

Sustainability in Tasmania's Forests

by Pete Godfrey

This is a photographic expose of issues around sustainability in forestry in Tasmania.

I have in the past worked in forests that were managed by small sawmillers on their own land. They managed to log and mill timber for themselves and to make a living by single stem extraction. By carefully selecting the logs they wanted to mill they could leave future sawlogs to grow on. At times they would remove logs of lesser quality and mill them for what they could, in order to improve the health and suitability of the forest for their future operations. Most logs 600mm in diameter had pipes up the centre. Termites or rot in the heart wood were not considered an issue. All mills in NSW have piles of heartwood billets with holes up the centre left over from milling. These are either chipped or burnt to create steam for their drying operations.

It was a surprise to me when I came to Tasmania to learn that trees with pipes up the centre were not even considered worthy of sawmilling and some not even worth chipping.

This article shows the ugly side of what is and has happened.

Tasmania is an incredibly beautiful place . We all need to do our bit to keep it that way.



The above photo is of Harts Hill to the north of the Gog Ranges. It was clearfelled approximately 5 years ago and has only managed to grow a crop of Thistles, Fire Weed and a few Musk Trees (*Olearia agrophylla*). The native forest remnants here are generally Damp Schlerophyll, dominated by *E.Obliqua*, *E.Amygdalina* and *E.Viminalis*.

Note that all the drainage lines have been clearfelled in this coupe. One small streamside reserve is visible in the west of the coupe.

As the native forest failed to regenerate this coupe has now been hand planted with *Pinus Radiata*. this occurred around April this year.(2006)

The soil is very erodible being derived from Volcanoclastic rocks , mainly Breccia, Pumice and Andesite. This combined with the steepness of the land seems to have prevented re afforestation.



Across the Garden of Eden creek from Harts Hill is this fine display of sustainable forestry. BU108B. Once *e.Obliqua* and *e.Amygdalina* forest on volcanoclastic derived soils. Now rocks remain. The subsequent burning of this coupe has sterilised large areas of the soil. I wonder if re afforestation will be any more successful here than across the creek. At least this is a North facing hill and not a South like Harts Hill. This coupe was logged for a total of 300 tons of sawlogs of all categories and 3,800 tons of pulpwood. And we are being told that our industry is sawlog driven.

There are numerous plantations in this area, mainly the Gog and Paradise Pine plantations as well as private hardwood plantations.

There is a hardwood plantation that is on a tributary of the Garden of Eden creek, all the gullies and streamside reserves are planted with *e.Nitens*. It may be that the land was already cleared in the past but the stumps that are still in the coupe do not seem to back this up.

The main problem with this coupe is that the Garden of Eden Creek and its tributaries are known habitat for the Giant Freshwater Crayfish (*Astacopsis Gouldii*).

These creatures are very susceptible in their juvenile stages to turbidity in the waterways. The roads in the whole area are sub standard and siltation and erosion is occurring at unacceptable levels.



The claw was found on the road near this creek culvert. As you can see there is a lot of erosion on the outlet of this culvert. This dirt is now in the creek.





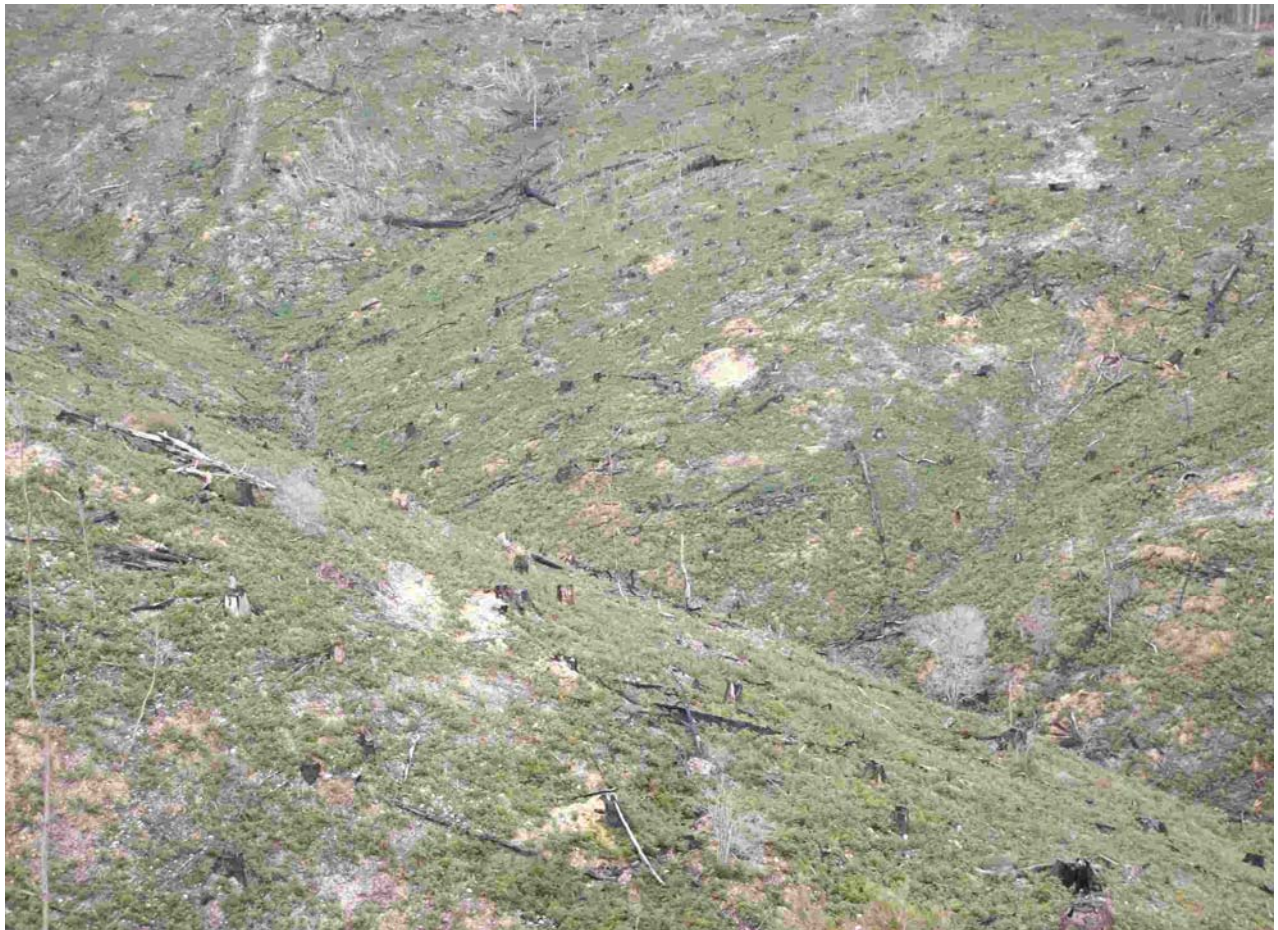
Coupe MQ301A at Liffey, The above photo is a small oasis in the middle of a valley of Nitens plantations. As you can see the forest was magnificent and will not be allowed to return as long as our forests are sustainably logged. Below shows the coupe 100 metres from the Myrtle. Note the tree ferns ready to burn. If we were to remove these and take them home we could incur a \$5000 under the Forest Practices Act 1985





Above the aftermath of logging on a Forestry Tas coupe in Caveside, this is to be converted to plantation and added to the Private Timber Reserves next to it. The forest was *e.Delegatensis* (white top stringybark) with *Sassafras*, *Myrtle*, *Dogwood* and *Silver Wattle* understorey. Below is batter slumping (small landslips) on the road in. The road was constructed through a *leptospernum lanigerum* (wooly tea tree) swamp. The saturated soil could not stay put on the road cuttings.





Above coupe BC062A cable logged 2 years ago, note streamside reserves cleared, all vegetation missing and no regrowth of native forest.(unless one considers bracken native forest)
Below, Dalgarth Hill in the Branch's Creek pine forest , Cable logging showing the damage to the soil from cable draglines. During heavy rain the soil will wash straight down the hill.





Honeycomb caves in flood, the cave system is approximately 2 kilometres north of the Chudleigh/Caveside coupes. The caves are fed by underground streams, some come across the contours from Kelly's Pot which is 2 kilometres to the west. The caves then go under a hill range then appear at the Mole Creek rising which then flows down Mole Creek and into the Mersey river.

The Karst and cave systems in the Mole Creek and Caveside areas are world class. The limestone underlying the Mole Creek and Meander valleys are in places 1.3 kilometres thick.

They were laid down at a time when much of Tasmania was covered by warm tropical seas (between 600 and 410 million years ago). At this time Tasmania was thought to be in the Northern Hemisphere and drifting south before the break up of Gondwanaland. The limestone was formed by microscopic organisms dying and falling to the bottom of the oceans. Later being compressed by layers above and forming calcium rich rocks. When it rains the carbon in the atmosphere is picked up by the rain and forms carbonic acid which eats the limestone away to form Karst and Caves. There are hundreds of Caves in the Mole Creek area with only a few being open to the public, all need conservation.

Tasmania's past is long and fascinating, I find it an amazing and wonderful experience learning about the geology, hydrology and plant life of this beautiful state.

As a builder and woodworker I acknowledge the need to utilise our trees in a truly sustainable way so that we may all enjoy the beauty and practicality of timber products in our lives.

The current practices used in our forests, what is called industrial logging, I refer to as land mining. We are destroying the biodiversity and the structural integrity of our forests in the short term, high profit forestry that we are carrying on. To switch to low volume, high value forestry is the only way that future generations can also come to enjoy the beauty and functionality of Tasmania's forest products.



Above Scotts Road landslip on the side of Mother Cummings peak, this was caused by a road culvert being directed onto an area of Dolerite talus. The water entered an underground aquifer and ran along the sandstone bedrock, causing this slip. (the scale is not easy to show in photo)

Below Dunnings Rivulet landslip (some of it) caused by clearing and burning by graziers on the Great Western Tiers above. The sphagnum and peat were burnt out allowing excessive flows down the stream during a large downpour. (in the 1980's the creek was myrtle forest and waterfalls all the way down.

