

**SURFRIDER FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA (SFA)
NORTHERN TASMANIA BRANCH**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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SURFRIDERS FACILITATE BALANCED PULP MILL TOUR FOR TASMANIAN MLC

Launceston, Tasmania – The global resources of the Surf Rider Foundation were engaged last week to successfully assist in an international pulp mill tour by Tasmanian parliamentarians, visiting Chile as part of a global “fact finding” trip.

This tour was conducted prior to Tasmanian parliament voting at the end of August on a controversial proposal to build one of the worlds largest Kraft Pulp Mills in the Tamar Valley, Tasmania, which has been proposed by timber company Gunns Ltd, and has strong support from the Tasmanian Labour Government. The proposed mill site is located in a tourist sensitive area and would dump up to 30 billion litres of industrial effluent into Bass Strait per annum, close to key surfing breaks on the north coast of Tasmania.

One member of the visiting delegation, Ruth Forrest, MLC for the seat of Murchison, was hosted by Joshua Berry, surfer and director of marine conservation group “Save the Waves Coalition”, for a one day, overnight tour of the areas surrounding the recently established Nueva Aldea Pulp Mill in Chile. During the visit she met local vineyard owners, agricultural workers, fisherman, health professionals, marine scientists and the local Mayor and tourism board of the fishing town of Cobquecura located in Southern Chile.

“There are two sides to every story,” said Peter Whish-Wilson President of the Surf Rider Foundation Australia Northern Tasmanian Branch, who helped organise this tour. “This day of meetings was deliberately designed to show different perspectives on the potential impacts of this proposed Pulp Mill in Tasmania that Ms. Forrest may not have received on the official tour with the other parliamentarians.”

Ms. Forrest was able to meet with local vineyard tourism operators who expressed their concern over foul odours and the negative impacts the mill was having on their businesses, health professionals who treated health problems from these odour emissions within local communities, as well as fisherman and town officials who expressed concern over the Mill’s negative social and economic impacts on their local communities.. Dr Sandor Mulslow, an experienced marine scientist and member of the UN Seabed Authority, also met and travelled with Ms. Forrest and briefed her on the many ecological and environmental problems encountered at another recently commissioned Chilean Pulp Mill in Valdivia. The Valdivia mill has been shutdown several times since it was recently commissioned due to technical difficulties and pollution problems, and has been the subject of significant independent scientific marine studies at the University of Valdivia.

“We have considerable respect for Ms. Forrest’s decision to agree to take this tour, and for not being afraid to meet and listen to genuine, concerned people in Chile, who have no corporate interest in Pulp Mills. The Surf Rider Foundation are happy to provide her with any feedback or follow up on concerns raised during her many meetings,” commented Peter Whish-Wilson. “We are especially pleased with the way the Surf Rider Foundation and its global marine conservation partner Save the Waves Coalition have been able to co-operate and share resources on such an important opportunity, with such short notice”.

Ms. Forrest’s meetings were filmed with her permission during the tour, and may feature as part of a documentary made by independent Californian film maker Sachi Cunningham. Due to be released in 2008, this documentary focuses on the impacts of forestry businesses on South American communities and ecology.

More specific detail on this tour can be found below, for additional information contact Peter Whish-Wilson on 0410754728. /ENDS

TOUR DETAIL

The tour started at 2.00pm on Monday 6th August with a visit to a small vineyard directly bordering the Nueva Aldea mill. Victor Rabanal, proprietor, showed the group his largely abandoned salesroom whose drop in sales he directly blames on the giant mill's proximity and its odors. The group walked the fields and spoke with agricultural workers trimming vines about the mill's strong odors and its negative effect on tourism, wine sales, and visitors.

The group then visited the town council of Nipas, a small riverside town 12 kilometers West of the mill. Two town council members, a health professional and a dentist, recounted to Ms. Forrest their medical experience with the mill's odor problems and its impact on local residents. Sandor Mulsow, a visiting scientist from Valdivia, was present to recount his experience in Valdivia from a similar pulp mill.

The tour then left Nipas and followed the Itata River out to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean, where the mill company is building a large pipeline to evacuate the mill's liquid effluents directly into the Pacific Ocean less than 2km offshore.

Later in the evening a dinner was hosted by Julio Fuentes, the mayor of the small coastal village of Cobquecura and leader of the opposition to the mill's waste pipeline. Also present at the dinner were local fishermen, opposition members of Salvemos Cobquecura and tourism operators. The town of Cobquecura is dependent on fishing and tourism and the mill's pollution directly threatens that livelihood, so opposition is fierce.

The next morning a breakfast meeting between local tourism operators, Ruth Forrest and Sandor Mulsow clarified the town's concerns over water pollution and the science of the waste pipeline.

ABOUT THE SURFRIDER FOUNDATION: A HISTORY OF TACKLING POLLUTING PULP MILLS

SFA is not opposed to downstream processing of forest products in Tasmania but maintains we must be absolutely sure that any development is benign to the environment, other industries, coastal amenity, and indeed human health.

Surfrider is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of Australia's oceans, waves and beaches for all people through Conservation, Advocacy, Research and Education (CARE). We have 29 branches nationwide, international affiliates in the USA, Japan, Brazil and Europe, and over 100,000 members worldwide.

Surfrider advocates for the sustainable management and use of the coastal zone, including coastal river catchments and offshore activities. Our opportunities to enjoy the coast: its clean water, its biodiversity and its spectacular landforms, are influenced by the actions of individuals, the aspirations of business, and the policies of all levels of government. Surfrider aims to increase awareness of many issues impacting on our enjoyment of the coast, and to ensure that our children have similar opportunities to enjoy it as we have today.

Surfrider is part of a larger, international Pacific Rim Pulp Mill Coalition, advocating responsible and effective coastal environmental management standards from pulp mill operators.

In 1991 Surfrider Foundation USA won the second largest Clean Water Act suit in United States history against two pulp mills in Humboldt County, California. As a result of the legal action the Louisiana Pacific's Samoa pulp mill was converted to a closed-cycle, totally chlorine-free (TCF) process.

For further information visit the SFA website at: <http://www.surfrider.org.au/>