

The Awful Effects of Clear-Felling

What's Happening to your Forests?

In the Central Highlands this coming summer, thousands of hectares of native forest are scheduled to be clear-felled for wood-chipping, and the residue will be burnt. The creation of new access roads for enormous logging trucks will compound the problems caused by widespread clear-felling of our forests.

There are many detrimental effects of this type of wood harvesting, and some of these will last for centuries! In general, these effects fall into four main categories: *ecological disturbance; reductions in quality and yield of water from catchments; destruction of opportunity to realise better economic outcomes; and, loss of amenity for recreational use of our forests.*

Ecological Disturbance

Logging operations destroy habitat for many native animals (fauna) while at the same time wreaking havoc upon the smaller shrubs and grasses (flora) that cover the forest floor. In many locations that are ear-marked for logging by NRE, designated logging coupes lie side by side with *special protection zones* that have been declared to protect 'at-risk' colonies of threatened species and other at-risk areas such as the margins of streams and rivers. If we could be sure that NRE directs its logging contractors with accuracy and utmost responsibility, these special zones could have some chance of survival. But past practice has demonstrated that this is highly unlikely. The over-logging of our forests (that has been caused, in the main, by NRE's poor management) demonstrates that NRE has failed in recent years to properly direct and manage its logging contractors on behalf of the people of Victoria (and the nation!) so that there is no encroachment of neighbouring areas.

By opening up and laying waste to vast tracts of land, clear-felling punches significant gaps in the natural wild-life corridors that provide for migration of species and maintenance of healthy bio-diversity in the ecology of our native forests. (The older practice of 'strategic felling' - where individual trees were selected - does not interfere as severely with forest ecology, but this practice is hardly used any more by NRE in Victorian forests.)

In the case of the 350 Forestry Block, this problem is at its most acute! There have been numerous sightings in this locality of Leadbeaters Possum, Powerful Owl, Sooty Owl, and Tree Goanna, and these are recorded as threatened species in the Atlas of Victorian Wildlife that is maintained by NRE! There are significant numbers of old-growth trees in the coupes in this block, and it is well documented that the removal of these trees results in a loss of nesting places for hollow-dependent possums and gliders. Hollows only begin to form in trees that are around 120 years of age. Logging is presently taking place on a 60-year rotation, and this means that species such as Leadbeaters Possum cannot and will not survive if logging disturbs the forest surrounding old-growth trees.

Members of the UBAG consider that it would be ecological madness to log in the 350 Block, given the number of special protection zones that have already been declared in recognition of the at-risk natural values in this highly sensitive area!

Reduction of Water Yields

Another impact of clear-fell logging that is well researched and documented is the lowering of water yields in catchment areas that are subjected to this method of harvesting. Higher uptake and transpiration of water by the regeneration 'forest' that follows a logging and re-seeding cycle is the cause of this effect. Research commissioned by Melbourne Water indicates that the loss of

water yield from clear-felled areas can be as much as 50% of the previous yields – and it takes 150 years to restore pre-logged levels!

Let's put this in the context of the 350 Block, *the boundaries of which are identical with those of the 'Bunyip River Water Supply Catchment' that was proclaimed in 1963 to supply drinking water to the Mornington Peninsula.* Clear-felling in this self-contained catchment area will result in big losses in future flows in the Bunyip River, downstream of the Bunyip Weir, and potential losses in availability of drinking water to help meet Melbourne's future needs. And clear-felling will result also in a marked reduction in the pristine quality of the water flowing into the Bunyip Weir, because of the high level of sedimentation that accompanies this method of logging.

Members of the UBAG insist that there is absolutely no justification for logging a 'forestry block' that is identically a proclaimed drinking-water catchment area for the residents of Melbourne!

Destruction of Opportunity for Realising Better Economic Outcomes

It is well recognised that a major driver of economic development in Victoria is *tourism*, and opportunities should be seized to cater for the diverse interests of visitors to, and residents of Melbourne. While some seek active recreational outlets such as sporting events and spectacles, there are others who seek quieter and more reflective ways to enjoy their visit to our city. An outing to The Dandenongs affords this type of experience, and a visit to the 350 Block would be an ideal way to cater for those tourists who would enjoy a day of bushwalking in a quieter forest setting.

While recognising the contribution of the timber industry to the Victorian economy, UBAG asserts that the 350 Block should be preserved in its current state - *and this would require an immediate cessation of logging.* Then, this wonderful headwaters area of the Bunyip River could deliver much better returns to the economy by reserving and preserving it for '*passive*' recreational pastimes, such as bushwalking, *gentle* pushbike cycling, and the like. This alternative to logging should be encouraged by the Government, and UBAG recommends that the 350 Block be appended to the Bunyip State Park as an interim management measure while its long-term future is discussed and determined through a process of community consultation.

UBAG believes that the long-term economic gains from this alternative land use would far outweigh the short term returns from destructive logging of this block, and UBAG appeals for strong community support - to express and promote this message to our MPs, municipal councillors, and other relevant decision makers.

Loss of Amenity - for Recreational Use of Our Forests!

Logging of our native forests is destroying their attraction as valued places for recreational enjoyment. It is also destroying their immutable sanctity as places that should be preserved intact for future generations. Put bluntly – if *we* have enjoyed the intrinsic natural value of our native forests, then why should *we* deny this pleasure to *our* children? - and as a consequence, *their* children?

UBAG asks - what right should be given to the loggers of today to destroy the natural heritage of the children of tomorrow? No such moral right exists now, or ever!!! We must stop this wastage of our forests and their heritage values now!

JOIN THE UPPER BUNYIP ACTION GROUP, and [begin writing letters](#) NOW to protect the 350 Upper Bunyip Forestry Block from unnecessary devastation.