



Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

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BLUEPRINT TO SECURE THE OTWAYS' FUTURE

Lines on the map had been drawn in the proposals for the Otways on public display from today, the Acting Chairman of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC), Mr Duncan Malcolm, said today.

VEAC has today released its Angahook-Otway Investigation Draft Proposals Paper which recommends the establishment of a single 98,200 ha Otways National Park and a new public land use category 'Forest Park'.

And the community was being called on to 'make its mark on the Park' by providing a submission to VEAC.

Mr Malcolm said the proposed boundaries were not a 'foregone conclusion' and there was now the last opportunity for the community to help shape the future of the Otways by providing a submission to VEAC before 26 July 2004.

He added the Draft Proposals followed consideration of the 660 submissions received to date, containing more than 7000 different proposals.

The Minister for the Environment requested VEAC to provide options for a new, larger national park in the Otways in February 2003. This round of community consultation would help VEAC put forward its final recommendations to the Minister for the Environment by 3 September 2004.

The Draft Paper proposes creation of an 'umbrella' Otways Park under which there would be two main land uses – the Otway Ranges National Park and 47,800 ha of Forest Park.

The forest park category would encompass former State Forest and reserves, and be available for recreational uses such as horse-riding and 4WD-driving and commercial use such as apiculture, low-intensity firewood collection and resource extraction.

Mr Malcolm said the proposals aim at securing the Otways' future for future generations to enjoy.

"The proposals would protect old-growth forest, threatened species, waterfalls and rainforest.

"Securing the environmental well-being of the Otways will ensure that the tourism industry – which depends on the area's beauty – is maintained and that future generations can enjoy the tall forests, lush rainforests, beautiful water falls and forest that we enjoy today," Mr Malcolm said.

"The areas that we propose to include in the national park embrace the entire Southern Fall of the Otway Ranges, the area of highest density of waterfalls in Victoria, some of the tallest trees in the state and nationally significant geological and rainforest areas.

"The area will also be a protective home to the 43 species of threatened animals and plants – such as the Spiral Sun-orchid and the Spot-Tailed Quoll. Four of these species are endemic, ie, found nowhere else in the world."

Mr Malcolm added the proposed park boundary was based on a vision for the Otways that was an inspiring example of sustainable and integrated land use which aimed at delivering enhanced environmental and socio-economic outcomes.

For further information:

Felicia Williams, Communications Project Manager: (03) 9412 5158 / 0417 442 212

Duncan Malcom, VEAC Acting Chairman:

Simon Ransome, Executive Officer: (03) 9412 5143