Questions and answers

Webinar 4: "Forest extent, condition and health"

NSW Forest Monitoring and Improvement Program has committed to host annual stakeholder forums. This is an opportunity for people to learn more about the program, ask questions and provide feedback.

The Commission hosted a webinar in November 2022 with a panel of members from a team of scientists from leading universities, NSW agencies and the private sector.

This paper:

▪ Responds to questions not answered in the webinar

▪ Lists questions answered in the recorded webinar.

The webinar is available on the Commission's website.

Response to questions not answered in webinar

	Question	Response
1	Pretty ballsy to say that forest extent is increasing in RFAs when the last 3 years of data isn't included - of which major disturbances have occurred with fires followed by floods.	Spatial Vision included the last 3 years of data in their extended state-wide analysis. The dataset was undergoing final QA for publication at the time of the webinar. This data will be available at https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/fmip-baselines-ecosystem-health-projectfe1
2	The "stress" in RFA areas - would that be related to logging? especially in the southeast where intensive logging for woodchipping occurs?	The stress on forests was not attributed to any single cause but is seen across all tenures in the RFA region and is considered most likely the result of drought and soil moisture deficits that are climate related.
3	Fire can have beneficial or detrimental effects in most forest ecosystems. Can we separate out 'damaging' from 'ecologically beneficial' fires in the classification?	No, not from the spatial methods applied. This would require detailed understanding of the local ecology, including ground-based assessments over multiple years.
4	Montreal Process criteria 1 relates to reporting forest ecosystem type, successional stage and age class. What has happened to them?	Montreal process criteria remain in place. NSW continues to report against the Montreal Process criteria as part of national *State of the Forest* reporting. The analysis presented during the webinar represents one input to reporting against the Montreal Process criteria and indicators. There are other datasets used as well.

Question	Response
5	Over the last twenty years, the area of forest with trees dominated by epicormic crowns has increased significantly in SE NSW. Normal branching habit being replaced by epicormic crowns has a fundamental impact on the flowering capacity/ health of eucalypts. This is a key issue, much of which occurs where there are no bell bird populations. When will more long-term soil research be undertaken to see what changes are occurring in the substrate that supports all trees and other soil dependent vegetation?	There is currently no or planned long term soil research or monitoring program in NSW. The Commission agrees soil is key component of ecosystem function, delivers important services to support environmental, economic and cultural values and supports investment in long-term monitoring.
6	The amount of leaf mass is a relatively coarse measure of forest health. Is anyone actually monitoring how long it takes forests affected by high intensity bushfires to get back to "normal" flowering capacity?	The time for a forest to recovery to 'normal' flowering capacity is a knowledge gap and continues to remain so. More broadly, researchers from several government departments and research institutions have been developing methods to assess forest recovery following high severity wildfires. One project was funded by the FMIP (https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/fmip-baselines-ecosystem-health-projectfe2).

Questions answered in webinar

Question
1	Where does 'blinking' of unstocked forest usually occur?
2	BMAD would be affecting Forest Connectivity as well ... but was not mentioned by Speaker just now.
3	How can fire disturbance in 2019 be so tiny? Is there a reason 2020 data hasn't been included? It would seem a lot of these measures would be very different following the 2019/2020 fires which disturbed so much of the state.
4	There seems to very little reported about measurement of the extent of Bell Miner Associated Dieback (BMAD). Bell miner associated dieback is spreading though forests on public and private lands from South-East Queensland to Victoria but particularly in northern NSW. Bell miner associated dieback (BMAD) is listed as a key threatening process under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act (OEH, 2016) and is known to directly impact threatened vegetation communities (e.g., Blue Gum High Forest ecological community). Any comment on this??
5	So, the blinking will usually be for dry types or also agriculture?
6	Why didn't the connectivity analysis include the last three years, capturing the big bushfires and very wet seasons?
7	The data only goes to 2019. So, years 2020 and 2021 which may be of interest for analysis from Fires and floods are not in the data sets. I don't recall the explanation for why data sets finished in 2019. Presumably this was all that was available at the time the work was undertaken. Is this correct??Are there any plans to extend this work over further years, perhaps at five-year intervals?
8	Does the analysis discriminate any discrepancies in the recovery trajectories following harvesting, drought and fire: e.g., where pre fire cover is not fully achieved in the recovery phase?

Question

9   Great development of a forest canopy cover dataset (and I am glad that you noted repeatedly in your reports and this presentation that it isn't a forest extent dataset, whatever you might have named it!). However, it's value will only be realised by repeated updates over time. What are the plans for this?

10   The CRAFTI project needs to be re-run!!

11   How have your results compared with the Global Forest Change and Global Forest Watch losses and gains?

12   Has any analysis been done of the changes in forest carbon over these years? There has been a very disturbing report recently looking at the carbon impacts of logging in Victoria. https://www.victorianforestalliance.org.au/carbon_report

Answer: The second webinar in this series presented the forest carbon balance of NSW work. Details can be found here including the final report and data.

13   Were additional areas included in RFA regions? And if so, was that accounted for in the trend analysis?

Answer: Hi - all tenures (public and private) were included within the RFA regions.