

Our Ref:
Your Ref:

21 February 2006

Mr Adam Menary
Vice President
The Central Highlands Alliance

Dear Adam

Harvesting in the Royston Forest Block

I am writing to you in response to the report of alleged breaches of the Code of Forest Practices in the Royston Region submitted to the Office of the Deputy Premier of Victoria on 13 February 2006 by The Central Highlands Alliance. I would appreciate it if you could forward this on to Sarah Rees also.

A number of regional forest planning issues are raised in the submission. Invariably matters of region forest planning are addressed at the level of the Central Highlands Forest Management Plan (CHFMP). The CHFMP has been prepared after due consideration of the goal and guidelines as outlined within the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production. Interestingly, application of the management guidelines identified in the CHFMP and in the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production has arrived at the reduction in total coupe size that you have noted (p.1). Coupes have historically been planned as gross area units and invariably undergo an area reduction when the nett coupe area is physically marked for harvesting.

Aspects of the operations relating to the coupe have been questioned, in particular the management of adjacent rainforest. Buffers have been applied to all rainforest consistent with the requirements of the CHFMP. VicForests have never marked any boundaries through rainforest as claimed on page 3 of your submission. I suggest that the tapes in question may have been left by the persons who also left a hair tube within the coupe. Similarly areas of forest that meet the requirements for Leadbeater's Possum habitat zone 1A have been excluded from harvesting consistent with the CHFMP.

It is reassuring to me that application of the CHFMP has achieved the same outcomes in regard to boundary location that you have identified. This is in itself testament to the public consultation processes employed during the development of the CHFMP.

Roading activities associated with the Iron Pipe coupe have entered the rainforest buffer however this is permitted in the Management Procedures for Timber Harvesting Operations, October 2005, and is consistent with the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production. Alternative road alignments were considered to be more detrimental to environmental values. Treatment of individual Myrtle Beech has been in accordance with the requirements of the Management Procedures.

There is no road being cleared as per the claim on page 7. There are some old tapes possibly from a previous reconnaissance however there is no clearing along this line. What you may be viewing is boundary line construction ahead of harvesting.

The management of the landscape values associated with the Iron Pipe and Hook coupes, in particular in relation to views from ski trails on Lake Mountain, is once again consistent with the requirements of the CHFMP. The matter has been discussed with Lake Mountain Alpine Resort staff and the views inspected. They do not consider that the harvesting as proposed will unduly impact on the visual amenity from Lake Mountain.

Measures have been taken by the contractor to ensure that his fuel storage area complies with the Utilisation Procedures for all commercial harvesting managed by VicForests, October 2005. The fuel spill identified in your photo, page 15, has been managed to the satisfaction of the supervising Forest Officer. . Actions have been implemented to avert a similar occurrence.

At the completion of the coupe the landing will be rehabilitated. This includes ripping to rectify any subsoil compaction and the respreading of topsoil. Not all topsoil has been stockpiled where your photo indicates. Topsoil has been used as fill in the landing and will be recovered when the landing is rehabilitated.

The marking of retained trees on the coupe is limited to living trees and does not include dead stags resultant from the 1939 wildfire as identified in your photo on page 16. The intent of retaining live trees is to provide for the retention of any existing hollows and for future hollow development.

To summarise I am confident that the planning for the Iron Pipe and Hook coupes and the subsequent harvesting operation comply with the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production. It is likely that you will continue to differ on matters of interpretation hence my offer to meet with you to discuss your concerns remains open.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bruce McTavish".

Bruce McTavish
Forest Operations Manager Central

cc: Mr Pat Groenhout, Mr Ian Miles