

Friday, July 15th 2011

Symposium illustrates forestry's sustainable future

University academics and members of the forestry industry from across Australia have called for better education of the community regarding the vital role of Australia's sustainable forestry industry.

VicForests' Forest Scientist, Michael Ryan, said academics and industry representatives came together at a forum held in Melbourne this week to discuss the management and sustainable future of Australia's regrowth forests.

"This event has highlighted that the active management of regrowth forests can achieve a variety of outcomes including wood production, water yield, carbon storage, biodiversity and fire management," Mr Ryan said.

"Dr Martin Moroni, a Carbon Scientist with Forestry Tasmania, emphasised the need for understanding that carbon is not permanently locked in our forests.

"Dr Moroni highlighted that while growing trees sequester carbon, events such as large scale bushfires and the natural decomposition of older trees actually releases carbon and CO₂ into the atmosphere.

"Rather than referring to our forests as static carbon 'sinks', Dr Moroni described these forests as 'carbon dams' in order to reflect their dynamic and changing nature as carbon is absorbed and released by trees.

"The forum identified there remains a need to better share the message of sustainability and the forestry industry, and improve the community's understanding around these issues.

"The Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and Environment, Donna Petrovich, addressed the event to outline the Victorian Government's support for the timber industry," he said.

Mr Ryan said a common theme across the presentations was an optimism regarding the positive role our regrowth forests can play in a sustainable future.

"While older forests are important, regrowth forests also play a vital role as younger, growing forests are a source of food for many native species," he said.

"Actively managing these forests through practices such as selectively harvesting some younger regrowth trees can have significant benefits for biodiversity by promoting the development of hollows in existing trees and creating habitat more quickly.

"This type of management also assists long-term timber production and short-term water yields by spacing out trees across the landscape.

"The forum also included a trip to visit the regrowth forests around Marysville and Toolangi," Mr Ryan said.

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