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Protestors threaten forestry jobs

Protestors that have obstructed forest workers today are potentially threatening hundreds of jobs in East Gippsland says VicForests, the State-owned manager of sustainable native timber harvesting in Victoria.

VicForests' Acting Regional Manager for East Gippsland, Michael Theobald, said the protesters actions were a severe blow to the East Gippsland timber industry already impacted by the global financial crisis.

"Whilst VicForests acknowledges that individuals have the right to protest, the dangerous and callous practice of protestors chaining themselves onto harvesting equipment is impacting on the livelihood of forest workers; and, subsequently interrupts the supply of sawlogs to local sawmilling business," Mr Theobald said.

"Stopping our operations not only results in the harvesting contractor and their employees not receiving any income today, but has the potential to adversely affect the operations of sawmills that are a major employer in East Gippsland."

"If these people want to protest against sustainable forestry operations then they should consider more peaceful methods that do not cause hardship for forest workers who are lawfully going about their business."

VicForests is certified to the Australian Forestry Standard, which provides international recognition of the sustainability of forest management activities.

Victoria's native forest timber industry directly employs over 4,000 people in rural and regional Victoria and the sustainable harvest of Victoria's native forests generates over \$140 million of revenues each year.

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