Media Release

Thursday 28th August 2008

The Long Paddock Scientists' Statement

Leading scientists call for protection of iconic stock routes network

500 ecologists and wildlife scientists today called on the Premiers of NSW and Queensland to protect the 3.2 million hectare travelling stock route network, which has nationally important environmental, economic and cultural heritage values.

Also known as the Long Paddock, the stock routes provide refuge for endangered species and in many cases are the best remaining examples of native vegetation in a highly cleared landscape, the scientists have written in an open letter to Premiers Bligh and Iemma.

The open letter is one of the most strongly supported scientific statements ever delivered to politicians in Australia.

The Long Paddock Scientists' Statement will be launched today by two signatory scientists.

"Administrative changes imminent in both NSW and Queensland threaten the future health, functionality and integrity of this vast, 3.2 million hectare public network of routes and reserves that stretches across eastern Australia," Professor Hugh Possingham FAA, Director of the Ecology Centre, University of Queensland said at the launch of the scientists' statement in Canberra.

"Research shows the network supports some of the last strongholds of Australia's most threatened native animals and plants on public land, and it provides some of the last connections of nature in our extensively cleared and modified landscapes, thus facilitating the movement of animals and plants across the landscape."

"The network provides critical resources for migrating birds across eastern Australia, and the value of the network for movement of wildlife and genetic material of native animals and plants is even more important now that our natural systems are adapting to climate change," Emeritus Professor Henry Nix, from Australian National University, said.

"The extent of support for the statement indicates strong scientific consensus about the importance of protecting and maintaining the outstanding ecological and cultural values of the Travelling Stock Route network," Professor Possingham said.

"Retention of original vegetation such as that found in the stock routes and reserves is by far the most efficient way of enabling landscape connectivity and restoration. These areas provide a backbone for re-vegetation and a major source of native seed resources."

The network of routes and reserves is a historical, cultural, recreational and tourism asset and an important resource for travelling stock across eastern Australia.

"The statement explains to our political leaders that the best available science shows protecting and actively managing the entire network of travelling stock routes and reserves is one of the most efficient steps to ensure our Australian landscapes, our unique wildlife, our cultural heritage, and our travelling stock tradition survive," Professor Possingham said.

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