Forest Stewardship Council Controlled Wood standard webinar Q and As

Bec from regional Victoria

Q: What is your definition of old growth forests?

A: The general definition of old growth forest is ecologically mature forest where the effects of disturbances are now negligible. The technical definition of old growth forests is outlined on page 35 of 'Assessment of High Conservation Values' document on our website.

The field assessment criteria include:

- A stand must be predominantly mature
- There must be no more than 10 per cent regrowth in the stand
- There must be at least 10 per cent old senescent trees
- The stand must be at least three hectares

Q: Talking about regeneration, coupes in Toolangi and Kinglake that were cut down five years ago and in 2018 have not regenerated, nothing appears to be done about this by VicForests, is there a plan?

A: VicForests actively regenerate all coupes that it has harvested, including preparing a seed bed and then sowing the site with local seed. We follow up with regeneration surveys approximately 18 months after sowing to determine whether regeneration was successful. On those patches that may not have been successful, we will undertake follow-up rehabilitation operations and further surveys until we are satisfied that regeneration is appropriate. We report regeneration progress, annually, to the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

If stakeholders have specific sites of concern VicForests welcome input and have regeneration team members available to discuss and/or meet on site.

Tim from Canberra

Q: Habitat connectivity is very complex, it's easy to say it will be monitored but what will be the criteria for a healthy connection? How long will monitoring go for due to its expense? Will the people monitoring this be independent of VicForests?

A: Habitat connectivity will be planned prior to harvesting commencement using data from VicForests habitat tree surveys and other flora and fauna surveys. The retained trees will be monitored during harvesting by supervising staff. Following harvesting, retained trees will be monitored through a regeneration field survey as well as aerial photos taken after harvesting completion. Please see Section 6.3.1 (page 25) of 'VicForests High Conservation Values Management Systems' document on our website for further detail on monitoring effectiveness of 'connectivity'.

Q: With the scrub gone, many animals will not be able to traverse that patch.

A: The aim of our habitat retention is to ensure that there is suitable forest structure over the long term. In addition to habitat tree retention there are often other retained forest patches such as riparian buffers that assist in maintaining a mosaic of forest ages across the forest landscape. Some species such as the Greater Glider will likely be able to use the retained habitat trees throughout the life of the coupe.

Q: When re-planting a logged coupe, how are species selected? Are they chosen for timber production or to restore the historic Ecological Vegetation Class? If it is for timber production, how is this different to a plantation?

A: VicForests sources seeds from local regions close to coupes to ensure the replanted forests match the same species and in the same proportion that existed on-site prior to harvesting. This is a requirement of the Code of Practice for Timber Production and is a key focus for VicForests.

Morgan from NSW

Q: What form will the monitoring of the forest health (be) at? What technologies will be relied on?

A: Monitoring of forest health, following timber harvesting, will be undertaken primarily through regeneration field surveys as well as subsequent aerial photos. There is also additional survey work conducted on a sample of coupes that will look at forest regeneration in greater detail. Please see Section 6 of 'VicForests High Conservation Values Management Systems' document on our website for further information on monitoring.

Jerry from Melbourne

Q: Is there a map available of where these old-growth areas are?

A: There is a map of modelled old growth in the Assessment of High Conservation Values document (annexure A, page 32) on our website, however the level of accuracy of this mapping is variable. DELWP are the managers for MOG 2009 (Modelled Old Growth). VicForests will use the modelled old growth data layer as a key indicator of where old growth may exist but will undertake intensive field verification of these sites as well as other locations that have old growth characteristics. Those stands that VicForests confirms as old growth will be mapped by VicForests.

Q: Will all proposed coupes get similar high intensity assessments of all habitat trees?

A: All coupes over the next 12 months will be assessed at the current high intensity, however this will be scaled down over years to 25% of all coupes. The intention will be to develop habitat tree models with the data that is collected in the early years. VicForests will always conduct coupe reconnaissance on all coupes and that will be combined with its own, as well as DELWP, flora and fauna surveys.

Dion from Tasmania

Q: Are you assessing habitat trees for all coupes in all forest types? Is GIS used to focus efforts prior to field assessment?

A: Yes. All coupes over the next 12 months will be assessed at the current high intensity, however this will be scaled down over two years to 25% of all coupes. The intention is to develop habitat tree models with the collected GIS data of habitat tree distribution across forest types.

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