

Wednesday, September 1st 2010

Approved plans give industry certainty

VicForests has welcomed the approval of its Timber Release Plans (TRPs) by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

VicForests' CEO, David Pollard, said the plans show the location of areas which VicForests may sustainably harvest over the next five years.

"The Department of Sustainability and Environment's approval of VicForests' Timber Release Plans is important for the native timber industry," Dr Pollard said.

"This outcome provides certainty for VicForests, our contractors and our customers and allows future harvesting plans to be developed.

"It's vitally important to note that the approval of the plans will not increase the amount of timber harvesting taking place in Victoria.

"The total area of State Forest available for harvesting on the new Plans has reduced by more than 7000 hectares in the Central Highlands region.

"Each year VicForests harvests approximately 5500 ha, or less than 0.1% of Victoria's total forested area. This limit is set in an Allocation Order and approved by the Minister for Environment under the Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004.

"Changes proposed to the Timber Release Plans will not result in an increase to this figure," he said.

Dr Pollard said the Timber Release Plans have been approved following a detailed process which included significant community consultation.

"As a result of public submissions, changes were made to the TRPs to address concerns raised by the community," Dr Pollard said.

"This included the removal of proposed harvesting areas from the Plans, notably coupes on the lower slopes of Mt St Leonard in response to community concerns.

"This consultation period was a crucial part of the process. All submissions received from the community were provided to DSE to assist them with their decision regarding the approval of the TRPs," he said.

"The majority of new areas included in the TRPs have been added for planning purposes and will not be harvested in the immediate future.

"And despite earlier claims made by opponents of the native timber industry, there will be no harvesting of forests in western Victoria as part of these approved plans," he said.

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