



Department of Sustainability and Environment

8 Nicholson Street
PO Box 500 East Melbourne
Victoria 8002 Australia
Telephone: (03) 9637 8000
Facsimile: (03) 9637 8100
ABN 90 719 052 204
DX 210098

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30/12/2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

LOGGING IN BROWN MOUNTAIN

Thank you for your email to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings MLC, regarding timber harvesting in East Gippsland. I have been asked to reply on his behalf.

In 2006, the Victorian Government made a commitment to add 41,000 hectares of significant old growth and icon areas of state forest to the conservation reserve system, without job losses or a reduction in timber resources. A moratorium on timber harvesting in all of the areas identified for reservation in the 2006 commitment has been put in place. The areas subject to timber harvesting in the Brown Mountain Creek area were not proposed for addition to the conservation reserve system in East Gippsland.

While I note your concerns, it is important to recognise that timber harvesting occurs only on a very small proportion (less than 8 percent) of Victoria's public land estate, with a far greater area of forests permanently placed in national park and other conservation reserves than is available for timber harvesting. Where timber harvesting operations are permitted to occur, they are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the *Sustainable Forests (Timber Act) 2004* and other relevant legislation, the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2007 and management guidelines in the relevant Forest Management Plan. Activities in state forests are regularly and independently audited, and commercial harvesting is considered to be conducted to a very high compliance standard.

The proposed old growth additions to the conservation reserve system are currently being reviewed to ensure that the intent and scope of the 2006 election commitments is delivered. Following the review process, the government will permanently protect identified areas within the formal reserve system. The addition of new old growth areas to the reserve system will take the level of protection for old growth forest in the area to over 95 percent.

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With respect to the important issue you raise about carbon storage, under the internationally agreed accounting frameworks, forestry is considered to be a net carbon sink. While the act of harvesting does release stored carbon, particularly during the regeneration burn, by law all native forests in Victoria are fully regenerated to their original forest composition, and will sequester carbon as they regrow. Over time, the net result from harvesting in Victoria's native forests is an absolute reduction in greenhouse gas concentrations.

Thank you for your interest in this matter. For more information, you may visit www.dse.vic.gov.au/forests or call the Department of Sustainability and Environment Customer Service Centre on 136 186.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janine', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Janine Haddow
Executive Director
Natural Resources