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MEDIA RELEASE

Hunters are coming to a National Park (very) near you.

The Friends of Durras conservation group says secret maps showing national park hunting zones near towns across NSW should be revealed to the public.

This follows leaks last week that revealed the tourist town of Merimbula could become a tourism ghost town with Zone C unrestricted shooting to be allowed along and across the Princes Highway in national park just north of the town. Plans to allow hunters access deliberately ignore potential dangers from shooting accidents identified by local National Parks and Wildlife Service officers.

Friends of Durras spokesman John Perkins said the NSW Government was waging war on regional areas.

“What is the real agenda here? First we have coal seam gas mining, now hunting in national parks, anyone would think the government wanted people out of rural areas and regional towns and no one to visit national parks. Logging, mining, shooting – where do the interests of the public fit into this picture? ”

Mr Perkins said already tourists were saying they wouldn't risk travelling to Merimbula from June when the hunting legislation was introduced.

Maps showing plans for the Zone C unrestricted, unsupervised shooting area near Merimbula were leaked last week and show a two kilometre stretch of the Princes Highway near Merimbula straddles the Zone C area and runs through it. This road is used daily by local residents, school buses, coaches and tourists.

“The O'Farrell Government is placing 7 million national park visitors at risk of being shot and doesn't care about the businesses that rely on these visitors. The regions and towns near national parks that have spent thousands upon thousands of dollars promoting their destinations as peaceful, beautiful places to visit are also at risk.

“It is clear why the NSW Government didn't want to release either the maps of where shooting will be allowed and why they keep silent about the advice from their own experts, which urges a prohibition on hunting in National Parks.

“What is less clear is why the O'Farrell Government believes it has a mandate to risk the lives and livelihoods of people living in rural and regional areas in the first place. The cost of keeping the Shooters and Fishers Party onside is becoming increasingly expensive, and the 98 per cent of the NSW population – who didn't vote for this group and would never do so - are condemned to pay the price.”

Ref: <http://davidshoebridge.org.au/2013/03/14/whistleblower-reveals-danger-to-public-of-south-east-parks-hunting//>