

Thursday, May 16th 2013

Harvest levels to be reduced in Victorian forests

VicForests has announced timber harvesting in Victoria's Ash forests will be reduced from 2017.

CEO, Robert Green, said VicForests' 2013 Resource Outlook outlines a transition to lower harvest levels in Ash forests.

"This reduction is a direct result of the impact of large scale bushfires on areas of forest available for timber production," Mr Green said.

"Our annual Resource Outlook provides updated information regarding the timber resources in Victoria's State forests.

"Previous Outlooks have projected the sale of 300 000 cubic metres of high quality Ash sawlog per year, but this year's Outlook has revised this figure to 215 000 cubic metres per year - a reduction of more than 25%. This change will come into effect from July 1, 2017.

"As a responsible forest manager, it is vital VicForests continues to balance the social, economic and environmental benefits provided by the 6% of native forest in Victoria which is available and suitable for timber production.

"This reduction demonstrates VicForests genuine commitment to achieving that balance.

"We have publicly acknowledged the need to reduce harvesting in Ash forests as a result of bushfire and this adjustment is being made ahead of the first major sales process since the 2009 bushfires, planned for later this year.

"The change ensures future harvesting will continue at a sustainable level and future timber sales will be based on the reduced volume.

"It brings forward the reduction in harvesting which has been forecast in previous Resource Outlooks.

"This adjustment has been made to ensure the future of the sustainable timber industry in Victoria and provide long term certainty to the businesses, families and regional communities who rely on our industry.

"We believe it also considers the affect of the fires on habitat for a range of species including the endangered Leadbeater's Possum by reducing the level of harvesting in Ash forests by approximately 500 hectares per year," he said.

Mr Green said VicForests will continue to work closely with the industry to assist them in adjusting to the new level of resource availability.

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“We understand this decision will have an impact on our industry and on employment,” he said.

“Delaying the changes until 2017 enables industry time to adjust to the new harvest levels and avoids an even more severe reduction in 15 to 20 years time.

“There will also undoubtedly be some who will say these measures are not adequate and are not happening quickly enough.

“However, we believe this is a responsible decision that will have a positive effect on our forests as they recover from the impact of recent bushfires.

“Through these revised projections, VicForests believes we can provide better environmental outcomes while still working to meet demand for wood and wood products from well-managed, local forests,” Mr Green said.

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