

Welcome to the first edition of VicForests' quarterly community newsletter. In order to provide content of relevance to you, VicForests is keen to hear what you'd like included. Email us at vfs.admin@vicforests.com.au

Five Year Audit of VicForests Operations

A detailed external review, commissioned by the Department of Treasury and Finance, assessing VicForests' first five years has endorsed VicForests' operations and business model.

The review, by URS Consulting, recognised VicForests' achievements in the five years since its inception, including a significant increase in the transparency and accountability around native timber production in Victoria and certification to the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS).

Despite some media outlets choosing to focus on the recommendations for improvement, the report indicates that VicForests has performed well against its important environmental objectives.

VicForests is confident it will further improve the profitability of the business as it recovers from the impact of recent, significant fire events and realise the full effect of the reforms implemented within the timber industry.

VicForests' Annual Internal Audit

VicForests recently conducted an annual audit of its Sustainable Forest Management System (SFMS) in both regional areas. The results showed a high level of understanding of the Utilisation Procedure, The Code of Practice for Timber Production and VicForests Instructions that relate to each division.

The audit demonstrated that VicForests' staff have a good understanding of and utilise the appropriate internal registers, including the Corrective Action and Incident Report Database, the Stakeholder Database and Communications Register. These are important registers and databases under VicForests' SFMS and staff are required to use them regularly to track corrective actions and stakeholder engagement.

Some areas for improvement have been identified as part of our continuous improvement strategy and will be reviewed in the next internal audit, to be held in the second half of 2011.

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Supporting Local Communities in Regional Victoria

With the receipt of over 100 applications, the launch of the VicForests Community Support Program late last year has exceeded our expectations. Around 40 local schools, community and sporting groups and local events across the State have now received financial support, including Orbost North Primary School, the Orbost Football & Netball Club, the Buchan Rodeo, Friends of the East Gippsland Rail Trail, Toolangi Primary School and Salvation Army, Healesville.

The next round of applications will open in late May, with financial grants to be provided during July (for the 2011/12 financial year).



VicForests' Mick Sutton with staff and students from Orbost North Primary school.

VicForests on Show

The Australia Day Woodchop at Alexandra Gardens, Melbourne, the Cattleman's Get-together at Hinnomunjie, the Mitta Mitta Show and Australian Paper Open Day are just a few of the events where VicForests has promoted sustainable forestry through its display stand. Several thousand seedlings, frisbees, fact sheets and colouring in sheets were distributed at the events and visitors were especially interested to view and hear of our regeneration activities.

Regeneration Campaign Begins

VicForests staff are undertaking planned regeneration burns in harvested areas across eastern Victoria throughout Autumn to promote the establishment of young eucalypt seedlings following harvesting operations.

These burns play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of our forests by creating an environment which encourages the regrowth of trees native to the area and are a part of a larger planned burning program being undertaken in conjunction with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).

Milder weather and recent rainfall has provided the opportunity to begin the regeneration burning process earlier than has traditionally been the case. However, VicForests will continue to monitor conditions carefully before any burns commence.

Community members wanting more information can contact the Victorian Bushfire Information line on 1800 240 667.

VicForests' in the News: Going Bush TV

VicForests has collaborated with Forestry Tasmania on their long running TV program, 'Going Bush'. With a focus on issues related to the multiple use of our forests the current series is the first to be broadcast into mainland Australia.

VicForests developed stories on regeneration, our resource planning LiDAR system and the role of our staff and contractors in fire suppression, with particular examples from the Black Saturday bushfires.

The film crew was very impressed with the professional presentation of VicForests staff and the positive impression they created about the forestry industry in Victoria.

The series aired on Southern Cross TV in regional Victoria between February 5 and March 5.

Appointment of Biodiversity Specialist

VicForests has recently appointed Dr Chela Powell to the role of Conservation Biologist to assist VicForests to build on its understanding of biodiversity management issues associated with its harvesting operations.

In particular, Dr Powell will focus on the protection of endangered species, liaising with external flora and fauna experts within DSE and other research agencies and working with VicForests staff to improve their knowledge base. Her work will also include coordinating fauna surveys prior to harvesting operations and developing policies to ensure the protection of species discovered during the survey process.

Dr Powell has a Bachelor of Science majoring in Conservation Biology from Monash University and completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne.

Protecting Victoria's Forest Giants

VicForests has implemented a new Giant Tree Protection Policy to protect any tree greater than 4m in diameter or 85m in height found in State forests across Victoria.

Trees greater than 4m in diameter in the East Gippsland and Tambo Forest Management Areas are already protected under the DSE's Management Procedures. However, this new policy extends this protection to trees throughout eastern Victoria.

This protection will include incorporating these trees into large buffers or retained habitat islands and using techniques such as extended clearing around the base of the trees to protect them from fire.

A Mountain Ash of 85m in height, recently discovered in forest near Toolangi, is the first tree protected under VicForests' new Giant Tree Protection Policy. In addition, VicForests has recently identified a 4.2m diameter Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) in State forest near Bonang in East Gippsland. This is the largest known Messmate in the State and this, too, will be protected.



Dr Chela Powell with one of VicForests' Giant Trees

Auction Catalogue

The Auction Catalogue sessions held in conjunction with the Resource Outlook Briefings outlined the timber lots to be sold in VicForests' major auction, as per the timetable below:

Auction Timetable

Release of reserve pricing to potential bidders	Online	Now available
Auction 2011-1	Online	Tuesday 10 May to Friday 13 May
Issue of Schedules to Terms and Conditions for Timber Sales	Online	Tuesday 17 May

