

Media release
November 2005

Save Your Leatherwood Honey Inc.

The Association began with just nine concerned people who were alarmed at the destruction of the Leatherwood resource in the South of Tasmania, the effect this was having on the beekeeping industry, and also on the future of other industries relying on the Resource. The remaining Leatherwood trees in the South of Tasmania are being destroyed by the present clearfelling in State Forest and are irreplaceable. The association now has more than 60 members (mostly non beekeepers) and is growing.

Are you aware of the current situation facing the Southern Beekeepers?

Notwithstanding the report by some Northern Beekeepers and Mr Bryan Green MHA, that all is well, the iconic honey resource, the unique Tasmanian Leatherwood (*Eucryphia Lucida*). is under serious threat of being reduced to an uneconomic level in the South of Tasmania.

The loss of leatherwood means the decline in the total number of hives available for honey production and to the Agricultural Industry for Pollination services. This service to the growers of fruit and seed crops in Tasmania equates to \$200 m. + in value to local crops. The Tasmanian Fruit Growers Association and the seed companies have been supportive to the Beekeepers in recognising the impending crisis, but little has been achieved to protect the resource.

Leatherwood trees must be at least 70 years old to produce a regular economic supply of nectar for the bees. It is the only resource in the Tasmanian forest which flowers every year. Some 70% of Tasmania's annual production of 1200 tonnes of honey is derived from the Leatherwood tree. It is a valuable irreplaceable wintering food supply for the bees.

The Leatherwood species is an understorey tree found in rainforest and in particular wet eucalypt forest. It grows alongside other celebrated rain forest species such as Myrtle, Sassafras, Celery Top Pine and Huon Pine.

For the Southern Beekeepers the absence of a secure Leatherwood resource means there will be a significantly reduced local honey and pollination industry in the South of Tasmania.

THIS SITUATION WILL BE REACHED WITHIN THE NEXT 18 TO 24 MONTHS.

In the recent Community Forest Agreement (CFA) between the State and Federal Governments the State is to receive significant funding for the restructure and support of the timber industry. However none of the otherwise commendable funding initiatives protect any of the commercial Leatherwood resource in the South of Tasmania which will have largely disappeared before these initiatives are implemented.

According to internal research by the Southern Branch of the Tasmanian Beekeeping Association, the present road access to the Leatherwood resource on Crown Land managed by Forestry Tasmania are already at the boundaries of the resource. There is nowhere else to go. It is the end of the “Leatherwood Road”. Like all resources the supply is finite.

This situation was foreseen by the Beekeepers 20 years ago and put to Forestry Tasmania with no tangible result.

Ask any Beekeeper and you will be told that securing the Leatherwood resource requires an immediate cessation of clearfelling Forest coupes where the resource grows. They will also tell you that no secure Leatherwood resource means no local Beekeeping or Pollination industries in the South of Tasmania. In 18 months there will be a loss of one third of the hive numbers in the South of Tasmania – that is a loss of one third of the honey production and pollination service.

NO LEATHERWOOD = NO BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY = NO POLLINATION

This means less, much less, locally grown fruit and vegetables, and more imported products to make up for the shortfall. Locally grown produce will be much more expensive and will be even less able to compete with imported produce than at present.

BEEKEEPING AND POLLINATION ARE INDUSTRIES APPROACHING A CRISIS ?

This organisation is doing all in its power to publicise the position by lobbying horticulturists and politicians and asking the media for support.

All the beekeepers want is to stop clearfelling of Leatherwood resource and the immediate commencement of the selective logging plan which is scheduled to commence in 2010.

If you want to be part of the fight to save your leatherwood resource or just want to find out more about us and the problem then please search this website or write to us at GPO BOX 1981 HOBART 7001, or telephone the President Bob Davey on 62202733 (day) or 62738907 (Evening) or Eric Cave on 0409286533 or 62238811 (day).

Do you like honey on your toast or locally grown produce? If you do or just hate injustice, then help us fight to preserve the resource on which these things rely!

The members of this new organisation are all volunteers and mostly non Beekeepers who passionately believe the Leatherwood resource is for all Tasmanians to treasure and enjoy not just a single industry, no matter how important that industry may be. Justice in Tasmanian Forests means preserving the employment of ALL people relying on the Forest for their livelihood.

Thank you for taking the time to read this media release.