

25 August 2009

Forests Assessment
Natural Resource Commission
GPO Box 4206
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Natural Resources Commission,

Re: River Red Gum Assessment

The protection of River Red Gum Forests is critical to conserve their well-recognised environmental values, including large areas which are listed as nationally significant under the Ramsar Convention on wetlands. These forests are vital to protect the health of the Murray River, as well as being important habitat for a number of threatened and endangered species, and for migratory species.

Water stress has led, in some areas, to up to 75% of trees becoming stressed, dead or dying. Therefore, they must be recognised as vulnerable habitat, vital to the 32 floral and 49 faunal threatened species found in the region, as well as hundreds of other species.

Nationally recognised criteria require 60% of remaining vegetation in vulnerable vegetation communities to be protected. The most effective way to achieve this is the creation of new National Parks across the entire River Red Gum State Forest area.

I strongly urge you to make new National Parks the central recommendation from your assessment of these forests.

Economic modelling and experience in Victoria has already shown this will also be the best outcome for the regional economy, and could create many more jobs than are currently supported by the timber industry.

Yours sincerely,
Deb Kellock