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I WRITE to your newspaper with serious concerns about the impending logging by Vic Forests of a coupe above Snobs Creek Falls in the Rubicon State Forest and the fact that plans are being put into play now, with scant - if any - public consultation or transparency.

The decision by Vic Forests to log in such a pristine and fragile part of our shire is environmental vandalism in the extreme.

On many levels logging of this area is wrong. The environmental impact of logging of native forest anywhere in the world puts long lasting stress on the local flora and fauna, imposes constraints on access to what is a public amenity (crown land and forest), damages and makes unsafe our infrastructure (roads and tracks) and leaves a permanent scar upon the landscape (see photo below).

However, it is regarding the long-term health of Snobs Creek and the state government owned fish hatchery that directly feeds off the creek, that the decision to harvest timber from such unique environs, disheartens me the most.

The site of the current hatchery was chosen in 1946 based on three critical criteria: 1) Snobs Creek's water quality. 2) Its consistently low water temperatures, critical for the survival and reproduction of trout, and 3) Its year-round water supply, due to the very low water evaporation rate.

In respect to the latter point, Snobs Creek

and narrowly meanders through very dense, heavily shaded forest, long before it opens out at Snobs Creek Falls and into the valley below. It is then diverted without any mechanical assistance through the fish hatchery and ends its journey just below the site of the hatchery, at the Goulburn River.

I know this because it was through the work of my late father, Derek Falconer, together with his long-time friend and mentor, the late Alfred Dunbavin Butcher, then a biologist in the Victorian Fisheries and Game Department. Soon after this, Butcher was appointed Victorian Director of Fisheries and Wildlife). Butcher and my father together chose the site for the existing Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery.

Logging activity above Snobs Creek Falls will jeopardise the water supply, as well as the purity and temperature of the water. For a government decision to log near 'the hand that feeds' its enterprise - the Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery - would seem foolhardy and ludicrous in the extreme.

For the sake of protecting such a beautiful environment and an industry which has for generations supported, and continues to support, thousands of recreational anglers each year, we as a caring community need to act now to put a stop to this imminent desecration of what is a unique public asset, solely it would seem, for a short term private gain.

*Rod Falconer, Snobs Creek*

