

FRIENDS OF HODDLES CREEK NEWSLETTER

Hoddles Creek forest, animals under threat

Logging application seeks to clear 65 year old forest on private land

An application from Moran Logging Company Pty Ltd to log 99 hectares (245 acres) of a 128 hectare private property at 565 Thonemans Road in Hoddles Creek is currently before the Shire of Yarra Ranges. Hoddles Creek and McCrae Creek both run through the property.

The property was purchased by Moran Logging earlier this year.

The Friends of Hoddles Creek are strongly opposed to this project. We have examined the planning application and would like to present you with just a few reasons why we believe this project should not proceed.

If you are like us and find it hard to picture how big an area of 99 hectares is, consider that the Melbourne Cricket Ground covers an area of about 2 hectares – **so the plan is to cut down 50 MCG's worth of trees.**

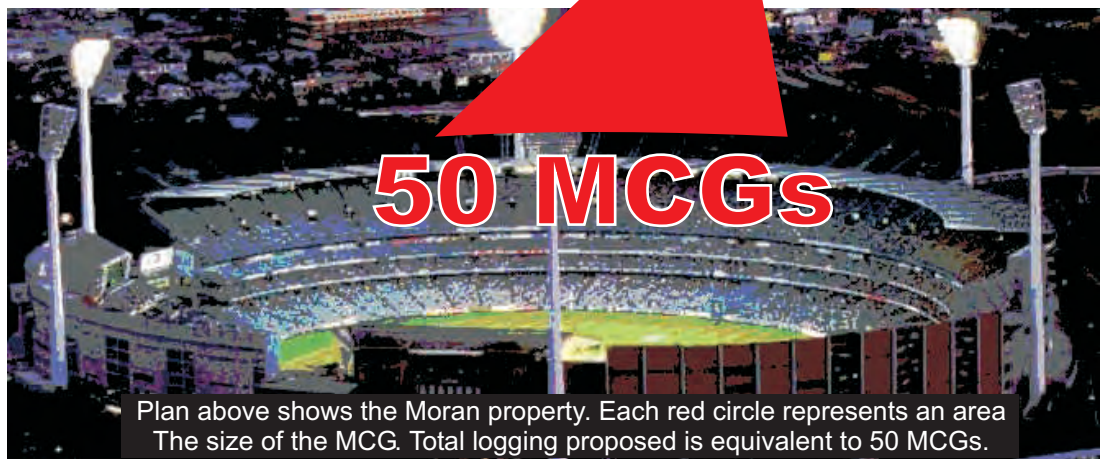
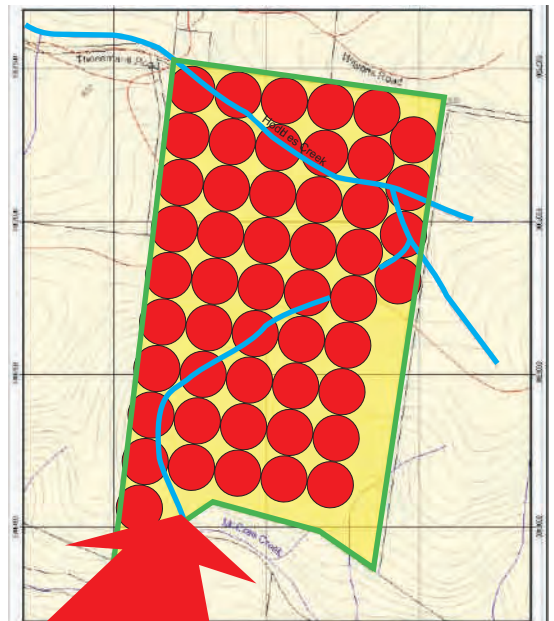
Environmental damage

The Shire of Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme states that the Shire has sufficient cleared land to provide for future agricultural activities. And, the property is within a Rural Conservation Zone, which is designed to protect and enhance the natural environment, natural resources and biodiversity of the area.

A flora and fauna survey of the property has identified plants of significance and important animal habitat. Animals included bandicoots, possums and gliders, wombats, wallabies and birds (including the threatened Powerful Owl).

A neighboring property owner has also reported the presence of koalas. The extensive clearfelling proposed will dramatically reduce wildlife habitat and increase the risks of washout and erosion.

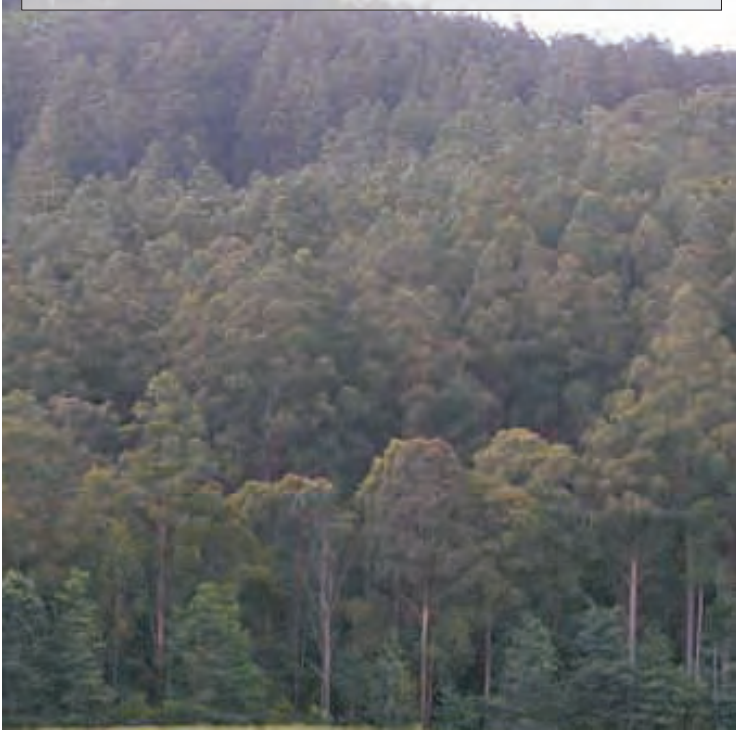
Despite these issues, the application claims that the logging and clearing will create *improved biodiversity* and *net environmental gain*. The applicant plans to leave 5 'seed trees' per hectare to provide the basis for regrowth, as well several large trees per hectare with hollows for wildlife use. However, isolated trees scattered across cleared land provide little effective habitat, are very susceptible to storm and wind damage and have reduced chances of survival (see photo on page 2).



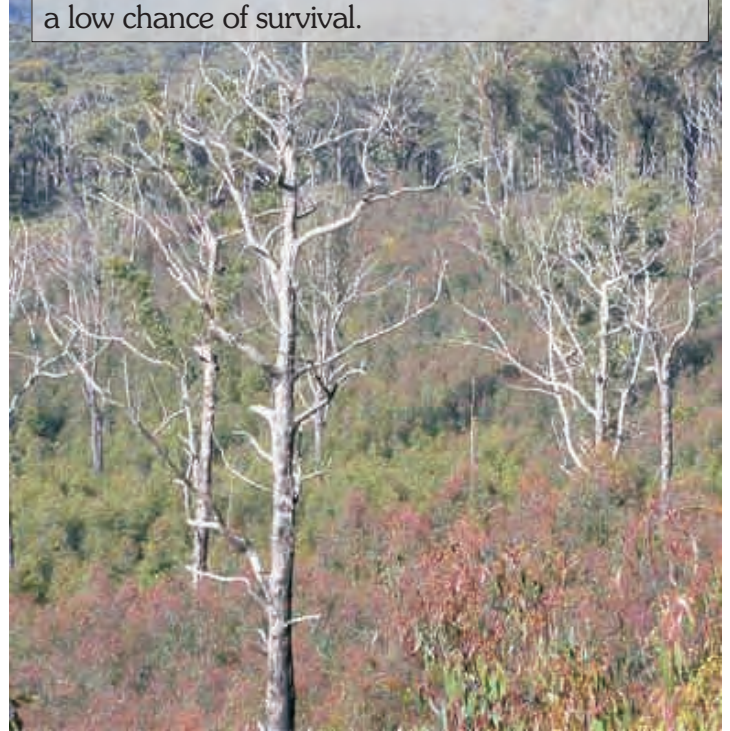
Thanks to Jill the postie for delivering the FOHC Newsletter.

Thanks to Melbourne Water for the grant for the FOHC newsletter.

A section of the Thonemans Road property



Isolated trees left following logging operations have a low chance of survival.



At a consultation meeting organised by the Shire, the applicant explained that the area will require 40-50 years – or two generations – just to get back to its present condition. How this represents a ‘net environmental gain’ is difficult to understand. And this is a ‘best case’ scenario – as the photo (above right) shows, even this is far from assured.

Issues for residents

If approved, logging would continue over 3 years, with the timber taken out along Thonemans Road and Hazeldene Road (an alternative scheme discussed at the meeting could shift traffic to other routes). The roads involved are narrow and winding and timber trucks would add significantly to the road hazards for drivers and pedestrians, dust creation, noise and road degradation.

Despite the applicant’s claim that he wants to be a good neighbor, the application ignores these impacts of the proposal on neighbors (all of whom have owned their properties for longer periods of time than Moran Logging), as well as the noise of the logging operations and the damage to the wildlife habitat that is the reason many residents are attracted to the area.

What’s in it for the Shire?

From information provided at the consultation meeting, very little. The proposal will create 3-4 part-time jobs during a 3 year period – the cost of the proposal is stated to be just \$5,000.

Three-quarters of the harvested timber will be used only for pulp or firewood. In return, all residents of the Shire lose one more section of mature forest and wildlife habitat.

While it may be a good deal for Moran Logging, we think it’s a bad deal for the Shire residents.

What can you do?

There is a great deal you can do. First and most important, you can write letters. Letters of objection to councillors and

state politicians, the Shire CEO and Shire Planning Office would help raise awareness of the opposition to the proposal.

Letters to the local paper or the Herald-Sun or The Age would also help. Some contact details are provided below and others are available on the Friends of Hoddles Creek website (www.provender.com.au/fohc), which also includes a range of suggested issues that could be incorporated in letters of objection.

As the application could be considered as early as the December Council Meeting, don’t delay if you would like to help. We also encourage as many objectors as possible to attend the Council meeting.

Contact details

Shire Planning Officer:

Elinor Nolan, Shire of Yarra Ranges PO Box 105, Lilydale 3140.

Local ward councillor:

Cr Monika Keane, c/o same address or email m.keane@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Shire CEO:

Mr Rob Hauser, Shire of Yarra Ranges PO Box 105, Lilydale 3140.

If you oppose the application, it is vital that you make your objections known.

If you have any suggestions that could help us in our fight to preserve the forest, then email us at fohc@provender.com.au, or write to us at FOHC, PO Box 298, Yarra Junction. Vic 3797.

If you would like us to keep you up to date with details as we hear them, email us at fohc@provender.com.au.

View the application on the net

The application by Moran Logging Pty Ltd is available on the Friends of Hoddles Creek website, which can be found at www.provender.com.au/fohc. The file is quite large (10 megabytes), but is well worth reading. You can also view a copy at the Shire offices in Yarra Junction or Lilydale, by quoting YR-2005/225.