

SOUTH EAST FOREST RESCUE, CHIPSTOP, CHIPBUSTERS, SERCA
South East Regional Conservation Alliance

South East Forests Woodchip Protest Escalates as Expert Slams Forests NSW Koala Survey

Media Update 27.04.10, 2.30pm. South East Forests NSW Australia

Conservationists have escalated their protest actions in the controversial woodchip logging areas on the edge of Mumbulla Mountain near Bega NSW. The area is the core habitat of the last known breeding colony of koalas on the coastal plain from Sydney to the Victorian border.

Early this morning, anti-woodchipping protesters erected a 10 metre high tripod to block the access of felling contractors and log trucks to the logging area, Compartment 2135. A protester is sitting now in the top of the tripod and has refused police requests to come down. A significant police presence is now at the site including a Police Inspector from Batemans Bay. Conservationists at the site expect that a special police squad will be called in from Wollongong to remove the tripod sitter.

“We have been forced to escalate our peaceful protests as the woodchipping of this vital koala area has not stopped since it started on 29 March despite clear evidence that State Forests has breached even the poor protective protocols that are supposed to apply,” said conservation group spokespersons.

“Now we have an expert ecologist’s report that slams the the koala survey conducted by Forests NSW so they could start woodchip operation on Mumbulla Mountain.”

In the report released today Mr David Milledge has said, "A more comprehensive, rigorous and fully documented survey is required before the presence/absence of Koalas in the compartment can be determined with any confidence" [David Milledge, 'Review of Methodology and Results of a Koala Survey of Compartment 2135, Mumbulla State Forest, NSW South Coast, 2010.'].]

David Milledge is a wildlife ecologist with extensive field experience throughout eastern Australia, having worked for Government authorities and as a private consultant in four States over the past 35 years. He is currently employed as an ecologist with Byron Shire Council. David has particular expertise in forest and woodland ecosystems and has specialised in endangered species, rainforest avifaunas and the ecology of large forest owls. He has published the results of his research widely in scientific and popular journals.

The report was commissioned by local conservation group South East Forest Rescue amidst growing community anger at the risk the woodchip operations pose to the extinction of the regional Koala population, with perhaps as few as 50 koalas left where a century ago there were 300,000 in the Bega Valley alone. 95% of the wood felled from the Mumbulla compartments will go straight to the Eden woodchip mill.