

River Red Gum Forests Investigation Update



The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC's) River Red Gum Forests Investigation began in April 2005. Its purpose is to provide advice to the Victorian Government in accordance with the [Terms of Reference](#) given by the Minister for Environment.

The Investigation includes public land along the Murray River from Lake Hume to the South Australian border and includes the lower reaches of the Avoca, Loddon, Campaspe, Goulburn, King, Ovens and Kiewa Rivers.

Below is an update from VEAC for people with an interest in the Investigation.

Community consultation

VEAC released its River Red Gum Forests Investigation Draft Proposals Paper for public comment in July 2007. During the following consultation period, VEAC held nine community forums, attended public meetings and had face-to-face meetings with many individuals and organisations.

Throughout the consultation period, VEAC encouraged anyone with an interest in the proposals to make a written submission detailing the specific draft recommendations they supported or the ones they didn't. Any detailed information to support comments was encouraged.

Submissions to the River Red Gum Forests Investigation closed on 8 October 2007. Around **6800 submissions** were received from people and organisations both inside and outside the Investigation area.

Analysing submissions

VEAC Council members and staff will read the submissions, and analysis of all 6800 submissions is well underway. This information will be used to assist Council in preparing the Final Report.

Submissions will be available for viewing on the VEAC website in early 2008 (www.veac.vic.gov.au) unless confidentiality has been requested and in accordance with privacy provisions.

A summary of your feedback

Some of the comments received include these points:

- concern regarding the proposed increased area of national parks and conservation reserves and the economic impact this would have on resource uses such as timber harvesting and domestic stock grazing on public land
- reservations regarding access for recreation activities such as camping, horse-riding, fishing and four-wheel driving
- the need for VEAC to provide more detail on proposed camping management changes, by describing the changes and specific locations
- support for a reduction in resource use and improved management for biodiversity and other environmental values
- support for expansion of protected areas such as national parks to meet nationally agreed criteria
- both support for and opposition to increased opportunities for Indigenous involvement in public land management and co-management of some parks, and traditional cultural practices. There was overwhelming support from Indigenous people.
- highlighting of the contributions of community organizations in management of public land
- concern over the possible adverse social effects in some communities in the Investigation area related to the proposed reduction in state forest
- both support for and rejection of the proposed campfire changes and related fallen timber targets, to varying degrees, with many people supporting a summer campfire ban in line with current NSW regulations
- concern over a reduction in areas available for recreational hunting

- the limited availability of domestic firewood which would follow the Draft Proposals, with no other cheap fuel alternatives in some locations
- the ability to source, store and deliver the proposed environmental water volume of 4000 gigalitres at least every five years
- concern over management of public land, particularly for wildfire prevention and suppression, and adequate on-ground resourcing

Note that the recommendations regarding camping, horse-riding, fishing and four-wheel driving have been misinterpreted by many people, and the correct recommendations are explained on VEAC's website.

VEAC has listened to these comments and will take all views into consideration when preparing the Final Report.

VEAC would like to thank the many organisations, individuals and volunteers who provided information throughout the Investigation.



NEXT STEPS

The Final Report will be presented to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change by May 2008. The Minister will release the Final Report within 7 days and it will also be published on our website (www.veac.vic.gov.au).

The State Government will then consider VEAC's recommendations and decide on its response. The Government has six months to provide a response to the recommendations in the Final Report.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Other River Red Gum Forests Investigation documents currently available on the VEAC website include:

- The Investigation's Terms of Reference
- The Discussion Paper (October 2006) describing the values, uses and condition of public land in the Investigation area (full version and summary brochure)
- The Draft Proposals Paper For Public Comment (full version and summary brochure)
- Independent social and economic assessment of VEAC's Draft Proposals
- Independent CSIRO report on environmental water requirements for the River Red Gum Forests Investigation area
- Fact Sheets about the Draft Proposals.

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