



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

**Wednesday 4 April 2007**

### **EPA Audit Result is One Part of the Sustainability Picture**

VicForests has welcomed the latest Forest Audit, released today by the EPA and says that it is an important component of the picture of sustainable forest operations.

Audits of VicForests' operations were conducted between May and July 2006 in the three regions in eastern Victoria in which it manages the harvest and regeneration of native forests.

VicForests has continued to improve its environmental performance by achieving an overall average compliance of 93 per cent, up from 92 per cent in 2005.

High levels of compliance were achieved in coupe planning documentation, roading and the management of harvesting exclusion areas for flora and fauna and streamside protection.

VicForests' Acting CEO, Cameron MacDonald said that he welcomed the independent review that the EPA Audit provides each year and commented that some of the recommendations have already been acted upon.

"VicForests has developed comprehensive operating procedures to ensure accuracy in recording seed sources and provenances sown and also contributed to the review of the Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land.

"We are very satisfied with the outcomes of this Audit and I believe that the results are in large part due to the commitment of our staff and contractors, who are focused on the environmental outcomes from our operations.

"They continue to meet the constant challenge of finding better ways of working and deepening their understanding of the impacts of our work.

"VicForests has put a sustainable forest management system in place and made accountability part of our organisational culture.

"Whilst the results are pleasing, they indicate that there are always going to be areas for improvement.

"We are constantly working to improve our systems and practices and are committed to a culture of continual improvement.

"In 2007, VicForests was certified to the Australian Forestry Standard, which was itself an intensive process of testing the robustness of our systems and operations.

"We also conduct internal audits and the recommendations are incorporated into operating procedures which will continue to be tested into the future," Mr MacDonald said.

**ENDS**

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*...Media backgrounder following*

## Media Backgrounder (2 pages)

### VicForests background

VicForests was established in 2004 for the harvest and regeneration of native forest timbers from Victoria's State forests. VicForests manages the sale of this timber to generate the best value for the State.

### EPA Audit background

The Audit is independently conducted by the EPA on an annual basis. The primary objective of the audit is to assess compliance with the *Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production, Revision No.2, 1996* (the Code) of harvesting operations within Victorian state forest.

### 2006 EPA Audit results

Table 2: Individual coupe scores

FMA/OA	Coupe number	Score (%)*
Tambo	C1	93
	C2	80
	C3	84
	C4	97
	C5	94
	C6	93
	C7	87
	C8	89
	C9	83
	C10	94
	C11	92
	C12	89
North	C13	95
	C14	93
	C15	95
	C16	89
	C17	94
	C18	89
	C19	91
Latrobe	C20	96
	C21	94
	C22	98
	C23	88
	C24	99
	C25	100
	C26	97
	C27	94
	C28	98
	C29	84
	C30	97
	C31	99
	C32	96
	C33	100
	C34	92
	C35	99
	C36	99

In general, a high level of compliance (greater than 90%) was achieved in the following areas:

- Coupe planning
- Wood utilisation planning
- Landscape values
- Water yield protection
- Habitat trees
- Litter removal
- Camp maintenance areas
- Management of area exclusions and boundaries – Flora and Fauna
- Reserved area protection – Buffers
- Rainforest
- Roding
- Snig and forwarding tracks

A number of positive practices were observed by the audit team. These included improvements in the quality and detail of documentation; greater attention to habitat tree retention; improvements in boundary track construction; improvements in rainforest identification; better use of the coupe diary system and the use of coupe planning checklists.

#### **How the EPA Audit was conducted**

The Audit covers forest operations across the state.

VicForests manages 80% of the operations audited.

This constitutes approximately 10% of VicForests' annual field operations.

The audit was spread across the three VicForests regions. Of the sites selected:

- Twelve operations were in the Tambo Operations Area (East Gippsland).
- Seven were in the North Operations Area (North East Victoria)
- Sixteen were in the Latrobe Operations Area (West Gippsland).

Additional components of the audit included an office-based assessment of regeneration processes and an assessment of harvesting compliance against area limits established by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Melbourne Water in State forest catchments that supply water to Melbourne.

#### **VicForests' internal assessment program**

The 2006 EPA Audit represents an important component of VicForests annual audit program which includes various external and internal scrutiny at all levels of its operations.

This includes the annual EPA Forest Audit, 3<sup>rd</sup> party Certification Audits against the Australian Forestry Standard, Department of Sustainability and Environment Regulation and also a detailed internal monitoring program.

#### **EPA Audit Review**

VicForests welcomes the State Government's announcement today that the annual forest audit program will be reviewed by an independent person and that EPA will coordinate this review. The outcomes of the review will be provided to the Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, John Thwaites, with recommendations for the future audit program.

The review is expected to conclude in September 2007 and will involve consultation with agencies (EPA, DPI, VicForests and DSE), stakeholders (industry and conservation groups) and the community.