

Save Your Leatherwood Honey Association Inc.

Presidents report for the year ending the 30th June 2008 To be presented at the Association's AGM on 29th September 2008

As you will have seen from our newsletters our involvement in the beekeepers dealings with Forestry Tasmania continues to be productive. Copies of the newsletters can be viewed at our website, www.saveyourleatherwoodhoney.com

There is at present a clear expressed intention on the part of Forestry Tasmania to understand the requirements of beekeepers in the southern forests and accommodate their resource requirements.

This is now occurring before a coupe harvesting plan is drawn and approved, thus allowing early coupe inspection and discussion aimed at avoiding the destruction of commercial leatherwood stands.

More promising is the reconsideration of existing harvesting plans where beekeepers can show the existence of commercial leatherwood stands in the coupe. However where leatherwood is growing throughout a coupe it is becoming increasingly necessary to model that coupe's monetary value in terms of honey production and pollination services

To farmers, orchardists and seed growers. This is because the retention of leatherwood in such a coupe leads to the inevitable loss of most of the timber resource in that coupe.

This modeling is showing a substantial benefit of beekeeping dependant on that coupe compared to timber return values in the same coupe. The timber returns occur once in each harvesting rotation period whereas the beekeeping benefit occurs every year. Whether the harvesting period is 25 or 75 years the value of the beekeeping benefit to timber benefit is a ratio of at least ten to one.

However the beekeepers maintain that this does not mean that timber harvesting must be abandoned in favour of leatherwood retention, but that Forestry Tasmania must be given the opportunity and be encouraged to harvest timber to meet their quota, from areas where leatherwood will not be destroyed in the harvesting process. The beekeepers recognise that this is a difficult balance to achieve, but we believe that the time to do that is well overdue.

Hive numbers are already contracting while crop areas requiring honey bee pollination are increasing: (see page 8 of the Tasmanian beekeepers association submission to the commonwealth inquiry into the honey bee industry in Australia, which can be viewed at www.Aph.Gov.Au/house/committee/pir/honeybee/report, submission number 63).

It is clear that if the timber quotas cannot be met without destroying commercial leatherwood stands

then a decision must be made at government level as to what has the greater value to Tasmania, timber production or food production. Timber harvesting quotas for Forestry Tasmania to meet have been set by legislation by the regional forest agreement and have not been amended.

At least 65% of all food grown in Tasmania depends on honey bee pollination for successful commercially viable cropping levels.

Government recognition of the crucial link between, in Tasmania, leatherwood resource, and the food we eat (through the pollination of crops), can be viewed in the report of the commonwealth inquiry referred to above which was published last month. This can be viewed at the website referred to above.

It seems likely that the inquiry and its report are in part responsible for the change in approach towards and understanding of the needs of the beekeeping industry.

Your association executive was substantially involved in the preparation of the submission to the enquiry. That, and coordinating/cooperation/discussions/coupe inspections, between beekeepers and Forestry Tasmania, has comprised the main activity of the association this year, and is continuing. This involves many hours, arranging and coordinating coupe inspections and many days in the field in coupe inspections, leatherwood assessment and subsequent financial modeling.

While this years activities have led to some positive outcomes it is clear that to continue in a broking role between beekeepers and Forestry Tasmania, and to monitor coupe content and value where appropriate, will not on their own be sufficient to change forest harvesting practices in coupes rich in leatherwood resource. I believe that we now need to produce a well researched and irrefutable financial model showing the value of the beekeeping industry to the Tasmanian economy. This will then form the basis of all formal submissions to Forestry Tasmania and the responsible government minister, whether on a coupe by coupe basis or for all leatherwood rich state forest areas. That is until a permanent change is made to the forest practices code to legally entrench leatherwood protection in the forest harvesting planning process.

Our current modeling is mostly based on opinion and word of mouth information, which, while accurately sourced, is hard to justify under scrutiny.

The executive of your association has neither the expertise nor the numbers to carry out this work.

We need help to do this at minimum cost - or funding to employ a research team to do this for us.

Please contact us if any of you are able to help in this work or know of anyone we could approach to help us.

The work would require researching honey production data, (some of which already exists), liaising with horticulturalists and/or their representative organisations, including carrying out surveys, sourcing

the latest beekeeping and pollination industries data from the department of primary industry water and the environment, researching the extent of the beekeepers dependence on the leatherwood resource and producing a model of the industry without leatherwood, preparing one or more models to help evaluate the best approach the issue of submissions and or lobbying government and Forestry Tasmania, and to assist in the making of actual submissions.

Our contact details are Save Your Leatherwood Association
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Mob 0409 286 533 - daytime (Eric Cave).

We already have one volunteer helping with the upgrade of our website, for which we are very grateful.

New members on our executive are now well overdue.

If you can research, use a telephone, use a computer (and have one), draft letters and/or submissions, know or want to learn more about the importance of leatherwood in the food chain in Tasmania or just want to (or can), help in any of these areas then please offer your services on the executive or make yourself available to be co-opted onto the executive.

There will be at least two positions for ordinary executive committee members to be filled at the AGM being held on the 29th September 2008 this year.

Please help with this important work.

In closing I pay tribute to and sincerely thank all members of our executive who have worked hard to achieve what have been significant advances in the area of leatherwood protection and further publicity of its importance to Tasmania. Also thank you to all beekeepers whether members or not who have assisted with their time and knowledge.

Please make every effort to attend the AGM which will be held at the Glenorchy state library on Monday the 29th September 2008 at 7 pm. You will have received formal notice of the meeting in the mail.

Thank you all for your support during the past year.

Bob Davey (President)