

22 Oct 2009

Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission
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Dear Commissioner

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to make this submission. Whilst I believe issues relating to water are the most important consideration when managing these forests, I also have concerns regarding conservation of habitat for threatened species. Two issues I feel should be considered are listed below.

1) Greater consideration should be given to the value of native shrubs for fauna, especially the Dwarf Cherry *Exocarpos strictus* and Silver Wattle *Acacia dealbata*.

Bird species richness in thickets of Dwarf Cherry is around 50% greater than surrounding forest, and provides an important source of fruit for birds like the Superb Parrot. Gilbert's Whistlers (listed as Vulnerable) are almost solely dependant on this shrub in these forests. Silver Wattle is also important for wildlife, especially the Squirrel Glider. Existing prescriptions for protection of shrubby habitats remain vague, and more specific management guidelines are required.

2) Many existing forestry prescriptions relating to nature conservation are removed and instead more of the key areas for threatened fauna and flora are protected in reserves (e.g. Forest Management Zone 1).

Whilst timber harvesting does not appear to affect the majority of River Red Gum wildlife, some threatened fauna species are affected and are only protected under certain prescriptions if detailed and expensive surveys are carried out. For example, areas around Squirrel Glider nest trees are only protected if these actual nest trees are identified—a difficult task usually involving the capture and radio-collaring animals. Removing such unworkable prescriptions and instead just designating the important areas for wildlife into conservation areas (e.g. FMZ1) would give greater certainty for the long-term protection of threatened species.

Particular areas I recommend for upgrade to FMZ3a or FMZ1 are Barooga, Cottadidda, Boomanoomana and Mulwala State Forests. These forests harbor New South Wales' western-most pair of Powerful Owl, some of the regions' last remaining pairs of Barking Owl, possibly the largest Squirrel Glider population in south-west NSW and provide

habitat for at least three other threatened species. I believe permanently halting forestry operations in such forests would surely have much greater benefits for wildlife than having numerous complex clauses and restrictions on forestry operations in areas that have already been managed for silviculture for more than 100 years (e.g. Moira State Forest).

Yours sincerely,

Hugh McGregor