

## Forestry protest

“A UNIQUE, devastating yet heartwarming experience. Hard to understand how this kind of destruction is even possible but so incredibly empowering to have such a huge number of wonderful and inspirational people coming together to fight for the survival of our forests. We are powerful as we are united.” Hayley Forster from Environmental Science at Deakin University said.

Last Saturday, over 80 people from community groups all over Victoria and beyond came to the Rubicon State Forest to experience the devastation of expansive clear-fell logging. Through photos and social media, they sent strong messages to politicians to save the remaining mountain forests, especially in Snobs Valley.

Everybody was welcomed warmly at Ken and Di Deacon’s place with hot drinks, soup and bread while mist swirled around the ranges above.

We trundled up the Rubicon Range in two long car convoys. As we passed numerous adjoining clear-felled coupes, visitors gasped at the devastation. Not only were they shocked at the vast areas cleared of all life but also, the result of escaped regeneration fires that burnt hotly through what were meant to be wildlife corridors adjoining the coupes.

Masses of people dressed in varied colours of all ages walked over soggy ground, clambering over blackend stumps and logs, up the hill and then down over the charred landscape.

Tiny heads bobbed above the 25 metre long banner and a bright red smaller one, with multiple legs beneath moving like a huge caterpillar.

We walked across a cleared coupe of 15 kilometres – possibly the longest continuous clear-fell in Victoria. People were even more stunned and shocked. “It’s a war zone, a holocaust - the place has been napalmed,” they said.

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Cath Rouse, a consultant accountant has worked on the audit of timber mills, says “the government has and is giving millions of dollars of handouts to an unviable and collapsing industry based on the clear-felling of our valuable native forest.”

Why aren’t governments looking ahead for jobs in our unique forests for ecotourism, recreation and environmental education instead of destroying them?

Vicforests will face significant opposition from all over Victoria if it tries to log Snobs Creek Valley.

*Dr Lea Jellinek, Taggerty*

## Forest protest

On Saturday, June 9, 80 people walked into one of Victoria’s largest logged areas on the steep mountain slopes in the Rubicon State Forest in Victoria’s Central Highlands – highlighting extreme logging in breach of industry regulations.

The group entered the spectacular devastated landscape carrying a 25 metre long banner saying ‘Save the Rubicon - Stop the Logging’. The group unfurled a second 13 metre long banner saying ‘Forests for Life not Logging’.

This part of the Rubicon State Forest contains one of the largest continuous areas of logged forest in the state with a total logged area of around 1,000 ha since 2009, equivalent to almost 600 MCGs.

This area includes at least two separate instances that exceed the maximum allowable area of 120 ha. Breaches of the Code of Practice for Timber Harvesting go largely unchecked, with logged areas much larger than permitted and retained buffers killed in regeneration burns. There are soil washouts on steep slopes that should never have been logged and scenic protections that are ignored.”

At current rates the Rubicon State Forest could be logged out in as little as five years, with current broadly intact areas of 1939 re-growth ash forest completely gone.

Logging of two areas in neighbouring

Snobs Creek Valley, is currently halted as part of the Federal Court case brought by Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum, challenging whether logging in certain areas of endangered species habitat can continue to have a special exemption from Australia’s national threatened species law.

“This protest is timely considering it is the one year anniversary since the listing of the Greater Glider as a threatened species with no protection in sight and logging of their habitat continuing unabated,” local ecologist Ann Jelinek said. “Barely 100 ha of old-growth forest remains in this area.”

Samantha Dunn MP, Greens spokesperson for forests talked about her “lone battle in Parliament and the out-dated 80 year old laws which mandate that the government must provide woodchip from our forests to the Australian Paper Mill (APM) or pay compensation. This is destroying our Mountain Ash forests, so much so the entire ecosystem is critically endangered.”

Local community group, the Rubicon Forest Protection Group, calls for the State Government to establish an immediate moratorium on logging this remarkable area while a detailed environmental and socioeconomic assessment is conducted to examine the full range of values this forest offers. The Group is currently looking at having a public meeting in Alexandra where VicForests and RFPFG would discuss the current situation and longer-term outlook.

*Nick Legge, former forestry academic, Taggerty*

