

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Friday 16 December 2005

Mt Stirling timber harvesting to begin in February

Timber harvesting will occur approximately two kilometres west of King Saddle, Mt Stirling, as part of the 2006 season, commencing in February.

The harvesting will take place in an area of 25 hectares of Alpine Ash within the Mansfield State forest. The operation was planned to commence in February to coincide with the end of school holidays and the peak tourism season.

The harvesting will require some road closures, particularly when the operation moves close to the roadside, to ensure that public safety is not compromised.

"We have been working with local tourism operators, Mansfield Shire and the Visitor Information Centre, to endeavour to notify the large numbers of visitors to the area," said VicForests Senior Forest Officer, Peter Scales.

"Circuit Road will be closed during harvesting, between Mt Number Three Road and King Basin Road, during weekdays, with the exception of public holidays. However, access to popular destinations such as Craig's Hut and Pineapple Flat will be via alternative routes such as the Howqua Gap, and will be signposted as such.

"The Alpine Ash harvested in this area is a highly sought-after timber that can be used for appearance grade products such as exposed beams and furniture. The sawlogs will be processed at mills in Mansfield and Murrindindi. The residual products from the narrow, limby head branches will be utilised for paper production at an Australian-owned exporting company based at Geelong."

Harvesting in this area is expected to conclude in May, and it will be regenerated in either autumn 2006 or 2007.

A copy of the fact sheet 'Timber Harvesting at Mt Stirling' can be obtained at the Mansfield Visitor Information Centre or at the VicForests website www.vicforests.com.au/ind-fr-abou-frame.html and clicking on 'Publications'.

VicForests is a State-owned enterprise responsible for the harvest of timber from Victorian state forests and their subsequent regeneration. It began operating in August 2004.

The Mt Stirling coupes are available for harvest under the North East Forest Management Plan. Coupes are identified as part of a long-term planning process, which ensures harvesting is sustainable through time. Native timber harvesting in the Mansfield district dates back to the 1920s.

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Further information, please contact Peter Scales, Senior Forest Officer, Mansfield telephone 5733 1230.