

Wielangta heading to High Court?



The Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle – one of three threatened species at the heart of the Wielangta Forest logging issue.

Dave Watts

More than a year after Senator Bob Brown won a Federal Court battle to prevent logging of the Wielangta Forest in Tasmania's south-east, the Greens Leader is heading back to court.

In December 2006, the Federal Court upheld an argument by Senator Brown that the logging of the forest was illegal because it impacted on three nationally listed threatened species – the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, the Wielangta stag beetle and the swift parrot (see *ECOS* 135, p. 4).

However, Forestry Tasmania subsequently appealed against the decision, saying the logging had made the forest a 'no-man's land' as it banned logging, tree planting and burning.

Late last year, the Full Bench of the Federal Court overturned the 2006 ruling, allowing the Forestry Tasmania appeal and setting aside the original order to ban logging in the 10 000 hectare Wielangta forest.

In response, Senator Brown has applied to the High Court for leave to appeal the decision.

'This case has national consequences for the protection of Australia's wild and endangered creatures,' commented Senator Brown.

Care required in slowing deforestation

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has warned that new incentive schemes to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) must address the wider political and economic causes behind the problem.

The warning comes in a recent CIFOR report based on 10 years of research on the causes of deforestation worldwide. The report found that fluctuations in commodity prices, agricultural and biofuel subsidies, and roads and other infrastructure projects are often more important causes of deforestation than logging and slash-and-burn activities by local communities.

The annual loss of 13 million hectares of forests accounts for one-fifth of global carbon emissions and more than the combined total contributed by the world's energy-intensive transport sectors.

CIFOR Director General, Frances Seymour, said that Indonesia is losing 1.9 million hectares of forest a year, including carbon-rich peatlands, making it a leading source of carbon emissions. Forest-clearing is partly due to the global demand for palm oil and



Widespread clearing of forests, such as this former peatland, for palm oil and pulp plantations has helped make Indonesia a leading source of CO₂ emissions. Ryan Wool/CIFOR

China's demand for wood pulp.

In contrast, the loss of 4.3 million hectares of forest a year in South America is partly driven by the high demand for meat and pasture lands. In Ecuador, road building is a major cause of deforestation; while in sub-Saharan Africa, fuel-wood extraction and charcoal production contribute to the loss of 4 million hectares a year.

Seymour warned that after decades of inattention to the rights of forest dwellers,

new payment streams tied to conservation could intensify the severe poverty that now afflicts most rural forest communities in the developing world.

'Since forest property rights are often unclear, payment for carbon services could end up providing incentives for corrupt officials or local elites to appropriate this new forest value from local communities,' she said.

More information:
CIFOR, www.cifor.cgiar.org

Scientists target Indonesia's illegal logging

An Australian researcher is spearheading a three-year project on the Indonesian islands of Sumbawa and Sulawesi to assess social and economic options to help stem Indonesia's loss of 2 million hectares of forests a year – a major contribution to global carbon pollution.

Through the project, Australian and Indonesian scientists, led by Charles Sturt University's Dr Digby Race,

will develop a framework for agreements between villagers and forest companies aimed at discouraging illegal logging.

The framework will be based on what the researchers see as key features of beneficial forestry partnerships, including:

- industry being aware of how forests contribute to the resilience of rural livelihoods by providing a 'buffer' of food and medicine, livestock fodder and building materi-

als when conventional crops and practices fail; and

- industry being aware of the need to provide payment for tree management activities undertaken by the local community.

Dr Race said that if fair and beneficial contracts are negotiated, both partners are more likely to be committed to their relationship and to see the value of sustaining forests.