



## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

### What is the Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme?

The Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme (MCKFP) is part of the Forest Conservation Fund (FCF), which is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH). It was developed through the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

### What is the MCKFP trying to do?

The MCKFP seeks to protect the forests on karst to complement the protection of the cave systems of the Mole Creek Karst National Park. It aims to reward private landowners with financial incentives for their help in ensuring that these values are adequately protected for future generations.

### What is the MCKFP looking for?

The MCKFP will give a higher priority to forest that is:

- over a significant cave, or has a high density of features such as caves, streamsinks and sinkholes, or is in the catchment area of a significant cave;
- old growth or under-reserved;
- connected to the Mole Creek Karst National Park or other conservation areas; and
- larger in area.

In general, higher payments will be made for properties with more priority features, specifically karst priorities, and for a sale or permanent covenant compared with a twelve year covenant.

### What are under-reserved forest communities?

There are national targets for including a proportion of each forest communities in protected areas. Under-reserved forest communities have not been sufficiently protected, so they have higher priority for protection. A list of the high priority forest communities in your region will be provided by the Field Agent and they can discuss this in more detail once they have assessed your property.

### What is old growth forest?

Old-growth forest is ecologically mature forest where the visible effects of disturbances are now negligible.

### I have mixed forests, do I have to offer only the forest communities you have listed?

The MCKFP will assign a higher priority to the listed forest communities, but will accept all forest communities.

#### Need more information?

Contact the Mole Creek Karst Forest Programme Administrator,  
The Tasmanian Land Conservancy, on 03 6225 1399  
or visit [www.deh.gov.au/land/forestpolicy/fcf/index.html](http://www.deh.gov.au/land/forestpolicy/fcf/index.html)

### How will the MCKFP work?

The MCKFP invites you to negotiate proposals to protect forests for 12 years or in perpetuity through a conservation covenant on the area you nominate. You can state the size and shape of the forest you will protect, the use you still want to make of the land and what actions you will do to manage it. Strict guidelines have been set for prices to be negotiated by the Field Agent.

Successful proposals to covenant your land will mean that you will be paid the negotiated price – over two payments. The first payment will be made once the financial agreement has been signed. The second payment will be made once the conservation covenant has been completed with the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water.

### What does conservation mean?

For the purposes of the FCF, conservation means all the processes and actions of looking after a place to retain its natural significance.

### What is a conservation covenant?

Please see Fact Sheet 5, *About the Agreements*.

### How long will approval take?

The MCKFP is trying to make the process as fast and simple as possible. The negotiated proposals will be submitted to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Heritage. You should hear whether you have been successful within three months of your proposal being submitted for approval.

### What length of time do the conservation covenants last?

Under the MCKFP there are two options. The conservation covenants last for either twelve years or in perpetuity.

### I am a lessee of the property: am I able to sign a conservation covenant?

No, the owner of the land is the only person able to sign a conservation covenant.

### I am a lessor of the property: am I able to sign a conservation covenant?

Yes, provided that it doesn't breach your lease agreement, and the lessee agrees to undertake the management actions and comply with the conservation covenant.

### Who will see the price in my proposal?

Your proposal will remain confidential to you, the Field Agent and the government. The Programme Administrator and the Field Agent will be required contractually to protect your privacy. You will also be asked to keep it confidential even if you are successful.

### How will the management actions and conservation covenant be monitored?

The Tasmanian Government Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) will provide on-going biological monitoring and management support to landowners of covenanted land under the MCKFP.

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DPIW will support you in managing the land for conservation purposes, inspect covenanted land and provide advice on and assistance with management. They will monitor the impact of the management on the land and may adjust the rules for how the land is managed (the management prescriptions) in agreement with you. If you need to change a particular management rule (for example during a drought) you can contact DPIW to negotiate a change.

DPIW officers will visit a proportion of properties with land covenanted under the FCF each year and make contact with you annually. These support services will be provided for the life of the conservation covenant and are free to you.

### **Can I withdraw from the process?**

You can withdraw from the process any time prior to signing the financial agreement with DEH.

### **Can I sell the property once a conservation covenant has been finalised?**

Yes. As the conservation covenant is placed on the title of the land, the covenant conditions will be transferred to the new owner. This may have tax implications for you. The Field Agent can supply you with Fact Sheet 7, *Tax implications*.

### **What happens once a twelve year conservation covenant ceases?**

Once the covenant lapses you will not be required to undertake any particular management actions. You will be able to manage your land as before, in accordance with the usual laws and planning restrictions. You may choose to negotiate a new covenant with DPIW, but this will not be part of the MCKFP.

### **How will I be paid for the conservation covenant?**

You will receive two payments. The first payment will be made when your proposal is approved and you sign a financial agreement with DEH. You will receive the second payment when the conservation covenant is finalised with DPIW. See Fact Sheet 5, *About the Agreements*, for more information.

Payments for assisted land purchase will be related to the sale of the land, and dependent on a contract of sale being signed.

### **Should the price in my proposal be GST inclusive or GST exclusive?**

The price should be GST exclusive.

### **What happens if my protected area is affected by fire or flood?**

You will still be required to manage the area to maintain the conservation value. The conservation covenant will have terms and conditions that you can discuss with DPIW. No further payments will be made by the Australian Government for losses.

### **Do I have a reporting responsibility?**

As landowner, you are not required to provide reports to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage on the management actions undertaken. The Tasmanian Government will provide on-going monitoring and support services, including annual contact by DPIW officers.

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## Scenarios

1. Owners Harry and Maggie are nearing retirement and have seen the area of forest in their back paddock as their superannuation. They recognise that the forest provides shelter for their stock, reduces erosion on the property and provides regular stream flow all year, and they would like an alternative to logging in order to retain those values. After discussion with the Field Agent they decide to offer all the forest for a permanent covenant (i.e. in perpetuity), but allowing light grazing in winter and collection of firewood for their home. They agree to remove the gorse which is starting to establish along the boundary, and discuss an appropriate price with their financial adviser which will help supplement their superannuation.
2. Owner Gwen runs a dairy property with many sinkholes and needs to retain the grassy forest for her business, as most of the rest of her pasture is flooded in winter. She has developed a whole farm plan which helps her identify her needs and priorities. After discussion with the Field Agent she decides to submit a proposal for a twelve year covenant, grazing at 1.5 dry sheep equivalents per hectare. She recognises that this grazing rate may reduce the conservation value, but it creates a balance for her between the income from the cows and the income from protecting the forest. By only signing up for only twelve years she leaves her management options open for the future.
3. Owner Dominic loves the forest gully on his property and wants to be sure that his grandchildren's grandchildren can continue to enjoy it. The Field Agent identifies it as old growth forest, as it has never been logged or grazed. Dominic is delighted to be rewarded for the care he has put into managing his forest over the years, and agrees to protect the gully up to the ridgeline in perpetuity, leaving the rest of his forest available for other uses.

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