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Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Friday, April 25, 2025 3:27:18 PM
Last Modified: Friday, April 25, 2025 3:54:52 PM
Time Spent: 00:27:33
IP Address: [REDACTED]

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Q1

First name

[REDACTED]

Q2

Last name

[REDACTED]

Q3

Email

[REDACTED]

Q4

Yes

Can we contact you about your submission (if needed)?

Q5

Yes

Can we add your email to our mailing list for occasional updates on this topic?

Q6

I am representing an NGO or community group.

What best describes you?

Q7

Statewide NSW

What best describes your main regional interest?

Q8

Your submission may be published. If you do not want your personal details or responses published, please tell us here.

I agree to have my submission published anonymously
– please remove my name before publishing.

Q9

What do you consider is the most significant action(s) we can undertake to protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystem function on private lands?

Replace the current self-approval laws with clear and meaningful approval pathways that aim to protect habitat and reduce land clearing. Current land management framework relies on landholders conducting a self-assessment to decide whether or not they can clear their land. these provisions, set out in the Local Land Services Act 2013 and the Land Management (Native Vegetation code) 2018, have been completely ineffective at regulating habitat clearing and have increased the misuse of land. Since these laws were enacted in 2017, the rate of land clearing on private property has tripled. code-based land clearing laws, based on self-assessment, must be removed.

Scale-up incentives for landholders to protect existing and regrowth vegetation on their land. the trigger for protecting vulnerable and sensitive land is too narrow and out of date, and should be expanded to capture a wider range of environmentally sensitive areas. The current system enables destructive behaviour and disadvantages the many land stewards wishing to deliver for nature. We need a system that holds bad actors to account and helps landowners value and protect biodiversity effectively in the face of a changing climate.

Introduce incentives for landholders to protect and restore regrowth forests and bushlands. Research has found that regrown forests can provide valuable habitat and food for species after an average of 15 years. Some species such as the koala, could use regrowth as young as nine years old. In contrast, some species such as the greater glider, need much older mature forests - demonstrating the need to retain both young and old forests side by side. Under current rules in NSW land cleared before 1990 is exempt from regulation. This is contrary to the latest ecological science and should be amended.

Q10

How can we further improve soil, water and vegetation management to protect and restore biodiversity while delivering sustainable economic outcomes?

We need to shift the culture so that landowners value native vegetation on their land and are incentivized to protect it - rather than destroy it. First and foremost, we need a strong regulatory system that encourages landholders to protect native vegetation. This system, needs to be supported by strong education and engagement so that landowners are aware of the laws, how to follow them and are inspired by the benefits to people, economies, biodiversity and the ongoing fruitfulness of the land. the regulatory system should be bolstered by economic incentives to landowners. In NSW, over 300,000 hectares of habitat is currently protected forever by voluntary conservation agreements. This program is delivered by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust. Funding and staffing for the BCT should be increased, to scale up the number of private properties entering conservation agreements. We also need to revisit how we protect regrowth vegetation. Protecting native regrowth is more cost effective and efficient than planting new trees.

Q11

What do you consider is the most effective way to further support and enable landholders to deliver sustainable land management and production outcomes?

Policies and reforms must be accompanied by a clear communications and engagement plan. Previous research undertaken by the Local Land Services revealed that a majority of landholders DO NOT know about the rules and resources available. There needs to be a one stop platform that landholders can use to make decisions, including a finalised and enforceable native vegetation regulatory map so that people understand what biodiversity values are on their land.

We need more permanent staff working in the Biodiversity Conservation Trust and Local Land Services. Increased staffing is necessary to roll- out and scale up conservation initiatives with landholders.

Q12

Is there any other information about this topic you would like to share with us?

I strongly urge the Government to make these changes this year. NSW does not have much nature left. But protecting what is left - is good for biodiversity, human health, climate resilience, soil quality for future generations.
