

Thursday, July 1st 2010

VicForests acts on community concern

VicForests has removed two coupes planned for the lower slopes of Mt St Leonard from the proposed amendments to its Timber Release Plans for 2010/11.

Lachlan Spencer, VicForests' Regional Manager, Central Highlands, said the coupes in question raised concern from the community due to the potential for harvesting operations to be seen from Healesville and their proximity to the Bicentennial Trail.

"VicForests has worked with the community to come to a solution which addresses their concerns," Mr Spencer said.

"VicForests indicated at a meeting with local residents on May 31st it would remove one of these coupes from the proposed plan this year in order to allow the community to approach DSE regarding their concerns relating to Forest Management Zoning in this area.

"We have also gone a step further and removed a second coupe from the proposed plan for 2010/11.

"These updates highlight the importance of community consultation around changes to our Timber Release Plans and show this process does work.

"Concerns regarding these coupes were discussed at a recent community meeting in Healesville. It is disappointing speakers did not share news of VicForests' intention to remove at least one of the coupes from our plans with those present.

"VicForests will continue to engage with the residents to improve the understanding of our operations and the positive contributions VicForests makes to the local community," Mr Spencer said.

"VicForests and its contractors directly employ over 500 staff in the Central Highlands region, which includes the Shire of Yarra Ranges. On top of this, timber from this region is supplied to sawmills who directly employ around 2000 staff," Mr Spencer said.

"It's important to remember that VicForests' operations comply with the legislative framework that governs sustainable timber harvesting in Victoria.

"This framework takes into consideration environmental, social and economic factors.

"Additional prescriptions are enforced on harvesting operations to protect important environmental, historical and recreational areas. These include measures such as buffers and additional protection zones where no harvesting is permitted or where harvesting is modified," Mr Spencer said.

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