

Name: Mike Coventry

About you: Individual

Name of your business or organisation: Member of the Hunter Farm Forestry Network

1. What improvements should the NSW Government consider making to the existing Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice (Northern NSW, Southern NSW, River Red Gum Forests, and Cypress and Western Hardwood Forests)?:

Several years ago I was informed by phone and by a Departmental official in person that I must clear land (including low regrowth) and then plant new tree seedlings to create a plantation and that I was not allowed to create a plantation in the following manner.. Because tree growing conditions are very favourable where I live it would be a simple matter of slashing out small regrowth trees to create rows of trees. The idea is to facilitate later forest maintenance and control and allow the remaining native species trees to grow. In particular, mother trees would be retained providing a focus on species known to thrive in the region from proven stock. The Implementation would be very simple and extremely inexpensive at the beginning of the project making it much more financially attractive as the receipt of revenue would coincide with the time of harvest when major expenses are incurred. It would also allow much of the hobby farm land that is not presently productive to be made so. There is a fire management benefit ensuring fuel load is kept low leading to a reduction in the opportunities for fire events to occur. Such applications should only apply to very early regrowth (say averaging up to 1500mm) or to land cleared at the time of application. This proposal does not prevent land owners allowing their land to return to native forest. It also promotes the multi purpose use of the land maximising the landowners financial opportunities.

2. Do you have any suggestions to ensure the Private Native Forestry regulatory settings are efficient, enforceable and effective?:

Assuming the above proposal is adopted the enforcement would be simple in that approval of the Department would be required before creation of a native species forest plantation. To recognise the native species element of the proposal these types of applications could be authorised under the existing PNF legislation and arrangements with some possible minor adjustments. In this way the opportunity to cheat and plant expatriate species without authority could be controlled very simply.

It would avoid the cheats creating rows in existing native forest and declaring it a plantation outside the PNF requirements and reduce the level of non-compliance.

3. How can the NSW Government improve the authorisation and approval system for Private Native Forestry?:

See item 2. above

4. What training and advice services would assist landholders, industry and the community?:

Beyond what is now provided through Gov't and non-gov't sources - not much. Costs would be minimal.

5. Do you have any other comments or feedback relevant to Private Native Forestry that you would like to share with us?:

It is important to preserve forest integrity to satisfy important non-financial forestry values. The balance with farmers and other land holders financial needs is also important. This proposal provides an opportunity to partially allow unproductive land to be used to conserve native regional forest species. It overcomes the "all or nothingness" of the current situation when landowners want to be compliant. Many of them just adopt a do nothing approach which has many downside impacts. At present many landowners see their land as superannuation once they are unable carry-on with the usual production. This proposal would allow those people to transition to a more physically appropriate means of managing their land and perhaps prevent so much productive rural land being subdivided into hobby farms. Finally, Landowners are expected to take more interest in their regional forest species which would be a favourable outcome. There maybe some possible difficulties with this proposal but nothing insurmountable given the minimal impact on funds. It will be more conducive to developing the social fabric of those areas affected. Given the nature of the attitudes of farmers and hobby farmers it is expected to have a minimal if any negative impact.