



Update from the Program Director

Welcome to our third newsletter for 2019. I hope you enjoy reading our latest news and that it supports you to understand more about the Forest Modernisation Program and opportunities to get involved.

The program aims to improve how we manage and use Victoria's forests. We're doing this through better science and knowledge, regulation and connections with our community. It is important that every Victorian has an opportunity to share their views and help shape these important reforms.

Key highlights since the last newsletter include:

- Appointment of a Scientific Advisory Panel comprising scientific experts, and a Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) Reference Group comprising peak bodies of key interest groups, to provide recommendations on potential improvements to the Victorian RFAs;
- Release of the *Independent Consultation Paper 'Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements'* prepared by Dr William Jackson; and,
- Joint Victorian and Australian Government community engagement on the Victorian RFAs including face to face events across regional Victoria and online engagement via response to survey or written submission.

Continued and ongoing activities include:

- Joint Victorian and Australian Government community engagement via Engage Victoria has been extended until Sunday 7 July;

- Commencement of work with new Partnership and Engagement Coordinators funded within Traditional Owner Corporations to partner with us on this program; and,
- Intended release of the Phase 1 Engagement Report that feeds back what we heard from you about what you value and prioritise for Victoria's forests.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and thank you for your ongoing interest in the program.

Yours sincerely

Courtney Bertram

Program Director

Joint engagement extended until Sunday 7 July

Share your views on potential improvements to the Victorian RFAs by:

Lodging a written submission or responding to our online survey by 7 July 2019 at

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/future-of-our-forests>

For more information, visit:

<https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests/get-involved/joint-rfa-consultation-with-commonwealth>

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Introducing our new advisory committees

We're pleased to announce we have established two advisory committees to support the Forest Modernisation Program.

Scientific Advisory Panel

To ensure that future forest management delivers the highest and best value uses of our forests for Victorian communities, it is essential that the forest modernisation process is underpinned by robust, contemporary science.

An independent Scientific Advisory Panel has been appointed to provide science-based advice to inform the renewal of the Victorian RFAs and design of a contemporary forest management system that is resilient and adaptive to a changing climate and associated management challenges.

The Panel's role is to:

- provide science-based recommendations to potential changes to the RFAs and forest management system;
- provide recommendations on research priorities to enable the sustainable management of Victoria's forests to deliver highest and best value uses under a changing climate; and to
- review the approaches undertaken to complete the comprehensive assessments of forest values and provide advice on the relative merits and limitations on how the data can be applied.

The Panel comprises:

- **Dr Sandra Brizga** (Chair), Consultant, credentials in hydrology, environmental economics and social science;
- **Dr John Raison** (Deputy Chair), former CSIRO scientist, expert in ecology, native forest management and plantations;
- **Associate Professor Lauren Bennett**, University of Melbourne, expert in forest and landscape ecology and biodiversity conservation;
- **Dr Lyndall Bull**, Consultant, expert in environmental economics, and forest industry;
- **Professor David Lindenmayer**, Australian National University, expert in landscape ecology and biodiversity conservation; and,

- **Dr David Cheal**, Federation University Australia, expert in botany, landscape ecology including fire and weeds.

RFA Reference Group

To deliver the highest and best value uses of our forests it is also essential that the modernisation process addresses community needs.

An RFA Reference Group has been appointed to enable representatives of key organisations representing diverse community interests to work together to provide advice on potential changes to the Victorian RFAs. The reference group will provide a forum for strategic discussion around relevant issues and opportunities, informed by contemporary science and community values.

The reference group comprises representatives from the following member organisations:

- Environment Victoria
- Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners
- Four Wheel Drive Victoria
- Outdoors Victoria
- The Wilderness Society
- Victorian Apiarists Association
- Victorian Association of Forest Industries

Jane Brockington has been appointed as independent chairperson of the RFA Reference Group. With more than 20 years' experience working with boards, governance bodies and executive teams, Jane has successfully established and transformed organisations, developed and delivered policy, and implemented reform.

Community Engagement

Public Lecture series

In conjunction with the Royal Society of Victoria we held the third public lecture of the series looking at the scientific evidence base informing RFA modernisation. The lecture included a presentation by Dr William Jackson on his findings in the Independent Consultation Paper: *Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements*.

Other speakers addressed Criterion 2 of the State of the Forests Report "*Maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems*". This criterion assesses the area and



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percentage of forest available and suitable for wood production, volume of wood suitable for timber, balance of state forest harvesting with sustainable harvest levels, annual production of non-wood forest products and the proportion of timber harvest areas successfully regenerated.

The next lecture examining soil and water systems of forests will be held in July. For more information about the public lecture series, including videos of each presentation, visit the Future of our Forests webpage.



Photo: Mike Flatley of the Royal Society of Victoria introduces speakers Tom Fairman (DELWP), Dr William Jackson and Professor Patrick Baker (Melbourne University).

Joint Victoria-Commonwealth Engagement

Throughout June, as the State of Victoria and Commonwealth of Australia have been working towards a modernised RFA framework, government representatives from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) and Department of Environment and Energy (DoEE) have held 39 engagement events including workshops, community drop-in sessions, and one-on-one meetings across the State to hear community and stakeholder views.

Independent Consultation Paper

The Independent Consultation Paper: *'Modernisation of the Victorian Regional Forest Agreements'* has been available on the Engage Victoria website since May for public consultation.

Authored by Dr William Jackson, the paper provides an overview of the RFAs performance to date and forms the basis for community feedback. Dr Jackson is an independent environmental consultant with extensive

experience in forest conservation, protected area management and community development.

The paper explains what the Victorian RFAs are, how they operate and potential opportunities for improvement.

A video of Dr Jackson presenting the paper at the May public lecture is available [via this link](#).

View the paper and provide feedback until 7 July 2019 via a written submission or an online survey. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/future-of-our-forests/rfa-consultation-paper>

East Gippsland Field Days

Future of our Forests in partnership with Forest Fire Management Victoria Tambo District braved the cold to interact with the community at the East Gippsland Field Days held on 26 and 27 April at Bairnsdale Aerodrome. Many community members from surrounding towns and areas attended.

Over the two days Department staff spoke with more than 100 members of the community including urban and rural residents, businesses, retailers, environment groups, rural workers, farmers, and representatives from the timber industry, 4WD groups, hunters, and fly fishers.

This is just one example of many regional engagement sessions that have been held and will continue to be offered through this program.



Photo: Kerry Spencer, Gippsland RFA Science Communicator speaking with Shamis Law from Parks Victoria

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Date	Activity
3-29 June	Joint Victorian and Commonwealth government face to face engagement across the five RFA Regions and Melbourne CBD
7 July	Public Survey and Public Submission process closes on Engage Victoria
July	Science public lecture #4: Soil and Water Systems of Forests

For more information visit: [Future of our Forests website](#)

Forest Protection Survey Program

The purpose of the Forest Protection Survey Program is to detect high conservation value and threatened species where they occur in coupes planned to be harvested.

The surveys look for species and vegetation communities that have prescribed legislated action in the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014. Together, the forest protection surveys and other threatened species surveys are building a knowledge bank to inform broader forest and threatened species management.

The Forest Protection Survey Program has been designed in collaboration with scientists at the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research and peer-reviewed by an independent expert in survey design, Professor Brendan Wintle, University of Melbourne.

This survey work is taking place in State forests across eastern Victoria.

The survey program held its first open field day near Benalla, with environmental and industry stakeholders who attended indicating strong support for the program. Despite the cold weather there were great discussions. Participants also heard about the draft Old Growth Assessment tool and looked at survey equipment used.

At the Central Highlands field day, discussions were held around how we measure old growth forest, use Elliot Traps, and survey techniques that we are using in the Forest Protection Survey Program.



Photo: DELWP staff at the Central Highlands Field Day

Traditional Owner partnerships



DELWP is committed to genuinely partner and meaningfully engage with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities in the RFA modernisation program, to support the protection of Country, maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities have a wealth of knowledge around managing resources within the Australian landscape and have much to offer in forest planning and management.

To support Traditional Owners to partner with DELWP on the Program, DELWP has funded 12-month fixed-term Partnerships and Engagement Coordinator positions within Traditional Owner Corporations of groups recognised under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, *Native Title Act 1993* and/or *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

Further projects are also being developed and funded to support Traditional Owners to capture information about their tangible and intangible values and ensure these values are able to inform future forest planning and management.

The Partnerships and Engagement Coordinators will play a key role building a forest management partnership between Traditional Owners and DELWP and coordinating involvement of Traditional Owners in future forest planning and management.

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The Traditional Owner Corporations are actively recruiting for these positions, and we look forward to working with the new Partnership and Engagement Coordinators in the months to come!

These partnerships will provide a significant step towards integrating cultural views and interests of Traditional Owners in the future management of forests across Victoria.

Forest values assessment

LiDAR surveying update

The LiDAR survey program is well underway in East Gippsland, with data recently captured from the Kuark forest and surveying now underway in the Bendoc/Orbost region. The data collected is currently being curated to check its quality and will be used to prepare high accuracy modelling of the forest, and improve our understanding of the range and location of high value biodiversity values such as old growth forest and rainforest.

For more information refer to the LiDAR Fact Sheet: www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests/forest-values-assessment/forest-values-assessment-fact-sheets

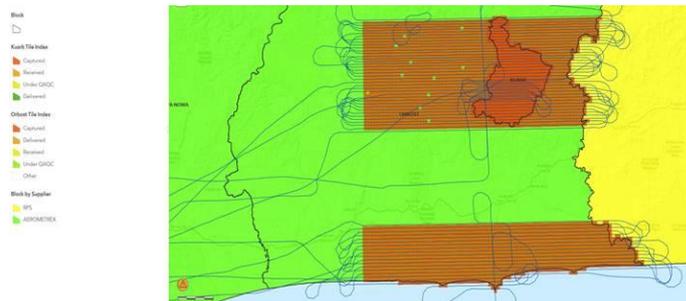


Figure 1. Completed flight lines over the Kuark forest block

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Key engagement contacts

If you would like further information on the RFA Modernisation Program, or to find out about engagement activities happening in your area, please contact your local RFA Engagement Coordinator:

Region	Name	Telephone	Email
Melbourne CBD	Mr Paul Kooperman	0436 613 243	paul.kooperman@delwp.vic.gov.au
Gippsland	Ms Carmel Henderson	0427 520 628	carmel.henderson@delwp.vic.gov.au
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