000 ha of eucalypt plantation will be established on State forest before 2010, together with high pruning and fertilising of existing and second rotation plantations.

Integrated Forest Strategy oldgrowth forest in Tasmania



Special species supply

Under the Policy there will be a small reduction in the availability of special species, reflecting the retention of about 20% of the trees within the coupes being managed under variable retention regimes

The new conservation reserves reduce the area of STMUs from 143 000 ha to 71 000 ha, and this will reduce long-term supplies available from these areas. However, provision for improved access into remaining areas will mitigate this reduction and ensure continuing long-term supplies of these species.

Residue management

Disposal of harvesting residue to provide a seedbed for regeneration and to minimise potential future fire hazard is critical. Around 1200 ha/yr of variable retention harvesting will be required initially. Initiatives to establish a market for harvest residues to lessen the significance of this issue is a key outcome of the plan.

Biodiversity and landscape conservation

Biodiversity and landscape outcomes will be greatly improved by the adoption of this Policy, through the additional reservation of 148 000 ha of State forest and the retention of oldgrowth elements in about 42 000 ha of forest that would otherwise have been managed under the CBS regime.

Further conversion of State forest to plantation will be capped, and completely phased out by 2010, with conversion of coupes containing old-growth being discontinued immediately.



Target to establish an additional 16,000 ha of hardwood plantation by 2010, resulting from the Tasmanian Community Forest Plan.

Worker safety

Safety will remain a priority issue, and the Policy provides for additional expert assessment and advice and a significant effort in workforce training.

Socio-economic impacts

The Policy will allow high quality sawlog production to be maintained at a minimum of 300 000 m³/yr. Existing contracts will be honoured and provision has been made to address the increased costs of variable retention.

Funds have been committed to establish, prune and manage an additional 16 000 ha of plantations to secure future industry supply.

Provision has been made in the Policy for sawmill retooling and new investment to facilitate industry accommodation to any minor log mix changes that might eventuate.

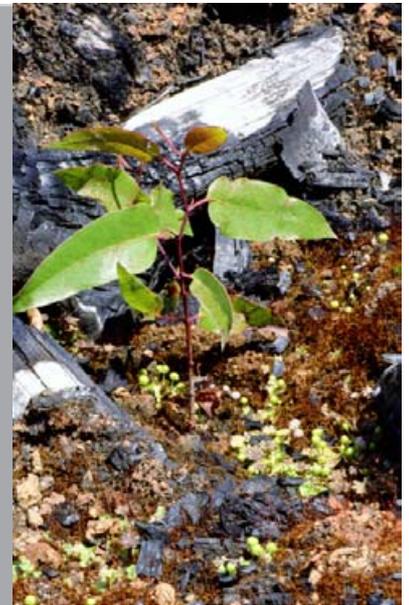
From 2020, the proportion of high quality sawlog production sourced from plantations instead of native forest is projected to increase to about 115 000 m³/yr, representing 38% of production. Provision has been made in the Policy to facilitate industry transition to this new resource.

Forest regeneration

Regeneration from variable retention will remain an important issue, and continued research and monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that adequate regeneration levels can be assured on these areas.



A 24 ha Aggregated Retention coupe (TE020C) in tall regrowth and oldgrowth forest near Temma on the West Coast of Tasmania. At the completion of harvesting, over 90% of the cleared area was within a tree-length of standing forest. The felled area will be burnt at low intensity in autumn 2005 to create seedbed for regeneration.



Eucalyptus seedling..

