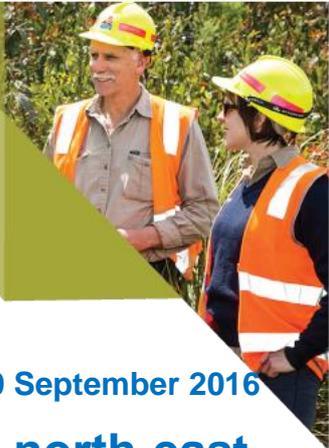


Media Release

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

20 September 2016

Mules and Horses help replant forest in Victoria's north-east

A team of pack mules and horses have become the first in history to take part in a VicForests replanting operation in the Acheron state forest.

In a pioneering move by VicForests contractors 'Timberwolf', this equine team was engaged to help carry the thousands of seedlings required to regrow an area of forest that had been recently harvested for timber.

Nathan Trushell, VicForests' General Manager, Planning said that VicForests is committed to actively regrowing every area that it harvests and welcomes any new and innovative ways that may assist in these operations.

"This replanting operation has been a great success thanks to the help of the pack mules," Mr Trushell said.

"We generally regrow more than 1000 hectares every year in the North East of Victoria. Some of these areas can be very challenging to access, particularly following a wetter than normal winter, he said.

Accompanied by their owners, JoAnne and John Kasch, the mules and horses were able to help VicForests and Timberwolf access a hard-to-reach area that had been made almost inaccessible by heavy rainfall and steep terrain

"The replanting of this area was proving to be quite a challenge, so when Timberwolf suggested the use of pack mules to access the area we were all quite happy to give it a go," Mr Trushell said.

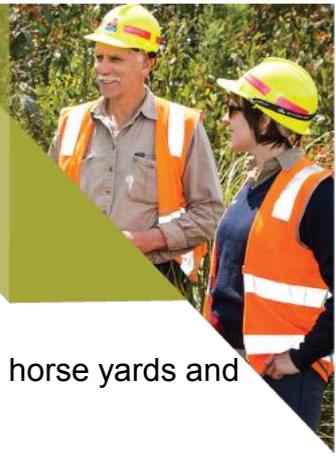
JoAnne Kasch, co-owner of Kasch and Co Pack Saddling said that she and her husband John were delighted to be a part of this innovative and creative seedling operation.

"Pack mules have been used by people for thousands of years. With the emergence of technology and equipment they have not been relied upon as heavily as they once had been," Mrs Kasch said.

"What people forget is that sometimes heavy machinery and equipment cannot access certain areas as it is large and bulky. This is where pack mules and horses really come into their own.

"They are not only trained and skilled in carrying heavy loads and navigating difficult terrain, but they are also a much more environmentally friendly option," she said.

The generous services provided by the Kasch's were in return for a nominal donation towards their ongoing project with the Bicentennial National Trail in which they are raising money to install various facilities for fellow trekking enthusiasts.



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“We have managed to raise \$12,000 so far and have been able to install toilets, horse yards and an information sign in the near future,” Mrs Kasch said.

“Pack Saddling is fast becoming a popular way to holiday, work and relax and are incredibly environmentally friendly,” she said.

VicForests 2016 regrowing program has planted over 60 thousand trees this year in north east Victoria.

Notes:

www.packsaddlingaustralia.com

www.vicforests.com.au/regrowing-our-forests

