Tasmanian Forest Agreement Verification:

Advice to Prime Minister and Premier of Tasmania

Interim Reserve Boundaries

Purpose:

This advice responds to a request from the Prime Minister and Premier of Tasmania to provide advice to verify boundaries for a nominated 430,000 hectare informal reserve to be included in an Intergovernmental Agreement arising from the two government's Heads of Agreement on Tasmanian Forestry.

The terms of reference for this interim advice are to:

> "Lead an independent verification process, assisted by relevant experts as required, to:
>
> 1. Receive and review the proposed map and other information provided by the Environment NGO Signatories to the Tasmanian Forest Statement of Principles on the 430,000 hectares of native forest area they propose for immediate placement in informal reserves in accordance with section 2 of the Heads of Agreement.
>
> 2. Verify that the boundaries of the proposed 430,000-hectare reserve are administratively and legally feasible, and do not contain mapping or coding errors.
>
> 3. Advise the Prime Minister and Premier by close of business Friday 5 August whether the proposed 430,000 hectare reserve is prime facie inconsistent with commitments contained in the Heads of Agreement."

Receive and review proposed map from ENGO signatories

A proposed map received from the Environmental NGOs is included as Appendix A to this advice. The area nominated is slightly less than the agreed 430,000 hectares, at 423,744 hectares, and is within the signatories' nominated 572,000 hectare proposed reserves, as agreed.

An (unverified) statement from the Environmental NGOs outlining their criteria for selecting the nominated 423,744 hectares, and values claimed to be contained within these boundaries, is included at Appendix B, along with an annotated map.

The proposed reserve at Appendix A is consistent with the requirements of section 2 of the Heads of Agreement.

Verify boundaries

Interested stakeholders including ENGOs, other Kelty Statement of Principles Signatories, and relevant government agencies and entities have been consulted.

The proposed reserve in Appendix A appears to contain a small number of minor mapping and coding errors, due primarily to software limitations in its generation. These should be corrected before declaration of final boundaries.

The proposed reserve areas appear to be owned and administered by the Tasmanian Government and government-owned entities, with a small number of minor boundary overlaps into freehold private land due to mapping misalignments. Provided these are corrected before declaration of the reserve, there appears to be no administrative or legal impediment to the reserves being placed into immediate informal reserve, as specified in the Heads of Agreement.

Consistent with commitments contained in the Heads of Agreement

Section 1 of the Heads of Agreement states that:

> "Wood supply for the remaining industry will be guaranteed at a volume of high quality sawlog of at least 155,000 cubic meters per year and 265,000 cubic meters of peeler billets per year. In addition, as agreed by the Kelty process, specialty timber will be provided, noting that the industry claim is 12500 cubic meters per year, subject to verification. Existing contracts for wood supply will be honoured and the Australian government will fund a voluntary exit mechanism to enable further native wood supply capacity to be retired and reserve areas increased when suitable plantation wood supply is available."

In the context of the present advice, the reserve proposals must be consistent with these commitments until the completion of the verification process specified in Section 2 of the Heads of Agreement, anticipated to be December 31 2011.

Assessment of these issues is considered separately below:

Provision of 155,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlog per year

Forestry Tasmania was requested to incorporate planning for the Statement of Principles moratorium on harvesting within the ENGO's nominated high-conservation-value forests in December 2010. Minister Green further communicated with the Board of Forestry Tasmania in March 2011, requesting that Forestry Tasmania take all feasible action to implement this moratorium.

Forestry Tasmania now advises it has not undertaken rescheduling to move projected harvesting activities out of the proposed reserve areas. It further advises that it cannot undertake such rescheduling "due to planning and operational constraints such as restricted access during the wedge-tail eagle breeding season and lack of suitable roaded coupes."

Forestry Tasmania did not provide data or mapping information to enable verification of this statement. Forestry Tasmania's three-year harvesting plan, however, indicates that for

the financial year to June 2012 it has the capacity to provide adequate high-quality sawlogs from outside the area under consideration as a reserve. An estimated 190,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlogs can be obtained from this area.

The most recent available information from Forestry Tasmania at the time of writing indicates that 13 active harvesting coupes and 80 allocated coupes, from among 339 coupes scheduled for the coming harvesting season, are within the proposed 423,744-hectare nominated reserve, as Forestry Tasmania plans to be capable of delivering its legislatively required 300,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlog. Reallocation of timber access to harvesting for 155,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlog outside the nominated 423,744 hectares should thus be within feasible operating parameters, which routinely incorporate flexibility to meet unanticipated fluctuations in weather, operational, and contracting requirements.

Modelling provided by Forestry Tasmania further showed that 117,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlogs per year would be available from native forests outside the ENGO proposed reserve area each year from 2011 to 2030, from a total estimated available resource of 2,340,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlogs over the next 20 years outside the ENGO's proposed 572,000-hectare reserve.

Recent actual demand for sawlogs from firms other than Gunns is estimated to have varied between approximately 90,000 cubic meters per year and approximately 110,000 over the years between 2006-7 and 2009-10.

In consequence, while some adjustment to harvesting schedules may be required, and associated marginal expense incurred, provision of 155,000 cubic meters of high-quality sawlogs and satisfaction of existing contracts from outside the proposed interim reserve area is within the operational capabilities of Forestry Tasmania over the time period under consideration (until completion of the verification process described in Heads of Agreement Section 2).

Provision of 265,000 cubic meters per year of peeler billets

Similar considerations apply to provision of peeler billets over the period concerned.

Modelling provided by Forestry Tasmania estimated that a sustainable yield of 191,000 cubic meters per year would be available each year over the period 2011 until 2030 from the area of production forestry outside the ENGO 572,000-hectare reserve, from a total cumulative estimated resource of 3,820,000 cubic meters of peeler billets.

While some rescheduling may be required to allow for the interim reserve, over the relatively short period under consideration meeting the provision of 265,000 cubic meters of peeler billets should be within the operational capabilities of Forestry Tasmania.

Provision of specialty timber

While it was not possible in the available time to verify required provision levels of specialty timber resource, modelling provided by Forestry Tasmania estimated that 6700 cubic meters of specialty timbers would be available each year over the period 2011 to 2030 from outside the ENGO's proposed 572,000-hectare reserve.

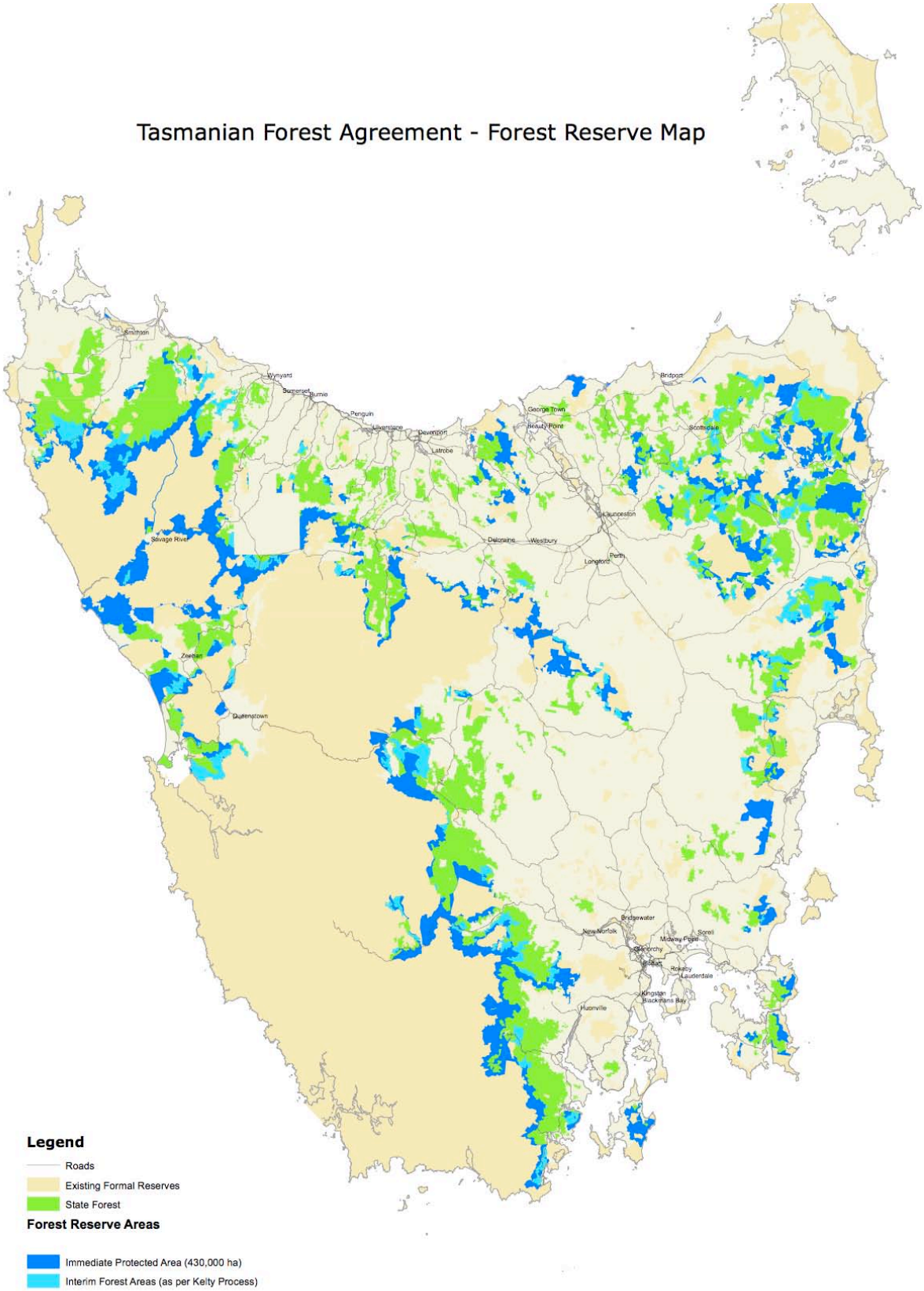
Again, while some rescheduling may be required to allow for the interim reserve, for the relatively short period under consideration the provision of adequate specialty timber to meet requirements should be readily within the operational capabilities of Forestry Tasmania.

Conclusion

Providing that the recommended changes are made, there thus appears to be no insurmountable impediment to the Australian and Tasmanian governments placing the nominated 423,744 hectares of land into informal reserve for the period under consideration.

Appendix A

Tasmanian Forest Agreement - Forest Reserve Map



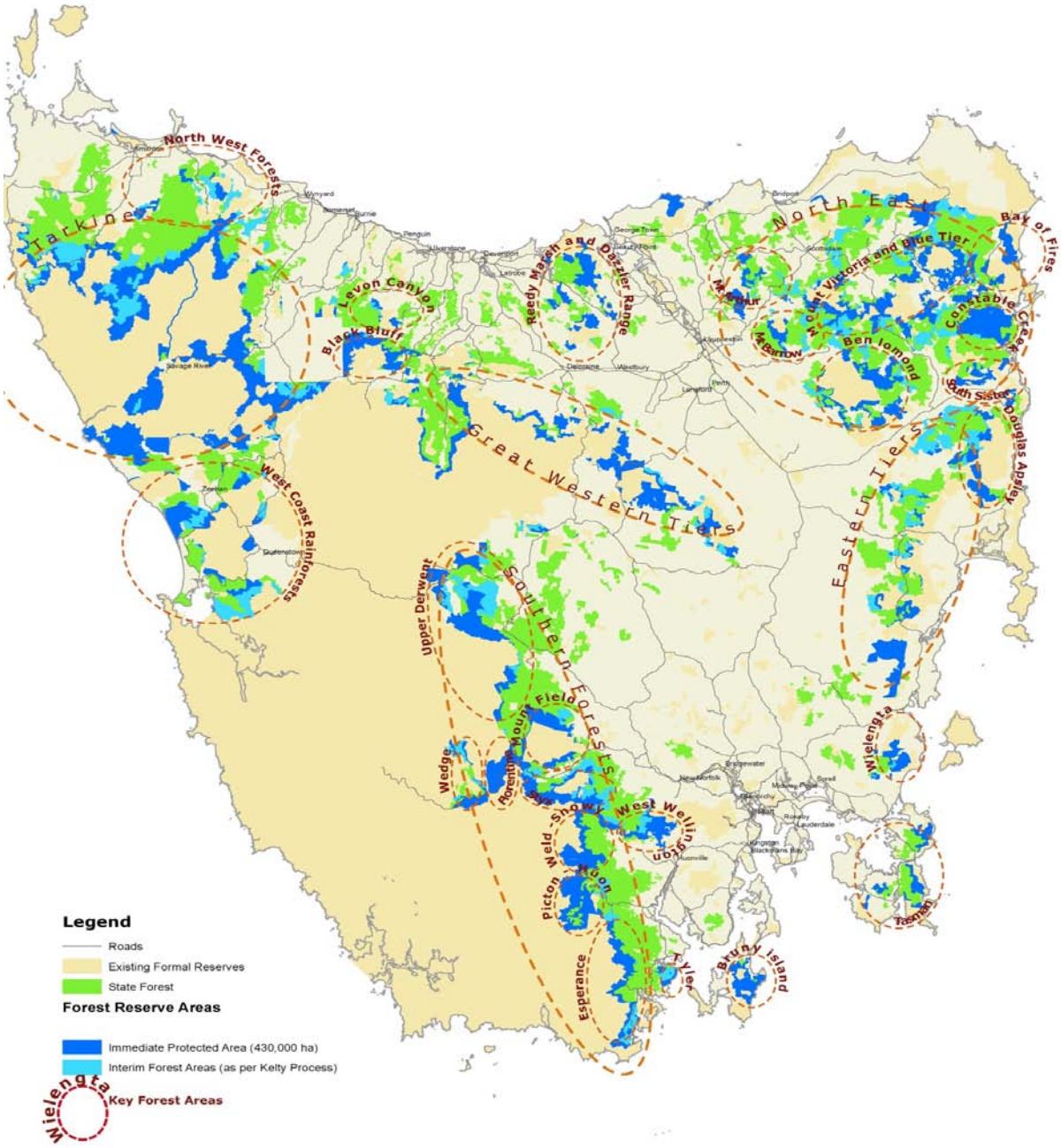
Appendix B

Statement from Environmental NGOs

Conservation Values in Reserve Nomination

Basis of Selection

Tasmanian Forest Agreement - Forest Reserve Map



Forest Area	*Conservation values*
North West Forests	Further north from the Tarkine are the core habitats of the giant freshwater crayfish - the world's largest freshwater crustacean - an extraordinary creature that can grow to nearly a metre in length. These forests also provide important linkages between the wilderness areas of the Tarkine and the north coast. They also provide valuable water catchment services.
Tarkine	The largest remaining single tract of Gondwanan rainforest in Australia, and the largest Wilderness dominated by rainforest in Australia. The northern limit of Huon Pine (Lagarostrobos franklinii) A high diversity of wet Eucalypt (tall) forests including large, contiguous areas of Eucalyptus oblique (under-reserved in bioregion) and an extensive mosaic of other vegetation communities, including dry sclerophyll forest, woodland, buttongrass moorland, sandy littoral communities, wetlands, grassland, and sphagnum communities. A high diversity of non-vascular plants (mosses, liverworts and lichens) including at least 151 species of liverworts and 92 species of mosses. A diverse range of vertebrate fauna including 28 terrestrial mammals, 111 land and freshwater birds, 11 reptiles, 8 frogs and 13 freshwater fish. Habitat for over 60 rare, threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna. Globally unique magnesite and dolomite karst systems, not to mention the largest basalt plateau in Tasmania retaining its original vegetation. Large areas of connecting high quality wilderness centered on the Meredith Range, Sumac region, Norfolk Range, Mt. Bertha/Donaldson River and Savage/Keith River One of the richest archaeological sites in Tasmania with the diversity and density of Aboriginal sites ranking it among "the world's greatest archaeological sites" Large areas of high carbon storage
West Coast	These reserves will include large areas of unprotected oldgrowth forest, rainforest and some of the last remaining areas of unprotected high quality wilderness in Tasmania such as the Little Henty.
Leven Canyon	Outstanding geoheritage significance – landform and karst Habitat for threatened flora and fauna. Outstanding scenic quality – tourism and recreation Small and important areas of remnant old growth forest habitat Important for landscape integrity and connectivity between the Cradle Mountain and Mount Tor area and north coast. Threatened rainforest communities
Reedy Marsh and Dazzler Range	Small remnant areas of oldgrowth Centre of vascular plant endemism Habitat for threatened species. Unique central north assemblages of eucalypt forest types. An important landscape of forests surrounded by extensively cleared landscapes of Northern Tasmania and connecting from the coast well into the hinterland.
Great Western Tiers/ Kooparoona Niara	Identified as having World Heritage significance with extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the TWWHA) and providing connectivity from the east of the state to the world heritage area. Contiguous topographic habitat links, lowland to highlands that provide wildlife corridors- most notably for Flame Robins (that have declined substantially in the past several decades) that move from coastal or lowland areas where they spend winter to foothill forests or higher elevation areas such as the Central Highlands to breed. Geoheritage values include karst, scarps, geomorphic processes, glacial/periglacial landforms and associated hydrological and geo-morphic relics Landscape/ visual amenity includes the inland skyline of much of northern and central Tasmania from Oatlands north; particularly north of Campbelltown Habitat values and high levels of endemism, especially cave and other invertebrates; birds, mammals, reptiles and plants - particularly alpine plants Both Aboriginal and European cultural heritage significance

Forest Area	*Conservation values*
North East coast (including Bay of Fires, see below)	Diverse vegetation communities including many important refugia communities and a complex topography providing altitudinal connectivity opportunities. Habitat for many threatened fauna and flora including key habitat for the Tasmanian Wedge Tailed Eagle. Aboriginal and European cultural heritage significance. Landscape connectivity Visual amenity Geoheritage (Holocene Dunes)
North East Highlands (including the Blue Tier, Constable Creek, Ben Lomond and Mount Albert, Mount Victoria, Mount Barrow, South Sister and Mount Arthur)	Headwaters of the catchments of over 14 major rivers Diversity of vegetation communities including remnant rainforest and glacial refugia, various old growth communities including E. regnans and E. delegatensis dry forest, and forest communities recognised as poorly reserved in the Ben Lomond bioregion. Locality of numerous rare and threatened species including Dagger wattle, Slender Aphelia, Large gnat orchid, Grey Goshawk, Spotted tailed-Quoll, Bornemissza's Stag Beetle, Tasmanian Devil and Mt Arthur Burrowing Crayfish. Areas of high forest carbon storage Aboriginal, European and Chinese cultural heritage significance Landscape connectivity including contiguous topographic habitat links, lowland to highlands that provide wildlife corridors Visual amenity
Eastern Tiers including Douglas Apsley	Important, contiguous areas of old growth Eucalyptus forest communities with very high biodiversity values Habitat for threatened species. Threatened (including endangered) lowland and/or grassy forest communities Landscape connectivity, especially with Douglas Apsley National Park and the north south corridor of the Eastern Tiers. Visual amenity and scenic backdrop to east coast. Centre of vascular plant endemism
Bruny Island	Small but significant areas of old growth forest Very high biodiversity values including distinct genetic populations Disjunct populations of species Key Swift Parrot Habitat Threatened lowland and/or grassy vegetation communities Aboriginal cultural heritage significance Outstanding scenic quality - tourism and recreation Reserve consolidation for the South Bruny National Park (currently confined largely to a coastal fringe)
Tylers Hill	Import habitat for the swift parrot Visual amenity from mainland Tasmania, *D'Entrecasteaux Channel* and South Bruny National Park
Forestier and Tasman Peninsulas	Small but significant areas of old growth forest Very high biodiversity values including being habitat for threatened species including, Swift Parrots, Burgundy Snail, Peninsula eyebright and Sky-blue Sun orchid. Threatened lowland and/or grassy vegetation communities Aboriginal cultural heritage significance Visual amenity in a highly visited Landscape/ reserve connectivity
Wielangta	Important, contiguous areas of old growth Eucalyptus forest communities Very high biodiversity values including key habitat for threatened species include Swift Parrot, the Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle and 15 threatened plants. Threatened (including endangered) lowland and/or grassy forest communities Landscape connectivity and significant reserve consolidation from coast to hinterland.

Forest Area	*Conservation values*
Wellington Range	Habitat for numerous threatened flora and fauna species including Tasmanian Devils, Spotted-tailed Quoll, Eastern Barred Bandicoot, Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle and Grey Goshawk. Significant water catchments including Crabtree Rivulet, Judds Creek, and Bakers Creek. Significant European heritage including Jeffreys Track. Connectivity values including being contiguous with the Wellington Reserve and the World Heritage Area.
Upper Florentine	Part of the South West Wilderness Area Identified as having World Heritage significance Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the World heritage Area. Diverse vegetation that reflects the underlying complex of geology and topography, ranging from tall eucalypt forest through rainforest, drier eucalypt forest, heathland and moorland Habitat for threatened species. Geoheritage including extensive areas of karst and numerous underground water systems and numerous cave entrances located. Outstanding scenic values and surrounded on three sides by the existing World Heritage Area Aboriginal cultural heritage of high significance and important European heritage esp. historic tracks. Leatherwood honey production area Significant carbon stores
Huon / Picton	Part of the South West Wilderness Area Identified as having World Heritage significance Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the TWWHA) Connectivity to TWWHA, logging and roading currently pose a threat to highly fire sensitive vegetation in the neighbouring TWWHA (e.g. Mt Bobs/The Boomerang) Threatened species habitat: • Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles Significant Geoheritage in the form of Karst systems Aboriginal cultural heritage of high significance Significant carbon stores
Styx / Mount Field	Identified as having World Heritage significance Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the World Heritage Area) Superlative example of the tallest flowering plants in the world (E.regnans) Superlative example of Tall Eucalypt forest (E.regnans with transition to E. delegatensis) intimately associated with Gondwana cool temperate rainforest Contains seven of the state's 10 tallest trees (Giant Trees Consultative Committee, 2004). Habitat for threatened species including Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles, Tasmanian Devils and Spotted-tailed quolls. Visual amenity, including from Tourism icons A range of crucial water catchments that flow into the Derwent River Significant carbon stores
Wedge	Identified as having World Heritage significance Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the World Heritage Area) Habitat for threatened species including: • Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles Significant carbon stores Significant stands of leatherwood important for beekeeping
Upper Derwent, Butlers Gorge and Central Highlands	Many of these areas identified as having World Heritage significance Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the World Heritage Area) High levels of floristic diversity. Threatened species habitat. Reserve buffering, consolidation and linkages.

Forest Area	*Conservation values*
	Wilderness values. Many carbon rich forests. Key headwater forests for the Derwent
Weld / Snowy Range	Identified as having World Heritage significance Wilderness values Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the TWWHA) Habitat for threatened species. Significant Geoheritage Significant sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage Significant carbon stores
Esperence, Lune River and Cockle Creek	Part of the South West Wilderness Area Identified as having World Heritage significance Extensive areas of contiguous oldgrowth forest (including with the TWWHA) Connectivity to TWWHA Significant Geoheritage Significant sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage Significant carbon stores Visual Amenity (on the flight path to Melaleuca)

Delineation of immediate protected area and interim forest areas

The ENGOs undertook a detailed exercise in consultation with its membership and other conservationists to separate the ENGO HCV reserve areas into immediate protected areas and interim forest areas.

The main criteria used to select the 430,000 ha for immediate protection were:

- Consolidation of existing reserves to optimise ecological integrity;
- Incorporation of areas of key old growth, wilderness and likely world heritage value;
- A bias towards the more remote forest areas adjoining existing reserves while forests remaining in the interim forest areas are biased towards the more readily accessible and peripheral areas (to existing reserves).
- To ensure that the interim forest area is comprised largely of production forests in order to maintain flexibility for wood supply if still required after voluntary exit, transition planning and other verification work.

Other considerations used were:

- Preferencing more mature forest and areas needing less restoration for the immediate protection area.
- Full inclusion of some areas that had strong conservation cases and were small in total area (these included, South Sister, Wielangta, Bruny Island, Tasman)
- Selection of interim areas from the periphery of the full reserve area to remove those areas most easily accessed for wood production (if required after independent verification processes)