



Groups fight bauxite mining

KAREN HUNT

DESTRUCTION of forests and farmland, threats to the water supply and constant truck movements — these are what conservationists fear from bauxite mining.

Bridgetown Greenbushes Friends of the Forest is combining with the WA Forest Alliance, the Conservation Council of WA and others in the North and South Darling Ranges to fight Bauxite Resources Limited's push to

become the third alumina producer in the South West beside Alcoa and Worsley.

"All hell has broken loose," said BGFF president Richard Wittenoom.

Mr Wittenoom said BRL had applied in 2008 for an exploration licence in the Warrup forest block south of Bridgetown — an area now recognised as old growth forest.

BRL managing director Dan Tenardi says the company's new exploration licence application in

Bridgetown is nowhere near the Warrup block.

"BRL is not interested in mining old growth forest," he said.

BRL has invested in woylie research and has on its staff an environment manager who has completed a doctorate on rehabilitating bauxite mines in the Darling Range.

However, green groups are alarmed at BRL's applications to explore big sections of the southern forests and farmland, and say that mining on private

prime agricultural land will have a widespread impact, driving down the values of adjacent properties.

The impact on roads, particularly in Bridgetown which is vulnerable be-

cause its CBD straddles South Western Highway — is another concern.

"If 1.5 million tonnes per annum was carted from south of Bridgetown to a railhead at Greenbushes this would mean a B-Double in Hampton Street every four minutes," Mr Wittenoom said.

In Chittering shire, where BRL has begun mining, the group Residents for Responsible Mining has accused the company of poor practice and breaching its mining licence.

The company denies the claim, and the Department of Environment and Conservation says it checked the first stage of BRL's Bindoon project for breaches of the Environmental Protection Act, but found none.

A second stage of the Bindoon project has been referred to the EPA for approval.