10 · 4 · 2000

Wombat Forest Society inc.

Wild & Wonderful Wood & Water Work & Wildlife

ASN: A0029445N
PO Box 428, Daylesford. 3460.
Ph/Fax: [redacted].

Media Release
10 April 2000

Contact: Peter O'Mara
[redacted]

The Wombat Forest Society has identified several catchments in the Wombat Forest that have coupes scheduled for logging that are a breach of the recently signed Regional Forest Agreement. The WFS has recently shown another coupe above Wombat Reservoir, near Daylesford, is twice the size of the maximum coupe size for this catchment, according to Attachment 9, of the West Victorian RFA. WFS analysis has found coupe size anomalies in the Colbrook (Werribee River) and the Korwienguboora (Moorabool River) water supply catchments. This harvesting may have wide ranging implications for the water supplies of Ballan and Geelong.

"This year the Department of Natural Resources and Environment plan to log several large 'shelterwood 2' coupes in designated water supply catchments, arguing that coupe size limitations do not apply to this type of harvesting." Said Peter O'Mara, WFS spokesperson. "The Wombat Forest Society believes that this logging is highly questionable, perhaps illegal, in designated catchments that have been subject to Land Use Determinations. These size limits as well as other activities, are for the protection of important water values. The West Victorian RFA clearly ratifies the restrictions on coupe sizes. The Agreement makes no distinction between the types of harvesting operation."

"Why has NRE scheduled several coupes that are many times larger than the stated maximum coupe size? Regional forest planning relies on forest management plans to provide fundamental protection of environmental, cultural and resource values within our local forests. These seem to be totally ignored or compromised when they conflict with logging.' Peter went on to say. "Corporate greed has been given precedence over community need."

The RFA states that the Colbrook water supply catchment has a coupe size limitation of 5 hectares. One coupe scheduled for harvesting is 82ha.NRE also proposes to log 184 ha in this catchment in one year. The Midlands FMA plan limits logging in Designated Catchments to no more that 20% of the catchment over a 20 year period.

"In the Colbrook catchment NRE proposes to log the Gentle Annie, Big Tree and Paradise Road Coupes, these amount to 14.5% of the water supply catchment area in one year. The names of these coupes would now appear to be a cruel and twisted joke, given the condition of the Wombat Forest." Commented Mr O'Mara. "Furthermore, the proposed logging coupes in the Korweinguboora water supply also contravenes NRE's and the RFA's maximum coupe size of 15ha.

28/3/1998

28 March 1998
Dear Mr Mc Namarra,

I write to request your urgent intervention in the current timber harvesting proposals for the Wombat State Forest as outlined in NRE's Proposed Wood Utilisation Plan 1998-2001 for the Midlands FMA and the Midlands FMA Forest Management Plan Dec 1996.

The WUP's were released on February 16th with public comment closing on March 16th and sawlog license conditions which require NRE to provide linencees with final copies of the WUP by March 31st.

Although forest management is not usually a part of your responsibility, I feel that the potentially harmful long term impacts on amongst other things, important water catchment values in Central Victoria must be brought to your attention.

Wombat Forest Society

Since 1994 the Wombat Forest Society has lobbied for a reduction in timber harvesting to a level that takes account of all forest values in the Wombat State Forest. We have liased with all levels of government, land managers, water authorities, academics, industry, community groups and landowners. The society has presented cogent arguments based on substantial research together with an enormous wealth of local knowledge. This approach combined with our willingness to participate in process has gained the Society the respect of most players except it would appear NRE forest managers. The WFS is not an anti-logging group. We are a community group with strong membership of both the trditional timber families of the area, and conservationists.

The Society's concerns relating to unsustainable timber harvesting are shared by a broad cross section of our community, I'm sure that both our local State minister Mr Barry Traynor and Federal Minister Mr Michael Ronaldson would substantiate this claim. The Central Victorian Logging Co (the local sawmillers syndicate) and the Wombat Forest Society are in the throes of drafting a joint letter outlining their shared concerns about current forest management practices in the Wombat State Forest.

April 2008

Wombat Forest Society inc.

Wild & Wonderful Wood & Water Work & Wildlife

ASN: A0029445N

PO Box 428, Daylesford. 3460.

Ph/Fax: [redacted].

To: Joanne Duncan.

From: Tim Anderson

Dear Joanne,

As per phone call, here are the details you asked for.

- In relation to the WUPs and their current preparation, I had a conversation with Gerard O'Neil a number of weeks ago that discussed the WFS belief that a number of the proposed coupes in designated catchments in the Wombat are in breach oft the RFA, the Code of Forest Practice and the Midlands FMA Plan. Mr O'Neil, expressed his belief that this was not the case. I argued why I believe that we where in fact correct. Mr O'Neil agreed that he could see the need for proper resolution of this issue. My suggestion was that we (WFS) would nominate one or two forest hydrologists and the NRE could provide theirs and a meeting with these scientists, NRE and Wombat Forest Society should be held to resolve this.

  I have now made six phone calls to Mr O'Neil, to give our suggested experts and arrange the meeting. I have left messages with MrO'Neil's receptionist. To date Mr O'Neil has not returned any calls.

  The WFS will now be forced to carry through and lodge an injunction against the WUPs and take NRE to VCAT. It is unfortunate that Mr O'Neil does not appear to be interested in a more constructive approach.

- The intensity of current harvesting, the proposed WUPs and the obvious lack of resource in the Midlands are not acceptable. The emergence of another group taking a much more confrontational line will appear inconsequential compared to the way this area will be reacting in the next 2-3 years with the extent of proposed harvesting.

  The WFS believes that it is time for a special meeting to be convened. This meeting should be designed to have the definitive discussion over how much of a future has the Wombat and the other values and the logging industry. It is my belief that there will not be an industry in 10 years.

  At many meetings I have attended, NRE staff have always used the excuse of needing to refer sticky issues to the people that know this area. Inevitably, we are never gotten back to over these outstanding issues.

My suggestion is to put them all in a room and lets talk. By having the NRE people that can give the answers, we can short circuit the excuse of needing to go back to these people.

- Included should be: Pollies: The Premier, Minister Garbutt, John Brumby, Joanne Duncan, Geoff Howard, John McQuilten, Kim McGrath.

- NRE: Gerard O'Neil, Mike Sutton, Ross Penny, Fiona Hamilton, Andrew Maclean, Geoff Scales, Peter Keppel.

- Industry: Vafi reps, Sawmillers, John Slorach, Graham Harding, Union representatives

- Wombat Forest Society reps

- Appropriate other scientists: Rob Vertessy (CRC Catchment Hydrology), Ian Ferguson Melb. Uni.

Tim.

Ps any quick, preliminary meeting might also be usefull, as your suggestion Joanne.

Wombat Forest Society inc.

Wild & Wonderful Wood & Water Work & Wildlife

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Media Release
30 August, 2000

Contact: Tim Anderson

[redacted]

Greed Killing our Forests

The Wombat Forest Society is calling in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to radically change the method of sawlog grading and allocation in the Wombat Forest this year. The WFS have alerted NRE that the Wood Utilisation Plan (WUPs) released for the next three years proposes to log coupes that the WFS believes are in breach of a number of State and Federal regulations. The Society has indicated that it intends to test the validity of the WUPs at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The main complaint the WFS have is the shear number of coupes that will be cut in the Wombat. Over the next three years NRE is intending to harvest around one seventh of the forest. The main reason that this area is required is to supply the volume of B-Grade logs. These are the best quality logs that our forests produce.

"The Wombat Forest Society has argued for many years that the volume of B-Grade logs that is supplied to the industry is killing our forest. Each year more area of forest is cut than is sustainable. You cannot keep logging excessive areas of a finite forest and not have it simply run out. This is the primary reason that we are seeing such significant cuts in the sustainable yield over the past four years." Said Tim Anderson, WFS spokesperson.

The independent audit by Profs. Turner (ANU) and Ferguson (Melbourne Uni.), called by Federal Minister for Forests and Conservation Hon. Wilson Tuckey, into the Midlands as part of the Regional Forest Agreement, states that "NRE has no requirement to maintain proportion of high-grade logs."

"The WFS calls on NRE to abandon the practice of cutting up the logs to suit grade demands from some sawmills, that produces more waste wood and requires more and more area to be cut each year. This is why the timber industry in this region has no future past ten years in the region." Said Mr Anderson. "Black Forest Sawmill is and has been supplied with 50% of its quota as B-Grade sawlogs. Our forests cannot supply this volume and Black Forest has no legal reason for being supplied with such a huge volume of B-Grade logs. It is time for NRE to show that they are in control of the bush and not there just to fulfill the selfish whims of some sectors of the industry."

Sawlogs should be graded for 'best recovery' and not 'best grade', and the industry should be prepared to take their logs under the regime known as 'run of the bush' or what the forest produces. The current system is cutting up trees to fulfill grade demands that cannot be met, this is resulting in excessive areas being logged. This system is also producing the increased volumes of woodchips.

"It is time that the big players in the industry show the community that they are responsible users of our forests and abandon the practices that have ruined the Wombat. The big logs are supplied on the basis that they are destined for high grade value adding, yet there is no auditing system that ensures that these logs are put to this use, and not simply cut up for fencing and green structural use. It is 'judgement day for our forests' and all of the 'gentlemen's agreements' need to be abandoned, and all involved show that they are serious about the long term health of our forests and not the short term profits of the few, that only have their own interests at heart." Said Mr Anderson.

The Wombat Forest Society has had indications from NRE that it will be attempting to down-size the industry from 58 000m3 p.a. to 40 000m3 p.a. sawlog that was an outcome of the RFA, this year instead of the 3 years allowed for. While the WFS see this as a positive step, unless the real problem (unsustainable B-Grade production) is tackled, then the same amount of area will be cut, and the Wombat will continue to be destroyed.

END

Wombat Forest Society

po box 428, daylesford 3460

PRESS RELEASE
14th December, 2001

Wombat Forest Society representatives have met with Geoff Scales, NRE Midlands Forest Manager Geoff Scales, regarding growing community concerns of proposed logging coupes within the Wombat Forest.

The Wombat Forest Society is disappointed that the outcomes of the Sustainable Yield Review 2001 have been postponed until February 2002. Wombat Forest Society research has indicated that the current logging volumes will decrease to approximately 15000 m3 per year, or perhaps lower, thus making the future of local industry operations extremely marginal. The Wombat Forest Society was hoping the reductions in logging volumes would provide for the withdrawl of contentious logging coupes, especially those of significant community and water values, from the current logging schedule, therefore avoiding unneccesary conflict.

The most immediate concern of the Wombat Forest Society is the intensity of logging within a 3.5km radius of the Paddys Point area. The Wombat Forest Society is asking that NRE provide clarification regarding adjacency issue.

'The Wombat Forest Society have serious concerns regarding the current application of coupe adjacencies and believe that the status of the intensive logging around Paddys Point could be legally doubtful. The WFS have asked Andrew McLean, NRE West Victorian Manager for Forest Management for a written clarification. Wombat Forest Society will also be seeking further legal interpretation and then decide upon the appropriate action.

The Wombat Forest Society also raised community concerns regarding logging close to the townships of Trentham and Blackwood. The Wombat Forest Society support a 3.5km buffer around the both townships. The 3.5km around Trentham is also supported by a recent study by the Department of State and Regional Development and the Hepburn Shire indentifying future business opportunities. Future logging of Babbington Hill, near Lyonville, was been totally rejected by the Wombat Forest Soiciety. NRE have agreed to employ a landscape architect to deal with Babbington Hill issues in conjunction with a community involvement program.

Under the West Victorian RFA, the Babbington coupe should be provided protection in relation to tourist route visual amenity. The Wombat Forest Society oppose any logging of Babbington Hill especially considering the poor regenerative outcomes of previous work and diminishing stands of remnant herb-rich foothill forests in the Wombat Forest. The Wombat Forest Society has also warned of possible community action if NRE allow any logging in the Daylesford water supply catchment.'

Included in the discussion with DNRE was the proposed logging in Dry Diggings, adjacent to the Midland Highway. The Dry Diggings coupe has a low sawlog output and exists primarily as a pulp operation in a highly sensitive tourist entrance and possible growth area of Daylesford/Hepburn Springs. NRE have offered visual buffers in Dry Diggings but it would appear that any buffer would be insufficent given the thin forest stand. Another coupe (Ryans) at Sailors Falls is also proposed, abutting the Boon Spa development ($17 million) and The Great Dividing Trail, both important tourist and recreation facilities.

>Loris Duclos
>Secretary
>Wombat Forest Society
>[redacted]
>
>Alternate Contact
>Tim Anderson
>[redacted]
>Peter O'Mara
>[redacted]

Attn: Macedon Ranges Telegraph
fax # 5428 2917

(1)

WOMBAT FOREST SOCETY
PRESS RELEASE
1st February, 2002

The draft Wood Utilisation Plan 2002/3-4/5 for Midlands Forest Mangement Area has some positive news for the Wombat Forest Society's water catchment campaign. The Wombat Forest Society has actively challenged NRE on logging in these water catchments, believeing that previous scheduling had contravened the West Victorian Regional Forest Agreement, resulting in logging coupes now being withdrawn from six designated catchments including Korweinguboora, Moorabool, Coolbrook, Pykes Creek, Blackwood and Rosslyne.

"The withdrawl of these logging areas in our water catchments is a huge win for local communities. The Wombat Forest Society has long argued that proposed logging in these areas, subject to previous Land Use Determinations, that limit coupe size and scheduling, had been excessive. These withdrawls will provide for a reduction of avaliable areas for logging in the Wombat Forest by one third, almost 11,000 hectares. NRE should be acknowledged for their efforts in addressing this issue but still need to flexible enough to provide protection of other non-timber values like township buffer zones."

Furthermore, the WUP 2002/3-4/5 show that no further logging can occur within the Leitches Creek and Ashbourne Powerful Owl Management Area (P.O.M.A.). The Wombat Forest Society have run a sustained campaign regarding logging within the Leitches Creek POMA culminating in our first direct forest action and the subsequent withdrawl of logging crews in November 2000.

"The Wombat Forest Society is pleased that negiotations undertaken in this provactive confrontation have been recognised within the current logging schedule. Hopefully, our open, intelligent and whole community approach will provide NRE with a model for future negiotation when dealing with conflict situations with local communities."

The Wombat Forest Society are disappointed that the draft Midlands Wood Utilisation Plan has once again failed to deal with obvious adequency issues regarding the aggregation of logging coupes within the Wombat Forest.

"The NRE Forest Manager, Andrew McLean has interpretted these Code Of Forest Practice guidelines to only apply to the first logging cut, known as Shelterwood 1, therefore neglecting the impact of following Shelterwood 2 logging where upon the remaining trees are removed. Ultimately, he has to take responsiblity for the intensity of this logging and the resultant negative impact on other non-timber values. Anyone who has had the unpleasant experience of a drive through Paddys Point would see the adsurdity of this application. The whole area resembles a bombsite, hardly a well managed sustainable forest. The Wombat Forest Society will be undertaking a vigorous, possibly legal, campaign to have this application revoked."

Future logging of Babbington Hill, near Lyonville, has been withdrawn by NRE after being rejected by the Wombat Forest Soiciety. NRE have agreed to employ a landscape architect to deal with Babbington Hill issues in conjunction with a community involvement program.

"Under the West Victorian RFA, the Babbington coupe should be provided protection in relation to tourist route visual amenity. The Wombat Forest Society oppose any future logging of Babbington Hill especially considering the poor regenerative outcomes of previous work and diminishing stands of remnant herb-rich foothill forests in the Wombat Forest."

Finally, NRE has included in the proposed WUP's logging coupes in Dry Diggings, adjacent to the Midland Highway. Another coupe (Ryans) at Sailors Falls is also proposed, abutting the Boon Spa development ($17 million) and The Great Dividing Trail, both important tourist and recreation facilities.

"The Dry Diggings coupe has a low sawlog output and exists primarily as a pulp operation in a highly sensitive tourist entrance and possible growth area of Daylesford/Hepburn Springs.NRE have offered visual buffers in Dry Diggings but it would appear that any buffer would be insufficent given the thin forest stand. The logging of these coupes is totally ridiculous considering the local tourism reliance on local environmental intergrity and aethestic."

Peter O'Mara
Vice President
Wombat Forest Society
ph: [redacted]

Wombat Forest Society inc.

Wild & Wonderful Wood & Water Work & Wildlife

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Letter to the Editor,

In reply to Ms Diane Tregoning's letter in last weeks Advocate, tying in the S11 concerns, the Regional Forest Agreement and local concerns for our forests.

Ms Tregoning claims that the Wombat Forest Society is shifting the goal posts in relation to the forest crisis in the region and not accepting the RFA outcomes. I would like to take the opportunity to put Ms Tregoning straight on these issues.

The Wombat Forest Society has always been arguing that the rate of logging in the region's forests is unsustainable. We have successfully proved that the sawlog volumes that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment have been supplying the timber industry where too high. The WFS has in fact proved that the sawlog volume set in the RFA of 40 000m3p.a. is still too high, WFS modeling shows that the real figure for the Midlands is around 25 000m3p.a.. The obvious outcome for the timber industry from unsustainable logging rates, will be the inevitable running out of suitable trees. This will see the industry collapse.

Of greater concern is the impact on the non-timber values from logging rates that are too high. We will see negative impacts on water for domestic, commercial and irrigation purposes for up to 100 years. We will see unacceptable pressure on the biodiversity that is dependent on our forests, we will see impacts on recreational and tourist opportunities in the forests and potentially an impact on some of our mineral springs.

I repeat Dianne, the volumes of timber coming out of the region's forests was and is still unsustainable. The right of Black Forest Timber to take logs from our publicly owned forests is based on sustainability. Log volumes that are in excess of sustainable volumes breaches a number of Commonwealth and State legislation and regulation. While this happens the WFS will speak out.

Black Forest sawmill takes around 50% of all of the B-grade logs that the Midland's produces. The WFS contends that the area cut each year is influenced by the demands that Black Forest puts on the system to supply the B-grade logs. The Regional Forest Agreement in fact exposed the reality that Black Forest Timber has no legal rights to this proportion of B-grade logs. This is why the WFS have called on the State Government to re-examine sawlog grade distribution in the region.

The post-RFA issues within our forests have not been the result of shifting goal posts but in fighting for compliance to RFA conditions. I suggest that Ms. Tregoning and other interested people get out their West Victorian RFA CRA report and look at chapter 16 (pg211)- 'Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management'. A reading of these pages and a look at current or proposed practises in our forests should quickly explain ongoing concerns from regional conservation groups.

The industry must also accept that they can't just take the parts of the RFA that suit them and ignore the sections that don't.

In tying in the S11 protests against globalisation and loss of timber jobs in the region and implying WFS involvement, Ms Tregoning may like to answer this question. There has been a significant rise in mechanisation and automation in most facets of the timber industry, primarily introduced to improve efficiency and more importantly profitability. Could Ms Tregoning please investigate and report back to our community, how many timber jobs have been lost in the past 15 years to mechanisation and automation, in the mills and in the bush? These where the concerns that the S11 protests where about. The environment and the people before profits and mechanisation.

Tim Anderson
RMB 3473 Daylesford. 3461.

Can you with hold my address. Thanks.