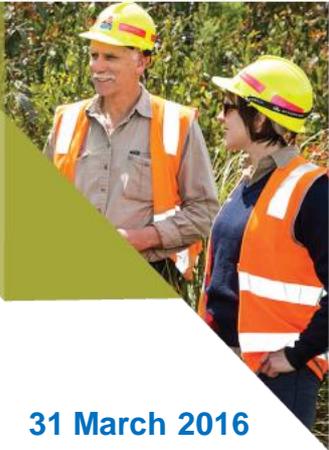


Letter to the Editor

A photograph of two people wearing high-visibility orange safety vests and yellow hard hats, standing outdoors in a wooded area. The image is partially obscured by a green geometric shape.

31 March 2016

Some recent letters have raised concerns over timber harvesting operations currently taking place near Rubicon.

There has been an increase in timber harvesting activity in the Rubicon Valley which is partially due to a number of areas becoming temporarily unavailable for timber harvesting in the Central Highlands.

Around 15,000 hectares of State forest, which was previously available for timber harvesting, has been placed in a moratorium while surveys are undertaken looking for Leadbeater's Possum colonies.

This has led to increased harvesting in the Rubicon area as we manage harvest levels across the State.

The overall harvest levels in Victoria have declined by more than 2,000 hectares a year over the last 10 years to 3,000 hectares in 2014/15. Part of this decline is due to adjustments in harvest levels following the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009.

We have received a detailed submission from the Rubicon Forest Protection Group along with a number of requests for more information and have already met with and proposed to further meet with the Group to discuss their concerns.

We recognise the Group's concerns and we are trying to balance these with the need to supply our customers and help meet the demand for local and sustainably produced timber products.

There have also been concerns that if another fire were to occur before regenerating trees had reached a point where they would naturally re-seed that the area would be overtaken by mountain wattle.

This would not be the case in any areas managed by VicForests as we retain a seedbank containing 20 tonnes of eucalyptus seeds that we can use to re-seed areas when bushfires occur.

Victoria's sustainable native timber industry supports thousands of regional jobs and many communities, generates hundreds of millions dollars in economic activity and supplies Victorian's with a vast range of high quality hardwood timber products.

Nathan Trushell, VicForests