

SOUTH EAST FORESTRY HUB

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP 2025

PARTICIPANT NOTES

Wednesday 26 March - 9:30am - 2:30pm

25 people gathered at the Civic Centre in Bega to explore the future of the South East Forestry Hub. The focus question for the workshop was:

How can we ensure that South East Forestry continues to flourish towards a productive and sustainable future?



WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

SEF Hub Chair, Mal McComb welcomed us to the day and handed over to facilitator David Newell who outlined how the day would run and principles that would support us to work well together. These were:

- Listen with attention - suspend judgement
- Speak with intention - stay on topic
- Be aware of your impact on the group
- Ensure all voices are heard - welcome diversity
- Contribute your wisdom - a leader in every chair
- Focus on shared outcomes - set aside personal agendas

CHECK-IN

We introduced ourselves briefly to others around the room and answered the question:
What brought you here today?

- What can be the impact of the SEF Hub?
- To learn and contribute to the hub's objectives and vision
- Ensuring Hub projects are on the right track to achieve outcomes for all
- Now working for SEFH
- Partners with Bega Circular Valley
- Connecting forestry and land holders
- A desire to provide local input from smallholder perspective
- To connect with others engaged in tree growing/forestry management
- Council presence and engagement with industry, to stay informed of Hub's work
- Trust in people
- Networking with like minded people to promote the value of forest management
- Find out more about forestry in area, putting faces to names
- Get a sense of PNF viability
- How does farm forestry fit in?
- Share my learnings from my region and learn from your region
- Learn about forestry as a key part of the region and how it fits with the Bega Valley's future circular economy
- A desire to see the industry succeed
- Importance of forests in our region – how to better value & support that resource
- A better future
- Contribute to future growth of forestry in SE NSW
- A commitment to seeing a sustainable and profitable forest industry
- Professional interest in the longevity of forest industry in the SE area
- Sustainable forestry is a key economic driver for the region – how can I in my role support the industry?
- Can we reposition forestry as an industry of National importance?

HUB OVERVIEW

Hub Manager Rob de Fegely gave an overview of where the Hub is up to and what projects are currently underway. Rob spoke of the need to take stock and review where the Hub is up to, and look to the next 2.5 years. He outlined the need that exists for forestry products into the future and the need for the industry to be sustainable. Rob highlighted the importance of building public awareness about forestry and providing extension opportunities for landholders.

WORLD CAFE

The group then participated in a World Cafe session to explore the vision for forestry in the region, the current situation and the objectives that should guide the Hub. Group responses are detailed below.

ROUND 1: *What is our long-term vision for forestry in the South East?*

RESILIENT FORESTS

- Wider resilience in changing climate
- Healthy & safe forest – specific to our local situation
- Forestry as a sustainable circular solution
- Build up biodiversity via non-species-specific selective harvesting
- Maximise indirect benefits of forests

THRIVING INDUSTRY

- That there is a forest industry
- Growing and thriving forestry industry in SE NSW
- Self-sufficiency in timber products
- Self-sustainable and exporting – product & ideas
- Connecting with existing initiatives – eg, future made in Australia
- To develop forestry as a natural part of our lifestyle and landscape

PRODUCTIVE FORESTRY

- Using the resources at highest value – improved tech, low value to high value
- Low value product to high value building material
- Best and highest use – making use of all yields coming out of the forests
- Productive – yield – MAI, value add
- Multi-use forests on private land
- Incentives for forest management
- Active management

ENGAGED COMMUNITY

- Education & training – forest management, processing, manufacture, building
- Community awareness and involvement
- Awareness of forest management – people are comfortable with the presence of the industry
- Building trust
- Community trust & understanding of forestry
- The majority of AU population see forestry as essential
- Being accepted and valued in local community

PLANNED

- Definitive shared vision of a healthy forest
- 500 year plan – maybe 100? – Total land management, re-connect with community
- All forest tenures maintained in similar way
- Fire mitigation – via creating mosaic forest that is opened up, collection of forest residue
- Science-based decision making



ROUND 2 - *What is the current situation of the forestry industry in the South East?*

The group spent time exploring the current situation of the industry and what was working well and not so well.

WINS

- Forest management – history, science
- Softwood silviculture
- Industry foundation
- Commonwealth & State Government support
- Increased community engagement
- Large forest estate
- Private native forest asset
- Diversity of asset

- Private Native Forestry regulation
- 2019/20 fires have spurred conversations about better/increased forest management
- Establishment of hubs – voice to Government
- Hub has connected, diverse range of stakeholders
- Aligning industry via circular economy objectives
- Engaging people with forests – adventure activities, mountain biking

ACTIONS

- Building awareness
- Circular Bio Based construction
- Future 'made in Australia'
- Create regulatory certainty
- Managed certainty
- Building relationships across industry and community
- Training future knowledge holders
- Proposal to change regulation of PNF in the Bega Valley
- Removal of requirements to get DAs in Snowy/Shoalhaven
- Landowners with good forestry outcomes
- Invite different voices – conservation interests
- Communications campaign – innovation, diversity of the industry

OPPORTUNITIES

- Investigating durable species further
- Private Native Forestry management
- Indigenous land management knowledge – especially fire management & forest health
- Circular economy initiatives
- Improve utilisation & reclamation
- Improve resilience

ASSETS

- SE Forestry Hub
- SE TA – South East Timber Association
- SE AN – South East Agroforestry Network
- Agriculture
- National Circularity Centre
- Estate – native, plantation – softwood, hardwood
- Natural forest – W/Use & PNF
- Processing industry – Chip mill, biofuel, sawmills, scale x 2m flexibility
- Deep water harbour
- Employment

- Knowledge base of people in industry – traditional, industry - good contractor base
- Forest management – knowledge & history
- Geography/topography – variety of landscape, innovative local businesses, underlying support from community
- Climate – natural advantage

OPPORTUNITIES

- Promotion of activities based on experiences to capture those outside the industry
- Consistent regulation on private land
- Growing more trees
- Carbon sequestration
- Product diversification from waste products
- Cross tenure opportunities – Nat Park (commenced), Forestry, PNF
- Using forestry operations to mitigate fire risk
- More balanced approach to include recreation, production, conservation
- Forestry as employment – traditional, innovative, circular economy
- Bio-char – finding high value uses for low value forestry products (biomass)
- Electricity
- MDF/sheet materials
- Showpiece exemplar of best practice

NEEDS

- Improve community trust
- Transparency
- Consistency of goals
- Greater longevity of legislation
- Infrastructure mobility, adaption
- More markets – eg, biochar
- Certainty – long term investment and funding
- Intergenerational knowledge transfer
- Centralised information
- Being unbiased – provided from non-vested interests
- Research on all land tenures
- Clear transport corridors
- Education plans for agroforestry

CHALLENGES

- Natural regen, regrowth post fire – eg, wattle, changed forest structure
- Dead standing fuel
- Monocultural forest
- Restoration of damaged forests
- The good, the bad and the ugly of good forest management eg, Flora & fauna management – culling, clearing
- Longevity of investment required
- Lack of certainty of market value in future
- Highest organised & well-funded anti-forestry lobby
- Hostile community
- Compliance
- Regulatory limitations (eg, RU2)
- Inconsistent logistic regulations eg, vehicle TARE on roads
- Value of products
- Competition for products
- Competition for resource
- Historic misinformation that is continued
- Reporting of biodiversity
- Cost of transport for low value forestry products (Biomass)
- Lack of resources

BARRIERS

- Lack of trust
- LEP – zoning and regulation
- Management and regulatory uncertainty
- Lack of market transparency – no publication of log prices, like cattle prices!
- Hard to know how to be involved in forest management and what the returns are
- Limited markets/products
- Commonwealth vs State Gov – advice to Commonwealth, but State controls industry
- Policy
- Local Government planning regulations – RUZ, BV needs consent for private forestry
- State Government agendas – can be seen as vested interest
- Legislation blocking improvement
- Tenure delineation
- Procuring infrastructure and investment for future proofing
- Clear social licence
- Ignorant/lack of awareness in community

GAPS

- Lack of interconnectedness between forestry industry players
- Buyers and sellers
- Primary industries – Ag, Fish, Forest
- New information streams
- Not enough research on – private, NP, agroforestry
- Are there gaps in biodiversity reporting?
- Landowner knowledge for plantation
- Plantation species – What can I plant where? What species for best market return?
- Nursery supply of timber species knowledge



ROUND 3 - What objectives will best guide the South East Forestry Hub now and into the future?

The group interrogated the current Hub objectives and gave input into what should be improved, added and dropped - to guide the Hub's activities for the next 2.5 years.

CURRENT OBJECTIVES

1. **Consultation** - to consult with a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties across the Hub region.
2. **Map Current Forest Resources** - undertake broad scale mapping of the forest resources within the Hub region by tenure and management.
3. **Future Forest Investment** - identify opportunities for future investment in forest resource development.
4. **Investment Business Case** - identify and support business cases for the investment in new infrastructure.
5. **Future Plantation Development** - determine the potential for future plantation expansion (softwood and hardwood).

IMPROVE

Objective 1 - CONSULTATION

- Feedback from Government on consultation
- Capturing the broad views of members
- Consultation outside our forestry 'swim lane'
- Facilitate communication (act as an intermediary)
- Include engagement & community connection
- Consultation Plus – focus it on more on advice to Gov, identify & report on constraints affecting productivity
- Improve inter hub collaboration
- Connect to other infrastructure owners for joined up advocacy for improvements
- Expand to include profile building for stakeholders/regional industry & partnerships
- Multi-use – eg, MTB/Tourism
- As consultation proceeds, ensure there is more communication to wider audience

Objective 2 - MAPPING

- Expand mapping metrics – forest health, biodiversity, post fire growth, transport/topography logistics
- Identify zones within the Hub where there is sufficient forestry resource to justify development of road plans and investment priorities

Objective 3 - FOREST INVESTMENT

- Innovative investments
- Do we need to define/explain 'forest resource' better? (Include National Parks)

ADD

SHARED VISION

- Why are we doing this?
- How do we get a common understanding of the value of forests/forestry?

COMMUNITY AWARENESS & ENGAGEMENT

- Awareness/networking
- Communications
- Community education to combat misinformation, improve acceptance
- Communication and promotion – through stories?
- Take/involve the community on the journey – agree as to what a healthy forest looks like and how to get there

INDUSTRY GROWTH

- How could (should) we better support growth of the industry? – connect to other primary industries, longer term, how is forestry critical to the whole industry - Ag first step? Through circularity?
- New investments – markets, short crop rotation, products, fibres, species
- Best products, best use of products to maximise value and sustainability
- Industry research that leads to forest industry investment/improvement
- Strengthening supply chain connections
- Solutions Hub for other sectors, eg, Ag, construction, community infrastructure
- Could we build a scalable model for forestry (avoid shire barriers/differences)
- Include more focus on industry value add, better use of resource
- Improve policy

FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Use knowledge gained by old objective to understand forest health objectives and management
- Plan for active and adaptive forest management at a landscape scale, fire, forest health, species etc
- Ensure we are talking about managing 'all forests', eg, Nat parks, including as a resource & PNF
- Update for fire (2019-20) effects
- Review road and fire trail networks to ensure access for future bushfire mitigation (FRB) and access for early fire response
- Should we broaden road study to other industries broader than forestry?

DROP

- Objective 2 - Mapping Current Forest Resources - It's been done
- Objective 3 - Future Forest Investment - feel this achieved already
- Objective 4 - Investment Business Case
- Export 5 (*unsure as to what this means - DN*)

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

What are the projects, activities and ideas we need to focus on now?

The group then focused on what actions were needed now to take the Hub and the industry where it needs to go. These actions and initiatives have been grouped by the facilitator to help with sense making.

VISION & PURPOSE

- Articulating vision for forestry industry – piloting, industry & community
- Define scope for the Forest Hub – forestry sector, forest resources
- Develop profile of Hub – forestry and weed products
- Contribute to a project which defines an agreed definition of a healthy forest to inform future forest management projects
- Past Hub structure

INFORMATION FLOW

- Networking and data source access for PNF, FF & Plantation
- Legacy – self-supporting industry network - tangible – lists etc, things to pass on

COMMUNICATIONS

- Improved Government feedback on existing reports and advice
- SE Promotional message as a template for national message funded by Commonwealth
- Prioritise and complete existing projects
- Case studies of successful initiatives

COLLABORATION

- Develop stakeholder group among the supply chain – list who's who
- Review current cross tenure meetings, add hub's view, feed to Commonwealth and connect local landholder's views
- Logistics, equipment accessible for sharing, pre-incident plan, then rebuild of our forests

- Widen the net for consultation
- Engage with stakeholders to identify policy/regulation constraints for investment/productivity and report to Commonwealth

RESEARCH

- Market assessment for timber products – determine demand
- Materials research into low value forest products
- Pilot project on indigenous forest management and with Bega LALC

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- Bushfire mitigation strategies to reduce impact – more intense fire breaks, well maintained roads through all tenures, residue cleaned up – Hub role in this?
Liaise with land tenure owners, RFS, Forest Corp
- Hybrid forest and landscape management – indigenous & western



OPEN SPACE

What are the conversations that we need to have now?

The group then had the opportunity to spend some time working in self-selected teams on issues, actions and ideas that were important to them on the day. Six conversations were held and these are listed here, with summary notes detailed below. Full discussion notes (where provided) are included in Appendix A.

1. A vision for forestry in SE NSW
2. Connecting growers, harvesters & timber users, processors
3. How can PNFs retain a right to harvest?
4. Most likely plantation species
5. Industry innovation
6. Without funding would we still have a hub?

OPEN SPACE CONVERSATION SUMMARIES

Conversation 1

Title: Leading a 100-year vision for forestry in the region

Host: Richard

Key take-away:

- Clear need for a vision and methodology that's agreed to by all

Next wise step:

- Develop a protect scope for vision development (Rob/SE FH)

Conversation 2

Title: Stakeholder connection

Host: Lisa Chin

Key take-away:

- Limited market and service provision in the region
- Design a guide to protect from liability and giving advice

Next wise step:

- Identify harvesters, processors, timber product sellers, assessors

Conversation 3

Title: PNF/Plantation right to harvest

Host: Ruben

Key take-away:

- Some risks not insurmountable
- Opportunities to make it more secure

- Regulatory change plausible

Next wise step:

- Keep up the good forestry
- Bring community along

Conversation 4

Title: Plantations

Host: Rob de Fegely

Key take-away:

- What has worked
- What does it take to create a valuable tree crop

Next wise step:

- Review current knowledge & research

Conversation 5

Title: Industry Innovation

Host: Malcolm McComb

Key take-away:

- Residues (saw dust, wood chip)
- Electricity leaves slash
- Gas
- Engineered wood products
- Finding uses for small & young logs
- Drones for tree health

Next wise step:

- Communication by hub
- Long term relationships with farmers

Conversation 6

Title: HUB afterlife

Host:

Key take-away:

- 2 years remaining is not much time to organise & advocate for extension

Next wise step:

Options to explore:

- Member funding
- Integrate with other industry bodies
- Advocate for renewal

CHECK OUT & FEEDBACK

We finished the workshop with a check-out and feedback session, capturing participants key responses. These are detailed below and have been grouped in like responses.

HOW WAS THE DAY FOR YOU?

- Good to build connections & develop project ideas
- The connections and topics were valuable and thought provoking
- Great to connect/reconnect with similar minded, smart people
- A good day – opportunity to reset priorities and reconnect with our community
- Great opportunity to network and hear a broad range of views on forestry in SE NSW
- Very useful (networking/cross referencing) and informative eg, Hub's next steps
- Collaborative
- Good connections
- Connecting with new and existing friends in the hub was refreshing
- A great opportunity to network

- The day was very interesting, always good to be exposed to new ideas
- Lots of great ideas and thinking
- Excellent range of thoughts and ideas
- Informative
- Slow start but useful to help me understand the forestry industry in the region
- Interesting questions
- Informative (even ran into an old friend)

- Great day
- Great day, interesting array of participants
- Great skills and knowledge in the group

- Positive, but it would be good to have information provided before meetings
- Feeling of shared objectives
- Constructive
- Today was of great value to me
- Well organised activities
- Long/dry (8-1?) – Lead a bit more

WHAT ARE YOUR KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DAY?

- We need a vision for future forest operations that is palatable to all stakeholders or as many as possible
- A lot of our focus on defining and working towards a safe and healthy forest

- Learning about the breadth of the SE Forestry Industry
 - Unified industry perspective is not really enough
 - Reinforced that forestry has a key role in the region's future/circular economy but lots of barriers in the way that need to be by-passed, dealt with
 - Advocacy of value that forestry contributes to the broad population is #1
 - Forestry is actually very forward looking in terms of sustainability and using by-products, but maybe public perception of forestry is not up to date
 - There is momentum pointing towards a successful transition to productive and sustainable forestry
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- There's a lot of ideas and thoughts amongst the industry and the Hub that make the process worthwhile
 - Hub brings resource and structure but task ahead is significant
 - What the Hub will be focusing on over the next 2.5 years – what the priorities are and/or should be
 - There is a broad cross section of ideas to progress the Hub's objectives
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- Great forum for idea sharing
 - Lots of unknown organisations/people with great insights
 - Need to work together for the future of the industry and Forest NSW
 - Profiling and engaging wider in hub region – tourism, mountain bikes, Indigenous
 - Connections and links with other stakeholders about activities in the area
 - There is some good buy-in from all stakeholders
 - Span of interest and perspectives on forest management and gaps in representation
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- There are large barriers that are not easily broached
 - Forestry in SE NSW has challenges with social licence, but has good steps forward and opportunities to improve this
 - Need for security/certainty for all in the industry (growers and processors)
 - A not fit for purpose regulatory framework inhibits sustainable forestry management - this issue will likely need to be addressed outside the Hub
 - Forestry NSW and Pentarch are aware of the poor condition of our native forests in the area – Forest health is a major concern

WHAT DO YOU NEED NOW?

- Feedback/update on workshop and what the Hub will take forward
- Nothing specific from Hub, other than to be kept informed about progress
- Discernible action that comes out of good intentions - communication of these actions
- More information on website
- Clear direction on how the Hub can progress the interests of the timber industry
- Continued engagement and support for projects that can help our organisation grow (SEAN)
- I would like more case studies and demonstrations of good forestry and how sustainable forestry materials can be used
- Support/advocate with comms about positive case studies
- A National Convention once a year
- Regular exchange/update forum
- More regionalised campaigning/comms
- Broader communication sent to whole network – maybe quarterly updates about activities
- Currently a great range/diverse stakeholder group with industry (eg, growers, govt, processor) What about others? (eg, Ag reps, tourism reps etc.)
- Facilitate communications with anti-forestry world – present us with their careers
- Would be good to have a regional contacts directory to facilitate collaboration
- Understanding of communication pathways to get best bang for bucks for the industry eg, where can we help or get help
- Meaningful partnerships
- Guidance in achieving a methodology that can be handed up to both State and Federal Government
- Better engage policy makers
- Explore 'healthy forest' metrics
- What does a 'healthy forest' look like? (Key characteristics)

HOW OFTEN WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONNECT?

- Quarterly (2 responses)
- 1-2 time a year
- Once every 6 months
- 6 monthly meetings – Quarterly updates
- Annually (4 responses)

APPENDIX A

OPEN SPACE CONVERSATION TOPICS

Conversation 1

Title: **Vision for forestry in the region**

Caller: Richard

Participants: Christopher, Chloe, Damien

Champions: Rob!

Insights:

- Can we flip the question from 'What do I need' & taking it to 'What can forest sustainability provide us?'
- Thinking differently about managing forests, eg, reduce canopy irrespective of species
- Need to build a cohesive vision that whole community buys into
- Need to understand what the vision for forestry is as part of the region's future 'Circular Socio-Economy'
- Need to simplify and standardise planning
- Forestry Hub is not just about harvesting

Unanswered questions:

- Can we find a methodology that all agree to? For forestry (eg, ESFM)
- What is potential for forestry products in general (eg, biochar)

Help/info needed:

- Resource/funding to develop vision
- Data/research on 100yr potential for forestry
- Do we need a NPS person. On the Hub?

Success measures:

- Community understands what a healthy, well managed forest looks like (Biodiversity, animal corridors)
- Clear vision developed and agreed

Actions:

- Develop a vision – involve broader group of stakeholders
- Show what well managed forest looks like
- Develop agreed management methodology
- Add in NSWNP (To vision dev' group), LALC, tourism, contractors, construction, manufacturers, AFCA, Forest Products Assoc (FPA), Carbon sequestration, Mills x 2 – Bombala, Pentarch, Councils

Conversation 2

Title: **Connecting growers, harvesters, processors & buyers, also people who can assess forest prior to harvest**

Caller: Lisa Chin

Participants: Justin Law, Charlie Fisher, Peter Rutherford

Insights:

- No one stop shop for stakeholders in the area – although Pentarch does this internally
- Most contractors are tied to a processor
- Is geographical
- Species, condition & size of timber will impact which processor a grower can use
- Some guidance on which processors will accept what is needed
- Liability can be an issue
- Processor info needs to include minimum amounts

Unanswered questions:

- Should haulage and processing costs be included – example/approximate – as a guideline?

Help/info needed:

- LLS has good info but can't make recommendations for contractors
- Flow chart would be useful – decision tree

Actions:

- Identify players
- Get them to provide info about what they do
- Publish info

Conversation 3

Title: **PNF right to harvest**

Caller: Ruben

Participants: Emily, Jeff, Ben, Lee, Ruben

Insights:

- Approval duration for PNF Plan 15-30 yrs
- Dual consent
- Ramp up compliance
- Similar question for plantations
- LLS social license
- Showing evidence
- Group certification
- Grower co op
- Valuations
- Community engagement
- Profit a Prendre & farm forestry groups

Conversation 4

Title: **Plantations**

Caller: Rob de Fegely

Participants: RdeF, N Walber, S Baben

Champions: NWalber, RdeF

Insights:

- What is value?
- What do I need to do to grow value?
- What silviculture – plant spacing, pruning, thinning (when, how)

Unanswered questions:

- What species has worked and failed in the past?

Success measures:

- Compendium of success and what worked

Actions:

- Joe O’Gava research
- Wayne Schipp
- Experience
- View ‘best’ plantations – why did they work?