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**From:** Russell Ainley [mailto:russainley@nswfpa.asn.au]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 30 September 2009 3:29 PM  
**To:** Felicity Calvert  
**Subject:** Submission on Cypress forests

Dear NRC,  
Please find attached our initial submission on the assessment with respect to the terms of reference for Cypress forests.

Regards  
Russ Ainley  
NSW Forest Products Association  
02 9279 2344, 0413 684 694

## **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

# **Assessments of Red Gum Forests in the Riverina and Cypress Forests in South-Western NSW**

### **Terms of Reference**

1. Carry out a regional forest assessment of the scientific bioregion:
  - a) for the purposes of section 15 of the *Forestry and National Park Estate Act 1998* including an assessment of the following: environment and heritage values (including indigenous heritage), economic and social values, ecologically sustainable forest management, and timber resources; and
  - b) otherwise such that the assessment will also meet the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (C'th)*.
2. Recommend conservation, protection, economic and ecological sustainable use of public land in the bioregion.
3. Recommend water management and flooding requirements to sustain the forests and identified values and uses under the range of projected impacts of climate change.

### **INITIAL SUBMISSION WITH RESPECT TO CYPRESS FORESTS**

**By**

**NSW Forest Products Association**

**September 2009**

### **The NSW Forest Products Association**

The NSW Forest Products Association represents the interests of its membership at parliamentary, political and senior Government levels. The NSW FPA provides advice to the NSW government on issues affecting the timber industry of NSW. The FPA participates in government processes which impact on the timber industry. With respect to this forest assessment, the FPA represents the interests of timber harvest/haulage operators, sawmills and timber processors in the region and provides a forum for integrated representation of all enterprises involved in forest industry sector.

The NSW FPA is also concerned with broader industry issues and providing factual forest management information to the community as required.

The Riverina and Western Branches of the Association take in those areas of Red Gum and Cypress forests which are the subject of the forest assessment now being undertaken by the Natural Resources Commission.

The NSW FPA provides a forum for the integrated representation of smaller forest industry enterprises to community and government.

### **The Submission**

This submission addresses the terms of reference for the assessment, expressly and elaborates on more specific and detailed issues that consequently arise.

Included within this submission are a number of issues relevant to the assessment which will be further developed over the coming weeks. Other "Issues Papers" relevant to the Terms of Reference will also be developed and forwarded over the next few weeks.

Primary references for this submission and issues papers include:

Environmental Impact Statement: Harvesting and associated roadwork operations in south-western NSW, Forests NSW, May 2009.

*The EIS comprises, in part, this Assessment of Red Gum Forests in the Riverina and Cypress Forests in South-Western NSW under term of reference 1 b) in satisfying section 15 (3), of the Forestry and National Park Estate Act 1998 in accordance with Part 5 of the **Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979**.*

### **Brigalow Belt South Bioregion Assessment (Stage 2)**

These assessments have been looking at economic, social, environmental and cultural attributes on all tenures of land with the following aims:

- Conservation management of biodiversity and natural and cultural values;
- Maintenance of viable cypress pine, hardwood, apiary and other forest industries in the region;
- Access for exploration and development of mineral energy deposits and extractive resources;
- Increased involvement of Aboriginal communities in land management;
- Maintenance of diverse agricultural industries;

- Development of ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM) and ecologically sustainable land management (ESLM) encompassing Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Outcomes of the assessments included

- Forest Agreement, including  
Integrated forestry operations approval,  
Long term wood supply agreements
- Integrated regional planning
- Conservation
- Aboriginal cultural heritage and consultation
- Minerals and energy
- Socio economic opportunities

## FORESTRY AND NATIONAL PARK ESTATE ACT 1998 - SECT 15

### Requirement for NRC forest assessment before agreement made

- (1) A forest agreement may only be made in respect of a region that has been the subject of a regional forest assessment carried out by or on behalf of the Natural Resources Commission.
- (2) Any such assessment is to include an assessment of the following (in the particular areas of the region that the Commission considers appropriate):
  - (a) environment and heritage values (including indigenous heritage),
  - (b) economic and social values,
  - (c) ecologically sustainable forest management,
  - (d) timber resources.
- (3) For the purposes of this Act, the "relevant regional forest assessment" comprises any such assessment for the agreement concerned, together with any environmental impact statements obtained by the Forestry Commission or other determining authority under Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, or related environmental studies, that the parties to the agreement consider relevant.
- (4) For the purpose of making forest agreements with respect to the Eden region, the Lower North East region and the Upper North East region, assessments:
  - (a) that are in existence on the commencement of this section, and
  - (b) that the parties to any such forest agreement relevant,
 are taken to satisfy the requirements of this section with respect to the relevant forestry assessment for that region and no further assessments are required under this section in connection with that forest agreement.

### Terms of Reference

Overwhelmingly the most important issue in this region, with respect to every element of life and health of Red Gum forests, is the supply of water. For cypress forests, water itself is not as important however it is very important in the context of social welfare of the communities. As the drought continues so the dependence of small towns within the region on the timber industry has increased.

With respect to the published terms of reference:

1. a) satisfies exactly the requirements of the NSW Forestry and National Parks Estate Act for a forest assessment that creates a forest agreement. Section 15 (2) enables more precise application to the relatively small forest areas and local communities that exist within the full 25 million hectares of the region. Section 15 (3) ensures that the already completed EIS by Forests NSW will be a component of the assessment.
- b) ensures that Commonwealth legislation under the EPBC Act is also satisfied.

*This term of reference needs to more explicitly consider the alternative cost options, environmentally and socio-economically, of changes recommended from current management.*

2. to make recommendations as to sustainable use.

*This term of reference needs a process of submissions that may enable participation in those recommendations*

3. issues of water management are not relevant to the Cypress forests.

The assessment of Cypress forests needs to recognize the existence of resource as predominantly small areas of forest spread over a very large region of mainly agricultural land. Cypress forests exist predominantly as regrowth from very old agricultural pursuits regenerating from significant events, mainly from the 1890's and more recently from the 1950's. The assessment of Cypress needs to understand the unique growth habits of Cypress, very long cutting cycles and the silvicultural management requirements to grow weeds into productive stands of commercial timber.

Of particular importance to the assessment of cypress forests in this assessment is that long term Wood Supply Agreements have been made between companies, Forests NSW and the State of NSW. These agreements exist as defined resource security which has been traded as a commercial asset on the open market and on which industry development investments have been made. The Cypress milling company operating within the region of this assessment holds wood supply agreements covering this region and the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion.

The impact that these Wood Supply Agreements have had on industry development, to meet government policy objectives arising from the Brigalow Assessment, has been outstanding. The consequent social and economic impacts have been outstanding for the towns where the industry continues, in stark contrast to the outcomes where the industry chose an assisted exit opportunity.

Any change in resource arrangements affecting the Wood Supply Agreements will necessarily be subject of compensation. There is only one Cypress timber milling business operating in the region with mills at Narrandera and Condobolin. Other milling businesses which previously operated within this region have closed, leaving social disasters for those towns.

The NSW Forest Products Association believes that these terms of reference will enable presentation of all the issues that we represent as relevant to this assessment. These are listed below.

Specifically investigate issues of :

- Investment and employment in the timber industry;
- recreation uses including camping, fishing, water ski-ing, four wheeled driving, trail biking and hunting;
- spiritual connections;
- apiary and grazing interests;
- education;
- ecological management, including costs and historical outcomes;
- bushfire protection;
- minor forest products including seed collection, craftwood, broombrush, mallee and box woodland products;
- general interest in forestry, forestry operations and conservation.

Specifically address:

- Actual social and economic impacts on local communities, alternative costs to the State;
- Sustainable yield of each and all forest products;
- Actual values of forest utilization;
- Opportunities for development of forest-dependent industries and communities;
- Principles of water management, water quality and forest environment requirements;
- Ecological management requirements;
- Aboriginal and non-aboriginal cultural heritage;
- Climate change impacts, alternative environmental costs;
- Cumulative impacts;
- Other impacts of noise, air, roads and traffic.

## Introductory statement

1. The Cypress forest industry is made up of local people, local businesses.  
     Real people, not statistics  
     Real businesses dealing with real money, not theoretical, not economic models.

Cypress is an industry that has been through an assessment of fully integrated activities from the growing of trees to the consumption of timber products.

2. We deliver sustainable and resilient forests and environments.  
     We deliver sustainable and resilient industry and communities.

We deliver these outcomes at our cost. The alternatives of public funding and welfare payments are horrendously expensive. The overwhelming experience is that reservation kills the forest and all its values.

Our focus is on a healthy forest environment as a productive, natural resource.

3. We do not deal with broad national economic measures such as multipliers or hypothetical models. They have no relevance in small timber communities. We know there is a very high local community dependence (50 to 100%) on the industry's operations.
4. The Cypress forests are managed sustainably – there are systems and accreditations to substantiate it.
  - Management is done according to the Australian Forestry Standard, meeting the international Program for Endorsement of Forests Certification.
  - EIS clearly established that there is unlikely to be any significant impact on threatened species.
  - The NSW government completed a forest assessment for the Cypress forests of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion and established the criteria, protective prescriptions and silvicultural management for Cypress forests.
  - Ecological Sustainable Forest Management for the Riverina Region is managed under ISO 14001

In Cypress forests we have complementary management for all outcomes. If we can improve management and activities for better value for the forests and communities, then we will.

5. We are looking to this assessment to be factually and scientifically rigorous. Cypress forests are the true survivors in poor dry outback conditions and in many cases have grown back on abandoned wheat farms.
6. The specific environmental values of Cypress forests have been clearly set out in the EIS and previously in the Brigalow Belt South Assessment. There are broader environmental values to also need to be considered:
  - bushfire protection
  - carbon storage
  - energy production of alternatives
  - alternative timber supply options

We need to understand what the alternative options are and what the costs are.

Patrick Moore, one of the founders of Greenpeace and now Chair and Chief Scientist of *Greenspirit Strategies*, says at [www.greenspirit.com/trees\\_answer.cfm](http://www.greenspirit.com/trees_answer.cfm):

*“I believe that trees are the answer to a lot of questions about our future. These include: How can we advance to a more sustainable economy based on renewable fuels and materials? How can we improve literacy and sanitation in developing countries while reversing deforestation and protecting wildlife at the same time? How can we pull carbon out of the atmosphere and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emissions, carbon dioxide in particular? How can we increase the amount of land that will support a greater diversity of species? How can we help prevent soil erosion and provide clean air and water? How can we make this world more beautiful and green? The answer is, by growing more trees and then using more wood, both as a substitute for non-renewable fossil fuels and materials such as steel, concrete and plastic, and as paper products for printing, packaging and sanitation.”*

#### 7. Tourism:

There is currently virtually no tourism within Cypress forests in this region. The only value exists under current management and is serviced through income from current management. There is no reason that a change of tenure or a reduction in forest management might change that in any way.

#### 8. What we want is:

- Recognition of sustainable and resilient outcomes of forest management
- Continuation of security of access to resource for timber production, as committed in the outcome of the Brigalow Belt South assessment and the legislation created for that assessment.
- Opportunity to continue to invest and develop business, improve products and return values back to the forests and communities.

**We believe active, multi-use forest management is the best and only feasible option for forest outcomes.**

**We require, as a minimum, that existing supply agreements and conditions of access to the cypress resource are maintained.**

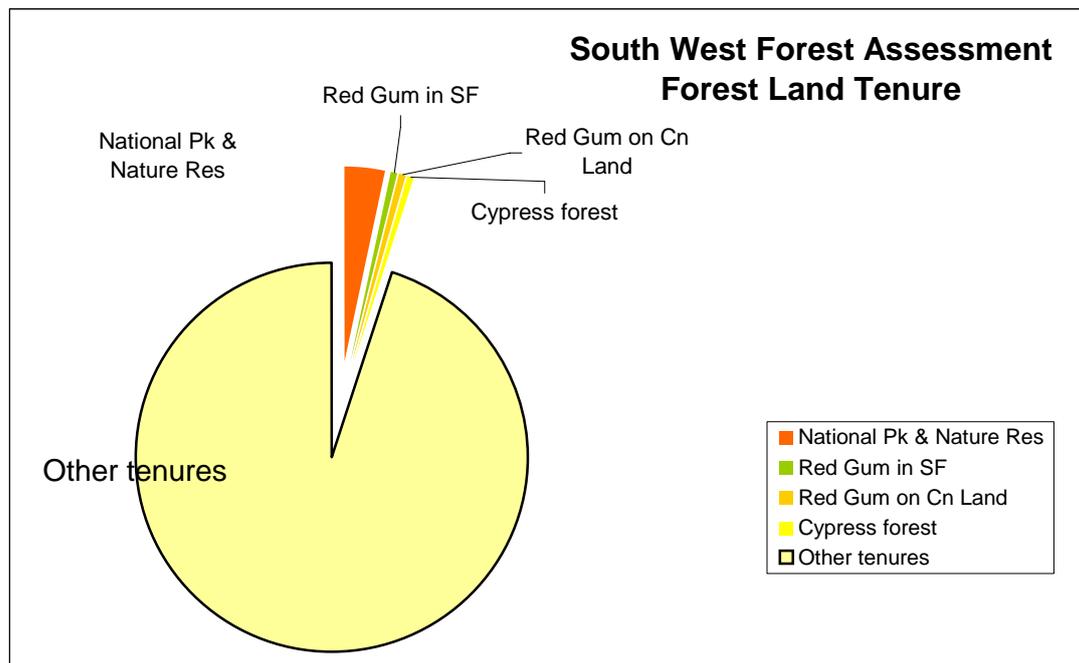
**The Cypress forest industry is the solution for achieving sustainability and resilience for the environment and the communities. Our operations pay to look after the forest – we hope to see the benefits.**

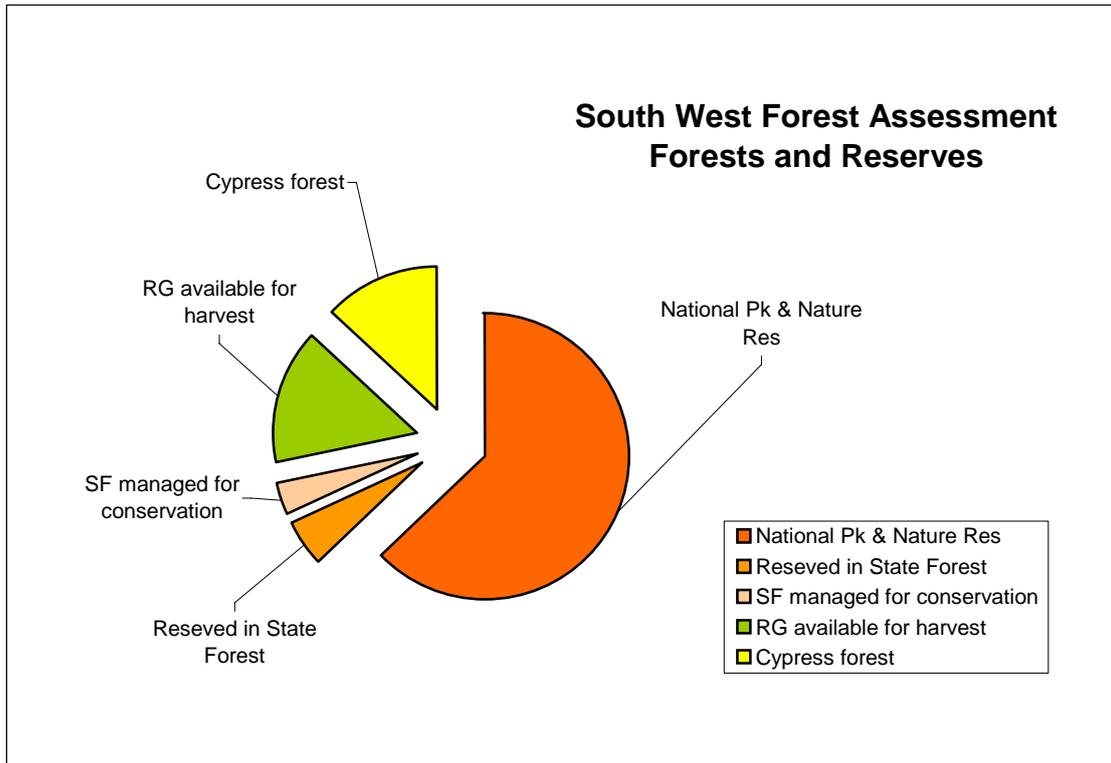
### Making the connections

The Cypress forests within this region exist as small pockets of forest in a largely cleared agricultural landscape. They are distributed across an extraordinarily vast area of NSW. In many cases they exist as the landscape linkage of natural vegetation and frequently as regenerated vegetation from abandoned farming enterprises. Their management as forests has guaranteed their survival. The towns have grown with the timber and agricultural industries. Only 2 such towns now exist – Narrandera and Condobolin, and the whole of the cypress resource of the region, and some from the Brigalow, is required to maintain them. This industry has been a foundation of settlement, development and infrastructure in the region. The integration and cohesion within the industry and throughout the communities exceeds any other region of Australia. Protection of the environment and cultural heritage, including aboriginal heritage have been at the forefront of management objectives for at least the past 50 years.

### Forests in the Assessment

The area of the region covered by this assessment is approximately 25 million hectares. The area of Red Gum Forests is 146,000 ha, other Red Gum forests on Crown Lands 162,000 ha, Cypress forest 166,500 ha. National Parks and Nature reserves cover 803,000 ha. Of the area of State Forest and Crown –timber lands 67,000 ha is reserved and a further 47,000 ha is managed for specific conservation outcomes.





Under the FORESTRY AND NATIONAL PARK ESTATE ACT 1998 - SECT 15 (2), the particular areas of the assessment need to be carefully considered to ensure regional issues a considered without dilution of important values to local industries and communities and without regional exaggeration of specific individual values.