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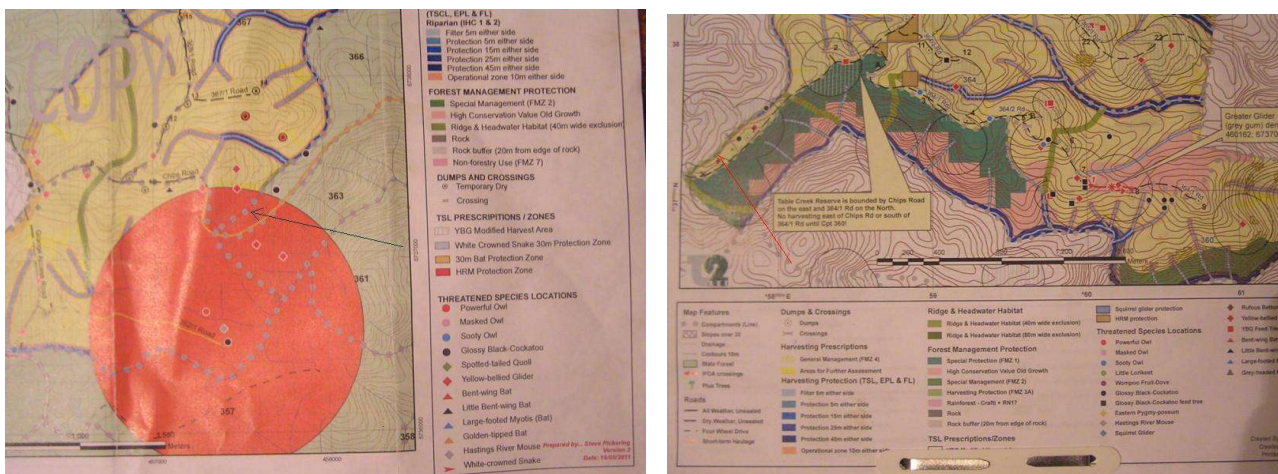
Dear Sir/Madam

Report on logging in relation to Operational Map of Harvest Plan 33794

Hastings River Mouse

If you look at the Operational Map of Harvest Plan 3677 there, in the bottom right corner, in Compartment 362 there is a very large orange circle which the legend tells us is Hastings River Mouse Protection Zone. Within that 800 metre radius circle all habitat must be *“assessed and marked appropriately”*.

A close look will reveal that the orange circle extends across a number of other compartments including Compartment 366. **So why is it that when undertaking its desk-top assessment of Harvest Plan 3794, which included Compartment 366, did the EPA inspectors fail to notice that the corresponding protection zone has not been extended to that plan?**



In fact the area that should have been assessed and marked appropriately, has been heavily logged – We counted 22 fresh stumps between GPS 457461 – 6737141 and 457650 – 6737210 alone. The question must be asked – Was the area properly assessed? Certainly there was no marking.



Heavily logged Hastings River Mouse protection zone.

Habitat tree destruction

Staying with Harvest Plan 3794, at log Dump 9, instead of constructing a snig track along an old track, and more direct route, to GPS 460904 – 6737151, a new and longer snig track has been constructed passing in very close proximity to a marked first order stream exclusion zone.



Then, at the above location, an area of unmapped old-growth (mostly Spotted Gums) was found to have been logged, including a large Tallowwood tree marked “H” on all 4 sides. (hollow-bearing tree marked for retention) Despite the clear marking, and the fact that it was the largest tree anywhere in the vicinity (900mm diameter at breast height above base)(dbhab), with multiple hollow limbs, that tree had been

logged.

The dead stag that is lying atop the stump was deliberately knocked over by the machine constructing the required 'roll-overs' after the logging was completed. That operation also unnecessarily destroyed numerous Forest Oaks that are supposedly protected under the licence as threatened Glossy-black Cockatoo feed trees.

At Dump 9 we also found a large Grey Gum, also marked with “H”, which had also been cut down. This tree had not been logged, but simply left lying on the ground. The “H” on the top of the trunk had been crossed out with a painted pink X, but the “H” on the underside had not (see below), suggesting someone had painted the single “X” after the tree had been cut down. That tree was significantly larger than most other “H” trees in the vicinity.





As stated, there were a number of “H” trees marked in the vicinity, mostly smaller than the felled Grey Gum, including one pathetically small tree with a dbhab of less than 450mm, a poor crown, and no hollows at all.



Back along the road at Dump 8, a snig track has been cleared some 300m south from the dump, where we estimated less than 50 trees had been logged from along the entire route. There was no marking up of habitat and recruitment trees (beyond 2 marked “R” trees at the dump) or boundaries. The largest tree harvested was another Tallowwood, again one of the largest in the area, and also with multiple hollow branches (see below).



There were side tracks where vegetation had been trampled by the harvesting machine, seemingly wandering around looking for something to cut down, mostly without finding any, and at the end of the track it had trampled vegetation within 17m of a cliff edge at 460212 – 6736724.

We note the EPA's statement (Abood May 31, 2012) that: *“The EPA notes your concerns regarding the failure of Forests NSW to mark hollow-bearing trees. The EPA is aware of the past and current issues associated with Forests NSW selection and protection of hollow-bearing and recruitment trees....”*, and that: *“The EPA continues to target these issues in their proactive auditing and enforcement role and expect Forests NSW to improve their practices and achieve the desired outcome that is protection at all times”*.

Sadly, that improvement is not evident in this latest logging. In relation to the destruction of marked habitat trees it seems that the logging contractors are in charge, with neither Forests NSW or the EPA apparently identifying these breaches.

Continuing with that theme, we encountered one person with a large trailer filled with what appeared to be large round posts. He informed us he was the local contractor. That vehicle was making a significant mess of the road in the wet conditions. On a related matter, we noted a significant number of log cores at and near log dumps that had been stripped for fence posts. This could be an authorised activity.



Eastern Chestnut Mouse records ignored

The efficacy of Forests NSW' Harvest Plans is again called into question, as is the EPA's desktop assessment of Harvest Plans. This time for harvest plan No. 355, where our investigation shows that NSW Wildlife Atlas records for Eastern Chestnut Mouse have been excluded, with no mention of the species at all. Further investigation showed that the records had been placed on the Wildlife Atlas, by way of a 'sweep' of Forests NSW records in 2010.

So here is yet another case, reminiscent of the Styx River Rufous Scrub-bird debacle, where records have apparently been either deleted from the Forests NSW data base, or have been ignored by the harvest planner. At the same time the omission of those records has not been picked up by the EPA officers charged with monitoring compliance. Our volunteers can find these omissions, so why can't the EPA.

Yours sincerely
John Edwards
Honorary Secretary