

The Courier-Mail

Queensland

State Government plans to allow logging in areas earmarked for national parks

- by: Brian Williams
- From: The Courier-Mail
- February 27, 2013 12:00AM

THE State Government is about to reopen logging in about two million hectares of environmentally sensitive land put aside by the previous government.

The move will see timber felled in prime conservation areas that were earmarked for national parks.

Logging will resume in southeast Queensland, the western hardwoods area, cypress regions in the west, central Queensland and north Queensland.

A leaked email from Agriculture Department director-general Jack Noye to National Parks Department director-general John Glaister says Agriculture Minister John McVeigh has approved the logging.

The email also notes that it is proposed that logging be conducted without Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service approval for codes or harvest plans.

It sparked a vicious response from Greens environment spokeswoman Larissa Waters, who said the letter confirmed Premier Campbell Newman was an environmental vandal.

"The reopening of native forest logging will trash invaluable habitat for native wildlife, destroy carbon stores and is an economic risk, given plantation forestry is more sustainable and provides reliable employment into the future," Senator Waters said.

Mr McVeigh said the areas being reopened were not World Heritage-listed forests.

"They are areas that have been previously available and they will ... meet the highest forest sustainability management standards," he said.

"Many of these robust, former state forests had been sustainably harvested for a century and more, supporting regional towns before being locked up by Labor in its dirty preference deals with the Greens."

He said the Greens wanted to shut down local forest industries, which forced greater reliance on imports.

It is expected about 30,000ha per year will be logged on a 30 to 40-year cycle.

In 1999, the state government signed the South East Queensland Forests Agreement with the Queensland Timber Board and conservationists.

Its aim - and other agreements that followed - was to end disputes over what areas should be logged or conserved and for producing plantations such as between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast to gradually replace native forest logging over 25 years.

But logging companies in country towns such as Monto and Mundubbera, often major local employers, complained that the agreements starved them of logs.

Senator Waters said Mr Newman was determined to repeal all environmental protection.

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