

30 MAY 1989

Richard - letter of support

THE SECRETARY
THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL of NSW
51 LIVERPOOL ST
SYDNEY 2000

Green Alliance Network
P.O. Box 621 Newcastle 2300
May 15th 1989
Forestry
File 1. Barrington Tops.

Re: Proposed Logging of Davis Creek Section, Mt Royal State Forest.

I write to ask for your assistance in relation to this matter, briefly summarised below. A public expression of concern by your organisation, letters to the Forestry Commission, the Minister and the NSW Ombudsmen's Office would be appropriate and useful. However, it is clear that such approaches would not halt the operations, or any similar operations elsewhere in the State. Our main objective is to seek an injunction in the Land and Environment Court restraining the operations pending an EIS. Any assistance you may be able to give to this process would be most appreciated - such as information about species in the area, expert witnesses, legal advice, any opinions you can offer on the basis of your experience in these matters. Also, information about current or proposed Forestry Commission operations elsewhere in NSW which threaten areas containing rainforest or otherwise of high conservation value, enable an overall picture and the possibility of joining similar cases in the action for an injunction.

Extensive logging operations proposed for the Davis Creek Section of Mt Royal State Forest will have a significant detrimental effect on the environment, affecting both flora and fauna in an area which includes previously unlogged rainforest. The operations have already commenced and a major new road is nearing completion. No Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared as required by Ss 111 and 112 on the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979; an internal Forestry Commission "Environmental Review" is not available for public inspection.

The Davis Creek Section was included in the Proposed Additions to Barrington Tops National Park submission by Conservation Groups in December 1982, because of its high nature conservation values. As the submission states "the area contains a diversity of plant communities including some not represented or poorly represented in the (then existing) Park. Continuous pure stands of rainforest, cool temperate to sub-tropical are found throughout the area including the Big Losy/Mount Cockrow-Davis Creek/Falbrook area... The cool temperate Antarctic Beech forests within this section are more diverse than the higher altitude Beech forests within the Park. Those at the low altitude of 900m (such as those within the Davis Creek Section) are of particular scientific interest and are not well represented within the Park." (page 17).

The integrity and survival of these continuous pure stands of rainforest has already been threatened by severe fires in moist hardwood forests which surround and enclose rainforest in an integrated system. The fires of 1979 and 1985 were particularly destructive. The disturbance and residual waste associated with the extensive logging operations and network of tracks proposed in the Davis Creek Section will increase the potential damage from future fires. Of particular concern is the fact that some destructive fires in the past have been caused by escaping Forestry Commission control burns. There is evidence to suggest that the Commission's fire policy which includes "broad area fuel reduction in unlogged areas"

has damaged moist hardwood areas, reducing their capacity to protect rainforest, and has also damaged areas of rainforest directly. The Forestry Commission has throughout the State resisted moves to protect areas of rainforest by incorporation into National Parks; and management practice in many areas suggests a policy of decimation of rainforest through encroachment by fire, roads and tracks, and failure to observe adequate buffers, erosion and catchment protection provisions, and slope restrictions.

The area has been little studied and knowledge of the fauna in the Mt Royal State Forest is scant: There is no fauna list in the Management Plan, the provisional list included having been compiled from studies on a private property some distance from the area. As the Management Plan states, "no specific faunal surveys have been done in the Area, and no specific data is available on the relative abundance of species of fauna between the major forest types.... There is a need for improved documentation of the range and status of species in the area."

Description of vegetation in the Plan is limited to broad grouping by forest type, and as stated in the Plan, "there has been no comprehensive floral survey." (page 4). Also, 66% of the Davis Creek Section (compartments 200 -204) is over 20-degree slope (see Plan Appendix 4b) compared to 45% of the Management Area as a whole (page 3).

Such inadequate information as exists suggests the presence of a number of rare, endangered or vulnerable species of fauna. The provisional list in the Management Plan includes the following in these categories: Peregrine Falcon, Glossy Black Cockatoo, Masked Owl, Spine-tailed Swift, Scaly Thrush, Crested Shrike-tit, Rufous Fantail, Spotted Quail-thrush, Platypus, Tiger Cat, Koala, Long-Nosed Potoroo, Hastings River Mouse. Locals report a rich diversity and abundance of fauna including species not included in the provisional list, such as Eastern Native Cat, Hairy-Nosed Wombat, Feather-Tailed Glider, Great Flying Phalanger, a dozen species of snake, and others.

Local people who know the Davis Creek and Cross Creek area well, report that dingo baits set within the State Forest as well as on nearby private land have decimated the population of the Eastern Native Cat, such that this once frequently-seen animal has not been sighted for some time. Similarly bird and mammal populations have been affected over a number of years by 1080 rabbit poison. This is just one of a complex web of consequences of the fact that the Davis Creek Section is an extremely vulnerable edge, its conservation values under threat from proximity to cleared grazing properties, Liddell Power Station, open cut coal mines, and so on. In such a situation it is particularly important that areas of rainforest be left with significant buffer zones and accorded full environment protection zoning if they are to survive.

We submit it is clear the Commission is engaged in operations likely to significantly effect the environment of an area identified as having high conservation value, without carrying out an Environmental Impact Statement as required by the Act. We submit that the proposed operations cannot be shown to be in accordance with the Commission's Management Objectives and Strategy (Plan, pages 29-31), without an EIS, in the absence of adequate knowledge of the flora and fauna of the area. As an area including previously unlogged forest and rare cool temperate rainforest with significant continuous stands of Antarctic Beech and a profusion of faunal and floral life not yet studied, comprising a significant area of

"ecological and scenic interest" with "mountain ridges and escarpments", within a water catchment area, the proposed operations contravene the conservation provisions of the Hunter Regional Environment Plan, (Part V111, Division 2, Part V11 Division 3). Pending its rightful inclusion within the Barrington Tops National Park, the area should be accorded appropriate Environmental Protection Zonings:

Accordingly we call on the Commission to halt all operations in the Davis Creek Section pending the preparation of an EIS.

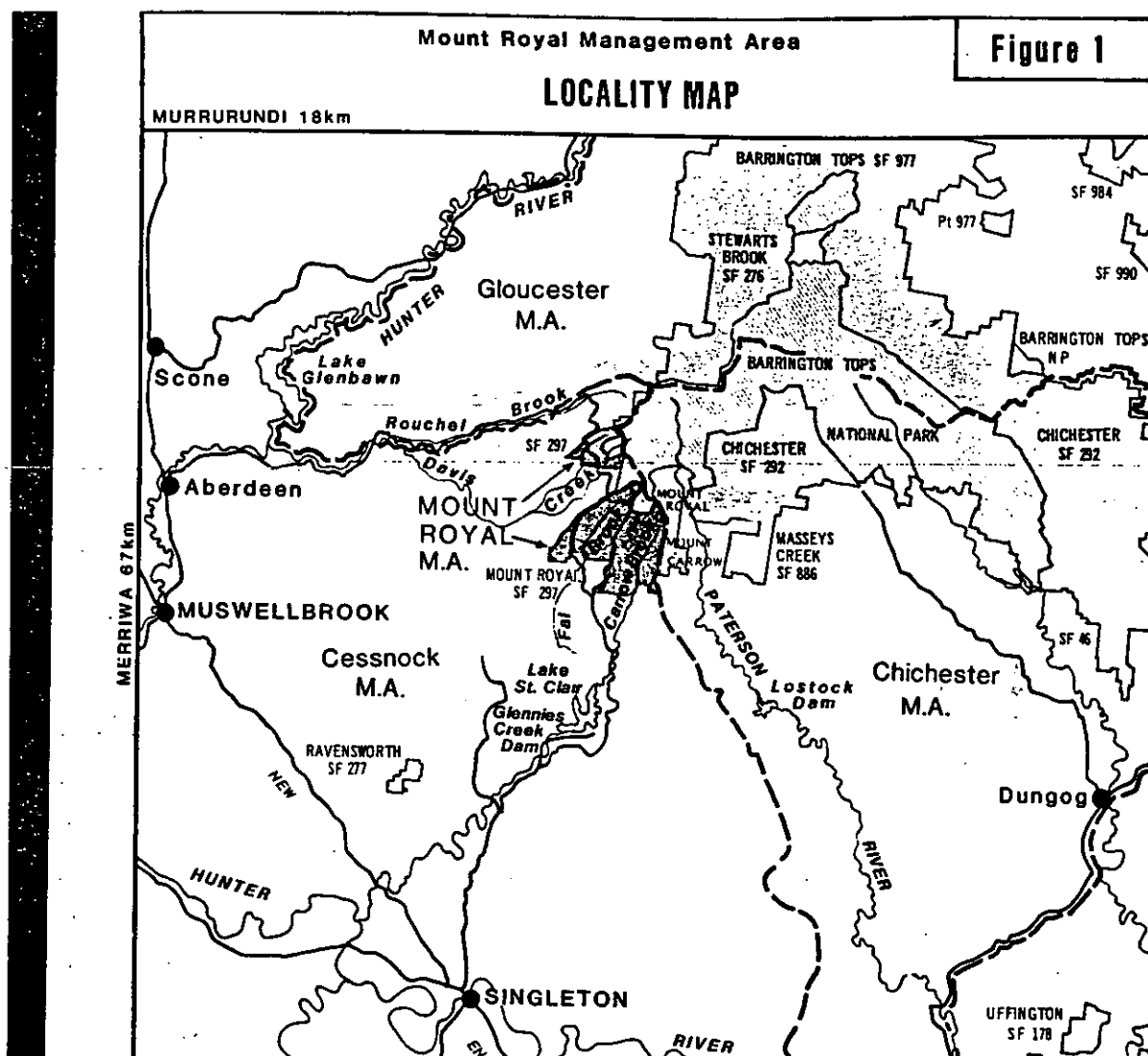
Barrie Griffiths
Green Alliance Network

REFERENCES

Management Plan For Mount Royal Management Area, Forestry Commission of N.S.W., July 1988.

Submission To The Government of N.S.W. on the Proposed Additions to Barrington Tops National Park: National Parks Association of N.S.W.; Nature Conservation Council of N.S.W.; The National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.); Colong Committee; Newcastle Flora and Fauna Protection Society. December 1982.

Draft Hunter Regional Environment Plan, Department of Environment and Planning, Sydney, 1987; and accompanying Background Report.



Green Alliance Network
P.O. Box 621 Newcastle 2300
May 15th 1989

Mr Col Nicholson
Newcastle Regional Forester,
Forestry Commission of N.S.W.
P.O. Box 488G Newcastle 2300,

Re: Proposed Logging Operations in Davis Creek Section, Mt Royal
State Forest.

Dear Mr Nicholson,

I remain concerned about this matter, discussed with you by telephone some weeks ago. It seems clear that the extensive logging operations proposed for the Davis Creek Section of Mt Royal State Forest will have a significant detrimental effect on the environment, affecting both flora and fauna in an area which includes previously unlogged rainforest. You will be aware that the area was included in the submission by conservation groups on Proposed Additions to Barrington Tops National Park, of December 1982, because of its conservation values. No Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared as required by Ss 111 and 112 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979. I hope you will understand that in the absence of access to the Commission's Environmental Review and details of the proposed operations, your assurances that rainforest and fauna in the area will not be affected lack conviction.

I therefore write to ask that the Commission revise its policy regarding the Environmental Review and make copies available for concerned groups such as ourselves, and furnish such further details of the proposed selective logging operations as would substantiate the claim that ecological viability and other values identified in your Management Objectives (Plan, pages 29 - 30) will be retained. For example, a map showing in detail the access tracks proposed from the new main road and the approximate boundaries of proposed felling operations in compartments 200 - 204, would be appreciated. I would also be grateful if you could give some estimated timetable, assuming wet weather ends soon, for completion of roadworks and tracks and commencement of logging.

Yours sincerely,

Barrie Griffiths.