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20th October 2009

Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission
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Dear Commission Members

Re: Submission on the Forest Assessment

Conargo Shire Council forwarded a submission on the assessment of River Red Gum Forests in the Riverina on the 8th September, 2009 and, with the release of the preliminary assessment report would like to make the additional comments:

ISSUE 3 How will river regulation, climate variability and climate change affect the forests and the values they can support in the future?

Conargo Shire fully supports the necessity of regular flooding of the Red Gum Forests. The flooding maintains the health of the trees and also assist with the re-growth of these forests. The controlled logging of the Red Forests allows trees to grow and regenerate, for the benefit of these forests.

Therefore, with the decline in water the controlled logging has a positive aspect on the health of the forests.

ISSUE 5 What approaches should we take to maintaining the forest values and processes through the transitions that seem inevitable?

Council strongly believe that Forests NSW are currently managing these forests to a high standard with a commitment to conservation objectives and well controlled logging to ensure wildlife habitat is not disturbed. The Forest NSW were instrumental in the development of the RAMSAR Wetland requirements.

The experienced logging contractors are aware of the necessity of controlled logging and comply with the requirements of the various conservation objectives.

ISSUE 6 What are the key features of a sustainable future for the forests, forest industries and the local communities?

Currently there are over 500 people directly employed in the Riverina Red Gum Industry with many more indirectly employed.

If the forest areas were declared a National Park this would have a major impact on the communities and would also result in a decline in the population affecting all social life in these areas.

The reduction in employment in rural areas is contrary to priority P6 of the NSW State Plan.

Priority P6 states:

“Strong rural and regional economies are critical to achieving the overall prosperity of NSW”

Tourism is also very important to our area and currently there is significant tourism within the State Forest areas and also the Redgum Industry attract tourists.

The creation of National Parks does not increase tourism and there are a number of examples where these National Parks were not maintained and tourism declined.

The reduction in tourism is contrary to priority E8 of the NSW State Plan.

Priority E8 states:

“More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities and participating in the arts and cultural activity”.

ISSUE 7 How can local communities transform to cope with less water?

The timber industry has been operating for over 150 years which has resulted in the State Forest areas being logged on a well regulated basis. The controlled logging has maintained the health and vigour of the forests. The controlled logging allows the Red Gum Forests to survive with less flooding than historically occurred.

ISSUE 8 How can forest industries respond to declining wood yields?

Continuing with the controlled logging of the State Forest areas this will maintain these forests into the future and at a very high standard.

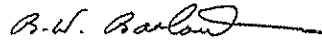
The controlled logging provides timber for homes, etc and also has a positive aspect for exporting for Australia.

If the timber for buildings are taken away future homes will become more expensive. The decline in timber for buildings is contrary to priority E6 of the State Plan.

“The Government is focused on improving housing affordability”

Conargo Shire Council appreciated the opportunity to expand on the original submission and would further emphasize that making these forests a National Park would be detrimental to the area and also contrary to the NSW State Plan.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "B.W. Barlow", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Barry W Barlow
General Manager