

Bullatale Creek Landholders
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28th August 2009

Forests' Assessment
Natural Resource Commission
GPO Box 4206
SYDNEY NSW 2001

RE: Terms of Reference – Assessment of Riverina Red Gum Forests

Dear Sir

The Bullatale Creek region is a prime agricultural area located within the Murray Shire of NSW.

The region is adjacent to the internationally recognised Redgum Forests of the Barmah-Millewa. The Bullatale Creek is part of the Central Murray system which also comprises the Edward, Wakool and Niemur Rivers. The Central Murray system reconnects with the Murray River downstream of Swan Hill.

The region has significant investments in land and capital infrastructure. Farm Business assets alone, excluding land and housing in 2003, were in excess of seventeen million.

A report as part of a broader sustainability plan in 2003, identified crop and stock production in excess of eighteen million dollars, with a regional multiplier effect of approximately thirty to forty million.

Landholders have participated in sustainability planning and have implemented a range of sub catchment initiatives in terms of biodiversity and conservation strategies, as part of broader catchment planning.

The future of crown land management in the Barmah Millewa Forest region raises significant areas of consideration for Bullatale Landholders. In particular, fire management and responses, delivery of water supplies, management of feral animals and weeds, access and a range of other issues.

The Natural Resource Commission's Terms of Reference in regard to – Assessment of Riverina Red Gum Forests do not identify the interests of local communities outside specifically identified agencies and indigenous interests.

Agriculture interests in the Bullatale region wish to identify specific gaps in the Natural Resource Commission's terms of reference to ensure that consideration of broader interests within and on the perimeters of the Millewa forest, are adequately considered.

Proposed additional terms of reference - bioregion

The Commission should have regard:

- For the social, economic and community interests of adjoining landholders

Proposed additional terms of reference – consultation

The Commission should consult:

- Local landholder groups who have specific legal, financial and social interests within or adjoining the area of proposed assessment.

The Natural Resource Commission in its terms of reference identify key aspects for consideration. Mentioned specifically is “the existing science and body of knowledge about the region”.

Within the Bullatale community there is extensive knowledge about the history of region. This knowledge goes back three or more generations and covers a range of current and historical aspects, in particular:

- The structure of the forest
- Flood events and behavioural flows in both the forest and surrounding region
- Fire management and fire behaviour
- Biodiversity interaction with surrounding region

We would welcome the opportunity to assist the NRC in its deliberations and encourage recognition of our interests and involvement in the identified terms of reference.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Louise Burge
On behalf of
Bullatale Creek Landholders