

Forest Facts

South-East
Queensland

No. 8.1

This information is mainly derived from Comprehensive Regional Assessments carried out for the SEQ Regional Forest Agreement.

prepared by

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for

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Recreation & Tourism

The Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) phase of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) process included two projects, SE 4.1 and SE 4.1(a), that deal with tourism and recreation issues in the forests. Both reports have serious deficiencies, the worst being that no attempt has been made to compare the relative value of forests for tourism and recreation with timber production (even though SE 4.1(a) notes that this could have been done). Nor are good figures available on the likely increase in demand for nature-based and/or ecotourism activities.

Considerable effort is made in the Recreation Report to paint a picture of severe disadvantage to 'active' recreational users of forests arising from any change in tenure from State Forest to National Park. Active recreational users are defined as 4WD users, horse riders and bike clubs. Virtually no effort is made in the same report to assess the advantages to passive recreational users such as bushwalkers (who weren't consulted). Nor was any attempt made to point out to 'active' users the distinction between ending one use (eg logging) and the subsequent tenure of the land. (We would propose that some areas protected from logging be accessible to horse riders, 4WD's, etc. under a new category of protected area).

Despite the shortcomings of these reports, some interesting statistics emerge from them.

Only two per cent of all visitor days spent in forests are spent on activities inconsistent with National Park tenure. There would be positive economic and social benefits of a tenure change from State Forest to National Park for tourism and recreation of the type preferred by 98 per cent of visitors to forests.

There are 5.8 million visitor-days per annum to National Parks compared with 1.8 million visitor-days to State Forests.

There is evidence of overuse of some forest recreational facilities (both in National Parks and State Forests) and evidence of others being at capacity. Growth in population alone is expected

to lead to substantial additional recreation and tourism pressure and without additional areas being made available, increased pressure on existing recreational facilities. Based on expected increases in domestic tourism and population, the number of visitor days in forests may increase by 36 per cent by the year 2011 and by 57 per cent by 2021. The majority of future demand for tourism and recreation will be for activities consistent with National Park tenure.

Studies of international travel indicate that the desire to enjoy and appreciate nature accounts for 40-60 per cent of all international tourism and wildlife related travel accounts for 20-40 per cent of all international travel.

Around 50 per cent of international visitors to Australia visited Queensland in 1997.

The number of tourists visiting National Parks in the Sunshine Coast region is notable at a quarter of a million tourists per annum, with 1.2 million visitor days per year to Noosa National Park.

One set of economic values for forests is the estimated gross expenditure associated with visiting them. Total expenditure was estimated at \$196 million in 1997.

Another set of economic values is referred to as consumer surplus (ie willingness to pay to visit forests). Estimates of consumer surplus ranged between \$75 million and \$118 million.

Net Present Values were projected to 2021, at \$5,420 million for expenditure and \$2,074 to \$3,263 million for net consumer surplus.

There are currently 84 commercial tour operators in forests, employing 768 people, although not all these businesses are 100-per-cent dependent on forest-based tourism.