

Water Quality & Supply Issues



Trees need water – what impact does forestry have on catchments?

The increasing demand for water is happening at a time when one result of climate change appears to be lower rainfall in the south-eastern part of the continent – the location of most of Australia's forestry activities.

All forests use water. In Tasmania, detailed research is under way into how changing land use, including plantation forestry, affects the availability of water in a catchment. Tasmania is ahead of many other states in the development of scientifically-based tools which help determine how changing land use patterns affect water quality and quantity.

Australia is the driest permanently inhabited continent on Earth (only Antarctica is drier). Demand for water is increasing – for agriculture, for a growing population, for higher environmental flow in river systems.



Forests, Water & Erosion

Forests have an important role in maintaining water quality and protecting soil from erosion. When foresters are preparing a Forest Practices Plan for an area to be harvested or planted, the impact of operations on water flow in the coupe are carefully considered. Steep land where erosion could occur are marked off from logging. Streamside reserves – areas of forests

bordering water courses – are set aside from harvesting to protect water quality. In the Warra Long Term Ecological Research site in Tasmania's Southern Forests, selected stream sites are being monitored before and after production forestry to assess the natural variation in water quality in forest streams and the effectiveness of the Forest Practices Code measures in protecting these values.

These provisions aim to protect soil and water resources during the initial regeneration phase – within a few years, as the new forest grows, trees will continue to protect the soil from erosion and maintain water quality.

