

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Murray Shire Council

**Name:** Mr Greg Murdoch

**Date received:** 26/07/2012

---

Please find attached Murray Shire Council's submission into the Inquiry into the Management of Public Land in NSW, particularly as it relates to the River Red Gum State Forests in the Southern Riverina and more particularly in the Murray Shire.



26 July 2012

*Correspondence to:*

The General Manager

PO Box 21

Mathoura NSW 2710

*Administration/General Enquiries:*

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*Engineering/Building & Planning:*

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

email:

admin@murray.nsw.gov.au

website:

www.murray.nsw.gov.au

*Head Office:*

21-25 Conargo Street

Mathoura NSW 2710

*Branch Office:*

6 Meninya Street

Moama NSW 2731

The Director

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir

**RE: SUBMISSION –  
INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN NSW**

Murray Shire Council takes this opportunity to make a submission to the abovementioned Inquiry, particularly as it relates to the River Red Gum State Forests in the Southern Riverina and more particularly in the Murray Shire.

Council's submission will endeavour to address the Terms of Reference as follows:

**1a) Process of conversion and the assessment of potential operational, economic, social and environmental impacts**

Murray Shire Council was party to the process of conversion and participated in good faith as part of the initial forest assessment process. However, Council's faith in the process was significantly undermined by political decisions and statements.

I have attached Council's submissions to the various stages of the process. I have also attached a summary of some of the political statements made in the process.

Council was always concerned with the operational, economic, social and environmental impacts of a conversion, as can be evidenced in Council's submissions.

**1b) Operational, economic, social and environmental impacts after conversion and in particular impacts upon neighbours of public land and upon local government**

Obviously, there are significant differences between a working State Forest utilised for timber production and a Red Gum National Park.

Council was always concerned that there would be significant economic impacts as a result of the loss of the Red Gum timber industry that provided an \$80M input to the regional economy. This concern has been confirmed with the closure of most local mills and loss of jobs in the region.

In the town of Mathoura alone, it is estimated that 25 direct jobs have been lost. This figure does not include indirect losses. These type of affects are replicated across the region.

The government did put in place a \$12M Regional Employment and Community Development Fund. However, the projects that have been funded have not replaced the economic benefits afforded by the Red Gum industry. In addition, due to some of these projects coming on stream at a slow rate, any replacement will be incremental.

Tourism was held up as the economic saviour for the region. Council maintained in its discussions with the State Government in the process that there would be no transformational change in tourism numbers as a result of a National Park declaration. Council did maintain that an iconic must see attraction needed to be developed to dramatically change the current tourism market. To date, no such attraction has been put in place.

Council runs the local Visitors Centre in Mathoura as a gateway to the National Park. Anecdotal evidence from the Centre and comments from local businesses indicate a reduction in visitor numbers due to the restrictions on use of the forest. The restrictions for dogs and river access are contributing to this effect. However, Council does acknowledge flooding has also restricted access for tourists.

Council has tried to work with the local community to generate economic development projects with an endeavour to assist with the National Park transition. One such project is the Mathoura Environmental Education and Research Enterprise Pre-feasibility Study. The Study has focused on environmental education as an economic development opportunity for the Mathoura district, targeting schools, universities and research organisations. The draft business case does not support major capital and operational expenditure to generate economic benefits. A negative cost benefit ratio has been produced as a result of the analysis. There are possible marginal positive economic benefits for low outlays. The prime reason for this result is other facilities competing for a small market share.

A line can be drawn from this result to tourism generally in the Red Gum forests. There are so many other National Parks and facilities that compete with each other. Council understands there are now 800 National Parks in NSW alone.

It should be noted that the market for Murray Shire is largely from Victoria, so that Victorian National Parks are also competitors.

Council is working well with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and can see it has more resources than NSW State Forests for tourist infrastructure development. However, if visitor numbers are to increase it will be incremental at best.

Firewood is a major issue for local communities. Whilst there are opportunities for locals to have access to the forest for firewood under permit, the areas available have been limited. It should be recognised that not all locals are geared up to collect their own firewood. Most sourced firewood through commercial operators. As a result of limited operators and limited areas to source for such operators, the price has increased from \$120 per tonne up to between \$170 and \$280 per tonne. In communities with low socio-economic status these cost increases are very significant.

Loss of employment in small communities has flow on social impacts and Council can envisage a mid-term population loss that can undermine local social, recreational and sporting organisations.

2. **The adherence to management practices on all public land that are mandated for private property holders including fire, weed and pest management**

Council is concerned that the lack of thinning and grazing in the National Park could provide significant fuel and a major forest fire potential. Local Rural Fire Service volunteers have indicated they would be unwilling to go into the forest during major fire events due to perceived dangers of fuel build up

The same concerns are held in respect of noxious weeds and pest management.

3. **Examination of models for the management of public land, including models that provide for conservation outcomes which utilise the principles of "sustainable use"**

Council would encourage the Inquiry to examine other models. It was considered by Council and its community that the Red Gum forest was being harvested in a sustainable manner prior to conversion.

Council is aware of the current thinning trials and is of the view that there can be a multi use National Park catering for sustainable harvesting and conservation outcomes.

It is understood that the Natural Resources Commission recommended that the Red Gum forests can be protected through conservation allowing active management. This active management could provide for commercial timber operations which could then assist in the reverse of the negative economic impacts of the National Parks declaration.

I trust you will consider the information in Council's submission in the Inquiry.

Should you require further information, please contact the undersigned on 03 5884 3302.

Yours sincerely

Greg Murdoch  
**General Manager**

GJM/km  
Encl.



7 September 2009

*Correspondence to:*

The General Manager

PO Box 21

Mathoura NSW 2710

*Administration/General Enquiries:*

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*Engineering/Building & Planning:*

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

email:

admin@murray.nsw.gov.au

website:

www.murray.nsw.gov.au

Forests Assessment  
 Natural Resources Commission  
 GPO Box 4206  
 SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: ASSESSMENT OF RED GUM FORESTS IN THE RIVERINA**

Murray Shire Council is a Local Government Area (LGA) that includes significant areas of State red gum forests. These forests are critical to the social and economic security of residents of Murray Shire. The continuation of the red gum industry is strongly supported by Murray Shire Council. The conversion of these forests to National Parks is strongly opposed by Murray Shire Council.

In making a submission to the Assessment, Council acknowledges that there has already been significant work carried out by the NSW Department of Primary Industries in the development of the *Environment Impact Statement – Harvesting and Associated Road Work Operations in South-Western NSW*. Perusal of this document certainly makes the case for the continuation of the red gum industry as it exists today.

However, Council would make the following points:

1. The red gum forests are essentially “man made” forests and as such need to be actively managed. Forests NSW have a long and proven record in responsibly managing these forests.
2. The *Environment Impact Statement – Harvesting and Associated Road Work Operations in South-Western NSW (EIS)* provides substantial data on the socio-economic impacts. Council is of the view that the figures within the EIS are very conservative and understate the real economic benefits of the industry to the area. In addition, there is minimal information on the industry that exists in Echuca and Moama. It is considered that a more comprehensive study on socio-economic impacts should be carried out.
3. The town of Mathoura within the Murray Shire is a focal point for the red gum industry. Mathoura has been holding its population over an extended period of time. However, the Council has endeavoured to stimulate growth with the development of the Mathoura Business and Visitor Centre. In addition, some years ago the Council sponsored a “Land Give Away” scheme, which

*Head Office:*

21-25 Conargo Street  
 Mathoura NSW 2710

*Branch Office:*

6 Meninya Street  
 Moama NSW 2731



resulted in over 20 new houses being built in the town. This scheme required a huge effort on behalf of Council. The loss of the red gum industry would quickly undo the positive effects of this scheme.

4. It is considered that the security of timber licences should be strengthened. Instead of the current 12 month annual licences, operators should have longer term wood supply agreements for say, 20 years.
5. The State Forests are already accessible to the public and many campers utilise the Forest to access the Murray River. This activity contributes to the tourism industry in the region. It is the Council's view that this contribution would not be altered by any change in management, ie State Forest to National Park. In fact, Council considers that there will be an adverse affect on tourism due to more restrictions being placed on campers. This includes banning of pets and hunting of pests.
6. The red gum industry is part of the heritage of the area. The historic Port of Echuca, as an example, showcases the red gum industry from a historical and working point of view. Red gum products, such as furniture, are still sold in this precinct.
7. The State Forests around Mathoura and Picnic Point have the potential to severely impact on property and human life in a bush fire. Therefore, it is critical that the forests be managed to ensure the risks are minimized. The management of the forests to date by Forests NSW has not resulted in many severe incidents. Council would not be confident that a National Park Management System would provide the same level of protection for life and property.
8. It is recognised that there are Aboriginal sites of significance within the forests. Forests NSW have been effective in protecting these sites over along period of time.
9. Forests NSW have worked effectively with the community and Council to protect and enhance the environmental values of the forest. Council has been involved in joint projects, such as the Bird Hide off Picnic Point Road, as well as a number of walking tracks including bridge structures to enhance the forest for visitors. In addition, Council has been very active in preserving and enhancing native vegetation along its road reserves outside the forest. The Murray Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has also played a key role in fencing and planting native vegetation to enhance habitat for species such as the superb parrot. This work compliments work done on forests by creating connectivity across the landscape.

10. Most of the forest in Murray Shire is managed by Forests NSW. There are minimal opportunities for the use of private forests. Therefore, should the industry cease in State Forests, the industry and economic outcomes would effectively be lost in Murray Shire.
11. Mathoura is a community with low income levels. Natural Gas was proposed for the town some years ago, however, it did not proceed. Firewood is the prime fuel for heating in the town. A change in status of the forest will threaten the availability of lower cost fuel for heating for the Mathoura community.
12. The Cummeragunja community is a small Aboriginal village within Murray Shire. I would point your attention to page 53 of Volume 2 of the EIS, which demonstrates the importance of the red gum industry to the village. In addition, it is understood that at least one (1) Aboriginal person has a wood supply agreement in his own right.
13. The State Forests in Murray Shire are designated as working forests, in conjunction with the RAMSAR Convention. This is international recognition of a working forest that also protects the environment.

I trust you will take this submission into consideration and keep Council informed during the assessment process.

Should you require further information, please contact the undersigned on 03 5884 3302.

Yours sincerely

Greg Murdoch  
**General Manager**

GJM/km





15 December 2009

*Correspondence to:*

The General Manager

PO Box 21

Mathoura NSW 2710

*Administration/General Enquiries:*

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*Engineering/Building & Planning:*

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

email:

[admin@murray.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin@murray.nsw.gov.au)

website:

[www.murray.nsw.gov.au](http://www.murray.nsw.gov.au)

*Head Office:*

21-25 Conargo Street

Mathoura NSW 2710

*Branch Office:*

6 Meninya Street

Moama NSW 2731

The Hon Kristina Keneally MP  
Premier  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Premier

**RE: RED GUM ASSESSMENT**

On behalf of Murray Shire Council, I write with respect to the Red Gum Assessment, noting that the report is to be provided by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to yourself by 21 December 2009.

As a Council, we are very concerned at the impacts of the announcement, made in Parliament on 3 December 2009, which would have reserved a very large area of forest and bring about severe reduction of log volumes, the closure of major mills and cost hundreds of jobs.

In our understanding, the Assessment has not been able to conduct full coverage of the forest resource, develop reliable water modelling or understand complex water management. Yet it has presumed severe climate change impacts on water availability from the Murray River flow. Council also understands that the growth/yield determinations, dependant on water modelling, have also been fraught with insufficient data and modelling which has not been effective for Red Gum forests. In summary, the Assessment has incomplete coverage, is based on unreliable models and produces outcomes with intolerable levels of uncertainty.

Our particular interest is the impacts that the Assessment may have on jobs and our communities. Council's concern is that decisions taken at high levels of uncertainty will incur severe social and economic consequences for our towns, may not be appropriate and will be irreversible.

Prior to the public release of this Assessment, Council would appreciate an opportunity to present a community based option for the future of Red Gum industries. Public presentation prior to such an option would prejudice a viable outcome for the communities.

Senior representatives of Murray Shire Council would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this critical issue. We would be pleased to present the basis of development of a community option, including full scientific expert reference, for your consideration.

Should you require further information, please contact the undersigned on 03 5884 3302.

Yours sincerely

  
Greg Murdoch  
**General Manager**

GJM/km

Copy: The Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Mineral and Forest Resources

The Hon Frank Sartor MP, Minister for Climate Change and the Environment

The Hon Tony Kelly MLC, Minister for Planning; Minister for Infrastructure; Minister for Lands



22 January 2010

**Correspondence to:**

The General Manager

PO Box 21

Mathoura NSW 2710

*Administration/General  
Enquiries:*

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*Engineering/Building &  
Planning:*

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

email:

admin@murray.nsw.gov.au

website:

www.murray.nsw.gov.au

The Hon Frank Sartor MP  
Minister for Climate Change and the Environment  
Level 35 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

**RE: NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION - RIVERINA  
BIOREGION REGIONAL FORESTS ASSESSMENT  
RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT**

I take this opportunity to respond to the report and to the consultations held in Deniliquin on 13 and 14 January 2010, with yourself and other NSW Government representatives.

Murray Shire Council has made its position clear in its previous representations and meetings with the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) during the Report development process. Council is of the view that its vibrant red gum timber industry can co-exist in an environment that protects the ecological values of the forests and its environs.

Council is of the view that the size of the proposed Millewa National Park can be reduced significantly in favor of a Regional Park designation, in which properly managed can give greater scope for the continuation of the Red Gum Industry. Your consideration of this reduction would be appreciated.

**Structural Adjustment for Timber Workers and Mills**

During discussions in Deniliquin, direct questions were asked as to what the structural adjustment packages would be for individual timber workers and milling operations. No definitive answer was given. The people involved need some certainty so they can consider their options.

In addition, will there be opportunities for timber workers to be offered positions in the National Parks?

I request that information in this regard be provided immediately.

*Head Office:*

21-25 Conargo Street  
Mathoura NSW 2710

*Branch Office:*

6 Meninya Street  
Moama NSW 2731

**Forests NSW and National Parks Employees**

Little information has been forthcoming in relation to the future of employees of Forests NSW. Council requests information on the proposed transition of these employees. Will staff of Forests NSW be retained to manage Regional Parks, or will they become employees of National Parks? Will National Parks manage all aspects of the National Parks system?

Council requests information on the current number of Forests NSW employees, future numbers, as well the proposed number of new National Parks employees for the local area.

You will appreciate that a reduction in overall numbers will be another economic loss to the local region. Your urgent advice would be appreciated.

**Forests NSW Infrastructure**

In the event that National Parks are to replace the Forests NSW presence, it is assumed that existing infrastructure including depots, plant and equipment will be taken over. Council is extremely concerned that the Forests NSW depot (in Mathoura) should continue as a place of work for Forests NSW employees or employees of National Parks.

Please provide clarification of the future arrangements.

**Fire Risk**

The risk of bushfire is a significant concern for both locals and visitors to the region. The anxiety surrounding the risk of bushfire has heightened with the announcement of a National Park, as no information has been provided relating to how this risk will be managed.

Will current resources and access to the forest be maintained?

Communication with the community regarding this most important issue is urgently required.

**Trans-border Iconic National Parks**

Recommendations 9 and 16 of the NRC report promote the establishment of Trans-border Iconic National Parks. In Council's original submission and in discussions with NRC representatives the point was made that tourism would not increase by the mere creation of a National Park.

The report indicates that there will be "regional development opportunities" as a result of the establishment of the Trans-border Iconic National Parks.



Council is concerned that the number of visitors to the new National Park is not going to reach the levels anticipated in the NRC report and will certainly not replace the Red Gum timber industry. To highlight this please see the enclosed 2010 report titled "Required Expansion in Tourism Activity to Replace Lost Timber Industry Output".

The Millewa Forest is currently well utilised by tourists for casual bush camping, using the waterways for recreation and fishing. There is a danger that the current level of visitation could diminish as a result of some negative perceptions surrounding National Parks.

However, if nature-based tourism is to work and become a source of real "regional development opportunities", as indicated in the report, a significant commitment of funding, resources and a concerted effort by the NSW State Government is essential.

Various studies undertaken in the area have identified opportunities for eco-tourism and nature-based tourism. These include (and are enclosed) Backroads Trail Scoping Plan (2009) Campaspe and Murray Shires Infrastructure Gap Analysis (2008), Echuca Moama Destination Development Plan (2007) and the Mathoura Ecotourism Strategy (2002).

Council is willing to collaborate with the Government to assist in developing these opportunities. I have listed the following issues to highlight Council's views on the opportunities.

- ***Phase in the introduction of the Parks:***  
Prepare for the National Park, before declaring it.

First, create a plan outlining how to create the National Park and build the tourism industry, then build the required infrastructure and then declare a National Park. Have all the required information about what the changes actually mean to the existing user groups, prepared and ready to distribute, before setting a National Park in place.

Due to the severe impact the introduction of a National Park will have on the local economy and community, it is strongly recommended that the introduction of the National Park be phased in over time, to provide the community with more chance to plan for, adapt to and survive the changes.

If a National Park is declared without thorough planning, or the implementation of infrastructure, there will be a detrimental gap between the existing visitors leaving and the attraction of new visitors.

- ***Reduce the size of the proposed National Park:***  
Certain areas of the park should be retained as Regional Park, to allow visitors to bring their pets and to collect firewood.

The overwhelming majority of current visitors to the forest bring their pets, collect firewood and camp along the rivers. If the proposed area was to all become National Park, a significant amount of our current visitors would no longer visit the forest.

By creating separate areas of both Regional and National Parks, visitors will have a choice of which area they wish to utilise. The introduction of Regional Parks would need to be located along the waterways. This will assist in retaining existing visitors.

- ***Retain existing visitors:***

Undertake an immediate communication campaign to reverse the already falling visitor numbers and try to prevent any further decline.

This should target both the Melbourne Metro and Regional Victorian markets, which is where our region's visitors come from.

The campaign needs to address people's perceptions about what a National Park means in NSW, as opposed to Victoria. The key messages should clarify exactly what the changes will mean and clarify that there will be areas of both Regional and National Park (point people to the website for maps).

It also needs to be clearly communicated that the risk of fire is being actively managed. There is a very real threat that visitors will stop coming, as a result of their perceptions that the risk of fire in the Millewa is increased because of the change to a National Park. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) need to very actively reassure and encourage existing visitors to continue coming to the area.

There is also a concern as to what charges might be levied on visitors entering the park.

- ***Do not restrict visitors to designated camping grounds:***

Campers need to have the freedom to choose their own camping spots, just as they have been doing for years.

As the riverbanks are constantly changing, a camper finding their camp ground is part of the experience for them. All campers are different (e.g. some have caravans, RV's, boats etc) and they have different requirements.

The low river banks and good road access to the rivers means it is suitable for visitors to set up camp all along the river – which is why they visit!

- ***National Parks and Wildlife Service coordinate various tours of the Forest:***

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) organise, conduct and promote a variety of tours within the Forest.

NPWS must have staff working out of the Mathoura Visitor Information Centre (VIC) to conduct tours. NPWS will also need to attract and engage private enterprise to set up tour operations.

Tours could include forest tours, fishing tours, indigenous history tours, bird watching tours, canoe tours, etc. Tours can be promoted and sold through the VIC's (on a commission basis).

Enclosed are photos of some of the wetlands and birdlife which could be incorporated in these tours.

Council has been working for many years trying to attract and assist tour operators to get established within the region, without success. It is expected that NPWS will need to work hard to attract tour operators to the area, or assist local operators to get started in the region.

NPWS also need to establish and promote self-guided tours.

- ***Development of an iconic, must-see attraction:***  
Construction of an attraction, such as an air walk or fire tower.

This has been a recommendation in previous tourism strategies, to help develop tourism in the region. Echuca-Moama consistently attracts significant visitor numbers. However it can be difficult to convince these visitors to drive the 40km to Mathoura and the Forest. An iconic attraction would go a long way towards drawing these visitors to the Millewa.

Echuca-Moama provides a brilliant supply of visitors, which could be tapped into if the right attraction was developed and promoted.

- ***NPWS lease space within the Mathoura, Echuca-Moama and Deniliquin Visitor Information Centres and join local tourism associations to help promote the Park:***

There must be information provided within the local VIC's and liaison with the local tourism marketing organisations to promote the Parks.

The VIC's already have the infrastructure in place to attract and manage visitors to the area, so is the ideal location for information about the Parks. However information about the new Parks must be coordinated and supplied by NPWS.

NPWS needs to participate in the local and regional Tourism Organisations, specifically the Murray Regional Tourism Board and Echuca Moama and District Tourism Association, as well as relevant Deniliquin Organisations.



- ***Provision of appropriate infrastructure and information for visitors:***

Infrastructure such as toilets, car parks, directional signage, interpretive signage, walking/cycling tracks, boardwalks, picnic areas, lighting, seating etc must be provided by NPWS.

Information about the risk of fire and how NPWS is actively managing this significant risk should also be provided to visitors.

- ***NPWS conduct ongoing promotional campaigns to attract visitors to the region:***

Once appropriate infrastructure is located within the Park, NPWS need to conduct ongoing promotional campaigns to attract existing and new visitors to the region.

The campaigns could communicate the key message that the Millewa Park has something for everyone (i.e. we have both National and Regional Parks – so visitors can bring their pets and collect firewood - in certain areas). This fact will differentiate Millewa from many Victorian Parks, where the rules are different, possibly resulting in an increase in Victorian visitors into the Millewa Park.

- ***NSW State Government to drive the development of the bird watching industry in the region:***

NSW Government should commit funding and expertise and work with Council to develop a major bird watching industry within the region.

In the past few years, numerous reports (listed above) have identified bird watching is a major opportunity for this region.

The Millewa Forest, with its magnificent wildlife and its proximity to Melbourne and ease of access provides enormous potential to attract huge numbers of bird watchers to the region.

Bird watchers are great visitors to attract, as they mostly have good conservation values and take care of the environments they visit.

Funding needs to be provided for things like:

- the attraction of bird watching tour operators and assistance for setting up operators;
- promotion of the region as a bird watching destination;
- attendance at tourism travel and trade shows (e.g. Australian Tourism Exchange) to sell the product to international buyers;
- tapping into bird watching networks to form partnerships and increase promotion and visitation;
- interpretive information.

Opportunities exist in the future to develop major bird watching events in the region to promote bird watching and conservation of the Parks.

It needs to be remembered that water (or lack of water) within the forest has a significant impact on the amount of bird activity and therefore visitors to the area.

- ***Construction of a cycling/walking track between Picnic Point and Barmah:***

A 17km track along the Murray River, incorporating camping grounds and interpretive information.

This walk should be promoted as an iconic Murray River walk and marketed differently to different types of visitors, e.g. a one-day walk, part of a bus tour (i.e. drop off in Barmah and collect again at Picnic Point), overnight camping incorporated into the walk etc.

- ***Construction of a boardwalk and wharf on the edge of the Moira Lakes:***

A viewing platform and pontoon would provide a focal point for visitors to get to and obtain interpretive information.

A viewing platform by the lakes would mean there is a better chance of visitors viewing water and therefore wild life. This project would improve access (via water and land) to an important site within the forest, which currently has limited access and could be incorporated into bus, boat and walking tours.

- ***Improve access points for small boats along the Murray River:***

Improvements at Fisherman's Bend, Poverty Point and Porters Plain.

Stabilise the bank (flatten and put down rock) to assist prevent erosion and provide a safer place to launch a small boats.

- ***The rebuilding of Liston Bridge:***

Liston Bridge crosses over the Gulpa Creek and requires reconstruction.

Liston Bridge forms part of the popular Gulpa Creek Walking Trail and is in need of repair, prior to further promotion of the walk to visitors.

- ***Investigate involvement in the Murray Valley Trail:***

The Murray Valley Trail is a Trail developed by the Murray Darling Association. The Trail is a network of tracks and trails along the Murray River, with the aim to educate the community about the Murray River, its ecosystems, Indigenous culture and heritage. See enclosed information, sourced from their website.

- ***Maintain access to river frontage for individuals and major events such as YMCA Murray River Canoe Marathon:***

This is an iconic event involving a 404km, five day flat-water race along the Murray River between Yarrawonga and Swan Hill. The event began in 1969 and now has more than 750 paddlers and over 3000 support crew and volunteers each year.

The event is organised by the YMCA, who invest all funds raised from the event into the social, environmental and economic sustainability of the Murray Region.

Access to the Murray River through the Millewa Forest is vital to this event taking place.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I look forward to working with you to real "regional development opportunities" for our community.

Should you require further information, please contact the undersigned on 03 5884 3302.

Yours sincerely

~  
Greg Murdoch  
**General Manager**

GJM/bh



29 January 2010

*Correspondence to:*

The General Manager  
PO Box 21  
Mathoura NSW 2710

*Administration/General Enquiries:*

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*Engineering/Building & Planning:*

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*email:*

[admin@murray.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin@murray.nsw.gov.au)

*website:*

[www.murray.nsw.gov.au](http://www.murray.nsw.gov.au)

*Head Office:*

21-25 Conargo Street  
Mathoura NSW 2710

*Branch Office:*

6 Meninya Street  
Moama NSW 2731

The Hon Frank Sartor MP  
Minister for Climate Change and the Environment  
Level 35 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

**RE: NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION - RIVERINA  
BIOREGION REGIONAL FORESTS ASSESSMENT  
RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT**

Further to Council's submission of 22 January 2010, I advise that Council representatives have had a further opportunity to meet with members of the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), including John Williams at a public forum in Mathoura and a Local Government meeting in Deniliquin on Thursday 28 January 2010.

Discussions took place with affected stakeholders and Local Government representatives from throughout the region, who are extremely concerned that the declaration of a new park system, in lieu of the current State Forest system, will have dire consequences on the economic and social viability of the region. The impacts on timber employees, the mills and local business will be significant.

Therefore, I would implore the State Government in its decision making process to ensure a significant period of transition. The transition would involve staging the declaration of National Park and other Park tenures to enable the red gum industry to have a wind down transition of at least five (5) years.

This would allow the timber industry to adjust relative to the availability of the existing timber resource as it goes offline in a scaled manner over the five (5) year period. It would also give the opportunity to the State Government to help introduce new technology to the industry itself, to assist its sustainability with less timber resources. Obviously, it will save the immediate economic pain of an immediate transition.

Such a transition will also assist the State Government, through National Parks, to develop infrastructure, allocate resources (including staff) and properly market and promote the Parks, as suggested in my previous submission, in a staged way. National Parks could then have the opportunity to build the profile of the Iconic National Park and support that Icon with the necessary infrastructure and resources to make eco tourism truly successful.

Unless there is a transition as suggested, there will be severe economic and social consequences in the short term with no chance of any early substitute industry and business that eco tourism or new timber technology may bring.

I implore you to consider this proposal and would be happy to elaborate on any aspect.

Should you require further information, please contact the undersigned on 03 5884 3302.

Yours sincerely

Greg Murdoch  
**General Manager**

GJM/bh





12 May 2010

*Correspondence to:*

The General Manager  
PO Box 21  
Mathoura NSW 2710

*Administration/General Enquiries:*

☎ (03) 5884 3302

☎ (03) 5884 3417

*Engineering/Building & Planning:*

☎ (03) 5884 3400

☎ (03) 5884 3417

email:

[admin@murray.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin@murray.nsw.gov.au)

website:

[www.murray.nsw.gov.au](http://www.murray.nsw.gov.au)

*Head Office:*

21-25 Conargo Street  
Mathoura NSW 2710

*Branch Office:*

6 Meninya Street  
Moama NSW 2731

The Hon Kristina Keneally MP  
Premier  
Level 40 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Premier

**RE: RED GUM FORESTS –  
PROPOSED NATIONAL PARKS LEGISLATION**

Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC) request an urgent meeting with you to discuss the dire ramifications of the above legislation on the affected communities in our region.

Council's affected by the recent NRC Regional Assessment Report in River Red Gums have been holding discussions with the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water about the probable effects on the various communities of the Southern Riverina of the proposed declaration of various state forests as National Parks, Regional Parks and Indigenous Protected Areas.

The united opinion of the Council's involved, being Balranald, Berrigan, Deniliquin, Leeton, Murray, Murrumbidgee and Wakool, has been to oppose the declaration of the National Parks and to urge the retention of a large scale red gum timber industry in the region.

The reasons for this are varied, but principally involve our opposition to a loss of an industry that provides an input into the regional community of \$80 million annually (recent estimates of losses to the community amount to \$105 million annually).

The compensation package put forward by the government is grossly inadequate. The timber mills require compensation of \$27 million, in addition to the \$12 million already on offer.

The communities require additional compensation to offset the economic loss that will be suffered by the loss of the red gum timber industry. Please find attached a list of some suggestions of needed community infrastructure as well as suggested infrastructure that would need to be built in the proposed National Parks and Regional Parks. The councils have additional ideas about the National Parks infrastructure.

As can be seen from the list of Community Infrastructure, there are many items that add up to far more than what is on offer in the government assistance package. The southern councils have compiled this list. Obviously, Murrumbidgee Shire and Leeton Shire would request some infrastructure assistance in their areas.

In the southern region, the following are the highest priorities:

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Air Service Subsidy   | \$ 1,000,000 |
| Deniliquin Airport Upgrade  | \$ 4,500,000 |
| Employ Business Development Officers -<br>Say 3 Positions for 5 Years | \$ 1,500,000 |
| Business Development Jobs Growth Fund<br>(5 Years) - \$3M per year    | \$15,000,000 |
| Riverina Regional Community Infrastructure Fund -<br>\$3M Annually    | \$ 3,000,000 |

The Air Service Subsidy is requested together with the upgrade of the Deniliquin Airport as a regional initiative, since the entire region suffers from the lack of an RPT service. These two (2) items are tied together.

The employment of Regional Development Officers and the setting up of a Jobs Growth Fund are tied together as a regional initiative. These would be required to offset the direct job losses due to the loss of the red gum industry. It is considered these measures should be administered by NSW Industry and Investment rather than the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water. Despite promises by the government of additional jobs growth from tourism, the councils concerned feel that the above is required in addition to that promised tourism growth.

The last item involves the setting up of a Riverina Regional Community Infrastructure Fund to provide for necessary Community Infrastructure on an ongoing basis.

The remaining items listed on the spreadsheet are needed going forward in the region, however the high priority items listed above are needed immediately, should the declaration of the National Parks and Regional Parks go ahead.

Should you wish to discuss the above, please don't hesitate to contact the undersigned, or one of the other General Managers of the Shires of Berrigan, Balranald, Murray or Wakool.

Yours sincerely

Terry Hogan  
**Chairman, RAMROC**

GJM/km  
Encl.



# The National Park was a political not an environmental decision

## The editorial prediction...

*Sydney Morning Herald* state political editor, Andrew Clennell, had no doubts about what he believed was really behind the announcement of an NRC inquiry, writing on August 15 2009.:

*The policy is an attempt by the Premier, Nathan Rees, to win back some of the green movement and hopefully secure Greens preferences for the state election - the Greens vote is expected to be very high amid discontent over both major parties...*



## The Premier's decision...

The NRC, struggling with the magnitude of its task, asked for and was given an extension of time by Premier Rees to complete the final report. But storm clouds were gathering on Rees's horizon and a week later, with rumours of an impending change of leadership circulating in the media, he suddenly pre-empted the assessment, declaring that he would save the red gums by putting them in a national park.

*Premier Nathan Rees today announced he would save River Red Gums in the state's south-west by declaring 42,077 hectares of the Millewa Group Red Gum Forests as National Park.*

And his reason?

*Already under attack from the drought and climate change, this habitat is fast approaching a tipping point where we risk losing it for ever.*

Press release issued by Nathan Rees, December 3 2009

## The Greens' threat...

*"This government will desperately need Greens preferences at this election," Mr Cohen said. "My position is, only if they deserve it and have earned it. The river red gums are pivotal as far as I'm concerned. We won't be giving over preferences automatically at this election. I will be recommending that we don't simply recommend preferences either way. Labor will come begging ... but if they don't deliver on these forests in a sustainable way they can go to hell."*

*The Australian*, February 23 2010



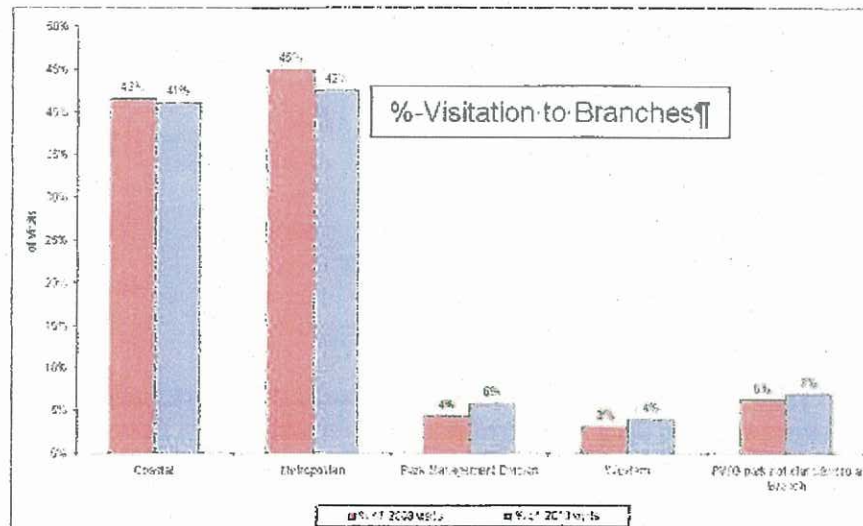
## The lesson...

*"Let me give you a lesson in politics. The Greens hold 15 per cent of the vote. And if we are to stay in power, we must hold their preferences to maintain city seats. They want a significant national park in red gum."*



National Party member Andrew Fraser, quoting a witness at the Gulpa Sawmill meeting In January 2010, during the bill debate recorded in *Hansard*, May 20 2010.

# Tourists can't replace timber cutters



SOURCE: Environment NSW website. Accessed April 26 2012

Over 80% of tourist visits to NSW national parks are to coastal or metropolitan ones.

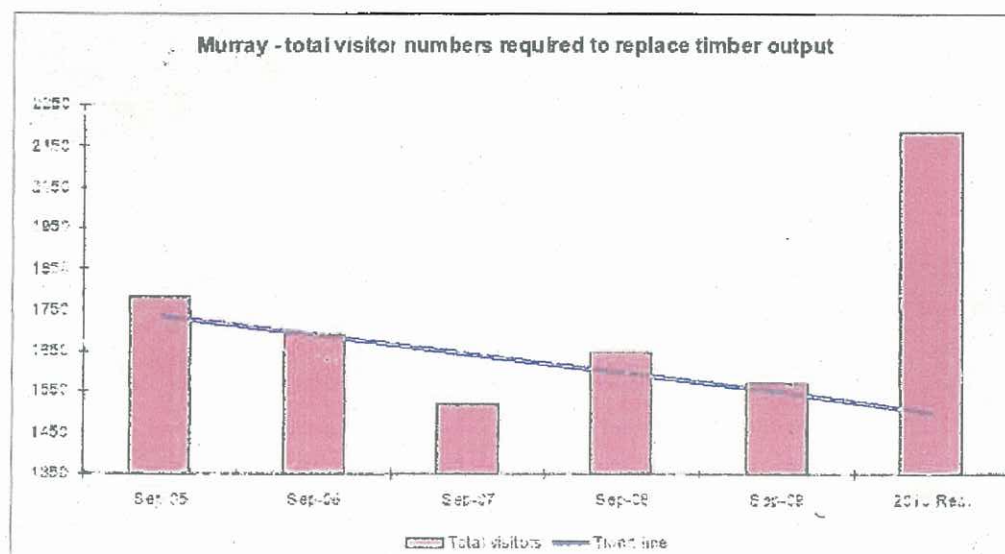
Only 4% come to the western part of the state.

Of the five parks with highest visitation four, Blue Mountains, Kuring-gal, Lane Cove and Royal, are metropolitan.

The fifth, Kosciuszko, contains all of the state's ski resorts.

The NRC estimated that the timber industry in state forests contributed about \$48 million to the regional economy.

Economics consultant Dianna Gibbs\* calculated that we would need almost 2 million **EXTRA** visitors a year to replace it.



SOURCE: Report by Dianna Gibbs & Associates for NSW Forest Products Association. January 2010