

River Red Gum Forests Investigation

INFORMATION SHEET

Changes made by VEAC to the Draft Proposals in response to public consultation

VEAC has responded to the views and information received in almost 9000 written submissions and hundreds of face-to-face discussions and this is reflected in the major recommendations of the River Red Gum Forests Investigation Final Report.

Environmental water changes

- Rather than specifying the volume of environmental water that the ecosystem may require for overbank flows, VEAC has focussed on identification and mapping of natural values that need flooding to be sustained, thereby enabling strategic decisions to be made in accordance with the availability of water.

Recreation changes

- Ensuring that access for 'dispersed camping' (camping at self-selected bush campsites) can continue as the predominant form of camping in all riverine parks and forests.
- Allowing campfires and associated collection of firewood in all riverine parks and forests, outside the fire danger period (replaces winter campfire ban and firewood collection in parks). This aligns Victoria with fire policies along the River Murray in New South Wales and South Australia.
- Adding areas to the Murray River Park and Shepparton Regional Park (through reduction in adjacent recommended national parks) to provide additional areas for camping with dogs. Camping with dogs will now be permitted along over 80 per cent of the currently available River Murray frontage.
- Adding two further duck hunting areas – Reedy Swamp and McNab Bend, through reduction in area of adjacent national parks. Hunting now continues to be allowed in 23 of the 35 current wildlife areas (state game reserves), state forest wetlands, and water frontages and some water storages.

Parks and nature conservation changes

VEAC has recommended a parks and reserves system that will give long-term protection to threatened riverine forests and wetlands and provide for economically significant recreation and tourism:

- Five new and three expanded national parks along the Murray, Ovens and Goulburn Rivers
- The Murray River Park, which extends along the River Murray frontage from Wodonga to beyond Mildura
- Three new regional parks and three new and expanded other parks
- Twenty-nine substantially new and 21 expanded or retained nature conservation reserves to improve the protection of depleted and fragmented ecosystems.

- There have been some reductions to recommended national parks to provide for firewood zones, camping with dogs and duck hunting. Gemmills Swamp has been reinstated as a nature conservation reserve, with provision for dogwalking.

Domestic firewood changes

- Providing additional firewood zones in the Murray River Park - near Wallpolla Island, Boundary Bend, Swan Hill, Barmah, Cobram and Rutherglen - in addition to those previously proposed near Mildura and Robinvale. Providing firewood zones in Shepparton Regional Park. The additional areas are provided by reducing the area of adjacent recommended national parks.
- Recommending a coordinated approach to managing firewood supply and demand, and ensuring delivery to local towns that don't have natural gas - modelled on the successful approach implemented in Bendigo

Timber

- Timber industry to continue in Gunbower, Benwell and Guttram state forests, but cease in other state forests to enable creation of parks such as the Barmah National Park.

Grazing

- New incentives and priority-setting for removal of grazing from public land, and a recommended new licence category to enable licensees to maintain a conservation stewardship role should they wish to do so.

Indigenous involvement

- Addition of Aboriginal Advisory Committees for Gunbower and Hattah-Kulkyne national parks and Murray-Kulkyne Park, to enhance the role of indigenous people in the management of parks.