

**From:** zoe wheat [zoewheat99@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, 23 October 2009 9:24 AM  
**To:** Avtar Singh  
**Subject:** River Red Gum Forests

**mdeg**  
mudgee district  
environment group

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Forests Assessment  
October 2009  
Natural Resources Commission  
GPO Box 4206, Sydney NSW 2001  
Facsimile: 02 8227 4399  
Email: [forests@nrc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:forests@nrc.nsw.gov.au)

Thursday 22

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: River Red Gum Forests

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to engage in the process of assessment and decision making around the future of the important areas of River Red Gum forests in NSW.

While our membership is primarily in Central West NSW, Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG) had an integral role in the first Western Regional Assessment of the Brigalow Belt South bioregion from 2000 to 2005. We have been following the outcome of that process and are pleased to be involved in this very important consideration of the protection of the woodland & wetland values of the River Red Gum remnants in the Riverina bioregion.

We welcome the NSW Government decision to conduct a rapid assessment of the

23/10/2009

study area and to give the process to the Natural Resources Commission as an independent body.

However, we do have some concerns with the preliminary assessment report. There appears to be a very strong weighting towards forestry and timber industry operations in the analysis of the study area with some quite disturbing statements about the sustainability of the industry. We are particularly concerned that the operation of patch clear felling in these very sensitive and internationally significant vegetation remnants is considered to be 'sustainable'.

Members of our group have visited these River Red Gum forest areas and were shocked by the devastation that forestry practices are causing. This industry, producing mainly low value products in the form of firewood and railway sleepers, cannot be considered to be sustainable by any stretch of the imagination.

We are also concerned that there is no rigorous analysis in the preliminary report of the biodiversity values of these important remnants in the landscape. There seems to be no acknowledgement of the value of National Parks to the local economy and to the resilience of regional ecosystem function.

MDEG understands that some significant survey work has been conducted in the study area by independent ecological consultants. We are disappointed that there is no reference to this work or its findings in relation to first records and species range extensions.

We trust that the NRC will be taking a more rigorous approach to considering the biodiversity values of the River Red Gum forests and will recommend large new River Red Gum national parks as an outcome of the final study analysis.

Because of our close participation in the Brigalow Belt South regional assessment, we are aware of the importance of a generous restructure package for the timber industry.

The tourism and agricultural industries in south-western NSW are far more valuable to local and regional economies.

New national parks will provide longterm biodiversity protection while a fair restructure package will give affected timber industry workers & businesses the opportunity to move into other regional enterprises that have a more secure future.

MDEG has also had considerable experience in understanding the processes relating to environmental flow requirements to Ramsar listed wetlands. Being situated in the Macquarie-Cudgegong Valley we have had a long term interest and involvement in providing more water to the Macquarie Marshes. We believe that increased environmental water allocations and careful

decisions around delivery timing are imperative for the future of the River Red Gum forests.

We support a strong recommendation from the NRC for large new National Parks in the Riverina bioregion with adequate environmental water allocations to keep the Ramsar listed wetlands viable into the future.

The aspirations of Traditional Owners also need to be considered in the final outcome for the region. MDEG strongly supports Aboriginal Ownership of the land if so desired.

Yours sincerely

Zoe Wheat

On behalf of MDEG

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