



Audit Report

Surveillance audit for
VicForests

Level 12 461 Bourke Street, Melbourne, VIC, 3000, Australia

Certificate No.: FMS20003

Audit Date: 17/4/2018 - 16/5/2018

Work Item I.D.: WI-967357

Issue Date: October 2018

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SAI Global conducted an audit of VicForests on 17/4/2018 - 16/5/2018.

The purpose of this audit report is to summarise the degree of compliance with relevant criteria, as defined on this page, based on the evidence obtained during the audit of your organisation. This audit report considers your organisation's policies, objectives, and continual improvement processes. Comments may include how suitable the objectives selected by your organisation appear to be in regard to maintaining customer satisfaction levels and providing other benefits with respect to policy and other external and internal needs. We may also comment regarding the measurable progress you have made in reaching these targets for improvement.

SAI Global audits are carried out within the requirements of SAI Global procedures that also reflect the requirements and guidance provided in the international standards relating to audit practice such as ISO/IEC 17021, ISO 19011 and other normative criteria. Auditing is based on a sampling process of the available information. SAI Global Auditors are assigned to audits according to industry, standard or technical competencies appropriate to the organisation being audited. Details of such experience and competency are maintained in our records.

In addition to the information contained in this audit report, SAI Global maintains files for each client. These files contain details of organisation size and personnel as well as evidence collected during preliminary and subsequent audit activities (Documentation Review and Scope) relevant to the application for initial and continuing certification of your organisation.

Please take care to advise us of any change that may affect the application/certification or may assist us to keep your contact information up to date, as required by SAI Global Terms and Conditions.

This report has been prepared by SAI Global Pty Limited (SAI Global) in respect of a Client's application for assessment by SAI Global. The purpose of the report is to comment upon evidence of the Client's compliance with the standards or other criteria specified. The content of this report applies only to matters, which were evident to SAI Global at the time of the audit within the audit scope. SAI Global does not warrant or otherwise comment upon the suitability of the contents of the report or the certificate for any particular purpose or use. SAI Global accepts no liability whatsoever for consequences to, or actions taken by, third parties as a result of or in reliance upon information contained in this report or certificate.

Please note that this report is subject to independent review and approval. Should changes to the outcomes of this report be necessary as a result of the review, a revised report will be issued and will supersede this report.

Standard(s): 4708:2013 | Certification

Code(s): 02, F01 to F08

Scope of Certification: Processes involved in the planning for, harvesting and haulage of native eucalypt forest and post-harvest regeneration. The Defined Forest Area is as per the area defined in the Timber Release Plan encompassing the geographic region located east of the Hume Highway and extending to the coast and the Victoria/NSW border. The DFA also includes the area of the Timber Utilisation Plan applicable to community forestry harvesting activities. Further information regarding the DFA, including all reports and maps, can be obtained from the Corporate Support Office address listed above or the VicForests website.

Number of Staff: 132 (FTE)

Shifts: 1

Total audit duration: 72 hrs

Audit Team Members(s): Sabrina Kerber - Lead Auditor

Audit Team Leader Sabrina Kerber

Other Participants: Gary King - Technical Specialist

Definitions and action required with respect to audit findings

Major non-conformance:

Based on objective evidence, the absence of, or a significant failure to implement and/or maintain conformance to requirements of the applicable standard. Such issues may raise significant doubt as to the capability of the management system to achieve its intended outputs (i.e. the absence of or failure to implement a complete Management System clause of the standard); or a situation which would on the basis of available objective evidence, raise significant doubt as to the capability of the Management System to achieve the stated policy and objectives of the customer.

NOTE: The “applicable Standard” is the Standard which SAI Global are issuing certification against, and may be a Product Standard, a management system Standard, a food safety Standard or another set of documented criteria.

Action required: This category of findings requires SAI Global to issue a formal NCR; to receive and approve client’s proposed correction and corrective action plans; and formally verify the effective implementation of planned activities. Correction and corrective action plan should be submitted to SAI Global prior to commencement of follow-up activities as required. Follow-up action by SAI Global must ‘close out’ the NCR or reduce it to a lesser category within 90 days or as specified in NCR form.

If significant risk issues (e.g. safety, environmental, food safety, product legality/quality, etc.) are detected during an audit these shall be reported immediately to the Client and more immediate or instant correction shall be requested. If this is not agreed and cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of SAI Global, immediate suspension shall be recommended.

In the case of an already certified client, failure to close out NCR within the time limits means that suspension proceedings may be instituted by SAI Global.

Follow-up activities incur additional charges.

Minor non-conformance:

Represents either a management system weakness or minor issue that could lead to a major non-conformance if not addressed. Each minor NC should be considered for potential improvement and to further investigate any system weaknesses for possible inclusion in the corrective action program.

Action required: This category of findings requires SAI Global to issue a formal NCR; to receive and approve client’s proposed correction and corrective action plans; and formally verify the effective implementation of planned activities at the next scheduled audit or within specified time frames.

Opportunity for Improvement:

A documented statement, which may identify areas for improvement however shall not make specific recommendation(s).

Action required: Client may develop and implement solutions in order to add value to operations and management systems. SAI Global is not required to follow-up on this category of audit finding.

Executive Overview

The purpose of this audit was to determine continuing compliance of your organization's management system with the audit criteria; and its effectiveness in achieving continual improvement and system objectives.

The audit revealed that the system continues to be enhanced and well implemented across the region audited. Improvements continue to be made and whilst there have been some significant changes to personnel, the system is robust enough to ensure consistency of outcomes and a clear approach to forest management.

There continues to be a greater emphasis on preparation prior to harvesting, identification of biodiversity values and flexibility in the system to allow for change through new issues arising or to address stakeholder concerns. The training processes are becoming more detailed and the excellent experience of the regional personnel is ensuring new personnel are well equipped to undertake their roles and achieve the planned outcomes.

This audit provided an opportunity to view aerial burn ignition and the coordination between personnel from VicForests and DELWP. This was a rare opportunity and indicated the highly professional approach involved in the helicopter process with VicForest personnel able to demonstrate extreme accuracy to achieve a good outcome for the seedbed and avoid exceedences.

No new major or minor non-conformances have been raised. A previous minor non-conformance regarding consistency between personnel and regions with regard to coupe rehabilitation and finalization has had good progress with a further internal audit to be completed prior to the recertification audit in December. This will be carried over but will be upgraded to a major NCR if the actions are not undertaken as proposed.

This audit was a stand-alone audit of the system(s) listed in the "Background Information" section of this report.

The audit has determined that your management system has the ability to ensure the organization meets its identified applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements relevant to the scope of certification.

The audit has determined that your management system is effective in ensuring that the organization can reasonably expect to achieve its defined objectives.

The objectives of this audit have been fulfilled.

Recommendation

The recommendation from this audit is that your certification continues.

Audit recommendations are always subject to ratification by the SAI Global certification authority.

This report was prepared by: Sabrina Kerber Management Systems Auditor and Gary King, Technical Specialist M. Nat. Res.; B.Sc. (For).

Meeting Attendance Register

Name	Position	Entry	Exit
Nathan Trushell	CEO	✓	
Tim McBride	Manager Biodiversity, Conservation and Research	✓	
Alex Messina	GM Corporate Affairs	✓	
Owen Trumper	GM Operations	✓	
Nick Broomhall	Forester Tactical Planning	✓	✓
Nora Devoe	Manager Planning and Environment	✓	✓

Charles Stansfield	(Acting) Regional Manager West Gippsland	✓	
Bill Paul	Regional Manager Community Forestry	✓	
Lachlan Wilson	Forest Policy and Compliance Officer	✓	
James Gunn	Forester Tactical Planning	✓	
Gary King	SAI Global Technical Expert	✓	
Sabrina Kerber	SAI Global Lead Auditor	✓	✓

Changes to the audit plan and the reasons for the change

Initial changes to the audit plan involved moving audit dates due to an illness of both SAI and VicForests personnel. The audit report was not completed until four months after the audit due to a significant and ongoing illness affecting the auditor. As such, the report has also been shortened however, the observation notes taken during the audit are quite extensive. Communication with stakeholders was restricted to those met during the audit with no ability to complete the usual ring around. This will be part of the recertification audit.

Significant issues impacting on the Audit Programme

There are no significant issues impacting on the audit programme with the recertification audit still planned for December 2018.

Appropriateness of the certification scope

The scope of certification continues to be appropriate to the activities controlled by VicForests.

Action taken on previous audit findings

Four minor non-conformances were raised at the previous surveillance audit. Significant work has been completed on all of the minor NCRs with a folder of evidence including the Close out Sheet summaries.

Three have had sufficient progress and verification at this audit of actions undertaken to be closed. Minor NCR 1 related to the inconsistency seen between districts, contractors and supervisors with regard to the completion of coupe rehabilitation including landings. A follow up internal audit was undertaken to review works in accordance with the internal procedures in a different region however, it is considered that the region in which the findings were made should also have been included in the audit to determine if there are differences regionally or with specific personnel which might assist with root cause identification and corrective actions. This NCR has had sufficient progress not to be escalated to a major NCR however, further roll out of auditor training and completion of the audits will be reviewed at the recertification before this minor NCR can be closed.

Review of any changes

Changes that have occurred since the previous audit completed in September 2016 include the following:

- Changes in the Executive team including confirmation of the CEO and appointment of a GM Operations and a new GM Corporate Affairs and CFO.
- Integrated planning between Sales and Operations following a full planning review
- HR now reporting directly to the CEO
- A new Resource Outlook with a reduced Ash sawlog supply over the next three years partly as a result of the wildlife issues and other forestry impacts
- Increased impacts related to Greater Glider prescriptions
- Roll out of gender equality policies

- Selection harvesting commenced in the Strathbogie Ranges
- Stakeholder engagement pilot undertaken in the Mirboo North and Noojee region
- The FSC Controlled Wood audit was completed in December 2017 with no final report received to date.
- Revision 8 of the Utilisation Procedures was released in February 2018 with the Chain of Custody and Roding instructions also developed.

Management Responsibility

Management continue to show strong leadership and commitment to improving the VicForest systems and supporting changes to improve areas identified through internal audits, self-assessments, stakeholders and other external parties. A Board Paper was presented in December based on risk reports and heat maps with the Risk Management Strategy being reviewed. The Audit and Risk Committee have identified eight strategic risks that will be reviewed at each quarterly meeting. Opportunities for integrated reporting are also being considered.

Systems/Identification of environmental, social and economic aspects and determination of their significance

The aspects and impacts are noted in Risk Wizard and no new additions had been made since the previous audit. A full review will be undertaken at recertification.

Internal audit, management review processes and continual improvement

Results of the internal audits have been well completed and documented into the system. Management review will occur prior to the next audit.

Periodic Evaluation and Review of Compliance with Relevant Legislation and Regulations

A briefing was provided by the General Counsel to VicForests. Three court cases are current. One has been lodged in the Federal Court in relation to the Central Highlands and the Leadbeater's Possum with an injunction on five coupes pending the court ruling and the timetable to be set.

Other litigation with regard to Old Growth and the Flora and Fauna Cooperative has resulted in an injunction on one coupe in East Gippsland. This case is in the Supreme Court.

DELWP have alleged criminal damage by VicForests over a breach in one coupe in East Gippsland which will be heard in the Magistrate's Court.

Progress of Planned Activities to Improve Performance – Objectives and Targets

The full range of objectives and targets were not part of this audit due to limited time in head office and the need to meet new staff and cover off the legal status. These will be fully reviewed at the recertification audit.

DFA Changes/Advice to AFSL/Maps/Logo Use/Forest Management Plan

The new Sustainable Forest Management Plan is currently in draft format with section 4.2 describing the two DFAs. The Eastern Forest Area contains 1.82M ha of State Forest east of the Hume Highway and defined by the Allocation Order and its conditions. The Western Forest Area of 43.126ha is west of the Hume Highway as defined under the Timber Utilisation Plan. Both are available with maps on the VicForest website.

The new Responsible Wood logo is not yet in use however, it is intended to take over from the old AFS logo on business cards and promotional material after recertification when new certificates will be issued.

Stakeholders/Summary Report

As part of a pilot Social Impact Assessment, stakeholders in the Mirboo North and Noojee regions were engaged with. All issues noted have been well documented in the system and are being worked through with local staff. As part of the process an Open House was held in Noojee in March 2018 with biodiversity and visual issues raised. The Greater Glider is becoming a key issue in West Gippsland resulting in the interim strategy being developed pending further instructions from DELWP. Initial surveys have contributed to this. The South Gippsland Shire requested a public meeting with the Mirboo North stakeholders

A Policy on Aboriginal Engagement has been developed and an action plan. The instruction has been rewritten and discussed across the business.

In the regions, the communications register noted that foresters had been sending out maps to affected neighbours and emails noting activities and dates.

Significant work is being undertaken in engaging the apiarist stakeholders and determination of their desired silvicultural regime. A single tree selection trial is being undertaken in the Strathbogie ranges.

Communication and Reporting

VicForests continue to use their website to keep all stakeholders up to date on the DFA and the Timber Release Plan. Maps are available at a suitable scale on this and the external audit reports are available for viewing.

Complaints and Non-Conformities

All complaints continue to be documented in the system and followed through with thorough investigations undertaken including on site checks and staff interviews. All complaints and non-compliances are entered into the Risk Wizard database and reviewed by the compliance team. Relevant incidents such as a machine entering an SPZ will also be reported to DELWP for feedback with others, e.g. OHS issues with contractors, are also reported on and investigated.

Auditing by DELWP has increased with 35 new compliance officers being trained.

OHS/Skills Development

A new position description has been developed for Manager Policy and Compliance with the role signed off in October 2017. PDs for other new roles were also reviewed and had been signed by the relevant managers and incumbents. All staff have been inducted into the new Utilisation Procedures with online training tracked through ELMO.

Safety initiatives include checks of every contractor crew's emergency response procedures and discussion on emergency meeting points and ensuring they have GPS locations in their systems. A new role of Operations Safety has been instigated that will ensure scenarios are tested annually and safety at landing sites is improved.

Forest Health

There have been no particular forest health issues during the past audit period. Information is provided by external sources in relation to any new threats and all personnel are familiar with weeds, diseases and other issues. Observations are being reported through the system processes. Myrtle Rust continues to be a potential.

In the region subject to this audit, there are see stores in Erica, Noojee and Powelltown. All data is stored in the Seedbank database with seed lot numbers allocated to all seed gathered from within coupe or in close proximity. There has been significant flowering in the Mountain and Alpine Ash with collection planned. Drones are now being used to assist in the process.

One of the key threats to the regeneration success is browsing by kangaroos with consideration being given to fences and monitoring in failed areas.

Chain of Custody

Discussions were held with the Distribution Coordinator based in Woori Yallock office regarding customers and distribution. Minutes of meetings with customers are well documented and note any grading, off spec or additional demand issues. All details with regard to coupe address and name, species, grade and volume are documented and information stored in CENGEA. It is noted that any complaints etc. are passed on to management i.e. not included in the communications register.

Biodiversity Management

- Tactical Planning is now putting much greater effort into identifying potential biodiversity issues during the future coupe identification process which includes field investigation.
- More effort is also being put into dispersing coupes in the landscape.
- New Leadbeaters Possum (LBP) and Greater Glider records have resulted in large areas of forest being set aside in accord with current requirements.
- VicForests is currently investigating LBP use of the interface between 20 year old regeneration and regeneration from 1939. VicForests has also found LBP using mixed species forest outside the expected range for the species.
- An Interim Greater Glider Conservation Strategy has been developed and implemented by VicForests while DELWP develops an Action Statement for the species. As part of this process DELWP is doing a tenure blind landscape assessment for Greater Glider presence. A review of past research identifying Greater Glider requirements is also influencing this process.
- VicForests is carrying out a Greater Glider survey in East Gippsland looking at different Greater Glider densities and different logging intensities. Research in southern NSW indicates that if 40% basal area is retained the potential impact on Greater Gliders is minimal.
- A Spotted-tailed Quoll has recently been recorded about 2km from an active coupe. VicForests immediately suspended operations pending advice and direction from DELWP.
- VicForests has recently worked with Birdlife Australia on an acoustic survey of birdlife in the central highlands. The report for this work needs to be completed and made publicly available on the Vic Forests website.
- Vic Forests is now ensuring that staff and contractors are aware of the potential occurrence of particular threatened species, such as the Swift Parrot, in the western community forest operations.
- The draft Flora Survey Instruction is currently being converted into an app. that field staff can use to identify threatened flora species in the field and guide them on species specific conservation action.

Sustainability of Timber Production

- All coupes in the TRP are now couped up. Tactical Planning verifying available volumes in the field prior to harvesting. An annual reconciliation process compares the modeled timber volume estimate with the Tactical Planning verification and the actual yield.
- The substantial decline in sustainable Ash supply due to LBP habitat requirements comes into effect in 2020.

Soil and Water Management

- Much of the logging in West Gippsland is within catchments of the Yarra tributaries. These catchments all have water conservation and management requirements which are included in the Coupe Plans for implementation.
- Some minor drainage issues were picked during coupe monitoring and rectified prior to leaving the coupe.
- Landings were restored prior to leaving coupes.
- Streamside buffers were marked and retained.

Silviculture

- The implementation of the regeneration burning program was being carried out during this audit. Inspections were carried out during burn implementation (both ground and aerial ignition) and of post-burn seedbed outcomes. The physical process of burn ignition and ensuring that the burn gained good coverage across the burn area and stayed within burn boundaries was well done. The

success of the burn is done either from the air (photograph during the burn) or from the ground, Inspection of coupes post burn showed excellent seedbed preparation.

- The documentation of the planning, authorization and implementation of the regeneration is cumbersome and voluminous including both DELWP and VicForests documents. The DELWP documents that need to be completed are directed towards broad area fuel reduction burning rather than regeneration burning. This has in part led to the documentation being variable in quality and completion.
- Recently burnt coupes will be sown anytime from 3 days post-burn and preferably after rain. All coupes are sown unless there is good seed tree distribution with an excellent seed crop.
- The North East (not visited) has also had a successful regeneration burning program with 82% of planned burns completed and producing good seedbeds. Four coupes were withdrawn from the burn program as they had already produced an adequate crop of natural regeneration.
- In the North East (not visited) macropod browsing issues affecting successful regeneration are being addressed by fencing and supplementary planting with tree guards. This is mainly in the Toolanghi and Strathbogie areas. By 2019 seven areas will have been fenced. It is intended that the fences be removed after 2-3 years and re-used. Local seed supply is currently an issue in the Toolanghi area following poor seed crops however an excellent seed crop is currently developing and will be available from 2019.
- Following the “Review of seedling regeneration in Victoria’s Box-Ironbark forests” by Bassett and Fagg (2017) VicForests will be implementing a replicated trial (recommended in the report) in which areas will be fenced and include treatments such as natural regeneration development, ploughing and sowing, and planting with fertilizer. The fencing is directed at removing the browsing/grazing factor from the equation.

Heritage

- Potential heritage issues (identified from the Management Issues overlay) were addressed during the planning process, including field inspection, prior to harvesting by excluding from the harvestable coupe or appropriate buffering if present. On this audit the main areas requiring protection by buffering were old tramway sites.

Social and Economic Benefits

- Markets and logging conditions have been good during 2017/18 with prescribed sales expected to be achieved. Some roundwood being exported to China but only that surplus to domestic needs in line with government policy.
- Neighbour consultation on Beat to Beat coupe prior to burning was excellent (Appendix 1).
- Social impact assessments at Noojee and Mirboo North have been a useful learning experience but have not resulted in a mutually beneficial outcome.

Operations and Site Visits

West Gippsland Region

Erica Office

New staff have recently been appointed to assist with the ground work with four fixed term roles. All personnel undertake online inductions and further training plans are prepared by the senior foresters. Personnel based at Erica total eight with ten harvesting contractors under supervision. Whilst there are twenty five customers, the bulk of the wood is travelling to the ASH mill at Heyfield.

Details on coupes as noted in file review and during field visits are provided later in this report. Examples were seen of special protection zones designated following the identification of spot tail quolls and suitable habitat. In these instances harvesting has ceased and additional sites assessed. All actions are as per the procedures and well documented and communicated to relevant staff.

Noticeboards indicated excellent communication of OHS issues, DWG meetings, new procedures, elected staff representatives etc.

Noojee Office

A total of nine personnel are now working from this office location with the Powelltown office closed. As with Erica office, new personnel are being mentored and trained with requirements well documented and staff not able to mark coupes on their own until fully assessed and signed off. Training has also included online modules and extensive reading material with a field component included. Training was found to be consistent between the two offices and supervisors.

Records of induction for the new Operations Forester were viewed including the training pack and completion of the Induction Checklist. A thorough training capability document has been prepared by the primary mentor and a letter indicating Probationary Grader status. Good use of the communications register, risk wizard and peer reviews of harvest plans and traffic management plans was seen. There is also a component of forest health and monitoring included in the training.

Stakeholder engagement continues to be high priority and includes field visits with select groups, face to face meetings, telephone conversations and visits to sawmills. All communication is well documented in the register. Some examples of practices undertaken as a result of pre planning include the use of pilot vehicles in front of log trucks on the Baw Baw road to avoid interaction with road users and a 50m buffer on the road to avoid windthrow issues.

As with Erica, noticeboards indicated good communication of minutes from meetings, staff representatives, evacuation plans etc. All were found to be up to date.

Coupe Planning and Implementation

- Tactical Planning has adopted a more holistic approach to its processes especially during field reconnaissance. Field inspections targeted towards flowering time if threatened plants likely to be present. Currently using the awareness layer then checking the species identification parameters before going to the field but hope to be using the new app. for flora (Biodiversity section above) in 1-2 months.
- When Tactical Planning identifies a special value an alert is recorded in CENGEA. This alert appears highlighted in yellow when opened up by Operational Planning who generate the Coupe Plans.
- The coupe planning process is generally well done with the occasional missed data entry or sign off in the Coupe Planning Checklist.
- Five of the fourteen coupe files reviewed recorded evidence of minor boundary incursion.

The following coupe plans (14) were reviewed. Six coupes were inspected in the field. Notes relating to each coupe below appear in Appendix 1.

Hack	Lure	Ginger Cat
Plain Tooth*	Lazarev	Acorn
Finne	Amok*	Jack and Jills
Beat to Beat*	Hand Out*	Shorty
Phasinator*	Release the Kraken*	

Community Forestry – Western Victoria Region

Personnel are currently based out of West Gippsland, Heywood, Horsham, Bendigo, Ballarat and Tatura with management in Woori Yallock. The first round of consultation as part of the VEAC study has been completed with stakeholders in the Portland region raising concerns that are being addressed in the system.

All new coupes have now been added to the CENGEA database. Some research is in progress relating to sawlog regeneration in box ironbark forests. Several new tactical planners have also been engaged in the Woori Yallock office.

Sawlog harvesting has commenced in the southern region with a new customer and new licensee harvesting sugar gum and mixed species with some of the product being sent to the Netherlands. Sawlog harvesting in the Pyrenees will shortly begin following on from the firewood cutting and will introduce a more mechanized approach. A tender is out for a licensee to commence this work. A meeting has been held with the Sovereign Hill owners to discuss provision of bark for roofing of the huts and firewood in addition to rails and posts.

Weekly and monthly meetings are being held with the team and a monthly report provided to the Senior Management Team (SMT). Reporting structures have changed with the appointment of the Manager for Operations.

Training of personnel has included general CENGEA training, chainsaw and 4WD, first aid, log grading and general procedures and instructions through the online system. All staff have had a review of any training gaps and the focus has moved to remote area skills, soil assessment, seed and habitat tree selection. This is being very well managed locally. An excellent Falling Technique Review document with photographs has been developed.

Minutes of the monthly team meeting for May were viewed and included skill updates, planning, information on Greater Glider instructions, protection of large trees etc. Some specific biodiversity issues include the Powerful Owl, Rainforest and the slender tree fern.

Field Visits

Otways

No 9 Street East 231-502-0109 360.19ha Coastal Mixed Species

The track into the coupe has been upgraded to allow access with some gravel put down to ensure it is accessible in the wet conditions. The harvestable area was demonstrated on the contractors mobile and indicated the location of the SPZ on the shape file provided.

A forest operations coupe plan indicated the Coastal Mixed Species forest with Satin Box and Blackwood. The coupe planning checklist had been peer reviewed and a conservation park noted within 200m of the eastern boundary of the coupe. This coupe is being cut for specialty timbers i.e. instrumental and craft wood primarily used for guitars. The boundary was marked in the field by VicForest personnel using blue tape with private land in the southwest corner.

The contractor was aware of the presence of the Otway Stone Fly and Slender Tree Fern and the historic points to the east of the coupe all noted in the coupe plan. The Rainforest Form had been used to note the location of myrtle beech isolated trees and the monitoring record noted that individual trees to be cut had been tagged and checked. The coupe diary has been very well used to note a description and discussion of the treefern and signage. A roading assessment and traffic management plan had also been developed and the record in the communications register noted that the owner of the private property was met and access confirmed. The field boundary was also checked.

The safety briefing provided by the contractor was also excellent and the log grade specifications and use of metal tags explained. In all the contractor had been very well briefed by the supervisor and had an excellent knowledge of the forest specifications and requirements.

Exhaust Pipe 254-000-0140 33.63ha Coastal Mixed Species

The coupe is being harvested for firewood using a thinning harvester and forwarder and had been temporarily closed in the previous week due to wet conditions. An SPZ was well noted in the documentation. Hand falling was also occurring on the adjacent coupe, also for firewood with brown Stringybark and Messmate the key species.

Documentation indicated that the neighbour was called and sent a letter with details in the communications register. An apiary site had been noted and the owner advised of operations. The coupe boundary had been clearly marked in blue tape and monitoring records and coupe diary completed in detail.

Neil 254-000-006A 68.5ha Foothill Mixed Species

The coupe had been allocated for firewood and was still under the old forest coupe plan prepared by DSE. Additional comments had been included by VicForests to allow self-selection of trees for harvest. Monitoring records and coupe diary notes were again very well documented.

Grampians

A field visit was made to the Woolhpooer State Forest where a number of coupes have been continually harvested for firewood and posts with domestic access allowed after cutting. The area is close to the Grampians National Park and Rocklands Reservoir with historic artefacts e.g. old mill also nearby. Issues in the area include the sweet briar, St John's Wort, orchids and windthrow.

In 2018, two coupes were opened following a windthrow event. There has been some illegal cutting of firewood by locals with signage put in place to deter this. In total the area comprises approximately 3000ha of red gum forest. Numerous swaps have required 30m buffers and 10m buffers on the creeks which only run in winter. Access is good using graveled tracks.

At the time of audit, there were four active licenses.

035-016-0200

The coupe file is red indicating proximity to a sensitive border in this case the Grampians National Park. Grazing in the area has been ceased and as a result, regeneration is excellent. No firewood signs have been installed to try to prevent illegal firewood collection.

035-016-0166 Click Go The Shears 90.47ha Red gum Forest

The coupe has a historic camp on it and wood from other coupes is being stockpiled within. Wood is being collected from the site by Bunnings personnel and inductions had been undertaken although records were not able to be located.

Firewood had been cut adjacent with habitat trees for retention clearly marked. Swamps within the coupe show very good regeneration and harvesting has indicated very minimal disturbance.

Turks Ag

Again the coupe file is red due to the Grampians being adjacent. The site is being cut for green firewood and it was noted that the contractor may have scraped too much of the surface to provide access. Trees for retention had been marked in yellow and the documentation included the induction of the forwarder noting the SPZ on the eastern edge of the coupe.

Glenisla South 035-016-0100 Stringybark

Another firewood coupe with yellow blazed trees and an excellent operations map and written instructions provided for the contractor. Features include the power line easement and the boundary clearly marked in blue tape. Minimal disturbance has occurred with no landings or roading required. The coupe is within the Horsham FMA and subject to water catchment prescriptions.

Ballarat

Whilst in the office, SMT meeting minutes were viewed, coupe diary notes for the Grampians that were not available in the files and the firewood docket books indicating wood is being sold at the stump. Coupe diaries for Ballarat based personnel were viewed for Beer Battered Fish and Margherita and the files indicated very thorough notes.

The following coupe files were reviewed whilst in the Ballarat office:

Margherita 175-501-0103 Foothill Mixed Species 30.21ha

Coupe planning checklist completed and peer reviewed noting a filter strip crossing, apiary zone, walking track and sedge woodland SPZ. The coupe diary also noted that trees had been marked and monitoring was undertaken.

Bens Porcelain 185-517-0101 8.8ha Mountain Mixed Species

Manna Gum, Messmate and Mixed Blue Gum were being taken for sawlog with habitat and seed trees clearly marked. A traffic management plan had been completed and additional 30m boundary to align with regeneration.

Buford 174-000-0001 58.89ha Foothill Mixed Species

Sawlog was being cut from Broad Leaf Peppermint, Messmate and Brown Stringybark. A red file had been created as an alert as the coupe is in the Midlands FMA and potentially subject to social stakeholder issues with numerous landowners to be identified and communicated with. Retained tree damage had been part of the monitoring checks and noted that a new coupe diary was required.

Full Sun 195-517-0012 17.03ha Foothill Mixed Species

Thinning guidelines had been included in the coupe plan and noted in the very thorough notes in the coupe diary. Monitoring of the buffers and boundary with the Wombat State Forest was very well done.

Full Bodied 195-517-0013 Foothill Mixed Species 2.66ha

The file included copies of the Forest Produce Licence and Operator Licenses. Coupe diary notes were excellent and monitoring checks completed in late 2017. Firewood volume had been assessed and a post thinning field summary completed.

Healey 193-535-0106 37.6ha Foothill Mixed Species

Wood chop logs had been harvested by the Midlands Axeman's Association and good notes had been included in the coupe diary of monitoring.

Field visits were made to the following coupes:

Margherita

The log loading area indicated limited disturbance with two firewood cutters and trees marked by the forester. Coppice from the firewood thinning was developing. A total of 83 trees were selected and DELWP allowed domestic firewood to be taken from the heads. No damage had been made to retained trees and an old mining area noted in the plan.

Full Sun

The coupe is located within the Wombat State Forest with a large area of coupes put on the TUP for a fuel reduction burn planned for 2020. Retained trees had been managed well and the track in very good condition. Thinning damage was noted and coppicing progressing well. The site had no threatened species and apiarists were contacted.

Full Moon

Instructions had been provided to the contractor to spread the bark out with the outcome of thinning excellent.

Non-Conformances

No minor or major non-conformances have been identified.

Opportunities for improvement

The following opportunities for improvement have been identified.

- The Social Impact Assessment procedure refers to a minimum of one per year to be undertaken. This may require further clarification to allow for a more systematic approach to avoid it being a random event.

- Consideration could be given to the use of a booklet similar to a previous DSE book used as field evidence of attendance at burns and actions e.g. coupe marking.
- There is an opportunity to review the data being collected at burns for system and consistency as personnel appear to have individual methods of recording personnel present, wind speed and direction, fuel moisture, instructions etc.

It is suggested that the opportunities for improvement be considered by management to further enhance the company's Management System and performance of the business.

APPENDIX 1 – West Gippsland Coupe Plans checked					
Office	Coupe name	Coupe number	Species type	Area (ha)	Notes
Erica	Hack	487/506/0011	Foothill Mixed Species	35	Seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical planning well done. Coupe Planning Checklist (CPC) peer reviewed and Coupe Plan completed with sign offs. Special values addressed. No harvesting in winter. Tramway site buffered. Coupe Monitoring Records (CMR) One head into buffer was cut off and the head left to minimize damage. Fire Plan completed and signed off. Incident Management Log (on the fire) well done. Burn map and Site establishment map completed. Low Elevation Mixed Species – Even-aged Mature Decision Support System (DSS) completed.
	Lure	483/504/0001	Foothill Mixed Species	24	Part clear felling and part seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical planning completed including Leadbeater's Possum (LBP) checklist. Coupe Planning Checklist (CPC) peer reviewed. Coupe Plans (Roading and Harvesting) completed with sign offs. Special values identified. LBP habitat excluded from coupe. Potential occurrence of Sooty Owl and Koala noted. Tyer River catchment restrictions included. Since commencement a Spotted-tail Quoll recorded within 2km of the coupe. Operation suspended pending a management response from DELWP. CMRs completed. Mt. Ash and Alpine Ash DSS completed.
	Plain Tooth*	490/509/0006	Foothill Mixed Species	14	Seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical planning and CPC well done with peer reviews. Coupe plan well done with appropriate sign offs through to clearance. Special values checked – no planning issues. CMRs completed addressing utilization, safety and communication issues. Post-harvest and burn plan map documented. Burn Plan in the field. Observed hand-burning of heaped logging debris – fire well-controlled producing a good seed bed. Low Elevation Mixed Species Uneven-

					aged and Regrowth DSS completed.
	Lazarev	483/504/0015	Mt. Ash	24	Clear felling coupe. Tactical Planning completed with sign offs. CPC completed but some sign offs missing. Coupe plan well done with appropriate sign offs. Special biodiversity values either occurring or potentially occurring well identified. Historic tramway site identified and protected. CMRs well done addressing boundary incursion, rutting on tracks and rocky areas. Post-harvest and proposed burn maps completed. Seed collection and collection area maps documented. Mt Ash and Alpine Ash DSS completed.
	Finne	487/502/0001	Foothill Mixed Species	19	Seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical Planning and CPCs completed with sign offs. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. Special values identified and addressed. Eastern Tyer River Walking Track buffered. Post-harvest map and Burn Plan completed. Low Elevation Mixed Species – Uneven-aged DSS completed.
	Amok*	484/501/0037	Foothill Mixed Species	41	Seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical Planning completed with sign offs. CPC completed except the 'During Harvesting' section – harvesting is completed. Coupe Plan completed with sign offs. Coupe Plan does not mention potential Greater Glider occurrences even though identified in the overlay by Tactical Planning (Coupe Plan prepared prior to Interim Greater Glider Strategy). CMRs well done. Post- harvest and proposed Burn Map completed. Observed aerial ignition of the coupe which was done with considerable precision. Expect the creation of an excellent seed bed. Low elevation Mixed Species DSS completed.
Noojee	Beat to Beat*	461/502/0011	Foothill Mixed Species	21	Seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical Planning completed. CPC completed and peer reviewed. Coupe Plan well done with sign off. Management issues addressed including requirements for Tanjil River catchment. Sooty Owl habitat protection zone external to the coupe. CMRs well done with

					branches over buffer documented. Seed tree adequacy map completed. Excellent neighbor consultation prior to the burn. Addressed potential windthrow, access road and truck movement issues. The burn, carried out the previous day, was well managed within designated boundaries creating an excellent seed bed for regeneration. Burn plan not seen as it was still with the burn OIC who was working on another burn elsewhere. High Elevation Mixed Species DSS completed.
Hand Out*	460/510/0032	Foothill Mixed Species	29	Seed tree retention harvesting coupe. Tactical Planning well done. CPC completed and peer reviewed. Coupe Plan well done with sign off. All potential management issues addressed including requirements for the Tanjil River catchment. A Telstra fibre-optic cable runs through and has been marked as a machinery exclusion zone. Coupe has only been operational for one week with the first CMR yet to be done. Boundaries and buffers marked.	
Phasinator*	464/501/0031	Mountain Ash predominant	12	Clearfell coupe. Tactical Planning completed with special values identified. CPC completed and peer reviewed. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. Linear rainforest buffer identified. Buffer increased from 20m to 40m due to the presence of Tall Astelia downstream external to the coupe. Requirements for the conservation of the Tarago River catchment and for Gully Grevilleas documented. Giant tree identified and retained. Burn well done with on minor escape to within the contingency zone. Burn Plan still with the burn crew. Mountain and Alpine Ash DSS completed.	
Release the Kraken*	464/507/0003	Mountain Ash predominant	28	Clearfell coupe. Tactical planning and signed off. An area of LBP Zone 1A habitat identified and excluded from the coupe. CPC completed with peer review. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. Tarago River catchment requirements documented. LBP area excluded from coupe. Greater Glider and Yellow-bellied Glider records external to the coupe noted. CMRs well done with drainage issues and trees over boundary issues identified and addressed. Burn was	

					well done with good seedbed created. Burn Plan not seen as still with the burn crew. Mountain and Alpine Ash DSS completed.
	Ginger Cat	344/509/0009	Mountain Ash predominant	5	Clearfell coupe. Tactical Planning well done with sign offs. LBP pre-harvest survey completed and documented. CPC completed with peer review. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. Starvation Creek catchment requirements applied. Forty metre rainforest buffer applied. LBP sites identified and excluded from the coupe. CMRs completed. Mountain and Alpine Ash DSS completed. Burn Plan documentation well done. Site establishment and sowing maps documented.
	Acorn	457/501/0001	Alpine Ash predominant	33	Clearfell coupe. Tactical Planning completed and signed off. CPC completed except for regeneration section. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. Coupe located within Taponga catchment but more than 1km from Spotted Tree Frog site. Forty metre buffer applied to identified rainforest. CMRs well done. Seed tree map on file. Burn Plan documentation completed. Final burn map on file. Site establishment and sowing maps on file. Alpine Ash Regeneration DSS completed.
	Jack & Jills	458/508/0014	Alpine Ash	28	Clearfell coupe. Tactical Planning completed with sign offs. LBP habitat checklist completed – not habitat. CPC completed with peer review. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. Protection requirements for the Thomson River catchment implemented. CMRs well done – some minor boundary incursions documented. High Elevation Mixed Species DSS completed.
	Shorty	348/501/0004	Mountain Ash predominant	19	Clearfell coupe. Tactical Planning completed with sign offs. LBP not detected in camera survey. CPC completed. Coupe Plan well done with sign offs. LBP habitat excluded from the coupe – no pre-1900 trees in the coupe. Sooty Owl record 500m from the coupe 27 years ago noted. Harvesting to cease if nesting or roosting sites found. Rainforest buffers to be applied if rainforest identified. Water catchment requirements to be implemented. CMRs completed. Mountain Ash DSS completed.

