



Murrumbidgee Field Naturalists Inc

Enjoying and protecting Australia's natural environment

PO Box 541
LEETON NSW 2705

28th October 2009

Dear Sir

River Red Gum wetlands on the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers of south-western NSW are unique to the planet. The Barmah-Millewa and Koondrook-Perricoota forests are two of the largest contiguous Red Gum forests left in the world. The MIA forests that extend from Narrandera to Darlington Point can be considered significant forests as well.

River Red Gum wetlands provide an irreplaceable refuge for plants and animals in one of the most heavily cultivated and poorly protected landscapes in Australia. It is known to provide habitat for at least 69 species of plants and animals threatened with extinction, including Barking Owls, Superb Parrots, Regent Parrot, (not found here) and Southern Bell Frog as well as the very rare Bush Stone Curlew: the winning Twitchathon teams know that a visit to the river is essential to get the "river" birds that are only found here.

Vast tracts of Red Gum are already under severe stress and are dying as a result of changing water regimes; Red Gum forests need regular flooding to maintain health and to allow for regeneration. God knows that we could use a bit of that flooding occurring in the north coast today. Our local forests are still grazed and cut for sleepers or firewood.

We question whether the forest's destruction for such uses when alternatives are available is either sustainable or worth the economic outcome.

The Regional Assessment of the forests by the NSW National Resources Commission needs to be conducted using proper scientific methodology:

There needs to be consideration given of the national reserve criteria or how they will be met. The impact of logging on the ecosystem needs to be considered while considering the additional impact of global warming on species.

Many species depend on corridors linking habitats to move from one area to another for food and shelter and these need to be carefully considered.

Don't we understand that the health of the river depends on the health of the forest and that it is our lifeline out here as well?

We are calling for the State Government NSW and Victorian to create extensive new Red Gum National Parks so that these very valuable forests are managed for improved outcomes for all.

Yours sincerely

Nella Smith
vice-president MFN