

SouthEastTIMBERassociation

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The members of the South East Timber Association (SETA) were surprised and disappointed by the NSW Government announcement of four new flora reserves covering all the remaining state forests between the Bega and Bermagui Rivers.

While the activist movement are pleased with the announcement, generally, they seem to be motivated by a desire to convert all state forests to national parks. Their rationale seems to be that this land tenure change will ensure the long term protection of biodiversity associated with native forests.

SETA members understand that long term conservation is not that simple and active management of native forests, on all tenures, is needed to ensure we do not lose any more species.

SETA members do not wish this announcement to result in a similar outcome to the activist campaigns of the 1990s, that saw the then iconic Tantawangalo State Forest koala population, protected from logging by dedication of the South East National Park. The latest publicly available information on the Tantawangalo population is: *“Recent intensive surveys show that a population at Tantawangalo/Yurammie is now very low and possibly extinct.”*

There are examples across NSW where koalas living in state forest have not been saved when the forest was transferred to national park tenure. It is disappointing to note that as the area of native forest protected in parks and reserves has increased, the koala numbers in NSW have continued to decline.

A table summarising koala activity in state forests, which are the areas to be dedicated as flora reserves, as well as surrounding national parks is below.

Table 3: Number of sites assessed, active sites, occupancy rates by land tenure (Table 1 of the report) plus uncertainty estimates.

Tenure	# sites	# trees searched	# sites with KFPs	Occ. Rate	95%CI
Biamanga NP	128	3840	9	7.03%	2.6-11.5%
Gulaga NP	8	240	0	0.00%	NA
Bermagui NR	38	1140	4	10.53%	0.7-20.3%
Mimosa Rocks NP	9	270	0	0.00%	NA
Mumbulla SF	176	5280	38	21.59%	15.5-27.7%
Murrah SF	55	1650	8	14.55%	5.2-23.9%
Bermagui SF	89	2670	3	3.37%	0-7.1%
Private Land	72	2160	2	2.78%	0-6.6%
Other Aboriginal Land	14	420	2	14.29%	0-32.6%
All National Parks	183	5490	13	7.10%	3.3-10.8%
All State Forests	320	9600	49	15.31%	11.3-19.3%
Total All Sites	589	17670	66	11.21%	8.7-13.8%

SETA members are confused. If koala protection is the real objective of the announcement, why was it necessary to create the 4 flora reserves, when koalas seem to be more plentiful in state forests than in the adjoining national parks? SETA will be taking great interest in what changes will be made to current reserve management systems to ensure long term survival of koalas on the NSW south coast. More information on this issue can be found at:

<http://southeasttimberassociation.com/biodiversity/>

