



MEDIA RELEASE – 21st October 2010

Regional conservation groups looking for local outcomes from forest agreement

A cross section of environment groups from around the state today welcomed the agreement on a Statement of Principles between ENGO's and timber industry stakeholders and said that it promised to deliver real conservation outcomes in the region.

The agreement, which promises a moratorium on logging high conservation value forests, leading eventually to full, formal protection, offers new hope for regional community groups that have worked hard to promote the conservation values of the forest in their backyards.

Lesley Nicklason, spokesperson for the Friends of the Blue Tier, congratulated all parties involved in the agreement. "This is a significant achievement that can deliver long overdue protection to the natural and tourism values of the Blue Tier and other spectacular areas across the North East," she said. "When the high conservation-value forests of the Blue Tier are protected, the upper catchment of the Groom River will be secured."

East Coast group Save Our Sister confirmed that an end to logging on South Sister would protect landscape, viewfields and other values. "Tasmania can't afford for its tourism drawcards to continue to be tarnished by clearfells and forestry burns. This agreement will give hope to tourism operators and begin the healing of long-held community rifts", said Andrew Lohrey, a former forestry minister.

Scott Jordan from the Tarkine National Coalition said that "the agreement offers great hope for the Tarkine and when implemented, the moratorium would protect 70,000 ha of unreserved forest in the Tarkine."

The Statement of Principles, in which industry has agreed to protect forests as identified by conservation groups, will provide great outcomes for water catchments, carbon storage, landscape values and wildlife habitat.

Dr Eric Woehler, Chair of Birds Tasmania said "this is a significant contribution towards the conservation of some of Tasmania's iconic bird species, notably the endangered Wedge-tailed Eagle and Swift Parrot. Their populations have decreased markedly as a result of loss of their breeding and feeding habitats. Expected changes to forestry operations in Tasmania will reduce the pressures that these and other species face".

“We hope that this will lead to an immediate conclusion to logging activities within the habitats of the 12 endemic birds on Bruny Island, particularly the endangered Swift Parrot. This is cause for celebration at the Bruny Island Bird Festival this weekend” said Louise Crossley from The Spirit of Bruny.

Jenny Cambers-Smith of the West Wellington Protection Group said "High altitude coupes such as those in West Wellington, adjacent to Hobart's Wellington Park, would take hundreds of years to recover from clearfell operations, we ask that the forest industry embrace this new spirit of cooperation and act swiftly honour the agreements made."

Angie McGowan from The Florentine Protection Society also welcomed the signing of the Statement of Principles, saying “unique forest areas such as the Upper Florentine Valley might now be appreciated for what they are - beautiful wild places - rather than the scene of ugly confrontations”.

The Public Environmental Health Network (PEHN) congratulates the hard work of the roundtable in arriving at their first stage of agreement. “We encourage the contribution of community science in any further scientific views on this matter including biodiversity, water catchment management and chemical use in broad acre plantations. Community scientists must be recognized as contributing to the diversity of scientific views on this matters,” said Dr David Obendorf spokesperson for PEHN.

Participating groups include the Tarkine National Coalition, Friends of the Blue Tier, Birds Tasmania, Florentine Protection Society, Huon Valley Environment Centre, Peninsula Environment Network, Save our Sister, Still Wild Still Threatened, Future Tasmania, West Wellington Protection Group, Public Environmental Health Network.

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