



Ryan Smith
Minister for Climate Change and Environment
Via email: ryan.smith@parliament.vic.gov.au

Peter Walsh
Minister for Agriculture & Food Security
Via email: peter.walsh@parliament.vic.gov.au

2nd April 2014

Dear Ministers,

Re: Fires and logging plans

EEG is writing to both of you as this issues falls under both of your responsibilities within DEPI.

Under the RFA (and the 'Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative' requirements), the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act, the Forest Management Plans and various Codes and Prescriptions, the Victorian Government is legally obliged to protect minimum quotas for values including rare wildlife and plants as well as forest EVCs, old growth and other values.

Since this century's many fires have reduced the habitat and extent of forests previously protected, it is now more urgent than ever that remaining unburnt forests be reassessed for their ability to provide the necessary habitat, values and representative areas which have been lost.

In particular, the recent bushfires in East Gippsland have severely burned large areas of the reserve system, including national park and SPZs designated as habitat for particular species to meet quota requirements in the FMP and Action Statements. From our own observations and surveys, many of these areas lost large numbers of hollow bearing trees and almost all wildlife that was previously present. The Yalmy valley is an example of a large area of high quality habitat that may not regain its values for generations.

Many of the species cannot use severely burnt forest, and so significant portions of the habitat reserved for them are no longer suitable. This means the quotas required to be protected are no longer in place. For these values there

is no alternative option but to protect unburnt areas that can provide replacement habitat, meet the values required to be reserved, and be used as recruitment areas for future habitat.

To achieve this, an urgent review of the zoning scheme, mapped forest values and mandated habitat and other forest value quotas needs to occur. This review needs to use the most recent fire-severity maps that can be generated.

In comparison, the native forest logging industry does have alternatives, which it is moving towards regardless. At a time when the industry's future is clearly unviable, uneconomic and unpopular, it would be the perfect opportunity to look at the steep downhill market trends, the increasing use of plantation timber and then analyse this in conjunction with the serious loss of so much forest, wildlife and associated values such as water and tourism.

Can you please answer the following five questions:

- Is this government planning to carry out assessments on those values lost?
- What is the timeframe for these assessments?
- Will it put a moratorium on logging in the areas most likely to be required for habitat, species protection or as representative age classes or vegetation types? (this would include at least all remaining old growth forest in the GMZ in the East Gippsland FMA, as well as SPZs and SMZs recently rezoned to GMZs, including a moratorium on currently scheduled coupes that fall in these areas).
- If new coupes are to be added to the TRP as a result of planned logging areas being burnt in January and February, will these forest stands go through the proper process of public consultation, wildlife surveys and the checking of overlying values?
- If the review of areas that this government is obliged to set aside for non-logging values is not to be carried out, can you please explain why this won't be done?

This statement is from the latest State of the Environment Report 2013, Chapter 2, p110.

vertebrates. This will take more than 200 years to recede.

The harvesting of unburnt forest is also an issue where significant fires have occurred because they provide an important refuge for fauna. Logging of these unburnt areas reduces the availability of habitat for those species displaced by fires. This is particularly an issue where areas designated for harvesting have been set prior to large fire events. Such areas can greatly increase in importance for the protection of biodiversity.

East Gippsland's amazing legacy of being "*The most biodiverse area of forest on earth*" (Professor David Bellamy) has undergone a summer of extreme impact.

Those areas most hard hit were the very heart of vital habitat for certain species. What remains outside of the fire zone now is a critically important refuge for fauna. Logging these areas now would be like bombing all surrounding villages and towns after the Battle of the Somme to keep soldiers active.

We look forward to hearing from you very soon on what your department plans regarding the above matter.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Redwood". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

Jill Redwood
Coordinator