

# Media Release

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## Greater Glider habitat protected in East Gippsland

VicForests has stopped timber harvesting operations in an area in East Gippsland following the verification of a Greater Glider detection by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Nathan Trushell, VicForests General Manager Stakeholders and Planning said 11 Greater Gliders had been detected on the site, resulting in the creation of a 100 hectare Special Protection Zone (SPZ).

“Harvesting was suspended on the site three weeks ago after a report regarding the colony of Gliders was sent to DELWP and this operation has now been stopped completely after the detection was verified by the Department,” Mr Trushell said.

“Legislation requires a 100 hectare SPZ to be created when more than 10 Greater Gliders are found along a one kilometre transect in East Gippsland.

“This is one of the largest Special Protection Zones created to protect habitat for native species.

“VicForests had previously engaged external ecological experts to conduct surveys of this area prior to operations commencing which found some Greater Gliders but not the density required to trigger a protection zone.

“We regularly use qualified external ecologists to conduct pre-harvest surveys on behalf of VicForests to look for threatened species and ensure they are protected.

“These surveys have found and protected nine populations of threatened species in 2016 in East Gippsland including the Yellow-Bellied Glider, Long-Footed Potoroo, Crayfish and Galaxias fish,” he said.

Mr Trushell said that VicForests responded quickly throughout the Greater Glider report submission and verification process.

“We stopped all tree-felling operations within hours of receiving the initial report and we have cancelled our operations on the site now the report has been verified.

“Our staff and contractors are all highly skilled and ethical professionals who operate within a strict Code of Practice regulated by the Victorian Government.

“VicForests follows a detailed and on-going planning process before commencing any work on areas planned for harvest and takes on board all new information as it becomes available.

“Any new information that is presented to us is assessed and acted upon where needed which can, and does, result in modifying our operations,” he said.

Both the third-party who submitted the report, and the DELWP contracted ecology surveyors who verified the detection, used roads and pathways created by VicForests contractors for timber harvesting operations to complete their surveys.