*NSW logging review a farce, green groups say*

[*Nicole Hasham*](http://www.smh.com.au/environment/by/Nicole-Hasham)*, State Politics reporter, Sydney Morning Herald, July 4, 2014*

*A coalition of environment groups has quit a state government logging review in disgust, saying the process is “deeply flawed” and threatened species and streams are imperilled.*

*Environment Minister Rob Stokes said he was “disappointed” by the move, which is likely to undermine public confidence in new logging rules for NSW coastal forests, covering thousands of hectares of sensitive bush.*

*The government has invited Forestry Corporation of NSW, which profits from harvesting public forests, to help rewrite rules governing coastal logging, saying the present regime is too complex.*

*Separate regulation for four forest areas spanning the NSW coastline will be folded into one regime. The government will also move away from "detailed and prescriptive rules" protecting threatened species, soil and water to an "outcomes-based" approach.*

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*The Nature Conservation Council of NSW, the state's peak environment group, says it has "serious concerns" about the remake. It says authorities reneged on a promise to properly consult the conservation movement and draft rules are being devised behind closed doors, without independent expert advice.*

*It says the proposed changes erode environmental safeguards, loosening restrictions on grazing and what forestry methods can be used.*

*Forestry Corporation of NSW pays an annual dividend to the government. Environment groups say the government’s commitment to maintaining wood supplies is in serious conflict with conservation principles.*

*“We are prepared to work with the government to ensure vital protections for soil, streams and threatened species are maintained, but we will not put our name to proposals that come out of a flawed process,” the council's chief executive Kate Smolski said.*

*North East Forest Alliance spokesman Dailan Pugh said environmental protections were “being decided in secret backroom political deals” and the process had become a "farce". Logging rules should be “based on the best available science and … subject to independent peer review” he said.*

*The dispute follows a series of perceived attacks on environmental protections in NSW, including a remake of laws limiting how farmers clear native bush, and recommendations from the government’s natural resource advisers for logging in state conservation areas.*

*The Shooters and Fishers Party, whose votes the government needs to pass laws through the upper house, has been pushing for an expansion of forestry activity, including opening national parks to logging.*

*Ms Smolski wrote to Mr Stokes last Friday, withdrawing from a scientific review into the logging changes and threatening to boycott future involvement in the rewrite.*

*Environment Protection Authority chief regulator Mark Gifford said it was conducting “robust and transparent consultation” and public submissions would inform the draft rules. The authority has contracted advice from several experts and was “working with peak conservation and industry stakeholders”, he said.*

*A Forestry Corporation of NSW spokeswoman said public consultation was “extensive” and more would be conducted before the regulations are finalised.*