

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



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To:

1 May 2009

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6, 8 Nicholson St,
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Re. Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation

WOOHLPOOER STATE FOREST

This area is denoted by DSE as 'State Forest'. It is managed for production of timber from River Red Gums established in about 1910 when the freehold was resumed by the Crown after having been cleared some decades earlier. The land had not been "improved" prior to the resumption, so it has retained a good portion of its native flora (although very few shrub species or other tree species), despite the forest having been grazed almost continuously from the 1930 through to about 2000. The survival of much of the grassland flora can be attributed to the poor natural fertility of the site, lack of "pasture improvement" and lack of fertilizer application.

The area is heavily grazed by Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Red-necked wallabies and Emus. Grazing by the native fauna replaced that of sheep that were largely removed from the area in about 2000 or a little earlier, in order to allow patch regeneration of River Red Gum in a largely single-age stand of River Red Gums.

The area in question is the green area shown in the attached DSE map *Woolhpooer Management Zone*.

The attached DSE map *Woolhpooer EVCs* appears to show that most of the area is "plains woodlands and forest", with some areas of "heathlands" and smaller "wetlands". The grasslands in this area are discussed in the DSE publication (1992) "*Draft Conservation program for grasslands and grassy woodlands in Victoria*"

The attached DSE map *Woolhpooer Bioregional Conservation status of EVCs* indicates that one EVC (presumably Plains Grassy Woodlands – an EVC that is extremely poorly represented now in the agricultural areas) that dominates most of the area is designated as "endangered". Almost all of the remaining area is designated "vulnerable" or "depleted".

HFNC contends that the entire Woolhpooer area ought to be included in the Grampians National Park, providing a better permanent linkage with the Rocklands and Black Range State Park. At the very least, the northern half, on the line E-W from the bend in the Henty Highway, should be so designated. That would put the swamps into the National Park where there is greater certainty of long-term stability of landuse and management.

Yours faithfully

Dr PR Bird
Secretary,
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club