

Call for input on proposed Timber Release Plan changes

VicForests has commenced public consultation on proposed changes to its Timber Release Plan in response to the 2019/20 bushfire season.

The proposed TRP covers 59 coupes that VicForests is considering harvesting under strict controls in the Benalla-Mansfield, North-East and Tambo Forest Management Areas (FMAs), excluding the East Gippsland FMA.

VicForests is conducting its public consultation process until 10 July 2020 to ensure suitable input and comment from interested parties, including the community.

As part of this change process, coupes are proposed to be added to the TRP to ensure we have flexibility to meet our contractual commitments to customers, contractors, and licensees. The format of the TRP will also be changed to align with the information requirements in Section 38 of the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004* (the SFTA).

These proposed coupes are all in fire impacted areas and have been prioritised as they contain areas of fire killed Ash forest. Any harvesting of these fire killed areas would be done in compliance with the fire salvage harvesting requirements contained within the *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests* (2014) as well as VicForests' own adaptive management procedures.

In doing so, VicForests' adaptive management approach to harvesting provides for the protection of habitat and forest regeneration.

VicForests' CEO Monique Dawson said: "The changes to the Timber Release Plan help VicForests to meet its wood supply commitments and keep hundreds of regional Victorians in jobs. The Plan also supports ongoing timber supply to local customers and contractors in accordance with Victorian government policy".

"VicForests is committed to strong consultation with the community and stakeholders in relation to the proposed TRP changes," Ms Dawson said.

Once the consultation period has concluded, the TRP Amendment will be submitted to the VicForests' Board of Directors for approval.

VicForests harvests about 2500–3000 hectares each year, which is about 0.04% of all Victoria's public native forests – nominally equivalent to 4 trees in 10,000. About 96% of native forests is protected and cannot be harvested or is unsuitable.

A schedule of proposed timber harvesting areas, maps of approximate locations and a consultation feedback are available at <https://www.vicforests.com.au/planning-1/timber-release-plan-1/proposedtrp>.

Comment and submissions of the TRP Amendment can be provided via email to vfs.trp@vicforests.com.au or made in writing to: VicForests, GPO Box 191, Melbourne, 3001 from 26 June until 5pm on 10 July 2020.