

Thursday, April 30 2015

VicForests accepts investigation outcomes

VicForests has accepted the outcomes of an investigation by Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) into allegations that rainforest was harvested in East Gippsland.

The investigation was unable to conclusively determine whether the Code of Practice for Timber Production had been breached in an area already harvested but acknowledged VicForests complied with the Code by protecting and identifying an area of rainforest and ensuring no impact on waterways.

VicForests' General Manager, Planning, Nathan Trushell, said concerns were raised over three separate areas on the one site.

"The site currently looks ugly but we believe there was no breach of Victoria's harvesting regulations," Mr Trushell said.

"All rainforest stands are protected from harvesting with buffers placed on any rainforest stand larger than 0.2 of a hectare.

"We have committed to looking at additional measures which can be put in place to avoid unnecessary damage to smaller areas containing species typically found in rainforest," he said.

"There were some trees unnecessarily pushed over as part of this operation and we will be reviewing our Operating Procedures to ensure we improve our practices in the future.

"VicForests acknowledges that DELWP was unable to be definitive regarding the allegation of a breach in the area and as a result of this investigation we will work with our contractors to improve our practices," he said.

Mr Trushell said concern was raised by a local, community group regarding the operation.

"We take any allegation linked to our operations very seriously," he said.

"Our own internal investigation into this issue found the site was assessed in detail prior to harvesting with an area of rainforest identified and protected in line with the regulations.

"A second area, which has been harvested, was assessed by our staff before operations began and was found not to meet the criteria for rainforest.

"Similarly, regulations in place to protect permanent waterways were applied correctly on the site.

"While we believe the operation complied with the Code, we accept that better care should have been taken in this instance," Mr Trushell said.