



## STATE FOREST HARVESTING PROCESS IN VICTORIA

### STEP 1: HARVEST AREAS ARE IDENTIFIED

VicForests is very particular about what can and cannot be harvested in Victoria. The first step is identifying areas that are appropriate for harvesting (known as 'coupes'). A meticulous, highly trained team uses skills in mapping, biodiversity identification and management, and forest measurement. This team uses a rigorous planning process to start the identification process.

They start with a computer-based assessment that seeks to minimise harvesting's impact on threatened flora and fauna, water sources, cultural sites and maintaining different forest types.

As part of its ongoing role, VicForests conducts independent research and assessments of biodiversity and Victoria's future forests, identifying reserve areas for the protection of High Conservation Values.

### STEP 2: FIELD ASSESSMENT

VicForests verifies the computer assessment in detail with on the ground analysis and study, identifying any features that are not available from a desk-based study. VicForests takes careful note of:

- streams, creeks, pools and how their presence is meaningful to forests and any potential harvest
- what can be learned about native flora and fauna – their habitat and how to minimise disruption for threatened species
- specific forest communities, such as areas of rainforest
- culturally significant sites
- ongoing scientific research.

After identifying these features, VicForests modifies its plans to protect and enhance the local environment. VicForests also assesses local roads to consider how best to carry out harvesting safely and with minimal impact on surrounding areas.

### STEP 3: TIMBER RELEASE PLANS

Once this careful assessment and planning has been done, VicForests can place the areas (coupes) on the Timber Release Plan (**TRP**), which identifies areas planned for harvesting for the next five years. These plans are amended on an annual basis and are subject to significant stakeholder engagement and final assessment before being reviewed by the VicForests Board and approved when appropriate.

#### STEP 4: OPERATIONAL (HARVESTING) PLANS

Once the TRP is approved, further careful planning takes place to create a 'coupe level plan' which features:

- Detailed mapping of the potential area to be harvested including the rules for how a harvest must take place and clear identification of areas that must be protected and excluded from harvesting
- Specific methods to minimise environmental impact through sensitive creation of access roads and careful selection of where operating areas will be constructed

Any other management actions to protect the water, flora and fauna of the site, using all of the research and planning gathered in the computer and field assessments.

#### STEP 5: OPERATING STAFF GET READY TO HARVEST

VicForests operational staff take the plans and translate them into individual actions by workers who undertake our harvesting operations. All relevant personnel get a copy of the coupe plan and understand their role in following it to ensure that harvesting operations comply with all requirements designed to protect the environment.

#### STEP 6: REGULAR AUDITS

A range of regular, rigorous audits are carried out internally and externally to check that work is in accordance with the precise standards that have been planned. These audits include:

- Auditing against Responsible Wood (Australian Forestry Standard), recognised globally by the world's largest forest certification scheme, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)
- Compliance checks and audits by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on VicForests' systems and operations
- Internal auditing and monitoring across all VicForests' systems to ensure continual improvement of our processes
- Audits by Melbourne Water, where operations are within catchments managed under their authority.

More than **93% compliance** is reported with prescriptions for timber production harvesting and coupe closure activities.<sup>1</sup>

#### STEP 7: REGENERATION PLANS

Once a harvesting operation has been finished, VicForests uses the information in the plans and any new learnings from the harvest, to ensure that regrowth plans are as successful as possible. Regeneration is typically done with seeds from the same area to replace the harvest with new trees which will be sensitive to the landscape and the area.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/forest-management/state-of-the-forests-report>