

# Tasmanian Special Timbers Alliance Inc

Tasmanian Incorporated Association number I11575

44 Strickland Avenue, South Hobart, Tas, 7004

Mr Mal Cronstedt AFSM  
Chair  
AFAC Review  
GPO Box1526  
Hobart TAS 7000  
email AFA.Review@dpfem.tas.gov.au

## CRONSTEDT REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF BUSHFIRES DURING THE 2018-19 FIRE SEASON

The Tasmanian Special Timbers Alliance was formed in 2012 to represent the interests of the Tasmanian Special Timber Sector. The sector has a long value chain with participants encompassing harvesting, milling, manufacture, tourism and retail. The Sector has over 2000FTE and 8500 part-time/income earning hobbyist and contributes over \$70M to the Tasmanian economy annually (Farley2009). The sector is reliant on sustainable access to Tasmania's endemic specialty timbers including Huon Pine, Celery Top Pine, Myrtle, Blackwood and Sassafras which are all largely fire-intolerant species.

Further information about the Sector can be found at [www.livingwoodtasmania.org.au](http://www.livingwoodtasmania.org.au).

TSTA wishes to raise bring two issues to the attention of the review team namely;

1. management of former forestry areas in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA), the State's reserve system and Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) Land; and
2. Fire response and management of areas of Huon Pine forest

### **Management of Former Forestry Areas in the TWWHA, State Reserve System and Future Potential production Forest (FPPF) Land**

The 2012/13 Tasmanian Forest Agreement led to the addition of 172,000 ha to the TWWHA. A significant number of former forestry coupes were added in this minor boundary modification. Areas such as Catamaran, The Picton, Styx and Butler's Gorge are historically modified landscapes where forestry activities had occurred in some cases for over 150 years. The coupes within these areas are contained within a landscape mosaic and often have areas of unharvested forest between them maintaining connectivity and refugia for flora/fauna.

According to the UNESCO World Heritage Reactive Monitoring Mission's 2015 report, the TWWHA also *"boasts a surprisingly extensive road network. There are more than 1,100 kilometres of roads according to State Party information provided to the mission team, much of it located within the area added to the TWWHA in 2013."* Many of these roads are former forestry roads which, depending on their location, are maintained to support tourism, beekeeping or recreation. However some of the roads are simply left to deteriorate, or deliberately closed and ripped up to deny access and restore the road surface to native vegetation. Many of the former coupes have significantly high remnant fuel loads within them and appear to be simply left to nature with no active management including maintaining roads or firebreaks which would assist in fire management.

After the repeal of the TFA Act in 2014, approximately 400,000 ha of TFA Future Reserve Land became Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) Land of which approx. 365,000ha occurs outside the TWWHA and is managed as unallocated Crown Land. Much of this FPPF land contains former forestry coupes and associated infrastructure. Additionally, much of the land abuts Permanent Timber Production Zone (PTPZ) Land as well, state reserves and private land. Many former forestry coupes have been successfully regenerated to native forest by Sustainable Timber Tasmania's predecessor, Forestry Tasmania, and regrowth is well advanced. Other former coupes either are in early stages of regeneration or have not been regenerated following transfer of land from Forestry to the state's reserve system.

In 2013, Environment Tasmania (ET) received \$1,237,500 from the former Federal Government to undertake the restoration of a small number of harvested coupes in the TWWHA. Restoration works were carried out in eight former forestry coupes with a combination of methods including regeneration burns and seeding and non-burn methods such as seen in coupes such as Picton 043E including direct planting of rainforest understory species. Following on from this round of funding, in 2015 Environment Tasmania received further funding of \$105,641.53 under the 20 Million Trees Program to undertake restoration activities that was to result in the production of 24,000 trees in two former coupes in the TWWHA – Arve 009B and Barnback 21C. A link to Environment Tasmania's old website discussing the restoration projects can be found at - [https://www.et.org.au/wha\\_project\\_sites](https://www.et.org.au/wha_project_sites)

As Arve 009B was burnt in the 2019 fires, it is worthy of closer inspection to see if regeneration, restoration or related activities assisted or impacted on the survival outcome of this coupe.

Arve 009B is located to the north of Hartz Mountain off Wyeena Road (Grid 480620E, 4218974N). According to the Forest Practices Plan, Arve 009B was a 54.7ha coupe with a 37.2ha net harvest area. The coupe was predominantly Euc. Delegatensis with some Euc. Subcrenulata and Euc. Obliqua. The coupe also contained a small patch of callidenrous and thamnian rainforest. Several aggregates within the coupe were excluded from harvesting including a patch of forest containing King Billy pine. The coupe was harvested in 2010/11. A post-harvest regeneration survey conducted by Forestry Tasmania on 26/11/2014 found that a regeneration burn and sow was not required as the coupe had met the required 66% stocking rate in accordance with Technical Bulletin No 6.

The Restoration Plan created through the ET project included the objective to "minimise fire risks to project site and areas surrounding the project site" and "maximise retention of any remaining habitat trees and other biological legacies from the pre-harvest community".

As the coupe was already well underway to achieving tall eucalypt forest values, the Restoration Plan recommended against a regeneration burn but did recommend the removal of logs and sash on the landing and dispersal of logging debris from the main landing and snig tracks. The plan also

recommended that the small portion of road within the coupe could be ripped up and sown with seed as well as having a drain excavated at the start of the spur road at the TWWHA boundary to prevent vehicle access into the coupe.

A visit to Arve 009B conducted in April 2018 found that the entire Wyeena 2-2 spur road (2.2km - both in and outside the coupe which ran from the coupe to the TWWHA boundary) had been dug up by an excavator and the last 500m to 1km leading into the coupe had logs, presumably from the former landing area, spread across the road to further impede access into the coupe. In the coupe itself, a significant amount of harvesting debris remained throughout, including logs placed on snig tracks, and the landing was completely covered with logging debris. Little to no eucalypt regrowth was evident in these heavily wooded areas.

Some pictures of the access road and the coupe taken in April 2018 follow below.



**Picture 1 – Wyeena 2-2 spur road approaching Arve 009B.**





**Picture 2 – More logs and debris on Wyena 2-2 spur road**



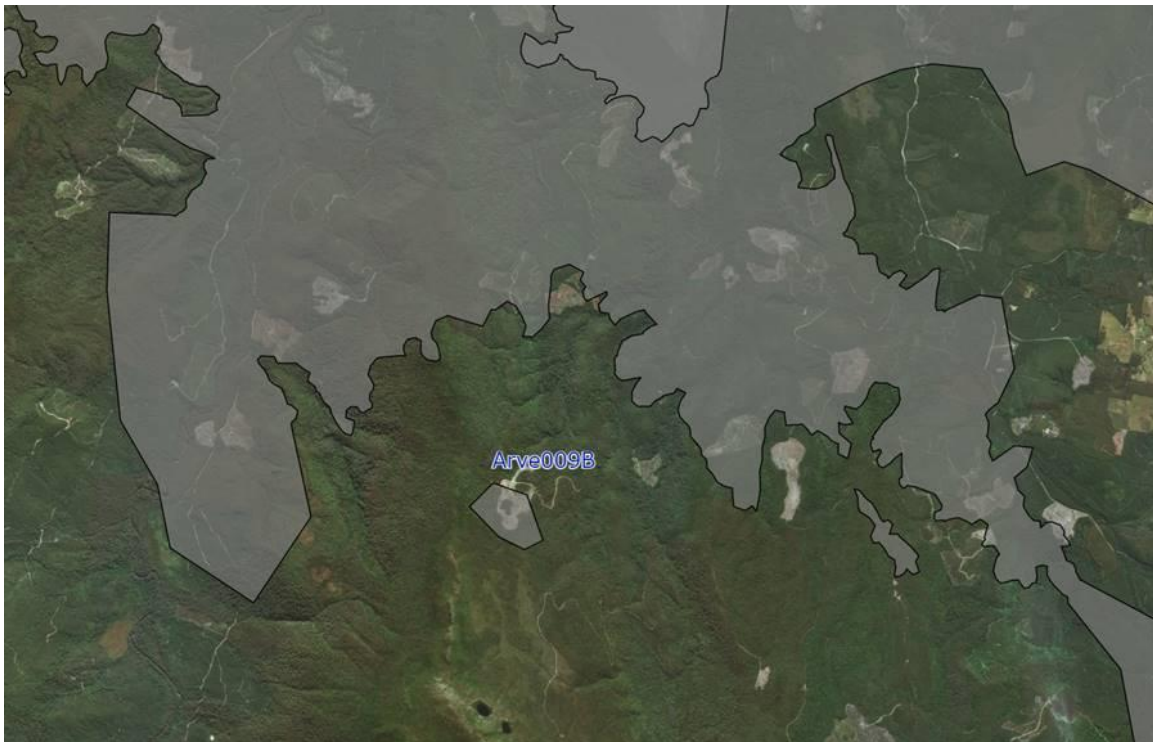
**Picture 3 –unburnt logs and logging debris in Arve 009B**





**Picture 4 – logs and slash left on the lower landing Arve 009B**

On or around 30/1/2019, Arve 009B ignited well ahead of the main fire front as seen in the screenshot from ListMap showing the TFS fire boundaries below.



**Picture 5 – Screenshot from ListMap with TFS fire boundaries taken 20/1/2019**



A visit to the coupe on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2019 confirmed that the coupe had indeed been burnt in the recent fires. What was of interest, was how much of the remaining wood/logs and debris left after restoration had been burnt in this fire. Some more advanced, pre-restoration regrowth eucalypt had survived, but unfortunately, the identified area of King Billy pine forest had been partially burnt. It was as if the trail of logs and debris on the snig tracks and road leading into the coupe had acted like a trail of gunpowder which had been lit and provided a path for the fire across some quite open spaces. In the case of the forest which contained the King Billy pine, leftover limb wood, and small diameter trees that were left along a machinery track through that portion of forest had been badly burnt and had appeared to have introduced fire into this small retained aggregate. If you walked into the forest a few metres either side of the machinery track the forest remained largely unburnt.

Some pictures of Arve009B post-fire are below.



**Picture 6 – Wyeena 2-2 spur road leading into Arve 009B. Logs across the road were heavily burnt.**





**Picture 7 – Logs placed on snig tracks burnt in 2019 fires**



**Picture 8 – Burnt harvest debris within the King Billy pine forest area. The fire followed the trail of logs and only ventured a few metres either side of the machinery track.**





**Picture 9 – Burnt King Billy pine Arve009B**





**Picture 10 – Arve009B pre-2019 fire (Google Earth)**





**Picture 10 – Arve009B post-2019 fires (Google Earth)**

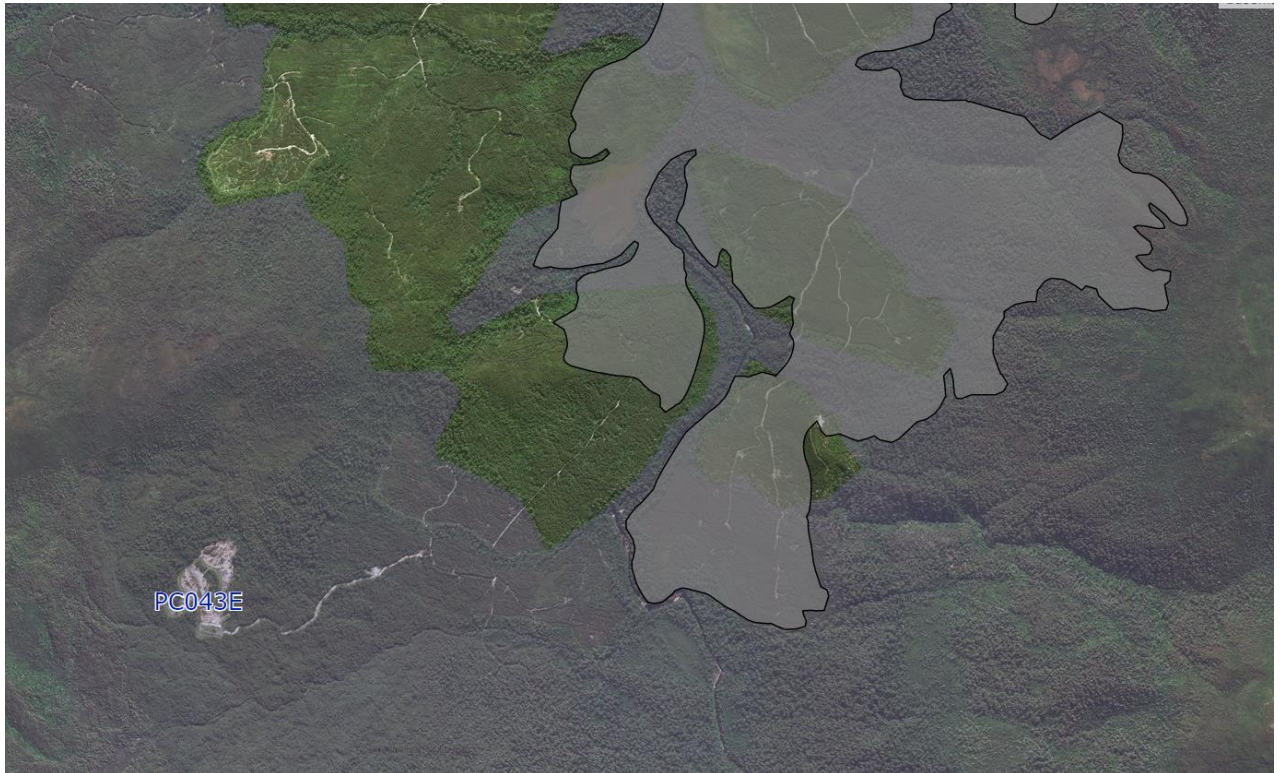
Although it is unsure whether or not ground-based fire suppression could have had an impact on the fire in this coupe, the opportunity to even enter the coupe by vehicle had been removed when the entire Wyeena 2-2 spur road had been dug up in 2016 by Environment Tasmania. In response to a question on notice in the Legislative Council by Ivan Dean in 2018 regarding Wyeena 2-2, the Premier responded by stating that “I am advised that the road was not required for fire fighting purposes”, and that there was no compelling argument for access to persist and closure was deemed to be the most appropriate in this situation to enhance the World Heritage Values.”

A copy of the question and the response is provided at Attachment A to this submission.

Environment Tasmania’s restoration plan also stated: “As long as the road is navigable it will provide potential access for arson attacks”.

As mentioned previously, other coupes underwent similar “restoration” with ET and have significantly high fuel loads within them. One such example is coupe Picton 043E. This coupe is located within the TWWHA at the southern end of West Picton Road (470864E, 521360N). The fire boundary came to less than three kilometres of this coupe.





**Picture 11 – Picton 043E and proximity of 2019 fire boundary (List Map)**

This coupe was visited in January 2019 and some pictures from this visit are below. Any attempts to regenerate eucalypt forest over piled or scattered logging debris have failed, and the remaining timber in the coupe was very dry. Like Arve009B, this timber would represent a high fuel load if a fire broke out within the coupe, with the possibility of spreading to the surrounding forest.





**Picture 12 – Logging debris in Picton 043E**



**Picture 12 – Logging debris in Picton 043E**





**Picture 13 – Logging debris in Picton 043E**



**Picture 14 – Logging debris in Picton 043E**



In other areas of the state such as Future Potential Production Forest (FPPF) Land, there are similar former coupes with high fuel loads that are not actively managed and represent an unnecessary hazard to surrounding unlogged/unburnt forest areas.

TSTA believes that consideration should be given to developing specific management prescriptions for formerly harvested coupes that are now within the state's reserve system or FPPF Land that is the responsibility of Parks and Wildlife/Crown Land Services. These prescriptions should take into account fuel loads within the coupes, retention and maintenance of access infrastructure, and likely impacts of coupe originated fire on surrounding forests, much of which contains special timbers.

### **Fire response and management of areas of Huon Pine forest**

Huon Pine is Tasmania's most well known and iconic timber and underpins much of the Tasmanian Special Timbers Sector

Huon Pine is distributed over 8,900 square kilometres in western and southern Tasmania along riverbanks, lakeshores and in swampy or very high rainfall locations. Over 85% of Huon Pine is in formal reserves, mostly within the Tasmania Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Only a small volume of Huon Pine is presently salvaged harvested from Teepokana Plateau, a formerly cut-over area of Huon Pine forest within Sustainable Timbers Tasmania's Permanent Timber Production Zone Land on Tasmania's West Coast.

During the period 2014-17, the Tasmanian Government in consultation with the forest industry and Special Timbers Sector, developed a Special Species Timber Management Plan to guide management of special timbers. Information on the Plan can be found on The Department of State Growth website [here](#).

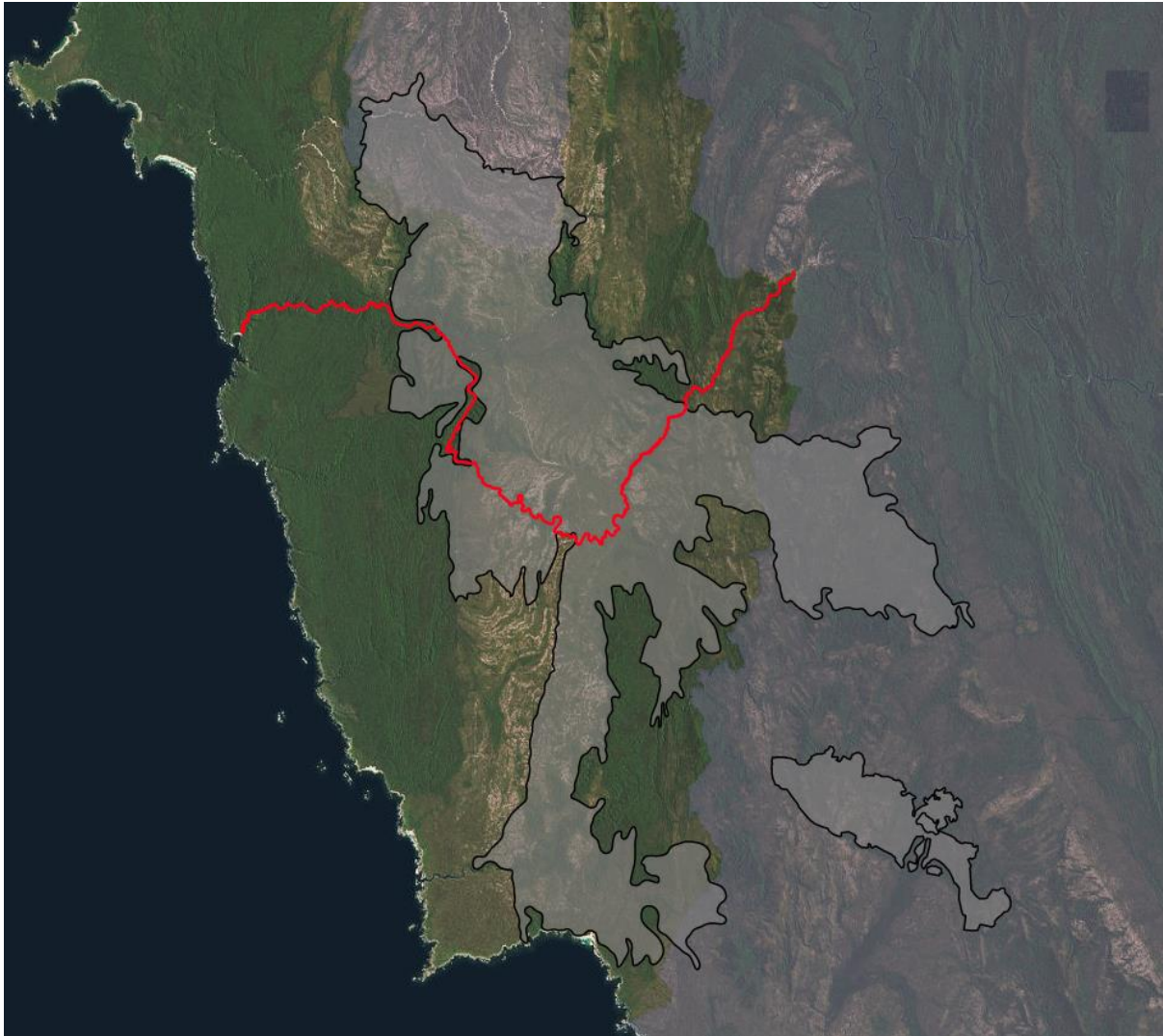
As part of the Plan development process, resource analyses were conducted on special species identified in the Forestry (Rebuilding the Forest Industry) Act 2014. It was identified during that process that ongoing supply of Huon Pine to the industry was limited since nearly all timber came from salvage from Teepokana as opposed to commercial harvesting. Further investigation was carried out to map stands of huon pine outside the TWWHA, but within land tenures which allowed for salvage of huon. This work identified a large resource (approximately 22,000m<sup>3</sup>) of lightly fire-killed, dead standing huon pine dispersed throughout a number of live stands. It was also identified that due to the flammability of dead huon pine, that the high fuel load represented by these dead trees represented a risk to the live trees in the stands, particularly in the event of a dry lightning strike event.

Discussion at the time and since has revolved around conducting a trial removal of some dead standing trees to see if the salvaged timber is suitable for use by the special timbers sector. If so, it is estimated that at least 120 years of supply at current supply rates could be potentially available. It would also mean that a significant huon pine forest regeneration exercise could be undertaken once the dead timber was removed.

Unfortunately, the exact event that was predicted i.e. a dry lightning strike event, occurred in January/February 2019. In picture 15 and 16 below taken from ListMap, the boundaries of a 36,000

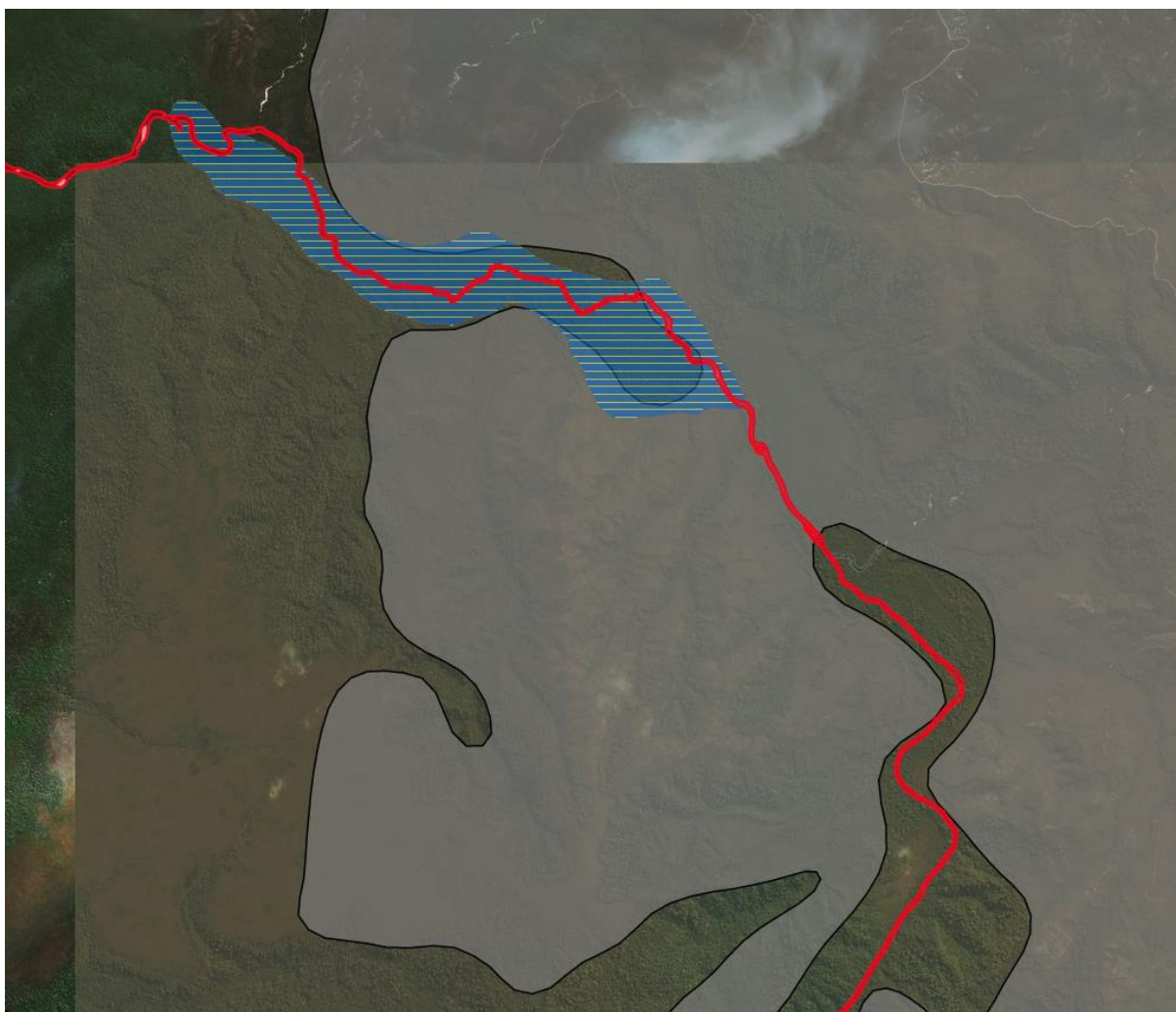


ha fire in Tasmania's southwest are shown. The red line is the Wanderer River which contains significant huon pine forests including a portion of the dead standing huon pine identified in the 2016/17 work. The blue hatched area in Picture 16 is Huon Pine forest from the Tasveg 3.0 layer on ListMap.



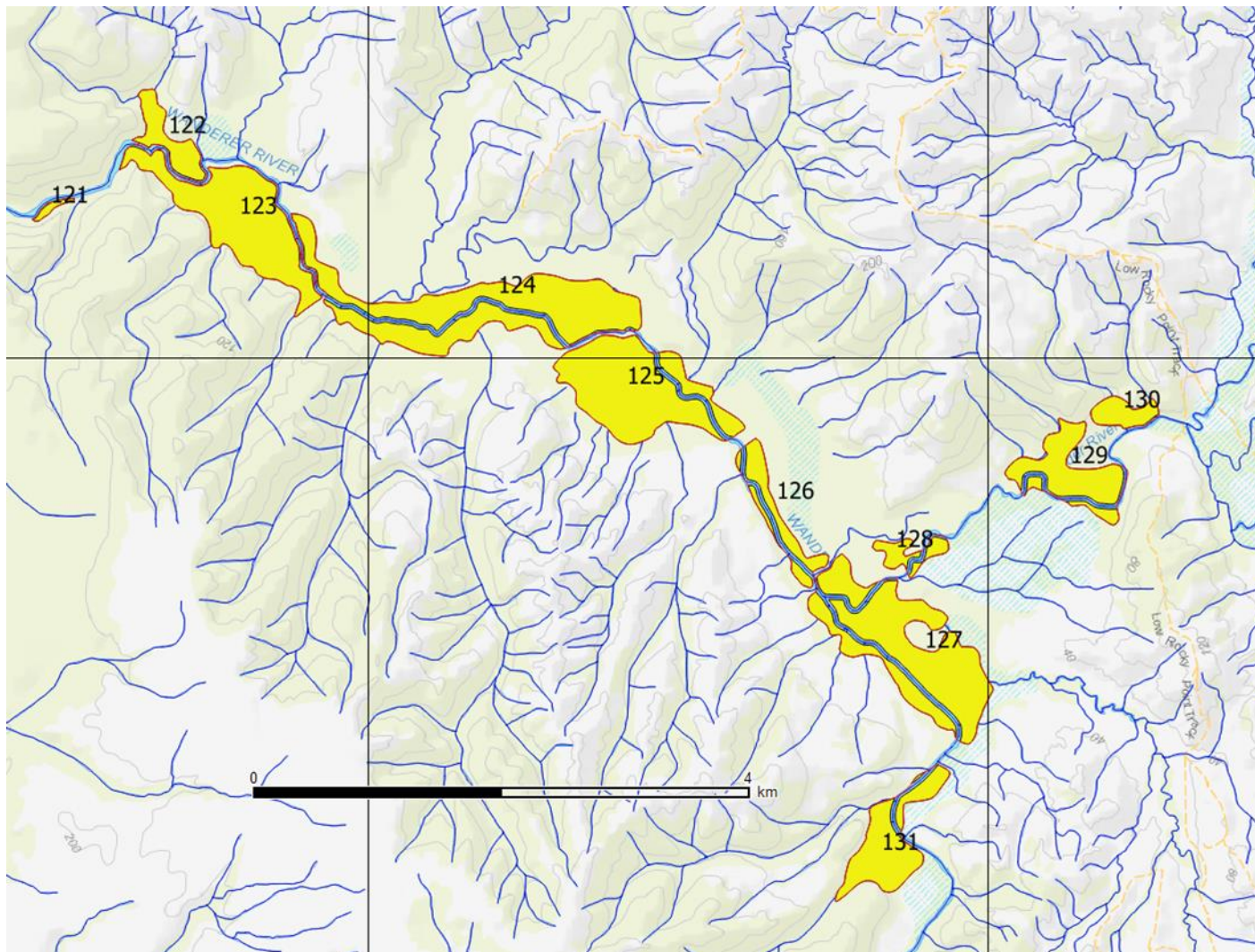
**Picture 15 – Fire boundary and proximity to Wanderer River**





**Picture 16 – Fire boundary and Huon Pine forest – Wanderer River 2019**

Picture 17 below shows the mapped extent of Huon Pine forest identified in the Wanderer River East section in the 2017 study.



**Picture 17 – The mapped extent of Huon Pine forest Wanderer River East (DSG)**

It is unclear if any suppression resources were allocated to this fire nor if the land manager, Parks and Wildlife, were aware of the extent of the dead standing huon pine within the live stands. What is clear though is that it is imperative that the removal of the dead standing huon and rehabilitation of these huon pine forests should be considered a priority, not just for environmental outcomes that come from removal of high fuel loads from fire-sensitive vegetation, but also to secure the future huon pine resource for the special timbers sector.

TSTA makes the following recommendation with regard to these identified areas of huon pine forest.

1. Priority should be given to a trial harvest to determine the properties and viability of the dead standing huon pine. We believe that DSG holds existing funding for special species timber projects that could be allocated to this exercise. TSTA has been in discussions with

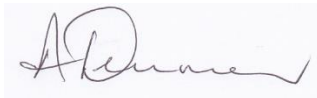


DSG for nearly two years to have this trial scoped and carried out, but there has been no commitment from Government as yet.

2. If such a trial proves successful, TSTA recommends a large scale operation to remove all dead standing huon pine from the identified stands to minimise the risk of further fire damage in conjunction with the environmental restoration of the stands. This exercise would also result in a stockpile of huon pine for the industry that could provide some funding towards the exercise from timber sales.
3. TSTA recommends that there needs to be further inter-agency communication and understanding regarding the identified huon pine stands including how fire resources are allocated to suppression.

TSTA is happy to discuss any aspects of this submission with the review committee.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A Denman', is shown on a light blue rectangular background.

Andrew Denman

President

Tasmanian Special Timbers Alliance

0413765984

11<sup>th</sup> May 2019



## QUESTION ON NOTICE

### Question No. 1 of 2018 Legislative Council

**ASKED BY:** Mr Dean

**ANSWERED BY:** Premier Hodgman

#### QUESTIONS:

With regard to the Hartz Mountain Road/Wyeena Road and a former Forestry spur road named Wyeena 2-2 and approximately 2.2 kilometres long which provided access to the former Forestry coupe Arve 009B (one of many coupes located in the 2013 Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area extension) and located to the west of Geeveston —

- (1) Is the Government aware that —
  - (a) The Wyeena Spur 2-2 has been completely ripped up along its entire length;
  - (b) That the last one kilometre approximately is covered with logs;
  - (c) Any access for beekeepers or firefighting vehicles has been completely lost; and
  - (d) That the old road is a mess, with many weeds growing on it?
- (2) (a) Which department approved the ripping up of Wyeena Spur 2-2 (from the TWWHA boundary to the road end over Foaming Creek); and
  - (b) On what recommendation?
- (3) (a) When was this work conducted; and
  - (b) By whom?
- (4) (a) What was the cost of the operation; and
  - (b) Who funded the activity?
- (5) What consideration was given by government regarding removing road access to the former coupe Arve 009B and the subsequent impact on beekeepers and firefighting vehicles?
- (6) Was the use of a gate on the road to prevent vehicle access considered and if not, why?

#### ANSWERS:

- (1) (a) The Government is aware the Wyena Spur 2-2 has been ripped along its entire length. This work has been undertaken as part of a strategic approach to rehabilitating previously harvested forest areas that now form part of the 2013 extensions to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) and, in this case, are within a national park.



(b) Ripping, along with the use of logs, has been used as the most effective method to close the road.

(c) (d) Weed growth is common in rehabilitation projects and to be expected given the harvesting operations and disturbance of the soil profile in the past. Ongoing monitoring of weeds and regrowth is part of this strategic rehabilitation program.

- (2) (a) (b) The works were approved by the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) as the land manager; and by the Forest Practices Authority, by virtue of a certified Forestry Practices Plan (FPP) covering parts of the area.

AR009B was one of a number of forestry coupes that became part of the TWWHA in 2013 upon the extension of the World Heritage boundary. The coupe had been harvested but not rehabilitated and now falls within the Hartz Mountains National Park.

In early 2014, shortly after the PWS inherited the transferred parcels as national park, a Steering Committee (comprising Forestry Tasmania [FT]; the PWS and other stakeholders) was formed to commence a project entitled: *Ecological Restoration of Logging Coupes in the TWWHA*. The decision to close and rehabilitate the access road was done in consideration of many issues such as tenure; fire risk; apiary industry and tourism stakeholders, noting that FT advised there were no apiary licences or approvals to access this road. All works were delivered in consultation with FT (as the previous land manager) and in accordance with the outstanding FPP obligations within the site.

- (3) (a) The works were delivered by Environment Tasmania Incorporated (ETI) on behalf of the PWS (as the new land manager).

(b) FT was contracted to undertake rehabilitation works on behalf of ETI within AR009B and along Wyena 2-2 in 2015-16.

- (4) (a) Initial estimates for the works proposed by ETI were for ripping of approximately 800m of the Wyena 2-2 Road and approximately 180m of the Wyena 2-2-1 Road at an approximate cost of \$16,700. This represented the length of the Wyena 2-2 Road that occurred within the coupe AR009B.

(b) All works were funded by the Australian Government and, in December 2014, ETI was successful in securing an additional \$105,641 in Landcare funding via the Australian Government's '20 Million Trees Program'. Funding from this source was used in the rehabilitation of AR009B and the Wyena 2-2 and 2-2-1 roads.

- (5) A range of factors were taken into account in determining how areas within the TWWHA extension should be rehabilitated. I am advised that the decision to close the road was made in consultation with the Steering Committee representatives and on advice from FT. I am advised that no apiarists were active on the road, or in the coupe, and that the road was not required for fire fighting purposes.

- (6) A gate and continued maintenance of the road was not considered a cost effective or long-term solution to the successful rehabilitation of the coupe. The PWS carefully balances the needs of industry and endeavours to unlock areas for sensitive and sustainable use, wherever practical. However, given the priority to rehabilitate the coupe as national park, in some cases, such as this, there was no compelling argument for access to persist and closure was deemed to be the most appropriate action in this situation to enhance the World Heritage values.



~~APPROVED~~ NOT APPROVED



William Hodgman MP  
Minister for Parks

Date: 14/6/18.







