

Protecting Forest on Private Land

Conservation goals for forests cannot be met without the support of private landowners. Nearly 30 per cent of Tasmania's forest is on private land, including many forest communities that are threatened as a result of their rarity or past land clearing. The Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement has already resulted in the protection of about 30,000 hectares of private forest land, including about 5,000 hectares of old-growth forest, to complement the extensive public reserve system in place.

Enhanced conservation of forests on private land remains a priority for the Australian and Tasmanian governments.

The protection of a further 45,600 hectares of private forest will be targeted through voluntary covenanting or purchase at market value. The private forest target makes up one quarter of the 170,000-hectare forest reservation target of the Australian Government's 'A Sustainable Future for Tasmania' policy.

The Australian Government will establish and fully fund a new program, managed jointly with Tasmania, to achieve the private forest reservation target. The program will focus on adding up to 43,200 hectares of forest to the reserve system, targeting old-growth forest as well as other high conservation value forest types.

The Australian Government's commitment to reserve up to 2,400 hectares of forest in the Mole Creek area will also be implemented under this program. \$3.6 million will be provided for this purpose. Refer to Fact Sheet No. 9 for more information.

The new program will be known as the Forest Conservation Fund.

The Forest Conservation Fund for protection of forest on private land

The new program will support private landowners to manage their forest for conservation and use mechanisms such as:

- voluntary stewardship arrangements, secured in perpetuity through covenants on the land;
- development of conservation management plans with the landholder; and
- provision of ongoing advice and assistance to manage protected areas.

Under the new program, private land will also be considered for purchase for inclusion in the public land reserve system or for sale to conservation trusts.

How will it work?

As a first step, governments will establish a joint steering committee to manage the program and develop forest conservation priorities and funding criteria.

The governments will consult with stakeholders such as Private Forests Tasmania, Timber Communities Australia, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust on design and implementation of the program.

The program aims to seek bids from the owners of high conservation value forest through a 'tender' or 'auction' process. This means that landowners will be able to nominate the value that they place on managing their land for conservation. Landowner proposals will be assessed on the basis of their comparative value in meeting the program's conservation priorities. The program will also be able to purchase suitable properties on the market.

Protecting Forest on Private Land (cont.)

Completing the Private Forest Reserve Program

The new Forest Conservation Fund will draw upon the lessons learnt through the existing Private Forest Reserves Program, which was established in 1998 and funded under the RFA. The existing program will finish in June 2006.

As at June 2004, the program had secured the conservation of nearly 30,000 hectares of valuable native forests on 175 Tasmanian properties.

Forest Conservation Fund Program Milestones

Consultation on program design with stakeholders	May/June 2005
Governments approve program strategy, forest selection criteria, operational and funding guidelines	July 2005
Finalisation of delivery arrangements	October 2005
Bidding rounds commence	February 2006

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