

PRELIMINARY AUDIT OF YABBRA STATE FOREST COMPARTMENTS 162 and 163 SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT 1

Dailan Pugh, February 2010
For North East Forest Alliance

On the 1st February 2010 I accompanied Forests NSW on an inspection of forestry operations in Yabbra State Forest. While a large variety of issues were discussed, the issue of rainforest logging was highlighted for further resolution and is dealt with herein. It appears that some 1.7 ha of mapped rainforest has been logged and intensively disturbed in contravention of the **Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999** and that rainforest trees were intentionally felled for timber.

It was stated on the site inspection that no Environmental Protection Licence had been sought or obtained for any of the operations in compartments 162 and 163. While this means that the numerous breaches of 20 conditions of the EPL I identified in my preliminary audit do not legally apply, some of the relevant requirements are included in the Fisheries Licence and/or incorporated into the Harvesting Plan and thus remain breaches of these. Irrespective of this, it is clear that the Environment Operations Act 1997 and best practice was openly flouted. Since my preliminary report, Forests NSW have undertaken remediation works at a number of road crossings of unmapped and mapped streams (only one of which was identified by me) and have installed cross-banks on the snig track I identified as eroding, though they have not attempted to remediate the numerous snig tracks and burnt areas around drainage lines. It is evident that the failures to implement adequate erosion-control measures are far more extensive than what I have so far identified.

During the 1 February inspection with Forests NSW the rainforest area within the claimed plantation was not inspected as Forests NSW claimed that no rainforest trees had been felled and I explained that I had not specifically assessed it during my preliminary audit (I had not realised it was mapped rainforest). After Forests NSW had departed, David Milledge and myself briefly inspected the logged rainforest area. When later checked on the relevant maps it was apparent that logging had extended 140m into mapped rainforest, intensively disturbing some 1.7 ha. Numerous trees of a variety of rainforest species had been bulldozed out and piled up. Although some had coppiced, many had died and lost their leaves and were thus unidentifiable.

In this brief inspection, more than 100 trees of at least 20 rainforest species were identified to have been felled or otherwise killed within the mapped rainforest during the harvesting operation. The species comprised:

Black Apple, Black Booyong, Bleeding Heart, Bolwarra, Brown Tamarind, Brush Box, Cudgerie, Guioa, Hoop Pine, Pencil Cedar, Purple Cherry, Red Kamala, Scrub Turpentine, Shiny-leaved Stinging Tree, Silky Myrtle, Soapy Box, Socketwood, Thorny Yellowwood, White Bolly Gum, and Yellow Aspen.

Most of these trees were apparently bulldozed over as part of the operation, many such trees being greater than 20cm dbh, with some greater than 40cm dbh (diameter at

breast height (dbh) was estimated by eye). Examples with location (AGD 66) and dbh are as follows:

Black Apple (E451371, N6838341), >40cm dbh., distinctly fluted trunk with fig enveloping it, pushed over;

Black Booyong (E451213, N6838369), >50cm dbh, distinctly buttressed trunk, pushed over;

Black Booyong (E451201, N6838444), >70cm dbh, distinctly buttressed trunk, cut down;

Hoop Pine (E451343, N6838340), >70cm dbh, distinct bark, cut down; and,

Soapy Box (E451263, N6838422), >50cm dbh., distinctly fluted trunk, pushed over.

The Black Apple, Soapy Box, and Hoop Pine were within mapped rainforest and both the Hoop Pine and one of the Black Booyongs had been cut down (the Hoop Pine log appears to have been taken, though the Black Booyong log apparently shattered when felled and it is unknown whether any timber was taken). A variety of other rainforest trees had been sawn up, though we did not ascertain whether sections had been removed.

It is apparent that the primary target was Flooded Gum, though there appears to have been an intent to maximise disturbance to rainforest species when obtaining these. I noted on the inspection that when this area of rainforest was previously logged it was common practice to plant Flooded Gum along snig tracks, and this appears to have been what occurred here. I stopped this practice in 1980 in the then Urbenville Management Area when I complained to the Urbenville office of then NSW Forestry Commission that the planting of eucalypts in rainforest was inappropriate as it would later be claimed that it wasn't really rainforest. I have apparently been proven right.

Despite my previous indication in my preliminary audit that the logging in the claimed plantation area resembled rainforest logging, it was noted during the 1 February inspection that Forests NSW were once again planting eucalypt seedlings in logged and roaded parts of this mapped rainforest stand.

The logging and destruction of mapped rainforest that has occurred in this section of Yabba SF is a clear breach of the Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999. The complying development standards for plantations of Division 3 of Part 4 of The Plantations and Reafforestation Code (established under the **Plantations and Reafforestation Act 1999**) requires that rainforest must be retained (clause 22 is breached if it was not identified as such) and Division 6 requires that it must be managed so as to conserve its biodiversity and ecological integrity (if the mapped rainforest was identified in accordance with clause 22 then clauses 55 and 56 were breached). Cow pads were found within the rainforest and there appears to have been no attempt to exclude cattle in breach of clause 57. There may well have been other breaches of the Code regarding the accreditation of this "plantation" and the operation requirements of the code.