

Forest Management Zoning Accountability Framework 2022



Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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Secretary's foreword

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) knows the Victorian community greatly values our State forests for many reasons. These include their ecological diversity, the ecosystem services they provide such as clean air and water, places of protection for cultural heritage, and the social and economic benefits they offer as places of picturesque landscapes, recreation, tourism and forest-based industries. DELWP is committed to implementing sound forest management and planning across more than 3.2 million hectares of State forest.

State forests exist on the traditional Country of Victoria's Traditional Owners and are part of living cultural landscapes that extend across Victoria and are important places for the protection of cultural heritage places, knowledge, and other matters of Traditional Owner significance.

The Victorian Government recognises the unique role that Victorian Traditional Owners have in caring for Country and is committed to genuinely partnering with Victoria's Traditional Owners to support the protection of Country, foster land, water, forest and fire management practices, and maintain all spiritual, mythological, religious and cultural practices.

In this context, we have developed the *Forest Management Zoning Accountability Framework* (Accountability Framework). The purpose of the Accountability Framework is to provide greater transparency of DELWP's forest management zoning activities. It does this by facilitating the ongoing assessment and reporting against the status and progress of fixed forest management zoning actions.

This framework goes hand-in-hand with the 2021 and 2022 variations to the *Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014*, which improved the clarity, accuracy and enforceability of the Code. The variation clarifies the purpose of the Code by clearly separating the conservation strategies of the Secretary to DELWP (that is, fixed zoning actions) from directions for how timber harvesting managers, harvesting entities and operators should plan and conduct timber harvesting. The approach to new performance monitoring in this framework ensures that the Secretary's fixed zoning activities are transparent, and targets are reported on. The 2021 and 2022 Code reforms, and this new framework, are complementary reforms which will move Victoria towards a more transparent and effective framework for timber harvesting regulation.

A key strength of this framework is that it provides a platform for adaptive forest management. By design, future reporting outputs may highlight instances where fixed forest management zoning is no longer aligned to management strategies for species or consistent with on-ground forest values. Identifying these gaps provides an opportunity to adaptively manage our State forest so that important forest values persist for future generations to enjoy.

As DELWP implements this framework, we will continue to develop more advanced monitoring and reporting techniques that shift forest management from being output-focused towards being outcomes-focused – so that we can be sure that management actions deliver tangible improvements for forest values such as threatened species.



John Bradley

Secretary to the Department of Environment,
Land, Water and Planning

1. Introduction

Victoria is home to 8 million hectares of public land which is managed for the community for a range of values and uses including recreational, cultural, forestry, conservation, and government services. Four million hectares is managed by Parks Victoria through a dedicated system of National Parks and conservation reserves, approximately 3.2 million hectares is managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) as State forest, with around 1,200 public land reserves are managed by other authorities.

State forests are managed as multi-value, multi-use landscapes. This means one area may provide numerous benefits to Victorian communities. DELWP develops regional strategic Forest Management Plans (FMPs) to ensure the balanced use and care of State forest for current and future generations, and to achieve landscape conservation goals.

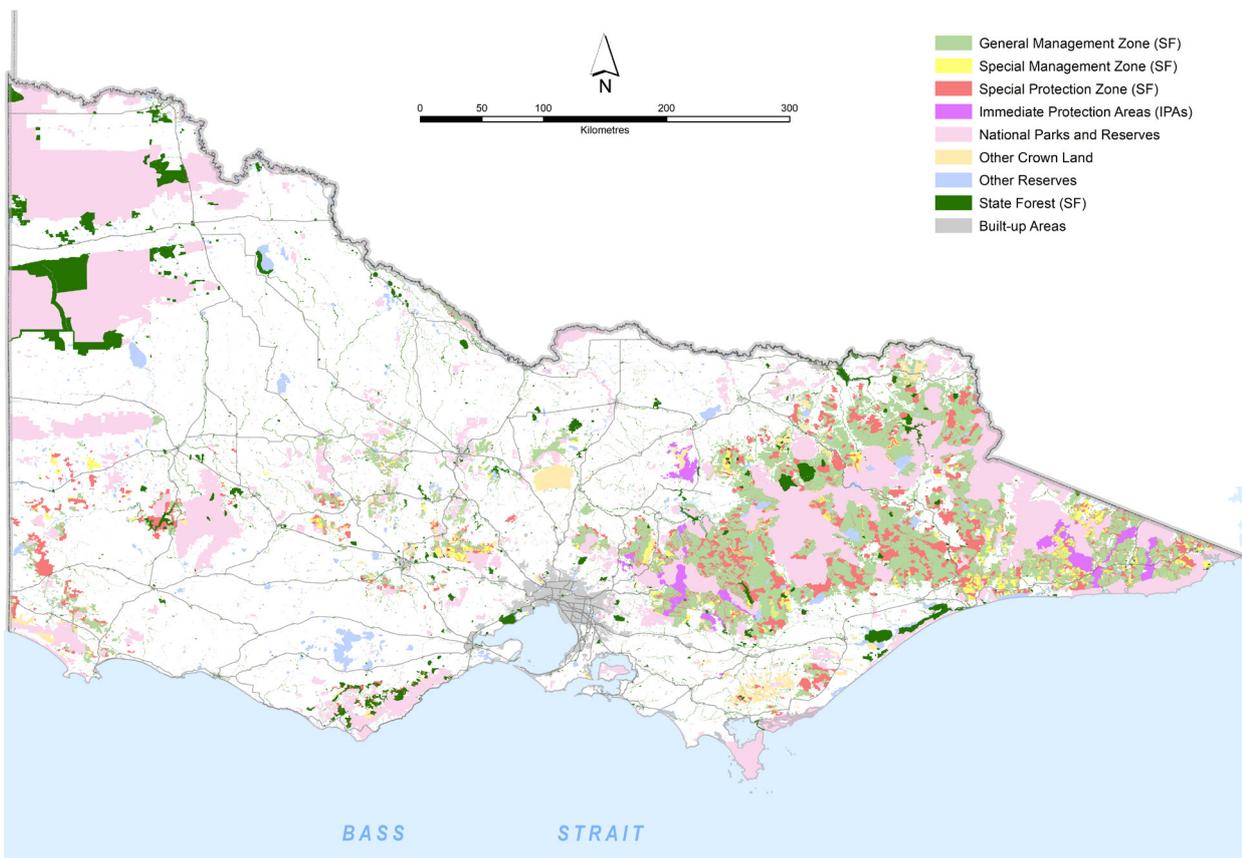
Existing Regional Forest Management Plans (FMPs) outline management strategies and permitted activities within forests, while also providing a network of informal reserves and protection areas within State forest that complement the broader

National Forest Reserve System of national parks and conservation reserves. DELWP is in the process of renewing regional FMPs, which will be delivered by December 2023.

The strategic objectives of FMPs, such as management of high conservation or cultural heritage values, are in part supported by forest management zoning. Zones balance objectives for nature and heritage conservation, amenity of place value, and land management and use, including timber harvesting.

The *Forest Management Zoning Accountability Framework 2022* provides a reporting structure that will deliver greater transparency and accountability for DELWP's forest management activities as they relate to fixed forest management zoning in Victoria's State forests.

Figure 1: Victoria's Forest Management Zones and Protected Areas 2022



2. Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of the *Forest Management Zoning Accountability Framework 2021* (Accountability Framework) is to provide a framework for public reporting on DELWP's progress towards meeting fixed forest management zoning targets (Appendix 1).

Examples of fixed forest management zoning targets include maintaining Special Management Zones (SMZs) for 150 resident pairs of Masked Owls in East Gippsland and establishing Special Protection Zones (SPZs) over rainforest stands that exhibit certain features, including Site of Significance status and area of coverage.

These targets were previously located in the *Planning Standards for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014* (Planning Standards), which were an appendix to the *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014* (the 2014 MSPs), a document incorporated into the Code.

The 2021 Code variation unincorporates (removes) the 2014 MSPs and the Planning Standards and incorporates (replaces them with) *Schedule 1: Management standards and procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State Forests* (the 2021 MSPs). Such requirements include management actions in response to detections of threatened species (see further explanation of detection-based zones under '3. What is forest zoning?' below).

All fixed forest management zoning actions from the Planning Standards have been compiled and are provided in Appendix 1 to the Accountability Framework.

The purpose of moving the Planning Standards into the Accountability Framework was to clearly separate the responsibilities of the Secretary to DELWP from those of timber harvesting managers, harvesting entities and operators, ensuring the Code's obligations on these entities are clear.

The Accountability Framework will ensure that DELWP continues to demonstrate accountability for fixed forest management zoning targets that have been moved into the Planning Standards – See Figure 2.

The Code and the 2021 MSPs continue to be the primary regulatory instruments for timber harvesting in Victoria.

Why have forest management zoning objectives been moved out of the Planning Standards?

The 2014 Code brought together zoning objectives from Forest Management Plans and Action Statements (see section 3. Action Statements) into one consolidated list in the Planning Standards.

However, this consolidation has led to a lack of clarity around the roles of the managing authority (DELWP) and harvesting entities and operators, such as VicForests, with respect to these objectives.

Including aspirational objectives for DELWP in an instrument that was developed for the purpose of regulating harvesting entities and operators created confusion.

Zoning objectives for DELWP are better situated in a document that is separate to the instruments used to regulate timber harvesting.

The Secretary has therefore documented these objectives in Appendix 1 and will demonstrate accountability and transparency in meeting these objectives through the implementation of the Accountability Framework and associated Reporting Action Plan.

Scope

The initial report under the Accountability Framework will focus exclusively on fixed forest management zones that have been implemented on public land in Victoria, principally within State forest, noting that some species have conservation strategies that span both public and private land in Victoria.

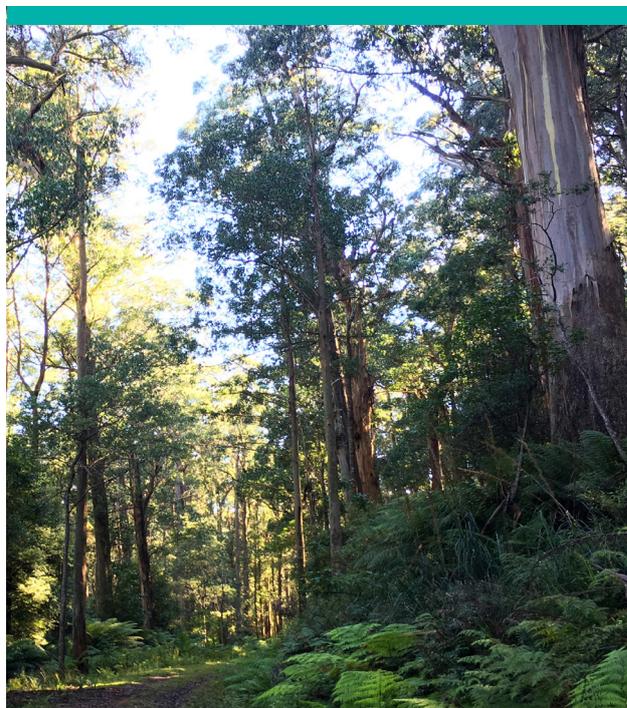
This approach increases accountability and transparency for the Secretary's zoning commitments. The first full report will detail the extent to which the zoning targets contained in the 2014 Planning Standards are being met.

Following the first full report, the reporting program can be expanded to include forest management zoning announcements or targets designated since the 2014 publication of the Planning Standards, such as those put in place through the *Threatened Species and Communities Risk Assessments* (TSCRA) undertaken in accordance with Victoria's Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs).

Outputs

The Acquittal Process (Chapter 4) and Reporting Action Plan (Chapter 5) contained in this Accountability Framework complement a suite of data improvement projects undertaken by DELWP. These improvements will enable DELWP to report consistently on forest management actions and progress against targets.

The Accountability Framework details how the report is compiled, its data inputs and its methodology. The Reporting Action Plan is DELWP's commitment to publicly report on the outcomes of the acquittal process, timeframes, and continuous improvement.



3. Victoria's forest management framework

Forest management planning in Victoria is undertaken within a framework of legislation, policies and subordinate instruments, such as the Code of Practice for Timber Production (the Code), that enable Victoria to meet international, national and state obligations and objectives (see Figure 2).

Regional Forest Agreements

Victoria's Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are agreements between the State and Commonwealth Governments that provide for sustainable management and use of Victoria's forests. Victoria's five RFAs provide a robust framework for sustainable, active and adaptive management of Victoria's forests for all uses and benefits including cultural, social, recreational, environmental, and economic.

Through the RFAs, the Commonwealth Government accredits Victoria's forest management system. As a result, timber harvesting operations done in accordance with a relevant RFA are not subject to certain Commonwealth legislative requirements. The RFAs set the requirements and timelines for delivery of initiatives including the renewed FMPs, (TSCRA), comprehensive review of the Code and review of the Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system.

Forest Management Plans

The foundational legislation for Victorian forest management is the *Forests Act 1958* (Vic), which requires the government to develop a working plan for management of forests. In accordance with this legislation, a set of regional FMPs were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s.

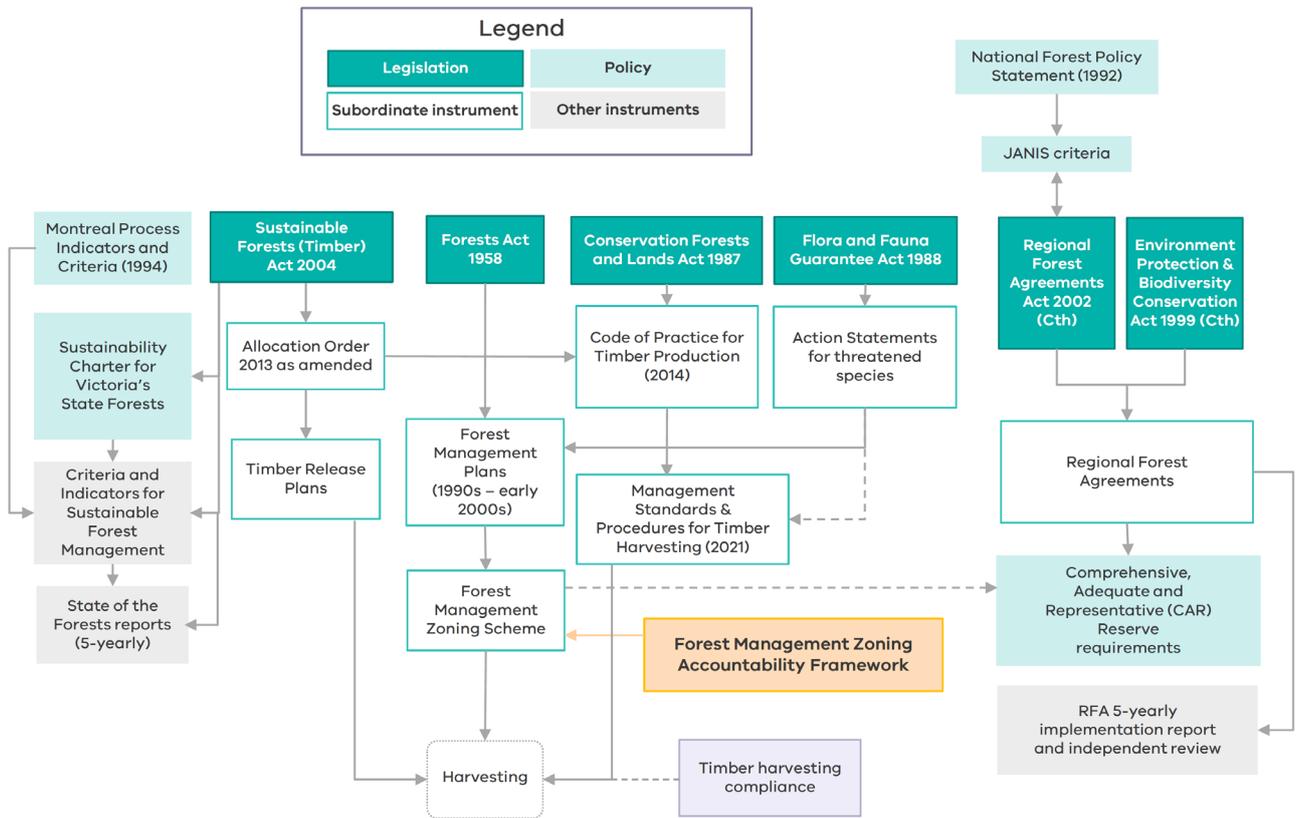
These FMPs outline strategic objectives and operational guidance using values identified by science, the community, Traditional Owners, and interest groups. The development of these plans included an extensive analysis of information on the uses and values of State forests, including natural, cultural, social, resource and economic values. They also incorporated findings/outcomes following wide consultation with scientific experts and the regional communities who live close to these places.

The primary tool used by existing FMPs to specify management objectives is the Forest Management Zoning Scheme (FMZS). The FMZS is an administrative planning tool comprising zones that set priorities and permitted uses in different parts of State forest. FMPs reinforce that the management strategies spatially represented through zoning are based on the best information available at that time and that zoning should be flexible to new knowledge and a changing landscape. Through the Code, the regulatory framework allows for this, with processes to add, remove and change zoning locations and boundaries based on new information.

Where can I find Forest Management Plans?

Forest Management Plans are available at <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/forest-management/forest-management-plans>.

Figure 2: Regulatory framework for forest management zoning and timber harvesting in State forests



Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014

The purpose of the Code is to provide direction to timber harvesting managers, harvesting entities and operators to deliver sound environmental performance when planning for and conducting timber harvesting activities.

The Code incorporates the *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2021* (2021 MSPs), which provide detailed operating instructions for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests to managing authorities, harvesting entities and operators, including region specific instructions.

Any person undertaking timber harvesting operations in State forests must comply with the Code and 2021 MSPs. This requirement is provided for in section 46 of the SFT Act and is included in licences and authorisations issued under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987* (CFL Act), the *Forests Act 1958* (Forests Act) and the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004* (SFT Act).

Compliance with the Code is enforced by the Conservation Regulator, which was established in 2019.

The Code was made in the context of there being a working forest management zoning scheme that reflects fixed zoning strategies derived from FMPs and Action Statements made under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act). This includes having Forests Act working plans (FMPs) in place, which are the overall guide for zoning targets. While the original 2014 Code (before the 2021 variation) incorporated fixed zoning actions for State forests through the Planning Standards, those targets were made under FMPs and Action Statements prior to the development of the Planning Standards and did not derive from the Planning Standards. When the Code was varied in 2021, these fixed zoning actions remained in their source documents (FMPs and Action Statements) and have been recorded in the Accountability Framework Appendix 1.

CAR reserve system

State forest management in Victoria must also meet international and national forest management standards. This is achieved, in part, by making sure fixed forest zoning outcomes meet the obligations of a 'Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative' (CAR) reserve system. The CAR reserve system is an integral component of Victoria's RFAs.

The RFAs supported the establishment of the CAR reserve system based on nationally agreed 'JANIS' criteria,¹ which set out targets for the conservation of ecosystems. The level of protection afforded by JANIS criteria in RFA regions is considered high by world standards.²

The CAR reserve system is made up of dedicated reserves, informal reserves, and areas within production forests where values are protected by prescription.

Dedicated or formal reserves are set aside for conservation, through areas such as national parks.

Informal reserves are areas set aside for conservation purposes in forests that are otherwise production forests, such as special protection zones in State forests. Fixed forest management zoning actions in State forest comprise a key component of the informal reserves.

Victoria's RFAs commit the State government to identifying and managing forested areas in line with the CAR reserve system, informed by a Comprehensive Regional Assessment of environmental, Indigenous, social and economic forest values.

The Secretary to DELWP is required to conduct five-yearly reviews of the operation of the RFAs in Victoria to assess and evaluate the performance of the RFA against an extensive range of forest management, cultural and ecological criteria.³

In this context, detailed and consistent reporting on the status and implementation of fixed zoning actions within State forest and across public land is important for evaluating the performance of the CAR reserve system and RFAs in Victoria.

1 JANIS is the Joint ANZECC/MCFFA National Forest Policy Statement Implementation Subcommittee

2 Commonwealth Government Department of Agriculture, 2020. Protecting our Forest Environment <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/policies/rfa/about/protecting-environment>

3 Further information on Regional Forest Agreements <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/forestry/policies/rfa>

Action Statements

Forest Management Plans distil information from a range of sources to provide a place-based guideline for forest management. Species-specific Action Statements made under the FFG Act and Victoria's biodiversity strategy, *Biodiversity 2037*, are two other important sources of fixed forest management zoning targets within State forest.

The FFG Act requires the Secretary to DELWP to prepare an Action Statement for any listed taxon or community of flora or fauna or potentially threatening process as soon as possible after that taxon, community or process is added to the Threatened List or Process List. Action Statements provide information on a species, reasons for its decline and threats which affect it. Their purpose is to report on past management actions, establish a set of new management actions and may include additional information on what needs to occur in the future to conserve and manage a taxon, community, or threatening process.

Action Statements are made in collaboration with a range of experts and stakeholders to ensure the delivery of the most strategic and effective actions, including fixed zoning.

Action Statements will continue to inform fixed forest management zoning actions across Victoria's public land.

The current Forest Management Plans incorporate guidance provided by the Action Statements that were available at the time of their release (1990s and early 2000s). The Planning Standards also incorporated fixed zoning targets from Action Statements released up to 2014.

Will new Action Statements be developed? If so, how will this affect the implementation of the Accountability Framework?

Yes, new or updated Action Statements will be made in accordance with the FFG Act and RFA obligations. The Accountability Framework will provide a mechanism to record where previous fixed forest management zoning targets have been superseded by new conservation strategies.

Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy

In 2017, DELWP released *Protecting Victoria's Biodiversity: Biodiversity 2037*. Under the FFG Act, the Secretary must make a Biodiversity Strategy for the conservation of the State's flora and fauna. For Victoria to achieve a net improvement in flora and fauna species by 2037, this strategy must contain proposals for achieving the objectives of the Act and includes targets to measure the achievement of the objectives; and a framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the strategy.

Fixed zoning actions introduced through Victoria's FMPs and Action Statements will help Victoria meet these biodiversity targets by ensuring there is sufficient suitable habitat to facilitate the persistence of key threatened species. This includes specific strategic directions relating to forests, including the need for adaptive, landscape-scale management which delivers the greatest benefit for all species.

What is forest zoning?

Forest management zoning is a commonly used land management tool that spatially describes permitted uses and priorities for certain areas. In Victoria's State forests, zoning is the product of extensive strategic planning. It brings together international, national and state obligations and objectives into a tool that can be used for on-ground management.

In Victoria, existing FMPs are 'working plans' under section 22 of the *Forests Act 1958* and give operation to Victoria's zoning system – the Forest Management Zoning Scheme (FMZS).

Forest Management Zoning Scheme

The FMZS is an administrative planning tool that sets broadly defined management priorities and guides where different types of disturbance or activity may be acceptable.

The FMZS consists of three zones. Each zone has defined management priorities and permitted uses, which are described in detail in regional FMPs. The three zones are:

- **Special Protection Zones (SPZs)** are managed specifically for conservation values, forming a network designed to complement the formal conservation reserve system. Timber harvesting operations are excluded from SPZs.
- **Special Management Zones (SMZs)** are managed to conserve specific features, while catering for timber harvesting operations under special conditions specified in SMZ plans.
- **General Management Zones (GMZs)** are managed for a range of uses and values, with timber harvesting operations prioritised.

Operational guidelines in FMPs specify where other uses/activities can occur, often with regard to the three zones, and any additional conditions that apply.

Changes to zoning

Victorian forests are dynamic living systems that contain immense natural, social and cultural values and resources. The current FMPs were developed in the 1990s and early 2000s with the best available information at the time. They were designed to be flexible to reflect new information, enhanced technology, and evolving community expectations, and will be formally updated as DELWP renews the FMPs by December 2023.

The ability to create, change or move forest zones is critical for an active forest management system capable of responding to new information or shocks such as bushfire. The forest management system allows for changes to be made through an *amendments* process.

Examples of amendments include:

- Detection of a value trigger a new SPZ or SMZ for example, species presence, identified cultural site.
- Identification of mapping errors, for example incorrectly located boundaries.
- Re-zoning of areas that no longer contain the value it was designed to protect.

What are fixed and detection-based forest management zones?

Fixed forest management zones (reflected as SPZ or SMZ) delineate areas of public land, primarily within State forest, where management priorities focus on the conservation of fixed values or assets such as waterways and wetlands, biodiversity values, historic and cultural places and recreation sites. Within these delineated areas, specified management activities such as timber production must be excluded or modified to protect those values. Importantly, conservation strategies for certain species prioritise the selection of habitat within existing parks and reserves where forest values are least likely to be disturbed, as seen in Figure 3.

In contrast, detection-based zoning actions are only triggered where there is a verified detection associated with a value, e.g. verified sighting of a threatened flora or fauna species.

Roles and responsibilities

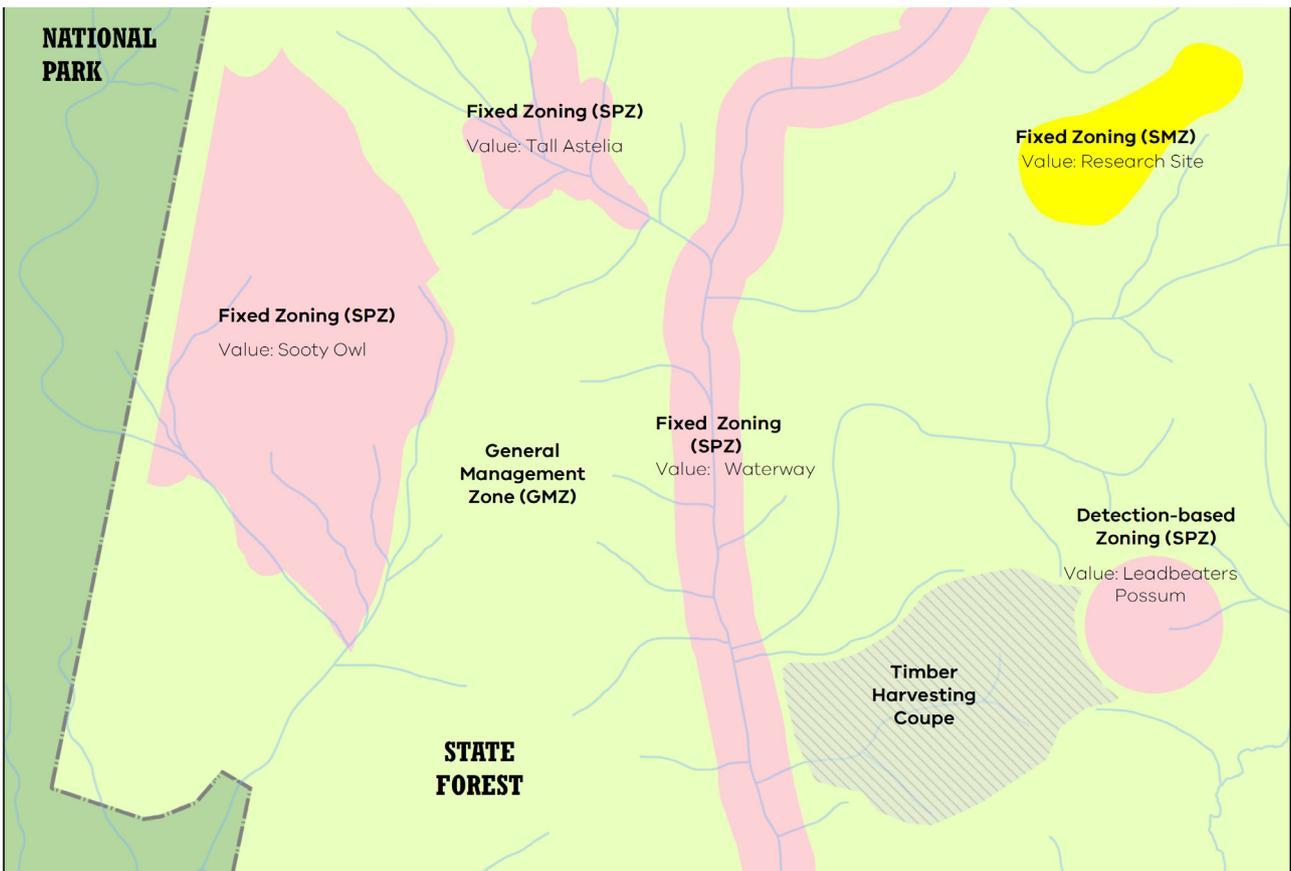
The FMPs establish the Secretary to DELWP as responsible for maintaining and updating the FMZS for detection-based and fixed zoning, including associated spatial data. Any changes must confirm the aims and targets prescribed in the FMPs. This direct line of responsibility means that the 2021 changes to the Code do not alter the Secretary to DELWP’s responsibility to manage and appropriately update the FMZS.

Because FMPs are designed to respond to new information, detections of certain species or values in the landscape can trigger a zoning response. It is the Secretary to DELWP’s (or delegated officers) responsibility to record this change in the FMZS and spatially represent it in the FMZ100 layer, which is a publicly available dataset maintained by the Victorian Government.

The role of zoning in the regulation of timber harvesting

Zoning is an administrative planning tool which indicates to land managers where certain activities and uses may and may not occur. Compliance with the Forest Management Zoning Scheme by timber harvesting entities is required by the Code. Compliance with the Code is required by the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004* (SFT Act). Powers to investigate and enforce contraventions of the timber harvesting regulatory framework derive from the SFT Act and *Conservation Forests and Land Act 1987* (CFL Act). The FMZS is not in and of itself an enforceable regulatory tool.

Figure 3: Stylised example of the information contained within the Forest Management Zoning Scheme - FMZ100



4. The Acquittal Process

This section describes the process for acquitting the application of fixed forest zoning actions and targets previously described in the Planning Standards.

The purpose of the Accountability Framework is to ensure that fixed zoning targets are captured in a way that facilitates transparent and recurring reporting on their implementation status. This will facilitate the sharing of consistent information on management action progress and outputs.

Within Victoria, forested areas traverse a number of land use categories including national parks and conservation reserves, other public land (including state forest and council reserves) and some private land. Victoria's forest management system is applied to forested land use across these categories.

The Accountability Framework is intended to apply principally to State forest, while recognising that some fixed forest management zoning actions within Appendix 1 apply to various types of public land, and in some cases extend to private land. The FMZ100 is the key tool specific to State forest that will be used. The Accountability Framework process can be updated to incorporate any emerging land-use categories, within State forest, that sit outside the FMZ100, which also provide protections for values listed in Appendix 1. These areas able to be reported on in future stages.

Framework design

The Accountability Framework supports the Acquittal Process for fixed zoning actions, which establishes the extent to which the FMZ100 footprint meets specified targets in Appendix 1. An overview of the processes to support transparent reporting of fixed zoning actions and the purpose of the Accountability Framework and Acquittal Process is shown in Figure 4.

The Acquittal Process comprises the following core components:

- **FMZ100** – Drawing on the FMZ100 layer with more accurate and current zoning data to inform the acquittal process and ensure that all targets are incorporated within the FMZ100;
- **Forest Zoning Reporting** – Improved reporting mechanisms that bring all information relevant to zoning together to support intelligent query processing of information and generation of public reports;
- **Evaluation Process** – Analysis, defined by a set of reporting principles established under this framework, to determine the implementation status of zoning targets; and
- **Forest Management Zoning Report** – A publication which reports on progress against the fixed zoning targets in Appendix 1, based on the reporting principles. DELWP will prepare this report on a

five-yearly basis for consistency with other periodic reporting, including Victoria's State of the Forests report, State of the Environment report, and RFA reviews. Annual reporting of relevant information such as zoning amendments or updates to informing source datasets such as new species modelled information will also be provided.

Informing the Acquittal Process

The Accountability Framework takes a contemporary approach to determine what fixed zone target values are being protected by the FMZ100 today. The acquittal process will not remake or revise historical decisions about where fixed zones are in the landscape.

Multiple forms of data will inform the acquittal, including the FMZ100. Legacy data which has informed the FMZ100 over the past 20+ years will be utilised, while applying the most current information to determine the extent of protection being applied. The Acquittal Process will not rebuild or recreate the FMZ100 data based on historical decisions.

The Acquittal Process uses a methodology which amalgamates the most current information and available spatial data into a 'values' layer, which will be overlaid with the FMZ100 footprint to inform subsequent reporting. This will ensure the Accountability Framework produces a transparent and accurate reporting product that clearly demonstrates how the Forest Management Zoning System is protecting target values as they exist at a point in time.

Informing data layers used in the analysis may be produced by a single dataset or complex combination of separate but related datasets. This process is outlined in Figure 5.

The Acquittal Process will seek to verify the amalgamated value spatial layer against any relevant and available landscape information, such as aerial imagery, ecological vegetation classes or fire impact mapping. The verified layer is then compared with the relevant FMZ100 footprint to determine the level of protection being afforded to any particular target value.

The FMZ100 footprint used in the overlay analysis will be determined by the zoning requirements associated with each target value and will be addressed as follows:

- i. Target values which are allocated SPZ level protection will be analysed against an overall single SPZ footprint.
- ii. Target values which are allocated SMZ level protection will be analysed against a composite footprint – which combines the SPZ with the SMZ zones that are suitable for protecting that specific value of interest.

Forest Zoning Reporting

DELWP will improve forest zoning reporting mechanisms to support the ongoing reporting against targets using the best available and most current data from a range of sources. These mechanisms will connect the FMZ100 data with current target values layers, as well as landscape and planning information. New data which can inform forest zoning is continually becoming available, such as when new species records are submitted or modelling such as habitat distribution models are updated. Many fixed zones overlap and protect multiple values. Considering the most up-to-date information will enable the Accountability Framework to report accurately on the status of fixed zoning target's implementation.

With the ability to accommodate reporting against various geographic units such as RFAs, Forest Blocks and other smaller areas, these mechanisms will inform the periodic acquittal process to be delivered through the Accountability Framework and support the development of new policy – including FMPs to be developed by 2023. The data gathered through the process of updating FMPs by 2023 will also be able to inform the Accountability Framework.

Improved reporting will allow for extraction of targeted and specific information, with results determined in real time, improving our ability to track incremental changes and which will accommodate the six key themes reflected in current FMPs (Biodiversity, Cultural Values, Knowledge Values, Landscapes, Recreation and Water) along with any newly identified categories. Under each theme, there are multiple values and targets. A summary of these themes and values is set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Forest management zoning themes and values

Themes	Values
Biodiversity	Fauna: Individual fauna species
	Flora: Individual flora species
	Linear Reserves
	Vegetation Communities: - Ecological Vegetation Classes - Rainforest - Old growth forest
Cultural	Aboriginal
	Historic European
Knowledge	Education
	Research
Landscape	Landscape Reserves
	Heritage Rivers
	Natural Catchment Areas
	Natural Features Zones
Recreation	River Zones
	Recreation
Water	Stream Protection
	Water Supply Protection Areas
	Wetlands

Figure 4: Forest Management Zoning Accountability Framework 2022, in the context of the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014

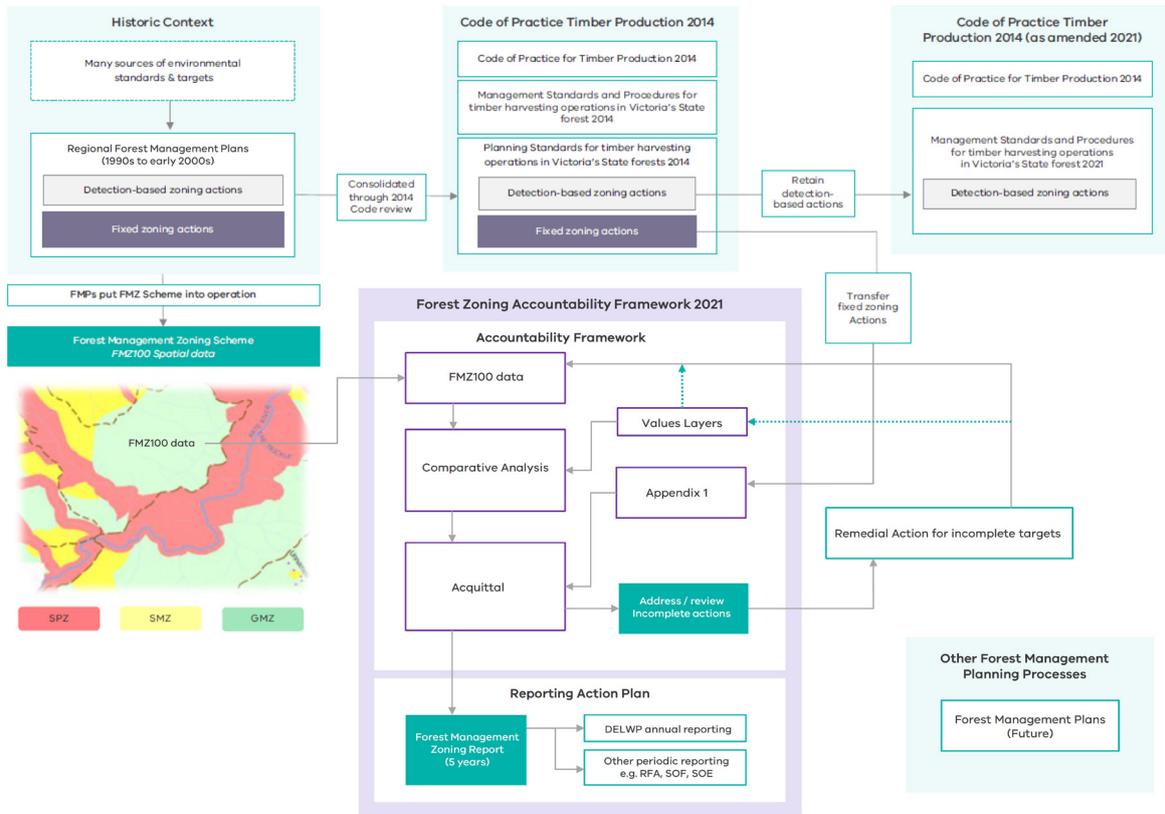
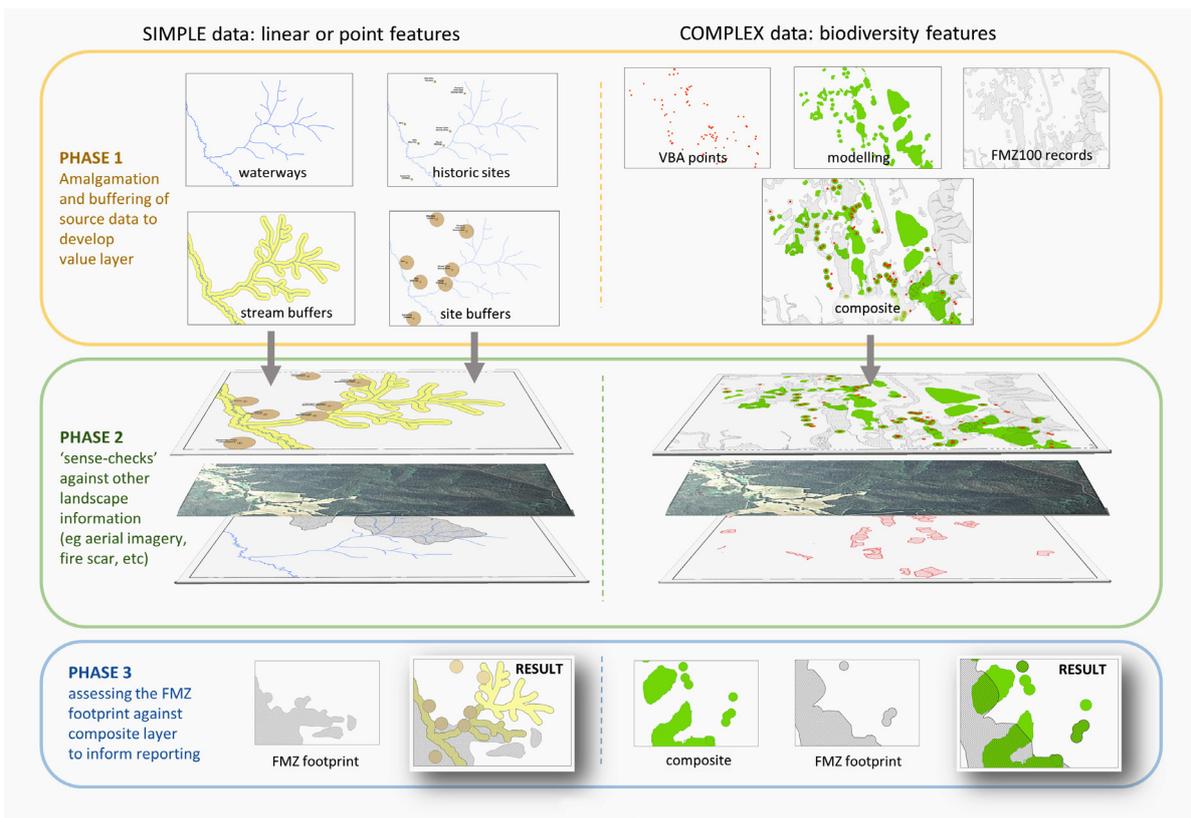


Figure 5: Informing the Acquitall Process – Phases for analysis of the FMZ100 footprint against the most current, available information on values identified within Appendix 1. These phases will inform to what extent values are being protected by the FMZ100 footprint.

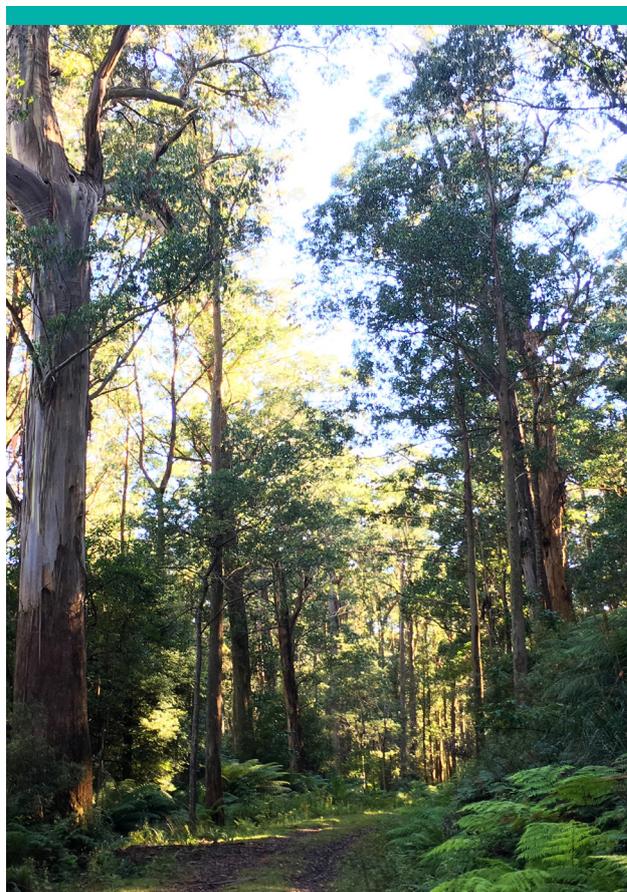


Evaluation process

The Accountability Framework will be underpinned by a set of Reporting Principles, designed for consistent reporting across all the themes and forest management values in Appendix 1.

Reporting Principles

- i. Extent of protection will be assessed** – findings will be presented in formats best suited to the relevant value. Findings will be presented consistently where possible – for example: extent or area (hectares), length (kilometres), proportion of expected total (percentage). The findings will represent the proportion of the target being afforded protection.
- ii. Assessment will be tailored to the specific targets** – alternative presentation of findings will be provided where targets are conditional upon identification of thresholds, specified situations or management inputs and do not support the provision of a straightforward finding. These will be presented in a way that best reflects the value target and its demonstrated level of protection.
- iii. Performance against review targets will be assessed** – reporting on commitments to review targets will be presented as a proportion of the total number of reviews undertaken after the Planning Standards were published in 2014.
- iv. Transparency of data sources** – all data used to inform the final value layer will be referenced within the report with comments on its contribution, including identification of any relevant caveats associated with the currency and completeness of the contributing dataset.
- v. Transparency of protocols** – protocols for data inclusion will be developed and disclosed, where relevant, and retained for consistency in future reporting cycles.
- vi. Consideration of will be given to 'landscape-scale' influences** – reporting will include discussion of broader influences on the presence of any forest value, for example the impact of a significant fire event following the establishment of the informing data sources.



5. Reporting Action Plan

The Reporting Action Plan represents DELWP's commitment to implement the Accountability Framework and publish a report that details the current status of fixed forest management zoning across Victoria. The full report will be produced every five years, with annual updates of relevant information such as zoning amendments or updates to informing source datasets such as new species modelled information.

Reporting schedule

The first *Forest Management Zoning Report* will represent a point-in-time account of progress towards achieving fixed zoning actions and targets. Preliminary work to prepare this report has already commenced. To facilitate this reporting process, DELWP will undertake dedicated data cleansing and enhancement of the data underpinning the Forest Management Zoning Scheme, with the aim of making this data more current, transparent and accessible.

The ongoing progress of data cleansing and informing data amalgamation will result in a staged reporting approach. The initial report, to be published in 2023, will contain reporting against as many targets as possible. Findings produced under this model are likely to be constrained by the availability, currency and accuracy of the underpinning data.

After the initial report, DELWP will:

- i. continue to update the underpinning data as it becomes available, and
- ii. provide annual updates so that stakeholders have reports on the zoning system with increasing levels of detail.

Future reports using this framework are expected to be presented as an update using a consistent format and demonstration of trends over time, allowing the previous report to be compared against the new report.

A detailed, comprehensive report that aligns to the reporting principles outlined in this document will be prepared at five-yearly intervals, for consistency with the other forest management reporting processes such as the State of the Forest Report. By the time the first five-yearly comprehensive update is due, it should address all targets within Appendix 1.

The annual updates will provide information on zoning amendments and improvements which will inform our overall approach in years to come.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting supports continuous improvement by collecting and reporting on data in a way that enables evidence-based planning and decision making.

By design, future reporting outputs may highlight instances where fixed forest management zones are no longer aligned to management strategies for species, or consistent with on-ground forest values. Identifying these gaps provides an opportunity to adaptively manage our State forest, so that important forest values are protected for future generations to enjoy.

Where any incomplete actions are identified, these will be addressed through priority zoning amendments or more holistic processes like the RFA CAR reserve assessment.

Continuous improvements

Victoria is undergoing a significant program of reform across forest management strategy, planning and operations. This is being delivered in accordance with commitments of Victoria's RFAs as well as the Victorian Forestry Plan (VFP), announced to assist the timber industry as it transitions away from native forest harvesting by 2030.

This Accountability Framework and Reporting Action Plan, as well as forest zoning itself, will evolve over time as we develop and implement more sophisticated tools and strategies to manage State forests, and as the VFP progresses.

Concurrent planning processes that may affect this framework, or benefit from output data, include:

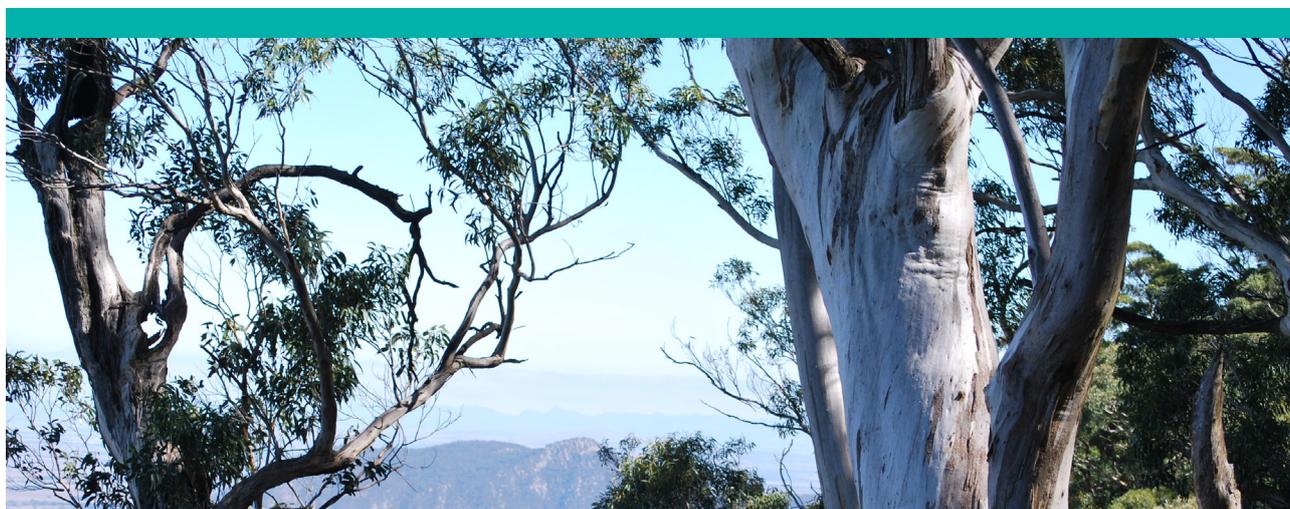
- new Forest Management Plans due by December 2023, as per RFA agreements
- new or renewed Actions Statements
- RFA five-yearly review process, including CAR reserve assessment
- formalisation of new forest protection areas, and
- aligned outcome-based reporting processes such as those described in the *Biodiversity 2037* Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework, and as required under RFAs.⁴

To ensure that its fixed zoning actions remain up to date, DELWP will periodically evaluate this reporting structure to ensure that it is fully integrated with Victoria's forest management framework.

Outcomes reporting

Comprehensive public policy and effective service delivery must provide value to the community. Focussing on outcomes rather than outputs enables DELWP to measure and report on certain activities, and how those activities benefit Victorians and native flora and fauna.

Due to the historical approach to forest management zoning, the Accountability Framework for fixed zoning actions and the Reporting Action Plan are necessarily output-based products. DELWP is exploring opportunities to transition to outcomes-based reporting in relation to forest zoning, which could draw on the Victorian State Government Outcomes Framework architecture.⁵



⁴ *Biodiversity 2037* Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvements Framework (MERF) Version 2.0

⁵ Victorian Government Outcomes Reform, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victorian State Government

Glossary

'Accountability Framework' means the set of processes, procedures and datasets that are used to improve fixed forest management zoning accountability, transparency and reporting.

'Action Statement' means an action statement prepared under Part 4 of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

'Biodiversity' has the same meaning as in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

'Code' means the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014.

'Fauna' has the same meaning as in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

'Flora' has the same meaning as in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.

'Forest' means an area with a high density of trees typically composed of an overstorey (canopy or upper tree layer) and an understorey.

'Forest Management Area' (FMA) means a territorial unit for planning and management of State forests in Victoria. The approximate location and extent of FMA boundaries are defined by the Department's corporate spatial dataset FMA25.

'Forest Management Plans' means plans prepared to allocate zones for forest management designed to meet objectives for conservation, management and uses including timber harvesting

'Forest Management Zoning Scheme' (FMZS) means an administrative planning scheme comprising zones that set priorities and permitted uses in different parts of State forest. The FMZS is established by the Forest Management Plans, which are working plans pursuant to section 22 of the *Forests Act 1958 Vic.*

'Management Standards and Procedures 2014' (2014 MSPs) means the Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014. The Management Standards and Procedures 2014 were unincorporated from the Code in 2021.

'Management Standards and Procedures 2021' (2021 MSPs) means the Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2021.

'Planning Standards' means the Planning Standards for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014, being Appendix 5 to the Management Standards and Procedures 2014. The Management Standards and Procedures 2014 were unincorporated from the Code in 2021.

'Public land' means unalienated land of the Crown managed or controlled by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Minister for Agriculture, or the Secretary, whether or not that land is leased, licensed or otherwise occupied by another person (but does not include land within the meaning of paragraph (iv) of the definition of private land).

'Rainforest' means closed (>70 per cent projected foliage cover) broadleaved forest vegetation with a rainforest tree canopy of variable height, and with a characteristic composition of species and life forms, of at least 0.1 hectare in area and 20 metres width. Rainforest includes closed transitional and seral communities with emergent eucalypts (including Cool Temperate Mixed Forest as a recognised subset of rainforest), that are of similar botanical composition to mature rainforests in which eucalypts are absent.

'Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs)' means an agreement between Victoria and the Commonwealth that is an RFA or Regional Forest Agreement within the meaning of the Regional Forest Agreements Act 2002.

'Secretary' as defined in the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004 Vic.* means the body corporate established by Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 Vic.* sometimes described as the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

'Special Management Zone' (SMZ) means a component of Forest Management Zoning Scheme (MZS) which are managed to conserve specific features and values, while catering for sustainable timber production and other utilisation activities under certain conditions, specified in SMZ plans.

'Special Protection Zone' (SPZ) means a component of Forest Management Zoning Scheme (FMZS) which are managed primarily for conservation values, forming a part of Victoria's Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative reserve system. Timber harvesting operations are generally excluded from SPZ.

'State forest' means:

- i. "State forest" within the meaning of the *Forests Act 1958*; and
- ii. any other category of public land where timber harvesting operations occur or are proposed to occur.

'Timber harvesting operation' means any of the following kinds of activities carried out by any person or body for the purposes of sale or processing and sale —

- (a) felling or cutting of trees or parts of trees;
- (b) taking or removing timber;
- (c) delivering timber to a buyer or transporting timber to a place for collection by a buyer or sale to a buyer;
- (d) any works, including road works, site preparation, planting and regeneration, ancillary to any of the activities referred to in paragraphs (a) to (c)—
but does not include—
- (e) the collection or production of firewood for domestic use.

'Water supply protection area' means any one or more of the following:

- i. Special Water Supply Catchment Area;
- ii. a designated catchment identified in a forest management plan;
- iii. a catchment protected by or under a planning scheme made under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

'Waterway' means any one or more of the following:

- iii. a waterway within the meaning of the Water Act 1989;
- iv. a permanent stream;
- v. a temporary stream;
- vi. a drainage line;
- vii. a pool; or
- viii. a wetland.

'Wetland' means a permanent spring, swampy ground, wetland or other body of standing water. A wetland may dry out seasonally. A wetland will support distinctive riparian vegetation (not including *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), indicative of extended periods of saturation and distinguishable from vegetation communities in surrounding areas.

Acronyms

'CAR' means Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative

'DELWP' means the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

'FMA' means Forest Management Area

'FMZ' means Forest Management Zone

'GMZ' means General Management Zone

'ha' is hectare

'JANIS' is the Joint ANZECC/MCFFA National Forest Policy Statement Implementation Subcommittee

'MNES' is Matters of National Environmental Significance

'RFA' means Regional Forest Agreement

'SMZ' means Special Management Zone

'SPZ' means Special Protection Zone.

