

MODERNISATION OF VICTORIA'S REGIONAL FOREST AGREEMENTS AND FOREST MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL USER GROUPS

Participant summary notes - What are some key messages and insights from your discussion topics?

The views and opinions expressed in these summary notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency of the Victorian Government. This report was written by the Commercial and Recreational User Group organisations in attendance at the round table and captures the key points of discussion, as determined by the participants. It does not represent the views of all Commercial and Recreational User Groups, nor does it comprehensively capture the full range of views and perspectives of those present.

Monday, 8 October 2018

Organisations attended

Australian Camps Association
Australian Deer Association
Australian Horse Industry Council/ Victorian Horse Industry Council
Australian Trail Horse Riders Association
Confederation of Australian Motor Sports
Construction Material Processors' Association
Field & Game Australia
Field Naturalists Club of Victoria
Four Wheel Drive Victoria
Motorcycling Victoria
Mountain Bike Australia
Victorian Environment Friends Network
Victorian Farmers Federation
Victorian Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association
Victorian High-Country Huts Association
Victorian Hound Hunters Association
VRFish

Other organisations invited

Australian Motorcycle Trail Riders Association
Bush User Groups United
Bushwalking Victoria
Minerals Council of Australia
Orienteering Victoria
Outdoors Victoria
Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria
Scouts Victoria
Sporting Shooters Association of Australia
Victorian Apiarists' Association
Victorian Rogaining Association
Victorian Seekers Club
Victorian Tourism Industry Council
Victoria Walks
Tourism Network Yarra Valley

Government organisations present

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Discussion Topic No. 1 – Comprehensive engagement with Victorian communities about what they value in forests

What does that mean to you?	What does it look like in practice?
1. An initial discussion with stakeholders before initiating actions regarding forests.	1. Active and meaningful consultation with community - face to face.
2. Caring about community values.	2. Communication with user/stakeholder groups, i.e. closures, burns, culls, controls.
3. Opportunities for all user groups and/or organisations.	3. Positive and well communicated outcomes from stakeholder engagement and consultation.
4. Value recreational benefits and spin-offs, e.g. health, regional economies, infrastructure.	4. Transparent process around managing engagement.
5. Enjoyment of natural areas through education and the desire to preserve for future generations to enjoy.	5. Defining the values, are they all equal?
6. Meaningful engagement to influence outcomes.	
7. Clear expectations of the ability to influence.	
What does success look like?	
1. Acting upon information gathered from stakeholders, users and the community and honouring any agreements.	
2. Stakeholder engagement in all areas of Victoria.	
3. Understanding of users needs and expectations.	
4. Information around which values have been incorporated and why.	

Discussion Topic No. 2 – Redesign of what forest values information we collect, and how we collect that information

What does that mean to you?	What does it look like in practice?
1. Greater emphasis and data collection on social values and recreational use (incl. health/wellbeing, demographics, cultural values, social capital, heritage).	1. Forest management that is truly sustainable (triple-bottom line ESD) and balances socio-cultural values with economic and environmental values.
2. Volunteer contribution, use of citizen science and general consultation with users to facilitate data collection.	2. User groups are consulted meaningfully with capacity to provide input and have access to all data, with regular review of users' demands, needs and expectations.
3. Realistic, achievable and well-resourced data collection which is subject to ongoing review and assessment (over the 20-year cycle) to ensure evidence-based management.	3. Overarching data collection strategy, with rigorous and transparent reporting and continual improvement in data collection and assessment.
4. Increased accountability of extractive user group with enforceable and achievable framework.	4. Must include education of participants to support informed decision making. Heeding the science and experts.
What does success look like?	
1. Sustainable, responsible and respectful use of forests that meets all users needs and expectations and balances economic, social and environmental values. For example, buffer zones.	
2. Stable, viable and balanced forests of normal biodiversity.	
3. Better recognition and measure for the value of forests for recreation, health/wellbeing, tourism, traditional users and industry. For example protection of streams, catchments and waterways.	

Discussion Topic No. 3 – Simplification of the RFA Framework and forest management system, and increasing regulatory certainty

What does that mean to you?	What does it look like in practice?
1. Recreational user access locked in not out - increased certainty.	1. A framework that sets up a balance of uses / values.
2. Consistent approach to user groups and regulations - greater understanding of regulatory requirements / operational standards of all user groups. Clarity around obligations / responsibilities of each user group i.e. Codes of Conduct / Memoranda of Understanding.	2. Better understanding of who user groups are and what their obligations and values are through centralised communication channels.
3. Looking for mutual benefits rather than exclusion of uses - co-existence of uses, users and values.	3. An interactive map highlighting regulations and obligations of user groups via Regulation Forest Agreements Regions.
4. Accountability of offenders with meaningful outcomes relative to the offence.	4. Accessibility for all user groups.
5. Understanding of relative impacts of different activities e.g. logging vs recreation - science based not subjective judgement.	
What does success look like?	
1. Regulations that set recreational user groups / users up to succeed not fail in harmony with others and allow those recreational users and industries to co-exist.	
2. Managing user group access to avoid conflicts i.e. time-tabling and resource sharing. Don't over-exaggerate conflicts.	
3. All users, including VicForests, fully aware of regulatory requirements and effective prosecution i.e. well-placed, clear signage in all areas.	

Discussion Topic No. 4 – Increasing the transparency and durability of forest management

What does that mean to you?	What does it look like in practice?
1. Feedback and information about analysis of why decisions are made with consistency in decision making through consultation with affected user groups.	1. Informed, agreed consensus in the decisions that are made allowing for consistency.
2. Transparency in the ongoing management e.g. monitoring assessment with decisions being evidence and science based.	2. Ongoing consultation and review, all parties being involved.
3. Flexibility in consultation with the affected user group allowing changes to the management plan during the life of the management plan.	3. Ongoing consultation and review, all parties being involved in the long term management difficulties.
What does success look like?	
1. An agreed workable document that all parties understand with all parties taking ownership of it.	
2. Community input that actually affects outcomes and not a token consultation.	
3. The ability to amend the document for changing circumstances at any time.	

Discussion Topic No. 5 – Improving the long-term sustainability and viability of forest-based industries, including the timber industry (over the short and long term)

What does that mean to you?	What does it look like in practice?
1. Access. Coordinated management of access. Co-existence when safe.	1. Permits and licensing and / or user guidelines / protocols
2. Broad range of values / uses. Development and improvement of assets for greater ease of access / beneficial uses.	2. Streamlined processes for access / one stop shop across approvals / tenures
3. Proper accounting for all values (and wider regional economy). Social, economic and environment values of the use - in situ and in the wider region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable uses • Traceable • Proper ability to assess values / data for decision making (choices) 	3. Appropriate access to allow a range of uses - recreational, commercial and emergency management / response For example - access to bee sites at appropriate times - recognising that some sites might only need to be accessed in certain events (budding) - a program that is responsive to the uses. Event - car rally and bikes approved on same site same day - then have to change logistics.
	4. Common platform for valuing uses Valuing ‘value added’ - tourism impacts on regional economy or pollination services – e.g. value of almond industry that requires pollination. Protocol with community for weightings within the values. Clearly understood by community and how it was developed. Community faith in the methodology on how values documented/ data quality. Ensuring health / mental health benefits documented.
What does success look like?	
1. Co-existence and awareness of other groups.	
2. Long term planning / access / political awareness.	
3. Forest agreement and management system that is responsive to other uses / users and natural cycles. (Good data and information on other users and the values - seasonality, access needs etc and the framework to show how these factors are analysed before approval given – e.g. like the decision about when fuel management burns are lit)	