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"Deforestation and Sugar Cane Growing in Eastern Australia, 1860–1995"

Griggs, Peter

Griggs, Peter. "Deforestation and Sugar Cane Growing in Eastern Australia, 1860–1995." *Environment and History* 13, no. 3 (Aug, 2007): 255–83. doi:10.3197/096734007X228273 . Deforestation associated with the cultivation of sugar cane in the coastal lands of Eastern Australia commenced in the 1860s. Beyond the initial large-scale clearing of the native vegetation to create arable land, the growing of sugar cane placed other demands upon the native forests. The vegetation was cleared to provide timber for buildings, railway sleepers, to supply the firewood for the sugar mill boilers and in some instances to supply the timber used in at least half a dozen Australian sugar mills that were adapted to manufacture lumber in the non-crushing season. Newspapers descriptions, archival records, and scientific reports are used to reconstruct the methods adopted to clear the forests and the speed and extent of the loss of forests in the sugar cane growing lands of Eastern Australia. The environmental consequences of the loss of the native forests, such as increased incidence of frost, river bank erosion, weed invasions, and declining biodiversity, are also considered. Despite the commencement of localised tree planting schemes in some sugar cane growing districts, the paper will highlight that forest clearing to enable the expansion of sugar cane cultivation in Eastern Australia has continued during the 1980s and early 1990s All rights reserved. © 2007 The White Horse Press

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"Deforestation and Sugar Cane Growing in Eastern Australia, 1860–1995"
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3299
Print date: 04 November 2026 03:11:27