

Second week in forest battle

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THE Forestry Commission will head back to Chaelundi today to begin week two of its attempt to begin logging in the State Forest.

With no new strategy but steadfast determination the Commission workers will once again face protesters who dispute the EIS which cleared the way for logging of three old growth compartments of the forest.

Forestry Commission spokesman Mr John Murray said yesterday the Commission had only entered the forest at the weekend to patrol its plant and had not attempted to do further work in the area.

"We have only patrolled the area this weekend but we're anticipating further obstruction when we head back up there," he said.

Grafton police Inspector Ron Hockey said yesterday a new force of police would be sent to the forest today.

He said it was possible the forest would

be "closed" some time today, which would mean protesters would be considered trespassers.

"Other than that nothing has changed and we'll just head into our second week of this," he said.

The Police and the Forestry Commission will face a renewed force of protesters when they return to Chaelundi, according to North East Forest Alliance Sydney coordinator Mr John Corkill.

Mr Corkill said nearly 200 protesters were at the scene yesterday with further reinforcements expected during the week. He said the protesters would tackle the Commission with "non-violent tactics" and "determination and resolve".

"The Forestry Commission has not gained one inch of progress in the week they have been at it up there," he said.

"They are dead but will not lie down."

Mr Corkill said he was disappointed and frustrated that Minister for Conservation

and Land Management Mr Garry West announced the Department of Planning had recommended against a request for an interim conservation order.

The order, under the Heritage Act, would protect the forest until the matter could be resolved.

"The matter had not even been looked into by the Heritage Council and we were told by a media release that Mr West said it had been knocked back.

"They have not even called for the documents that would back up our case."

He said the Forestry Commission was running a "disgraceful campaign" and should be embarrassed if it attempted to have the State Forest closed to the public to enable it to have protesters arrested as trespassers.

Twelve more protesters were arrested and charged early Friday night.

Charges included resisting arrest, causing obstruction and hindering police.

I think the answer's wrong

SIR: The issue over logging in Chaelundi State Forest near Dorrigo, highlights problems with the environmental impact statement (EIS) system.

Facts about the ecological value of the compartments in question include:

- they have never been logged;
- many of the trees are one to two metres in diameter and about 50 metres tall;
- occurrence of exceptionally high densities of glider possums;
- occurrence of other rare or uncommon animals including powerful owl, sooty owl, tiger quoll and beech skink;
- three rare plant species have been recorded;
- there are patches of mature subtropical rainforest.

Despite these undisputed values, the Forestry Commission, as the determining authority, has chosen to proceed with logging.

The question I would like answered is what ecological values are required before logging is stopped.

The minister responsible recently claimed the Forestry Commission had done everything right in this issue, which is debatable but I, along with many other people, believe it has got the wrong answer.

Phil Gilmour,
Darkwood Road,
Thora.

July 30

SMH

Police in forest

THE *Northern Star* editorial 'A logjam of ill-feeling' cannot stand without some clarification.

There is no evidence to support your claim that I have criticised police for 'not being forceful enough'.

No reporter from your newspaper has approached me on this matter. My criticisms have been aimed at government and directed at the need for allocation of greater police resources in Chaelundi.

It is astounding that police are expected to re-enter the forest each day and start again because of 'limited resources'. I have stated in many interviews my respect and admiration

for the local police, as they stand in the middle of this confrontation, without adequate back-up, to enforce the law.

As you know, I am well qualified to understand and sympathise with the police officers on duty in Chaelundi State Forest.

There are many inherent difficulties in your call for mediation or a cooling off period. Who should pull out? Do you believe that the Forestry Commission and industry, who are complying with the law and have met all environmental standards, should hand the forest over to a minority group openly practising civil disobedience?

The NSW Forest Products Association has attempted to meet with the North-East Forest Alliance to mediate and draw up a code of conduct.

The Alliance's John Corkill has told me that our proposal cannot be considered before a full meeting of the Alliance in August.

This is despite his knowledge that forest harvesting will begin before then.

Mr Corkill has said that

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any discussions we hold should not be confined to the Chaelundi issue but should embrace a much wider spectrum of forest issues.

Therein lies the problem. Industry's experience of mediation, viz a viz Washpool and Eden, is the requirement by extremists that, native forest harvesting cease, totally.

This is a rather difficult position from which to negotiate!

Chaelundi has gone beyond the environmental question. It is now a matter of law and order.

When does the will of the community, as expressed through its government, prevail over anarchy and destruction?

We are harvesting our forests with care. The living proof is in the forests.

Unfortunately, the greens can't see the truth for the trees!

COL DORBER,
Manager,
NSW Forest Products
Association.

(The source for the allegation that Mr Dorber criticised police for 'not being forceful enough' was AAP - Editor.)

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Defences fall swiftly in forest war

By environment writer
BRIAN WOODLEY

THE battle began yesterday between loggers and conservationists over the Chaelundi State Forest in north-east NSW — a confrontation for a piece of territory small in area but looming large in principle.

At least 14 protesters were arrested as 100 conservationists successfully blocked attempts by the Forestry Commission of NSW to build a temporary road into the heart of Chaelundi.

One of the first arrests of a long day was Ned, who held a bulldozer at bay for an hour when he shackled himself to it.

But his exploit faded into the background as police from towns all over north-eastern NSW encountered their next obstacle.

After Ned came the Battle of the Pipes, a remarkable conflict in which the ingenuity of the anti-logging protesters was more than matched by that of the NSW Police Rescue Squad.

Daybreak at Chaelundi began with about 100 demonstrators emerging from their tents to face about 30 police.

Inspector Alan Becke of Lismore said the police were there after the commission complained it was being stopped from carrying out its lawful business of overseeing the construction of a temporary road for logging access to three stands of tallowwood trees.

The commission's district forester for Dorrigo, Mr John Murray, said the previously unlogged stands covered a catchment of 561ha.

Of this, 430ha were to be harvested, but under a new commission guideline to recognise their value as a wildlife habitat, 50 per cent of the area's forest canopy would be preserved.

In total, less than 5000 trees were to be felled — sufficient to keep three logging contractors and three local sawmills in business for some months.



A demonstrator is arrested by police, whose speed in dismantling barricades surprised the protesters yesterday — Picture: SAHILAN HAYES

Facing the police was a determined band of environmentalists, most of them local, some with small children and some who had camped in the forest for months.

After Ned was cut free and hauled off to a prison van, the bulldozer approached the first barricade.

A trench filled with firewood was seized before it could be set alight, but then came the pipes. These, taken from the

roadside where the commission had stacked them for future drainage, were embedded in the road.

Inside each pipe was a person claiming to be chained to a block of concrete.

The chains were real in some cases and not in others, so police laboriously had to dig out each one.

One by one the pipes fell, each ejecting a protester to be led away.

Time and again, police worked inside the pipes with bolt cutters, disappointing the protesters who had not expected to lose all their main barricades on the first day.

Andrew, a Byron Bay gardener occupying a pipe carrying the slogan "Love, not logs", took an hour to be depiped.

His neighbour took 20 minutes and a third pipe, with

the slogan "Save the forest to grow" and occupied by Maree Hillyer, 29, a musician from Bellingen, was vacated voluntarily after she watched her companions go through the uncomfortable experience of being rocked about in a confined space by a bulldozer.

As each pipe was removed, the bulldozer drove around wooden tripods — 5m platforms constructed from felled saplings and with protesters

perched in their apex — and lumbered off to the next.

The protesters' purpose was to cause delays until nightfall so they could work overnight on more barricades.

But with their main obstacles demolished so thoroughly and so swiftly, today's demonstrations can be expected to be far more disorganised.