

# River Red Gum Forests Investigation

## INFORMATION SHEET

### Domestic firewood

VEAC estimates that approximately 10,000 cubic metres of firewood is obtained annually under licence for domestic purposes, primarily by communities that reside within the investigation area. A similar amount is obtained under commercial licence and is mostly distributed to markets outside the investigation area. Only a small percentage of the total firewood obtained in the region comes from public land (approx 11 percent), with the remainder being obtained from private land and other sources.

VEAC has recommended public land areas where domestic firewood collection can occur under licence. These areas are designated particularly to cater for residents having few affordable alternatives (especially those without reticulated gas). VEAC has recommended the following areas:

- State forests at Gunbower, Benwell and Guttram remain available for domestic firewood collection
- zones for domestic firewood collection be available in the Murray River Park - in the Mildura, Robinvale, Boundary Bend, Swan Hill, Barmah, Cobram and Rutherglen areas - and zones in the Shepparton Regional Park.

Firewood will continue to be available for the Echuca paddlesteamers to ensure supplies for this important tourism drawcard.

Improved planning, licensing and monitoring systems are recommended to ensure a sustainable supply of domestic firewood is available for communities in need. It is proposed that this be modelled on strategies being implemented by a range of agencies and local governments in the Bendigo and north-east regions. VEAC recommends the following be considered:

- Development of 5 year firewood plans to give certainty as to supply to local communities
- Preferential access for firewood to local residents
- Bringing forward silvicultural thinning programs at Gunbower, Benwell and Guttram state forests to increase firewood yield
- Encouraging alternative firewood sources including from plantations on private land
- Revision of licensing, collection periods and compliance approaches.

VEAC recommends development of a statewide strategic approach to firewood, including consideration of demand/supply, alternative fuels and public education.

Collection of firewood by campers enjoying open fires in parks and state forest is covered in the 'Camping and recreation' information sheet.