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Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
SYDNEY 2001



Dear Sir/Madam

ASSESSMENT OF RIVER RED GUM FORESTS

Berrigan Shire Council is located on the Murray River and within the area that will be subject of an "Assessment of River Red Gum Forests".

The Shire contains significant areas of red gum forests with both New South Wales State Forests and other public and private land.

The Council and the general community has been monitoring the issues surrounding red gum logging with interest and the Council now welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Commission in relation to its Assessment.

The Council would appreciate your consideration of its views, as set out below, when completing the required assessment.

The issues raised by this Council are not in any priority order:

1. The Council believes that the region is already well served with National Parks, particularly when the parks proposed to be established in Victoria are considered.
2. New National Parks in Southern New South Wales have not increased visitor numbers due to lack of effective management and capital investment.

The creation of new National Parks may well see a reduction in visitor numbers due to restrictive usage policies and the fact that State Forests are very well used by visitors now.

3. The construction of State Forests will allow the local community and visitors to continue their traditional use of the land that appears to have occurred largely without impact to the natural environment.

- The recently completed Environmental Impact Statement – Harvesting and Associated Road work Operations in south Western New South Wales, prepared by the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries clearly demonstrates that sustainable red gum logging can continue.
- If Governments wish to close State Forests and create new National Parks they must equally commit the resources to effectively manage these, especially weed control and fire prevention.

This required commitment is compounded by the loss of logging revenue and costs of unemployment.

- If red gum logging is proposed to be restricted or eliminated a rigorous social and economic impact study must be considered before any such decision is made.

Any assessment that considered only the environmental impact would be a long way short of best practice decision making that would dictate a triple or quadruple bottom line approach.

- Red gum forests provide a significant proportion of the local community's energy needs through the provision of wood heating and cooling etc.
- Effective environmental outcomes are more likely to be achieved through long term goals and long term timber licences that will both allow long term planning and increased capital investment.
- The riverine and red gum environment is a significant bush fire risk and provides a wick to rapidly spread fire.

This environment needs to be effectively managed to minimise this risk and help protect the forests themselves, local communities and visitors.

- The use of State Forests as working forests has seen significant improvement in the environment if photos from the early 1900's can be relied upon.
- It can be seen that areas of public lands outside State Forests now have an over population of red gums which leads to poor quality trees and exposes them to additional risk of demise during (the current) times of drought.

As stated earlier, it would be appreciated if you would consider my Council's views when completing your assessment.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



ROWAN PERKINS
GENERAL MANAGER