

Living near a State forest

What it means to live near a State forest

Many people are attracted to the idea of living in the bush and seek the solitude of living near nature in a forested environment. There are many benefits of living near a State forest, however, there are also some important issues of which you should be aware.

Who manages State Forests?

Forestry Corporation is responsible for managing approximately 2 million hectares of public native forest and plantation for the sustainable supply of timber, a range of other products and conservation. State forests are multiple use forests that are accessed by many people every day. The main activities that occur in State forests are:

- Timber harvesting and haulage
- Construction and maintenance of roads and fire trails
- Pest animal and weed control
- Firefighting and hazard reduction burning
- Recreational use – camping, picnic sites, four-wheel-driving, trail bike riding, mountain biking, camping, bushwalking and events
- Apiary (bee keeping); grazing; harvesting and collection of other forest products; quarrying for gravel and sand
- Research activities
- Communication sites and associated infrastructure.

Timber harvesting

State forests are managed for the purpose of multiple-use forestry which includes, primarily, the sustainable production of timber for the people of NSW. While less than 2% of the 2 million hectares of forest is harvested each year, it can involve the harvesting of a significant area in a local forest (e.g. 250 ha) for a period of time. Most State forests have been harvested several times over the past century. Periods between harvesting in any one area typically range between 6 – 40 years depending on the forest type.



Above: Harvesting operations in a softwood forest in NSW.

The area of State forest adjacent to your property may be harvested some time in the future. This may include commencing operations early each day, and extending throughout the night. Forestry Corporation contacts neighbours immediately adjacent to future harvesting and haulage operations before they commence to inform them of the proposed operation and discuss any issues that may arise.

Roads in State forests

State forests are not wilderness areas but are working forests containing an extensive network of forest roads and trails. Some are on Crown reserve and are therefore the responsibility of local council or NSW Department of Primary Industries. Many other roads are owned and managed by Forestry Corporation.

Forestry Corporation roads are maintained to provide access for forest use. Most roads in State forests are built and managed by Forestry Corporation primarily for forest management purposes. Where a road is open to the public, the public is allowed to use the road, however, they are not strictly 'public roads' and under the *Forestry Act 2012*, Forestry Corporation retains the right to close these roads as required. On all roads and fire trails in State forests normal road rules apply; vehicles must be registered, drivers and riders licensed and equipped with safety equipment required under legislation (e.g. motor bike and bicycle helmets to the required Australian Standard).

Timber harvesting and haulage is one of the primary uses of the roads in State forests. Forestry Corporation makes every effort to minimise the impact of timber harvesting and log trucks on neighbours, however, if you are establishing a residence it is advisable to consider the proximity of your house to roads to minimise dust and noise.

If you are thinking of buying a property near State forest you should be aware that any forest road access will be shared by timber trucks, 4WDs, trail bikes, horses, mountain bikes, bush walkers, campers and other neighbours.

Access to your property

When buying a house or property near State forest, check the legal status of access to the property, pursuant to the *Roads Act 1993*, beforehand. Most roads in State forest are not 'legal access' under this Act.

Some local councils require proof of 'right of carriageway' or 'legal access' through State forest before development applications can be approved. Contact your local council for conditions.

In exceptional circumstances, where a road to a property through a State forest already exists but is not 'legal access', it is possible to apply for and establish 'right of carriageway' to the property in order to fulfil such requirements. This process may take up to three months and fees will apply, however, it is important to understand that a favourable outcome is not guaranteed.

If there is no road present do not assume you will be able to gain access through State forest.

Be aware that Forestry Corporation roads are maintained primarily for forest management, timber harvesting and fire access. If you are granted access it will not be exclusive to you and you should not assume that an access road to your property will be maintained on a regular basis.

Preparation for the fire season

Fires are a natural and regularly occurring event in forests. When buying a property adjoining or near State forest you should be aware of the risk of fire and take all necessary precautions.

If building a new house be aware of the local bushfire protection guidelines and ensure you leave an adequate buffer between your house and the forest. State forest cannot be cleared to accommodate residential bushfire protection measures. As the property owner it is your responsibility to maintain an appropriate protection buffer, within the boundary of your property. Advice on preparing your property and protecting it from fire can be obtained from the Rural Fire Service at: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Hazard Reduction Burning

Forestry Corporation undertakes seasonal burning to control the risk of fire – known as hazard reduction burning – to reduce the amount of fuel on the forest floor. In addition, areas that have been harvested during the year are often burnt to reduce the fire risk and promote regeneration – known as post-logging burns.

- Each year the areas to be burnt are set out in a management plan that is submitted to the local Bushfire Management Committee within each local council area.
- Neighbours and people living in close proximity to the affected areas are notified in writing of the intention to burn the nearby State forest.
- When an area of forest near your property is being burnt, Forestry Corporation may offer to undertake burning on your property as well. Acceptance of this offer is voluntary and free of charge.



Above: Hazard reduction burning reduces the amount of fuel on the forest floor to reduce fire risk.

- If you believe the State forest near your property poses a fire risk, contact your nearest Forestry Corporation office and discuss this with them.
Do not burn it yourself. It is against the law for a member of the public, including neighbours, to light a fire to reduce fuel in State forests, at any time.
- If you wish to undertake a burn on your property you may need a permit from the Rural Fire Service and you should notify Forestry Corporation beforehand.

Bushfires, Fire Control and Firefighting

Bushfires occur in State forests every year. Many are started by lightning or accidentally from campfires, adjoining property or passing vehicles. Unfortunately many are also deliberately lit.

During the declared bushfire season (usually 1st October – 31st March), people living next to or near State forest should take extra precautions to protect their property from fire.

What to do if there is a bushfire near you?

- If you are the first person to find the fire, ring 000 and report it
- If safe, return to your property. Do not attempt to put the fire out yourself unless you are appropriately trained and equipped
- Prepare your property for the threat of fire.

Weeds and feral animals

Many weeds and animals escape into State forests from private property and cause damage to the forest environment. Forestry Corporation spends hundreds of thousands of dollars every year controlling weeds, feral animals such as pigs, foxes, cats, and goats as well as wild dogs.

Please ensure that your stock is contained, you prevent weed infestation through appropriate control measures and ensure that your domestic animals are prevented from interfering with native wildlife. By taking such measures you will be helping to protect the biodiversity in State forests.

Be aware that hunting is permitted in some forests. To find out where contact the NSW Department of Primary Industries: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

If you have concerns relating to the movement of feral weeds or animals from State forest onto your property, please contact the nearest Forestry Corporation office.

Forestry Corporation Stakeholder Engagement Policy

Forestry Corporation has a “Stakeholder Engagement” policy to guide employees in their day-to-day interaction with stakeholders, including neighbours.

The principles which underpin this policy include a commitment by Forestry Corporation to:

- Developing and maintaining working relationships with stakeholders
- Understanding what is important and of interest to our stakeholders by undertaking meaningful engagement
- Building trust and support of stakeholders in Forestry Corporation as a proficient commercial manager of native and plantation forests.

Like to know more?

Corporate	
Sydney	West Pennant Hills/Cumberland State Forest 1300 655 687 or (02) 9871 3377

Hardwood Forests Division	
Central Region	Wauchope (02) 6585 3744
North East Region	Coffs Harbour (02) 6652 0111
Southern Region	Batemans Bay 1300 880 548
Western Region	Dubbo (02) 6841 4288

Softwood Plantations Division	
Snowy Region	Tumut (02) 6947 3911
Northern Softwoods Region	Bathurst (02) 6331 2044

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