

Your Ref: 2009/01-Bertram-ForestNSW-NCS

Kayt Watts  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Forestry Standards Limited

Dear Ms Watts,

Thank you for your prompt and informative response to my complaint of 15 February 2009 about logging in Bermagui State Forest. Having directed my issues to the relevant parties my experience is that the complaints procedure falls short of being adequate. Nevertheless I have forwarded my most recent complaint to NCSI.

However, as the NSW Forestry Commission has initiated legal action against concerned community members that depends on claims of regulatory compliance and sustainable management that it is provided by this certification, there exists a reasonable community expectation that those who develop, certify and audit compliance with forestry standards should be seen to be working with credible information.

Community attempts to list as endangered the koala population in Bermagui and a few adjacent forests growing on the same soil landscape were rejected by the NSW Scientific Committee in December 2007 on the grounds that, although logging and extensive canopy die-back would result in their extinction in the 'medium term', there had not been a decline in regional koala populations in recent decades.

This determination preceded the outcomes in January 2008 of a pilot scientifically based and collaborative koala survey effort that had identified the homeranges of possibly 3 to 5 koalas in Mumbulla State forest, just south of Bermagui and on the same soil landscape.

According to the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, in a letter dated 5 June 2009, information supporting the claim of 'non declining' koala populations was provided by the NSW Forestry Commission. Around that time (14 June 2006), Forests NSW also agreed with others attending a workshop convened by the expert consultants engaged to assist in resolving the koala 'issue' that there was " . . . an absence of benchmark numbers. Anecdotal and scientific evidence suggests a significant decline and a lack of recovery."

The distance between these contradictions cannot be reconciled but, this would seem to be consistent with the fact that despite significant voluntary community contributions to the 'collaborative' koala surveys undertaken over the past two years, there has been no expert report on the outcomes other than the pilot study, no data has been made available and no koalas have been located elsewhere in the region.

While logging continues on the Murrah soil landscape we will be arguing that credible scientific information on soils, flora or fauna are not a requirement for certification under the AS 4708—2007 standard and that community consultation needs only to be cursory.

Regards,

Robert Bertram  
6 October 2009