

Jane Watson

Red Gum Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission
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Sydney, NSW 2001

This is my personal submission to the Red Gum Assessment.

1. Thank you for starting this process as River Red Gums are a very important ecosystem that needs urgent protection.
2. Did you know that River Red Gums can transpire up to 1200L of water per day? This is why in areas where the Red Gums have been cleared the water table has risen, bringing to the surface all the salts (mainly sodium) that have made that land unusable.
3. We have read the River Red Gums & Woodland Forests preliminary report and find both good and bad things in it.
4. The good things in your report which give us cause to hope are:
 - A. The fact that you have made a sound scientific attempt to measure future water availability and what that availability means to the health of River red Gums.
 - B. You have restated the threat posed by climate change and the current river regulation laws to Red Gum and forests in general.
 - C. Very importantly, you have shown the water-related decline in the timber industry. Forests are just not growing in the way predicted in the past by State Forests.
 - D. You have revealed that the true number of jobs in the logging industry is much smaller than previously claimed. This is a very good move as the “job-loss-threat” has always been used in the past as an excuse for very bad environmental decisions vis-à-vis- forestry practices & Wood Supply Agreements.
5. Unfortunately, there is much in your report that is not adequately addressed and much of it gives the impression of “business as usual with a few sops for the environment”.
 - A. Biodiversity is not properly addressed. A handful of threatened species have been considered but there has been no broad look at forest ecology and

conservation planning of River Red Gums. The impact of logging on forest ecology has not been scientifically assessed.

- B. Having stated that there is threat posed by climate change you selectively quote the 2008 CSIRO report. You ignore key findings that large protected areas are vital for protecting species.
- C. You do not mention the precautionary principle. This is very disappointing.
- D. There is no assessment of the impacts of current logging practices. This surely would be one of the models that needed to be considered?

6. Recommendations

- A. Large Red Gum National Parks are vital because the Red Gums are a vulnerable ecosystem. 60% of it must be conserved to meet conservation targets.
- B. Improved environmental water flows are vital to ensuring the health of the Red Gum forests.
- C. Given the relatively small number of jobs that would be lost under an environmentally fair decision restructuring packages that are should be well thought out and fair.
- D. Given your views on the water-related decline of the timber industry, reviews of all current Wood Supply Agreements in NSW and a invocation of the “force majeure “ clause would be one good outcome of this process.

River Red Gums are a vulnerable, ancient ecosystem that should be preserved and properly maintained with correct environmental flows. Such areas, conserved as National Parks would help provide habitat for a forest ecosystem that is dangerously fragile. The loss of jobs should be adequately catered for. Management of these forests is a fabulous opportunity for reconciliation actions with the knowledgeable indigenous people of the area.

Thank you for reading this submission.

Jane Watson B. Environmental Science – biodiversity conservation.