

The Institute of Foresters of Australia

ABN 48 083 197 586



5 April 2011

Yarra Ranges Shire Council
PO Box 105
Lilydale VIC 3140
mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Yarra Ranges Council Draft Flora and Fauna Strategy

The Institute of Foresters of Australia (IFA) is a professional body with over 1350 members engaged in all branches of forest and land area management and conservation in Australia.

The Institute is strongly committed to the principles of sustainable forest management and the processes and practices which translate these principles into outcomes.

The IFA supports a Flora and Fauna strategy for the Shire. In saying that, the Institute also considers that a flora and Fauna strategy should not be considered in isolation of public safety, social wellbeing and economic stability of the region.

We therefore submit for your consideration comment/suggestions on the Draft Flora and Fauna Strategy. Our comments have been compiled after consultation with members of the IFA Victorian Division.

We would be pleased to provide a member of the Institute to discuss in detail any aspect of our submission with you.

Kind regards,

Cassandra Spencer
Chief Executive Officer

Institute of Foresters of Australia

Comments on the Draft Flora and Fauna Strategy

Page 14, Figure 1.

Show Map of the shire boundaries plus the legend/key in order to properly interpret the map. Also show the source of the data.

Objective 1.6 Page 33

Mackey et al 2008 is an unreliable reference. It overstates carbon storage in natural ecosystems, fails to adequately account for natural disturbance patterns and many of the findings are highly questionable. Maximization of vegetation carbon must be balanced with fuel reduction requirements, and the production of timber products. Localised carbon storage in vegetation is irrelevant if it means a net carbon loss due to substitution with carbon intensive alternatives such as steel, concrete or illegally sourced timbers from deforestation. It must also be balanced with community protection. Maximizing carbon sequestration is achieved by actively growing regenerating forests which have a higher water use than mature forests which can therefore conflict with catchment values.

Carbon plantings alone are therefore not a productive use of land. Plantings should have multiple purposes of ecosystem function, timber production, riparian restoration and as a secondary objective Carbon sequestration and storage.

Objective 2.1

Roadside vegetation can have high ecological value in highly cleared landscapes. This however should not compromise human safety through lack of management of dangerous roadside trees. The Yarra Ranges in particular have many dangerous roadside dangerous trees which can prove lethal when they fall onto roads during storms or block safe evacuation in emergency situations. This is part recognized in 2.2.1

Action 2.3.5

Certain ecological objectives are being compromised by the lack of fire in parts of the private land estate. Some of the most complex fuel reduction and ecological fire management issues are on private land. The Shire may have a role in trying to facilitate this in conjunction with DSE, CFA and taking into account the ecological requirements.

5.1 p22 –

This is a confusing value laden section. Paragraph 2 requires re-writing. The Shire's vegetation is not, nor should it be, exclusively managed for flora and fauna as the passage indicates. Humans are part of the landscape and thus should be recognized accordingly.

Action 5.2.2

Clarify for what purpose friends groups would be promoted. Properly intentioned and trained friends groups can be helpful as part of monitoring the impacts of management.

Action 5.2.4

This objective should not be included in its current form. Additional reserves should only be created if there is an ecological imperative and balanced with other values on public land for recreation, timber management or minor forest produce requirements.

Action 5.2.6

Should perhaps include VicForests as an important local workforce to facilitate better understanding of timber harvesting objectives within the Shire.

Action 6.1.1

Supported

Action 6.1.2

Note there is already a forest interpretive centre at Toolangi.

Action 6.3.1

LandCare networks have been valuable contributors to private land management. These actions are supported.

5.7 Goal 7

To influence flora and fauna management outside Shire Control. This section focuses on the Shire's desire to influence land management on public land outside of the Shire's direct control.

In the Background section it makes a statement that "Council as the tier of government closest to its community has an important and legitimate role in advocating for appropriate land management outcomes on land outside of its control within the municipality." We would question if this is in fact a legitimate role of local government. Public land is managed for the net benefit of the state and country and should not just reflect the wishes of certain individuals or groups in the local municipality/council. This policy is working against genuine economic, social and environmental land management objectives.

With specific reference to the Council resolution of 27/11/08, if water production is the primary objective of the catchments, the council would benefit by promoting thinning to increase water production. The most important catchment management research has been undertaken within the Shire specifically demonstrating the benefits of active management. The Victorian government water white paper Action 2.21 provides that detailed research and findings. Simple statements can be counterproductive to management objectives.

With reference to Council resolution 8/06/2010. To date no study has been able to demonstrate that employment lost in the timber industry is replaced by tourism. Tourism is an important supplement to an economy but is not a basis.

Forest Management Plans and processes such as the RFAs are in place to manage these potential conflicts so that forest activities do not adversely affect the long term integrity of any flora and fauna. This also permits the benefits to the local community and economy such as local employment through timber production, timber processing, minor forest produce and recreation. The Shire's previous forest policy which was developed about ten years ago contained a much more balanced view of these matters.

Objective 7.1

Parks are an important land management tenure. They are not the only form of flora and fauna protection. Values can be maintained in State Forest areas and this would be a better objective than simply promoting increased Parks with less active management. New reserves should only be created if they are a biodiversity imperative and through genuine assessment processes such as the RFAs which balance economic, social and environmental objectives.

Objective 7.2

Given that the Council does not have any management responsibility for State forest it is questionable whether this goal should be part of the strategy.

Objective 7.2, (p.60)

To advocate and support the adoption of ecological sustainable forest management practices in area available to timber harvesting and other forest-based industries. It states that a significant proportion of the vegetation is available for timber harvesting, firewood removal and other forest based industries and that the activities associated with these extraction industries have an impact on biodiversity values and ecosystems in these forests and that it is therefore essential that all forest based industries be managed in an ecologically sustainable way.

We believe that our forest based industries are managed in an ecologically sustainable way through existing forest management plans and processes. This section includes a list of actions that the Shire will actively encourage DSE to implement such as increase their efforts as regulators of the timber industry to ensure adherence to the Code of Forest Practices, increase pre and post cut auditing to ensure all precautions to protect waterways and threatened species habitat have been taken, increase their efforts to ensure logging coupes are properly regenerated and that royalties are paid for by the timber resource etc. Existing planning, processes and practices are in place and adequately address these actions that the Shire would encourage DSE to do.

Action 7.2.1

These are heavily value laden and largely a 'grab bag' interests outside of the responsibility of the Council.

Action 7.2.2

This gets into fine detail, that once again should be confined only to land which the Council has responsibility.

Objective 7.3 and Action 2.3.2

This section primarily concerns fuel reduction burning as a major potential disturbance event. It discusses the potential effects of fuel reduction burning on vegetation and succession stages. It does not however include a discussion on balancing environmental outcomes with improved community safety outcomes from fuel reduction burning.

Fuel reduction must go back to the objectives of the fuel reduction burning. Fire ecologists should be consulted as part of any fuel reduction burning program but should not be permitted controlling say which could compromise community safety.

- END -

This submission has been prepared in direct consultation with the Victorian Division of the Institute of Foresters of Australia