

SUBMISSION

We wish to forward to you the following submission in relation to the impending discussion to change of Status to the Mt. Cole State Forest

Points of interest we wish to address are as follows :-

ARMILLARIA

A contagious native disease which has potential to spread throughout the forest if no measures taken to control it. Controlling methods being :-

Harvesting
Clearing
Deep Ripping
Isolation.

If not contained, the present situation on Mt Cole would see this disease in time, spread throughout the forest as it spreads by root contact.

A park situation would see little or no effort made to eradicate or control this disease. It needs machinery, harvesting and fuel reduction burns, allowed with no restriction, to contain the disease.

Fire Access

In conjunction with Armillaria eradication there needs to be maximum access to allow for fuel reduction burns, fire prevention and isolation of armillaria. All this requires machinery and co-operation with DSE Management

Track Maintenance

Required for forest users, such as bush walkers, bird watchers, hang gliders, bee keepers, endurance riders, 4 wheel drive enthusiasts, responsible forest management. Forest Harvesting.

Flora / Fauna

Forest harvesting and armillaria control provides food resources for the red neck wallaby, swamp wallaby, kangaroos and exotic deer.

Regrowth forest from harvesting provides an abundance of managum for a koala population. The echidna benefits from the regrowth of forest harvest. A small population of wombat also benefit from these activities. However a small population of feral pigs, foxes and rabbits badly need eradication.

Bird life prospers with the present forest activities producing an abundance of food and habitat in the more lightly timbered areas

Mt. Cole Grevillea thrives with ground disturbance created by forest harvesting. The ability for the bush to regenerate is clearly evident in the recently re-seeded, harvest coupes. Also the bee keeping industry presently benefits by the rejuvenated bush.

EXOTIC SPECIES

The Samba deer herd in Mt Cole is regarded as the purest strain of samba deer in existence, as it was introduced from Ceylon/ Sri Lanka in the late 19th century.

As we are a multi-cultural country there is no reason why this historic herd cannot share the same environment as our native animals.

Mt. Cole is also scattered with an abundance of historical sites, as yet unmarked, from our indigenous times through to our ancestors in the timber industry.

ACCESS

Easter 2016 saw the forest, Mt. Cole, attract many campers with every available camping area utilised.

Restriction to this recreational pastime would jeopardise the public's appreciation of our wonderful environment.

A multiple use forest has many benefits for the local economy. Eg logging, 4 wheel drive, motor bike, horse riding, bushwalking, bee keeping, bird watching, camping, mountain bike riding. All these activities are part of multiple use and no one activity should be eliminated from the overall use of the bush. All public taking part in these activities spend money in the towns.

Therefore a well managed State Forest is the ideal situation for the economy of the Beaufort and Ararat districts.

We believe that Mt. Cole can achieve the environmental protection as well as common sense utilisation under the State Forest status, therefore see no benefit in changing to a State Park.

JAMIE and CAROL HUTCHINGS