

Friday January 30, 2015

VicForests protects a high concentration of tall trees in Victoria's Central Highlands

VicForests is protecting a considerable concentration of tall trees identified during a survey of a proposed harvesting site in Victoria's Central Highlands.

Michael Ryan, Forest Scientist with VicForests, who surveyed the site along with a local interested expert familiar with the stand said: "We are protecting approximately a dozen trees over 80 metres in height along with many hundreds of trees surrounding them in this area".

The trees measuring 80-82 metres in height do not meet the requirements for protection under VicForests' Giant Tree Policy, but the organisation has made the decision to exclude these trees from the upcoming harvesting operation.

The importance of Giant Trees in the Central Highlands has increased following the Black Saturday fires that killed many of the Giant Trees in the Kinglake and Yarra Ranges National Parks. Those fires also increased the relative importance of scattered pre-1900 ash trees within the Central Highlands areas of State forest available for timber harvesting.

"Our giant tree policy is in place to ensure that exceptionally large trees are protected, that is trees measuring over 85 metres in height or trees greater than 4m in diameter. In addition to this, we have also decided to protect a number of other tall trees measuring over 80m due to their high concentration found in this area.

"We recognise the value in protecting these trees for future habitat and potentially becoming giant trees themselves which would offer a number of ecological benefits to the area, such as habitat for a range of fauna," said Mr Ryan.

"The size of these trees are the result of both a productive site and a thinning operation conducted on the site in 1968 which allowed the remaining trees originating from 1926 to grow both taller and wider," he said.

Thinning is a process by where we will select trees to be harvested at around the 20-40 year growth stage in order to allow more room for the remaining trees to grow to a larger size and in turn produce a greater volume of high quality sawlog.

VicForests' conducts pre-harvest surveys for a range of values on every area planned for harvest. The planning process of an area marked for harvest usually starts approximately one to two years before harvesting begins.

"VicForests' robust planning processes are carried out by trained expert foresters, forest scientists and if required our conservation biologist.

“VicForests takes every measure possible to ensure that special environmental measures are protected from our operations.

“We are here to commercially produce wood, but we also must do so in a way that maintains ecological values that are important in the forest today, or will be in the future,” said Mr Ryan.