

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

SCIENCE COMMUNITY

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 members of the scientific community 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 the entire scientific community, nor does it comprehensively capture the full range of views and perspectives of those present.

Wednesday, 3 October 2018

Organisations attended

Deakin University

ECOsystems Environmental Consultants

Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations

Griffith University

University of Canberra

University of Melbourne

Other organisations invited

Australian National University

Charles Darwin University

Latrobe University

Monash University

Government organisations present

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

VicForests

Discussion Topic No. 1 – The role of science and research in forest management

<p>1. <i>What is the role of scientists and the academic community in future forest management?</i></p>	<p>2. <i>What are we doing well?</i></p>
<p>1. Identify knowledge gaps and help fill them with evidence (data, synthesis and interpretation).</p>	<p>1. Building capacity for evidence-based management via on-going support of research.</p>
<p>2. Predict the consequences of management alternatives. Predictions should reflect the relevant values of the forest and account for uncertainty.</p>	<p>2. Beginning to embrace social values and metrics alongside traditional biological and physical indicators.</p>
<p><i>3. Be involved in community and policy conversations about forest management.</i></p>	<p>3. Better understanding of some species' ecology and how to model species distributions.</p>
	<p>4. Consideration of interactions of fire and forest management in planning</p>

3. Where can we do better?	4. What emerging and innovative approaches should we be excited about?
1. Developing management systems that respond to uncertainties, climate change and large-scale disturbances	1. Traditional Owner perspectives and co-management.
	2. Ability to use dynamic vegetation and disturbance modelling of forest landscapes.
2. Improve commitment to ongoing monitoring as a key element of evidence-based management.	3. Improved use of remote sensing technology and sensor networks.
3. Knowledge exchange and knowledge brokering - improve the science-policy interface.	4. Capacity to integrate social, economic and environmental data through an interdisciplinary lens.

Discussion Topic No. 2 – Adaptive management

<p>1. What does adaptive management look like and how would we implement it in practice?</p>	<p>2. How do we balance the need for certainty and stability, with the need to be adaptive to respond to change?</p>
<p><i>1. Clear, structured framework for monitoring and decision making including flexible objectives and/or targets</i></p>	<p><i>1. Being honest about uncertainty, incorporate that uncertainty into comparisons of management practices under scenarios</i></p>
<p><i>2. Capacity for learning: frequent monitoring and experimentation to update understanding and support decisions.</i></p>	<p><i>2. Identify critical uncertainties, those that if resolved one way or another would drastically change the preference for different management actions.</i></p>
<p><i>3. Forward looking: adapting to current and future predictions of forest sustainability and social environments</i></p>	<p><i>3. Identify thresholds in environmental states that may trigger management responses, but be aware that those thresholds need to be reviewed and updated by science.</i></p>
<p>3. How do we ensure science is being integrated with decisions in a timely fashion?</p>	
<p>1. Support for ongoing adaptive management, with relevant science to be annually reviewed and acted upon</p>	
<p>2. Review the appropriateness of the entire forest management framework</p>	
<p>3. Support for collaborative research, and communication and translation. Integrative teams between head office/regional practice and other stakeholders with researchers.</p>	

Discussion Topic No. 3 – Trade-off decisions

1. How do we make trade off decisions between multiple forest uses and values?	2. What are the principles that should guide trade off decisions?
<p>1. Establish governance arrangements: how to make agreements, settle disputes, whose decision is it - and what is the decision-making power of those involved?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparency regarding values, benefits, costs and constraints. 2. Sustainability across environmental, social and economic outcomes. 3. Procedural fairness and justice. 4. Think about the impacts of land-use decisions at multiple scales, make them explicit and provide for protection of values at the relevant scale. 5. Tolerate and respect each others' views and values and ensure decisions reflect a process that can be owned by stakeholders. 6. Consensus on how process occurs.
<p>2. Problem definition: don't frame as 'trade offs' or winners and losers, instead frame as maximising benefits for all (maximise overall outcomes); recognise validity of all perspectives; define and understand scope and context</p>	
<p>3. Establish values and objectives: consider values of all stakeholders, define and quantify where possible (and 'translate'/represent these values in a meaningful way).</p> <p>4. Design and present alternative solutions that are developed collaboratively and creatively. Avoid a narrow range of options. Develop credible estimates of the consequences of these alternatives on all values.</p> <p>5. Make sure that deliberative processes are in alignment with overall governance to that are informed by, but not determined by, consequences; where decisions are made regarding spatial 'trade-offs' (i.e. Zoning, 'no go areas) compromises are made using deliberative processes.</p>	

3. *What is the role of science in this process, and how does it interrelate with community values garnered through engagement? How do we link social values with biophysical values?*

1. Provide independent data and models that make predictions about relevant values
2. Understand public values and how they change
3. Recognise 'scientists' are a trusted partner, rather than a stakeholder.
4. Ensure good decision-making design
5. Social values are as important as biophysical values (link these values)
6. Try to standardise and communicate scale of different values

Discussion Topic No. 4 – Demonstrating performance against outcomes

1. How can monitoring, evaluation and reporting frameworks and processes be enhanced to better support adaptive management?

1. Clear definition of objectives (“the right things”) underpins a robust adaptive management framework, which must include social, economic and environmental values that are logically linked to performance measures (e.g. principles, criteria, indicators).

2. Monitor the right things at the right frequency and the right temporal and spatial scales (long-term, landscape scale). I.e, important to all stakeholders. Things that are most rapidly changing.

3. Ensure that the process maximises learning. By building prediction into monitoring and evaluation processes, we can test ideas, assumptions, and models to better understand change in Victoria’s forest. Design process to understand unexpected outcomes.

4. Report against all valued outcomes/principles/objectives

Enhance reporting to provide for more frequent reporting of key, rapidly changing values.

Place reporting values in an appropriate context so the nature of change can be understood by all stakeholders and decision makers