

Friday, July 22nd 2011

VicForests provides additional protection

VicForests has chosen to exclude an additional three hectares of forest from harvesting operations on Sylvia Creek Rd, near Toolangi.

VicForests' Director, Corporate Affairs, Nathan Trushell, said the three hectares are within an area which has been a focus of concern for some conservation groups.

"Following advice from the Department of Sustainability and Environment, VicForests undertook a further detailed assessment of the area on July 20th," he said.

"VicForests remains confident the area planned for harvest does not meet the criteria for Leadbeater's Possum habitat.

"However, we have chosen to exclude an additional three hectares from harvesting operations. This area will serve as habitat to compliment the range of measures already in place to protect biodiversity.

"VicForests hopes that by providing a pragmatic solution we can address some of the concerns raised by conservationists regarding these harvesting operations.

"This measure is a precautionary approach which goes beyond the requirements of the legislation governing native timber harvesting in Victoria.

"We believe this practical outcome will assist in further protecting biodiversity, while hopefully allowing harvesting operations to continue unhindered.

"No forest which meets the criteria for Leadbeater's Possum habitat and no old growth forest was ever planned for harvest as part of these operations," he said.

Mr Trushell said this decision underlines VicForests' willingness to consider community concerns and adapt harvesting operations.

"Trees are retained as part of all VicForests' operations to provide habitat for native fauna and plans were already in place to retain many of the trees in question.

"VicForests inspects all areas prior to harvesting to identify old growth Mountain Ash forest and potential Leadbeater's Possum habitat.

"The criteria used to identify Leadbeater's Possum habitat are defined by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and have been reviewed by a scientific advisory committee.

"A patch of Leadbeater's Possum habitat located adjacent to the coupe is protected from harvesting in a Special Protection Zone. This forest is outside the boundary of VicForests' operations and was never planned for harvest," he said.

Mr Trushell said harvesting has recommenced on the site today after delays during the week due to wet weather.

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