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To:

Department of Environment Land Water and Planning
(DELWP)

"Forest Reports"

Via Email - Forest.Reports@delwp.vic.gov.au

May 2nd, 2017

--URGENT--

Logging in Endangered Crayfish Habitat imminent, immediate action required by DELWP

To DELWP staff,

I write to inform you of the presence of Orbost Spiny Crayfish within VicForests planned logging coupe 841-504-0023 on Fern Tree rd, East Gippsland in the Ellery forest block.

I understand that logging in the Fern Tree rd area is imminent and VicForests are due to commence roading works in the area as soon as this week.

GECO conducted two riparian search surveys along streams bordering coupe 841-504-0023 on the night of January 24th and into the morning of January 25th 2017.

One crayfish was located by Owen Hanson at location 55 H 652731 5857949 (GDA 94) in the stream on the northern border of the proposed logging coupe. This crayfish was positively identified as Orbost Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus diversus*) due to the presence of four mesal carpal spines.

Photos of this crayfish are attached as well as a photo of the crayfish with GPS on satellite mode (note: this photo was taken minutes after the waypoint was recorded, therefore coordinates displayed on satellite mode differ slightly (10m) from those recorded on the waypoint and in the coordinates written above and displayed as the location on the attached map).

A second crayfish was located by Andrew Lincoln in the stream on the southern border of the proposed logging coupe at location 55 H 652951 5857586 (GDA 94). This crayfish has not yet been identified to the species level, however it is highly likely to be Orbost Spiny Crayfish. We will provide photos in the coming days.

This preliminary email is to immediately inform DELWP of the presence of protected crayfish within coupe 841-504-0023 and to ensure legally required protections are implemented prior to the commencement of any logging operations.

The legislation relevant to this matter (*The Planning Standards for Timber Harvesting Operations in Victoria's State Forests, 2014*) requires a 100m buffer on streams extending one kilometer upstream and downstream from Orbost Spiny Crayfish detection sites.

Inadequate Vicforests pre logging surveys in the Ferntree rd forests

VicForests has commissioned a fauna survey of coupe 841-504-0023 and several other coupes on Fern Tree rd and failed to find any Orbost Spiny Crayfish. We question the quality and thoroughness of the VicForests commissioned surveys that we believe have failed to adequately apply the precautionary principle as required under the Code of Practice for Timber Production.

Logging should not proceed in coupes 841-504-0023, 841-504-0024, 841-504-0022 and 841-504-0003 until thorough surveys have been completed and required zoning amendments that protect Orbost Spiny Crayfish habitat are implemented.

As VicForests has failed to appropriately survey these areas GECO and Fauna and Flora Research Collective are now conducting surveys and research in this area to properly assess the presence and abundance of Orbost Spiny Crayfish in coupes 841-504-0023, 841-504-0024, 841-504-0022 and 841-504-0003.

Further information relating to the crayfish detection's detailed above and in the attached map can be provided in the coming days if required.

We strongly urge DELWP to commission independent surveys of all watercourses in this area to properly assess the presence and abundance of Orbost Spiny Crayfish and implement the required protection measures.

Potential threats to Yellow Bellied Gliders

DELWP's Yellow Bellied Glider survey standard document states that under ideal conditions single visit detection probability is about 90% and under average conditions three site visits are required to obtain an equivalent level of detection probability.

VicForests has failed to conduct multiple surveys for Yellow Bellied Gliders in coupes 841-504-0023 and other coupes along Fern Tree rd such as 841-504-0024, 841-504-0022 and 841-504-0003.

Single surveys of these coupes were conducted in late autumn 2016 under conditions that were not ideal with cool temperatures. Without multiple surveys (at least three site visits) for Yellow Bellied Gliders in these coupes VicForests has failed to apply the precautionary principle and for this reason logging should not proceed as threats to potential populations of protected Yellow Bellied Gliders remain unknown and precautionary approach must be taken by VicForests to meet their obligations under the Code of Practice for Timber Production, specifically sections 2.2.2.2 and 2.2.2.4.

2.2.2.2

The precautionary principle must be applied to the conservation of biodiversity values. The application of the precautionary principle will be consistent with relevant monitoring and research that has improved the understanding of the effects of forest management on forest ecology and conservation values.

2.2.2.4

During planning identify biodiversity values listed in the Management Standards and Procedures prior to roading, harvesting, tending and regeneration. Address risks to these values through management actions consistent with the Management Standards and Procedures such as appropriate location of coupe infrastructure, buffers, exclusion areas, modified harvest timing, modified silvicultural techniques or retention of specific structural attributes.”

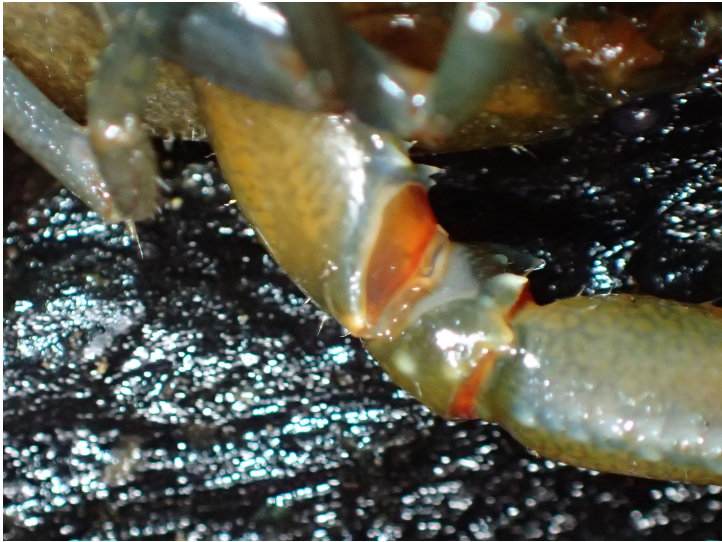
We urge you to immediately act to prevent any logging operations in the Ferntree Rd forests until thorough and appropriate pre logging surveys for protected species have been conducted and so legally required zoning amendments such as Special Protection Zones for Orbost Spiny Crayfish can be established.

Regards,

Ed Hill

Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO)

Appendix – photos of crayfish at location 55 H 652731 5857949 (GDA 94)

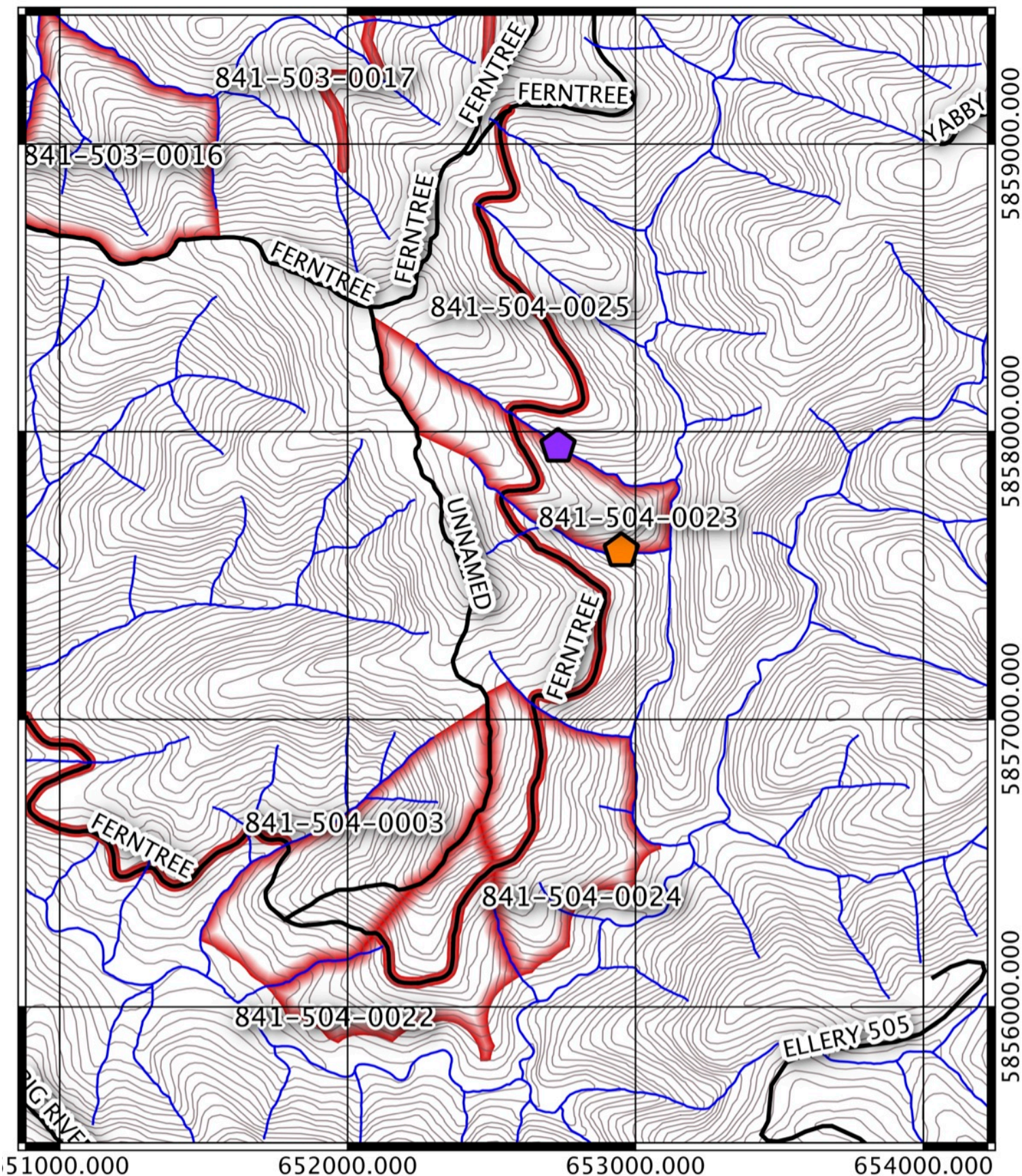


Appendix –

Additional photos of Crayfish detected at location 55 H 652951 5857586 (GDA 94).



Ferntree rd logging coupes and Crayfish detection's - Context map




Legend


 Orbest Spiny Cray

 Crayfish (not identified to species level)

 Watercourses

 Roads

 Contours (10m intervals)

 VicForests' logging coupes

250 0 250 500 750 1000 m

Map scale 1:10,000

Projection EPSG 28355
GDA 94/MGA Zone 55



North

Map produced by Ed Hill