

Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management

Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management (ESFM) is the management of forest on all land tenures to maintain the overall capacity of forests to provide goods, protect biodiversity and protect the full suite of forest values at the regional level.

One of the key objectives of each Regional Forest Agreement is to ensure that forests on and off reserves are sustainably managed.

The Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) for the Gippsland region reports on the ESFM systems and processes in the region and how they compare with an independent assessment of Victoria's Statewide ESFM systems and processes.

The Statewide assessment was independently peer reviewed by Professor Ian Ferguson of the University of Melbourne, and found that Victoria had all the major elements for ESFM in place. Among the further improvements it suggested were updating legislation, refining planning processes, integrating reserve and off-reserve management and increasing awareness of the importance of competition in determining price for timber resources. The Commonwealth and Victoria have addressed the suggestions with commitments in the East Gippsland, Central Highlands and North East RFAs and have:

- reviewed and amended the Commonwealth legislation dealing with the environment;
- established Parks Victoria under the *Parks Victoria Act 1998* to provide management services to the State for parks, reserves and other Crown land;
- established Forestry Victoria to enable clearer environmental accountability and an improved commercial focus for logging activity in State forests;
- completed regional prescriptions for timber production;
- published the Biodiversity Strategy;
- published the internal audit of the compliance with the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production for 1997 and 1998;
- published Guidelines for the Management of Cultural Heritage Values in Forests, Parks and Reserves;
- completed the Statewide Forest Resource Inventory for the North East;
- completed and prepared a report on a pilot program to trial the accreditation of forestry professionals relating to planning for forest operations on private land.

Victoria is preparing a Forest Management Plan for the Gippsland region. It will make an important contribution to achieving ESFM principles in the region along with other commitments in the Gippsland Regional Forest Agreement. Victoria's forest management systems and processes are summarised in the table overleaf.

Forest Management Systems and Processes in Victoria

<p>1. LEGISLATION AND POLICIES International Treaties, Conventions and Initiatives Commonwealth Government Legislation National Policies State Legislation State Policies</p> <p>2. PLANNING <i>Strategic Planning</i> Regional Forest Agreements Land Use Planning - Public land <i>Forest management planning - public land</i> Forest Management Plans (State forest) Victorian Code of Forest Practices Regional prescriptions Sustainable Yield Wood Utilisation plans Forest coupe plans Log grading <i>Park planning</i> Park Plans <i>Private land</i> Land Use Plans Education and cooperative programs Native Vegetation Retention Controls Code of Forest Practices for Private Land Waters of Victoria State Environment Protection Policy Flora and Fauna Guarantee Plantation Management Private forestry strategy <i>Fire management planning</i> Code of Practice for Fire Management Regional Fire Protection Plans <i>Flora and Fauna planning</i> Flora and Fauna Guarantee Recovery Plans</p>	<p>2. PLANNING (continued) <i>Cultural values</i> Aboriginal places Historic places <i>Exploration and Mining</i> Environmental Effects Statements Planning Permits Work Plans Environmental Review Committees <i>Other Plans</i></p> <p>3. IMPLEMENTATION <i>Accountabilities and Responsibilities</i> <i>Resourcing of Implementation Programs</i> <i>Operational Controls over implementation programs including control of:</i> timber harvesting in State forests fire management operations other activities in State forest operations in National Parks other operations on public land activities on private land <i>Documentation and Records Keeping</i> <i>Communication and Education</i> <i>Knowledge, skills and training</i></p> <p>4. INFORMATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION Forest information Monitoring implementation of plans and programs Monitoring and evaluating condition of the forest environment Auditing of compliance with regulations and controls Corrective action</p> <p>5. REVIEW AND IMPROVEMENT Review of the Environmental Management System Research and Development</p>
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