

**The Friends of
Eastern Otways**
(Great Otway National Park)
Inc. A0030273B



Secretary
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Forests Assessment
Natural Resources Commission

Dear Natural Resources Commission,

The Friends of Eastern Otways are glad that the Natural Resources Commission has been given the task of assessing River Red Gum forests in New South Wales.

We were very pleased when the Victorian Government hopefully ensured the future of the Victorian River Red Gum forests through the creation of new national parks in Victoria in 2008. However the Victorian River Red Gums are just part of these important forests, and we are indeed hopeful that the Natural Resources Commission will assess the extreme threats facing the River Red Gum Forests in NSW and recommend strong conservation action be taken to avert those threats. River Red Gum forests provide very important habitat for threatened flora and fauna, and it is essential that action be taken to protect this habitat which is already under severe stress as a result of changed water regimes.

The creation of large new national parks within New South Wales seems to be the logical way to protect this important part of Australia's biodiversity. We support the inclusion in the terms of reference of water management and the impacts of climate change on future water availability. It is also essential that immediate attention is given to the protection of Ramsar wetlands during the assessment process.

We would like to support the concept that the Traditional Owners be given Aboriginal ownership over these new national parks and reserves when that concept is sought. This land was carefully cared for by these people for a very long period of time, and the indigenous people and communities should be deeply involved during the assessment process.

We also believe that it is important that the needs of the timber industry be considered and a structural adjustment package be put in place to help create a sustainable timber industry. This has indeed been done successfully in the Otways in Victoria when felling of old growth forests was discontinued.

The environmental crisis facing River Red Gums is severe, and we are hopeful and optimistic that this will be the view of the Natural Resources Commission of New South Wales.

Sincerely

Margaret MacDonald
Honorary Secretary