

VicForests' FSC 2020 Project

A new outlook

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Topics for discussion

1. 2017 FSC audit report findings
2. VicForests project plan FSC 2020 Roadmap
3. Development of new harvesting and regeneration systems
4. Strengthening our HCV management systems
5. Stakeholder engagement processes
6. Next steps for VicForests
7. Questions & discussion



FSC Controlled Wood

- What does this mean?
- FSC identifies “Controlled Wood” a verification that source material is avoiding 5 categories of unacceptable sources
- FSC Controlled Wood Standard
 - Controlled Wood is virgin wood or wood fibre that can be mixed with FSC certified material in the manufacture of FSC Mix products.

FSC Controlled Wood

Controlled Wood is a part of the overall FSC certification program

1. FSC CW conformance criteria are a subset of FSC certification requirements
2. Controlled wood must be verified as avoiding FSC's five categories of unacceptable sources:
 - I. illegally harvested wood
 - II. wood harvested in violation of traditional and civil rights
 - III. wood harvested in forests in which HCVs are threatened by management activities
 - IV. wood harvested from areas being converted from forests and other wooded ecosystems to plantations or non-forest areas
 - V. wood from FMUs in which genetically modified trees are planted.
3. The SCS evaluation report raised issues under two of these categories.

Audit Findings

CW evaluation finding – FSC STD 30 – 010 Indicator 1.3

Corrective Action Request:

- VicForests must *revise its stakeholder consultation strategies and methodologies* in order to more effectively engage a wide cross section of stakeholders including those individuals and organizations that hold adverse views regarding VicForests' compliance with the Code of Practice and other applicable regulations.

Corrective Action Request:

- VicForests must *review and revise its timber harvest planning and operations* procedures for the purpose of more effectively avoiding threats to high conservation values.

Corrective Action Request:

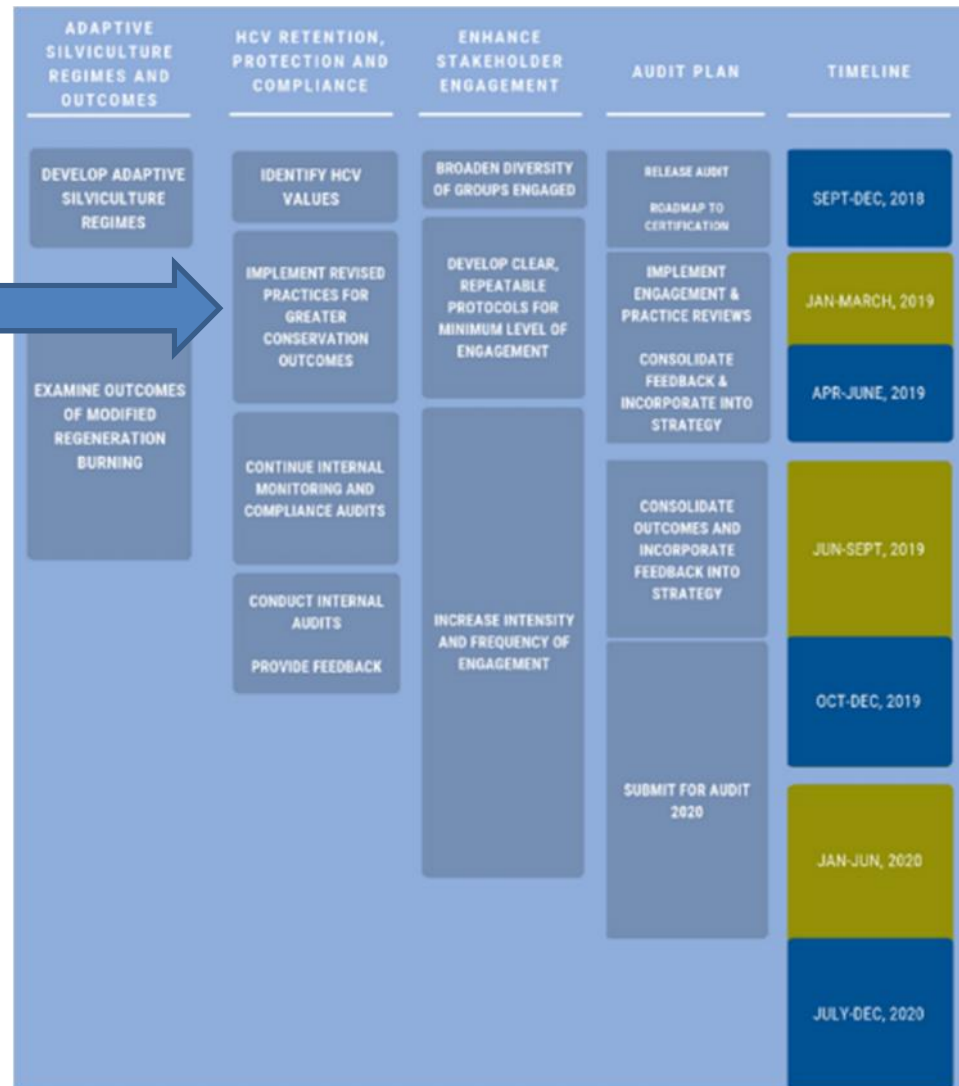
VicForests must *build upon the November 2017 Management of High Conservation Values document* in order to demonstrate that:

- a) areas and resources that meet the FSC definition of High Conservation Values are being effectively and competently detected and delineated; and,
- b) the company's forest management operations are, in fact, avoiding adverse impacts (threats) to high conservation values present on its forest estate.

Following VicForests' FSC 2020 Roadmap

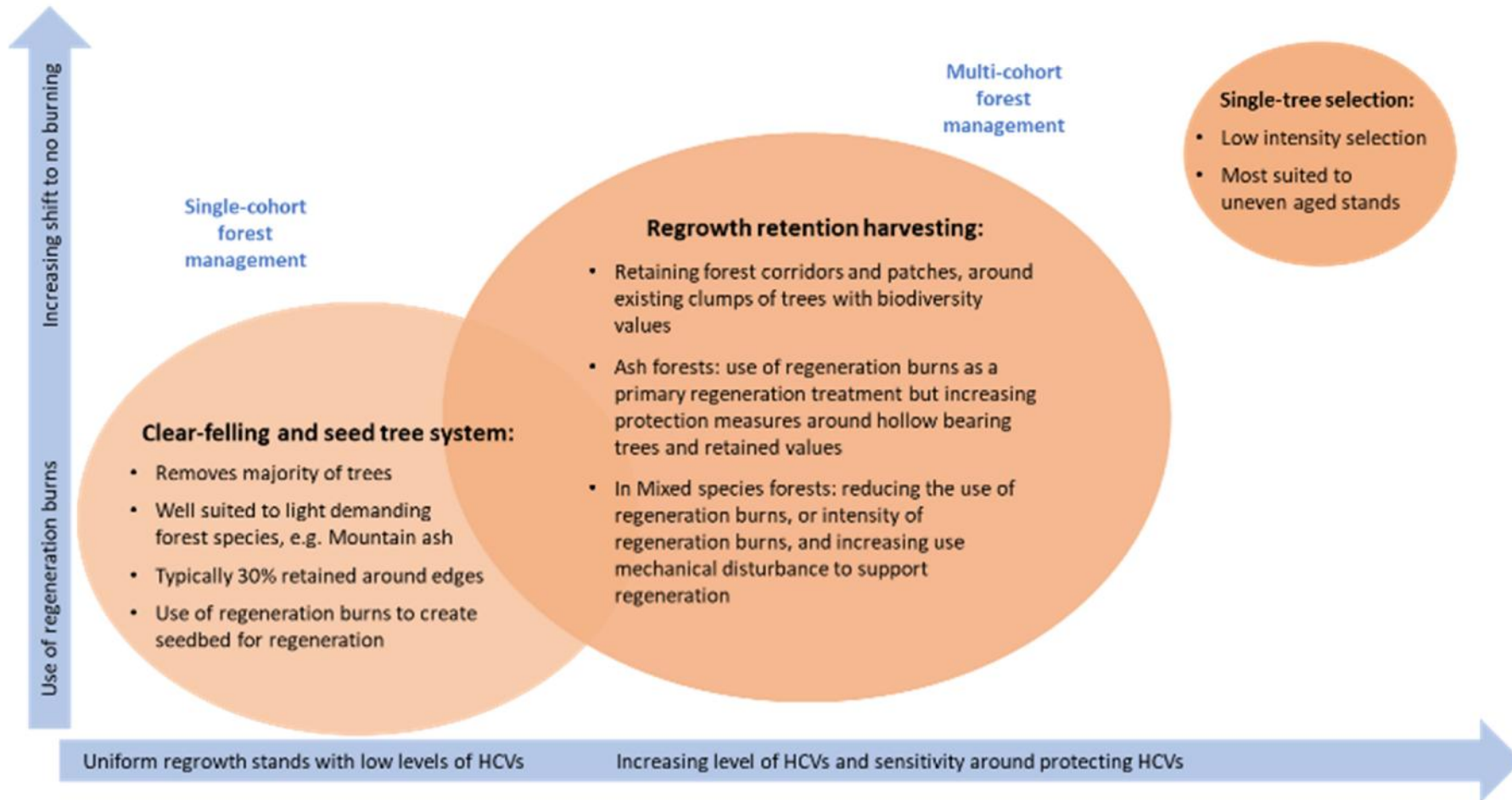
Progress since October 2018

- Prepared comprehensive FSC Project Plan for VicForests
- Developed a new set of management systems for harvesting and regeneration (*draft for engagement*)
- Reviewed and revised management systems for HCVs (*draft for engagement*)
- Now implementing revised practices across all regions
- Now underway with program of stakeholder engagement to address FSC related issues specifically



Conventional systems

VicForests has managed its timber production to date with a discrete set of conventional harvesting and regeneration operations; but is now moving to a more adaptive approach



Conventional systems

Clear-felling has been the most commonly employed harvesting method in Ash forests since the 1960s, with variations incorporating seed tree retention



Conventional systems and issues arising

Example where the intensity of operation has impacted on retained trees and values



A new outlook for harvesting and regeneration systems



A new outlook

VicForests is actively reviewing and revising its suite of harvesting and regeneration systems with a focus on higher levels of retention where possible

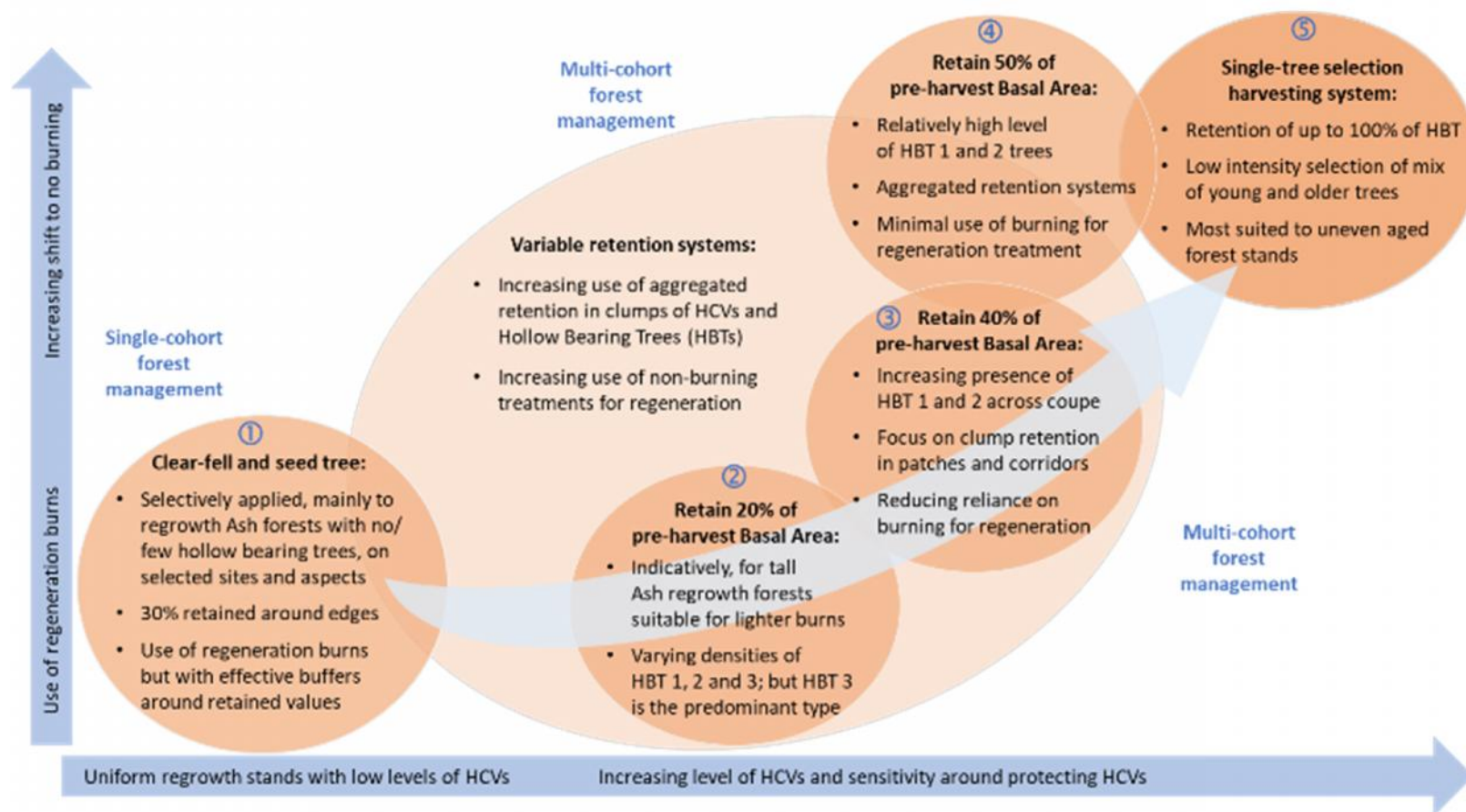
Key elements of VicForests' FSC 2020 Roadmap are:

- **Adapting VicForests' harvesting and regeneration systems** to address site-specific characteristics and manage for a range of values
- **Intensive site assessments** are conducted to identify and assess HCVs
- **Increasing focus on incorporating HCV retention and protection** into early planning for harvesting and regeneration systems
- As a result, future harvesting practices will feature **higher levels of tree retention**, less regeneration based burning and greater heterogeneity
- Concurrently, VicForests is conducting ecological research to inform ongoing **adaptive management**.



Adaptive management for multiple values

VicForests is now actively focussing on more adaptive management for the development of mixed aged stands and enhancing biodiversity values



HCV - Retention, protection, compliance

VicForests is refining and strengthening its HCV management systems to ensure that they are being effectively detected, delineated and protected

VicForests is working to ensure more consistent application of its conservation measures for HCVs and other forest values, specifically through:

1. Seeking further inputs from stakeholders and experts:

- Reviewing the definitions and identification of HCVs; and
- Strengthening VicForests' strategies to maintain and/or enhance the identified HCVs.

2. Increasing the retention and protection of Hollow Bearing Trees

3. Applying adaptive management systems for all forest values across sites

4. Reducing the use of high intensity burning for regeneration outcomes

5. Developing systematic coupe planning over a 5-year planning cycle

- Progressive identification of values the expert and stakeholder input
- Systematic checking and validating values on sites

HCVs – Retention, protection, compliance

VicForests' has developed a new classification system for key habitat elements to assist identification in the field (at varying densities) across different forest types

Ash-Dominant (Wet Forest)

North East, West Gippsland Regions



Mature, pre-1900 Ash



Senescing Ash



Dead Tree



Stag > 6m tall



Regrowth Ash with trunk hollow



Advanced regrowth Ash with hollows

HABT 1

Nest resource now and for at least one rotation

HABT 2

Nest resource now and declining; and likely current or recruiting nest resource

HABT 3

Nest resource now or recruiting nest resource within 1 rotation

Habitat and Hollow Bearing Trees

To complement existing levels of protection for ecological values within the reserve system, VicForests is focussed on enhancing the protection of HBTs within available harvest areas

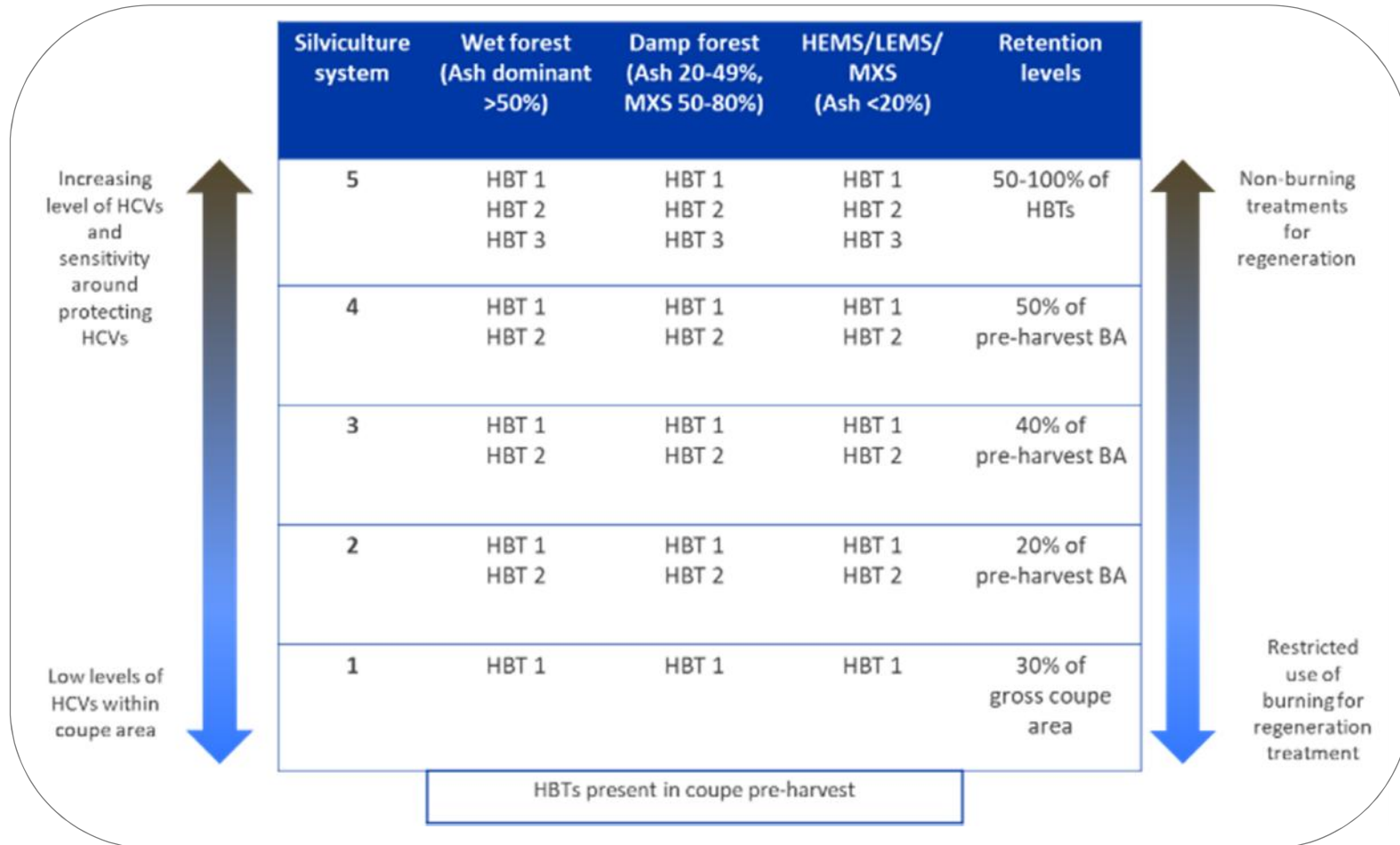
- As a key part of strengthening its HCV management systems, VicForests is **focusing on the identification, retention and protection of hollow bearing trees**, and trees with potential for providing hollows
- This includes large old trees with old growth values, outside of stands that constitute old growth forests, i.e. **small natural features that are more vulnerable** than aggregated areas due to fragmentation
- VicForests is strengthening its assessment procedures to firstly identify these trees, and then **enhance protection through variable retention** and set-asides
- VicForests' focus on increasing retention incorporates **recruiting more of the late mature (for next 50 years) while retaining some early mature or late regrowth** development, to ensure diversity and a succession of multi-cohort forests over 50-100+ years



Mature growth stage Messmate, Swifts Creek
Photo: M Ryan

Managing forests for multiple values

VicForests has developed a systems matrix to determine the most appropriate silvicultural system based on varying densities of key habitat elements



Clear-felling and seed tree system

Increasing focus on retention and protection of seed trees within this system



Variable retention harvest 20%

Guitar Solo coupe, Marysville , North East region



Variable retention harvest 40%

Drum Beat coupe, Marysville, North East region – increasing level of aggregation



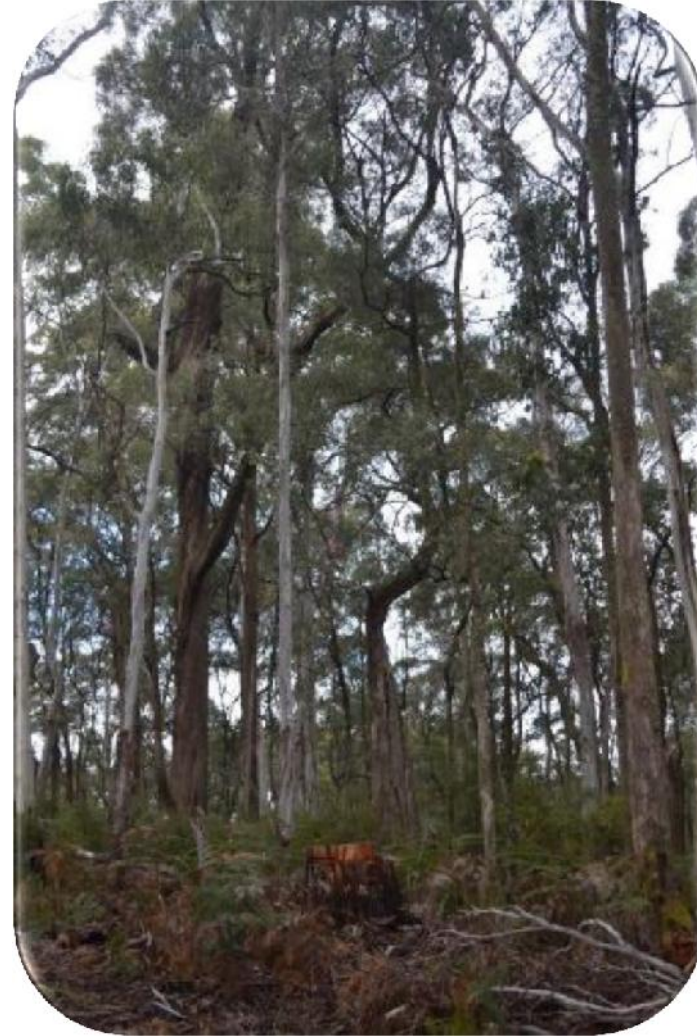
Variable retention harvest 50%

Dogs Back coupe



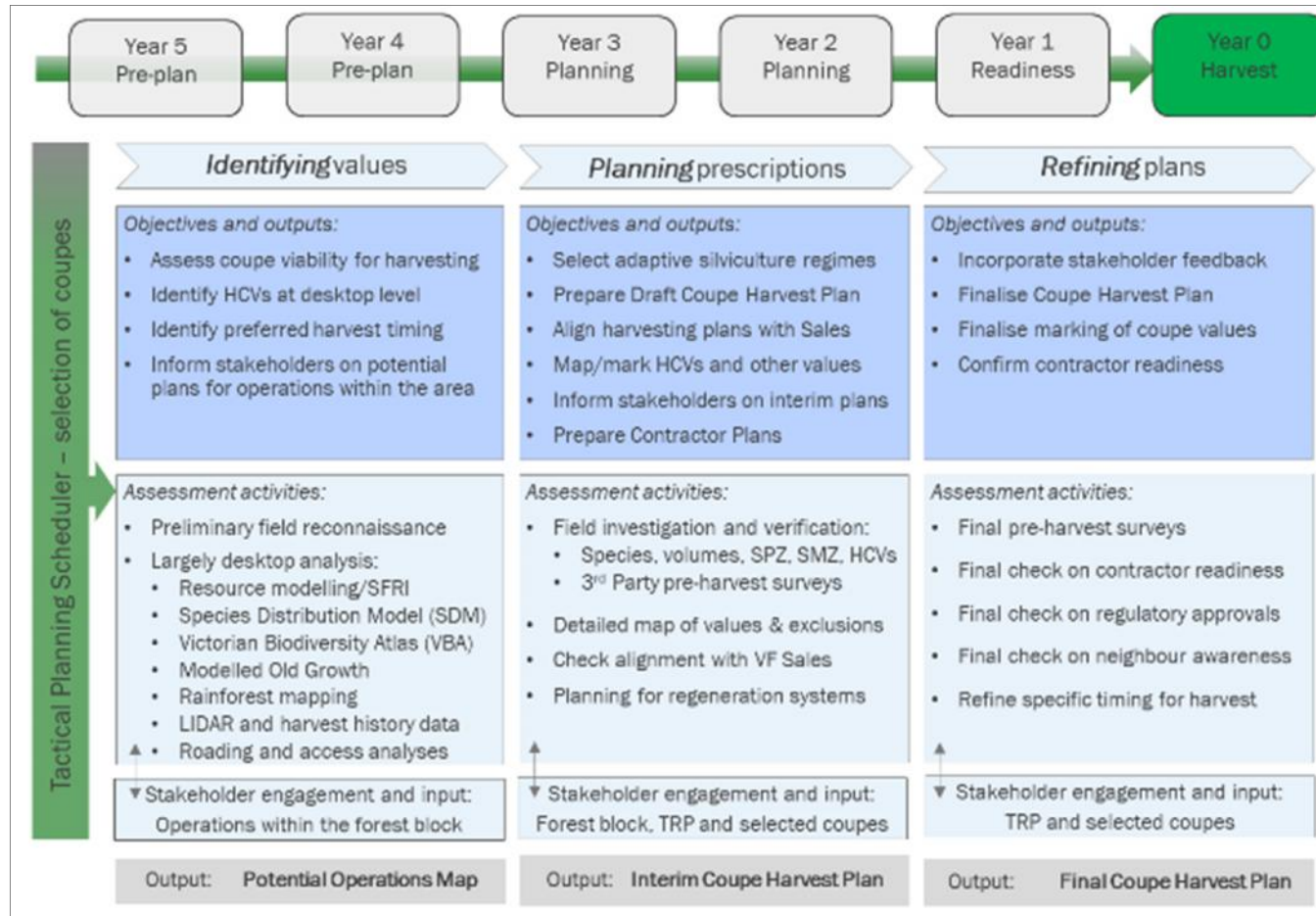
Single tree selection systems

Barjarg coupe, Strathbogie Ranges



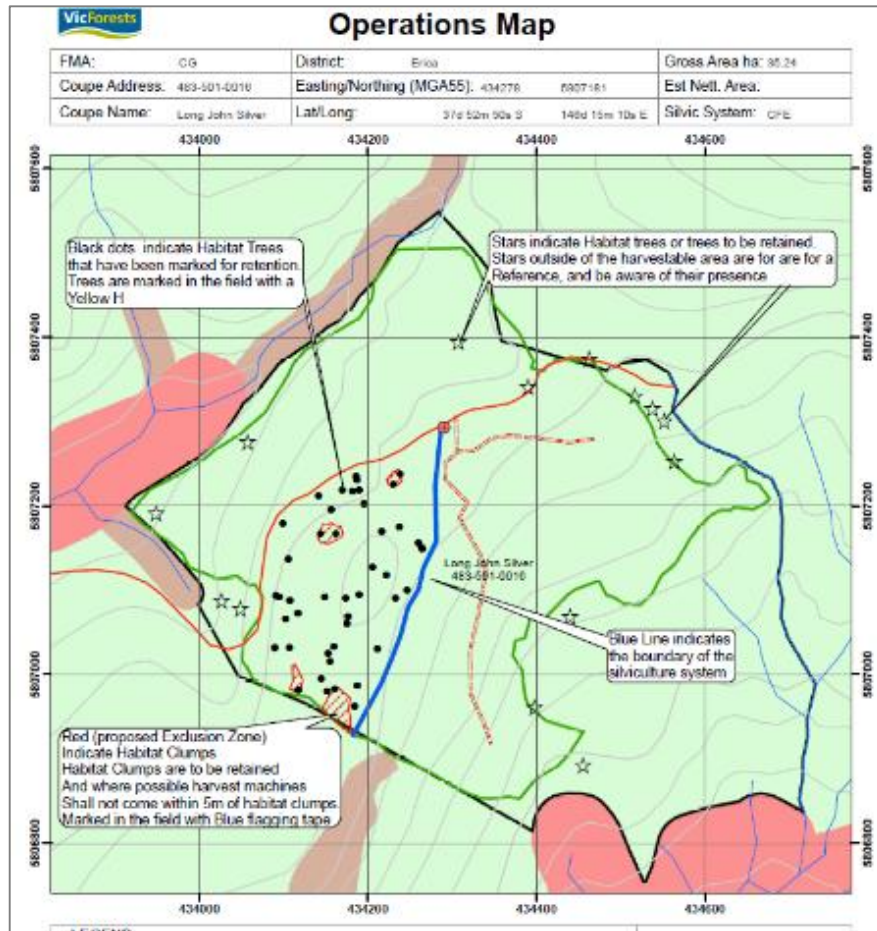
Managing HCVs in a 5-year planning context

Focussing on the further development of VicForests' processes for incorporating HCV management into the 5-year planning cycle for harvesting coupes



Example: planning for 'Long John Silver'

VicForests is reviewing its coupe planning processes and operations maps that show retained areas and the delineation of silvicultural treatments

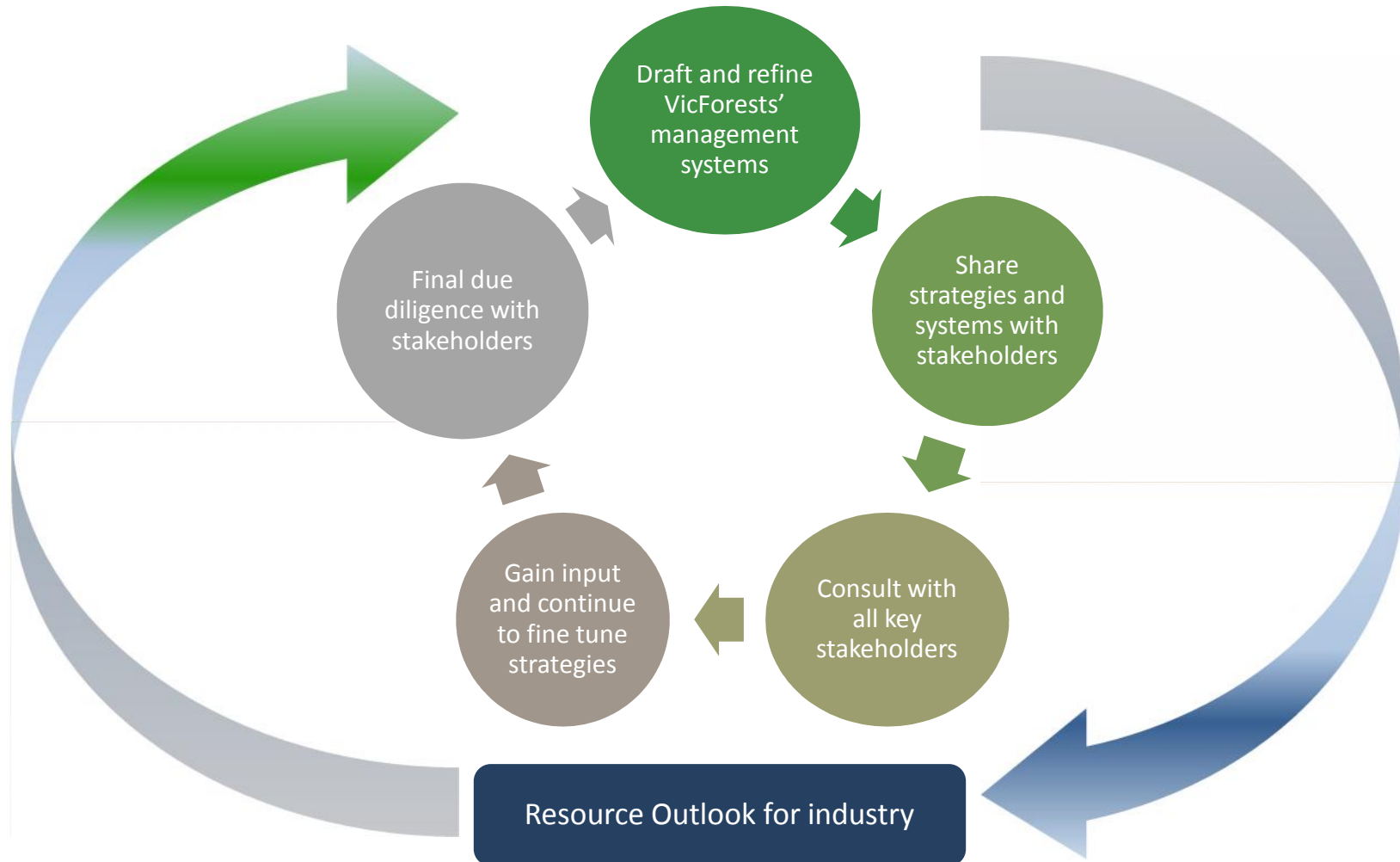


Current coupe planning:

- Protect hollow bearing trees and pre-1900 Ash trees by retaining and protecting large areas beyond coupe boundary
- Proposed a 50% increase in retention across the net coupe area
- Planning for regeneration treatments without any burning in high retention areas

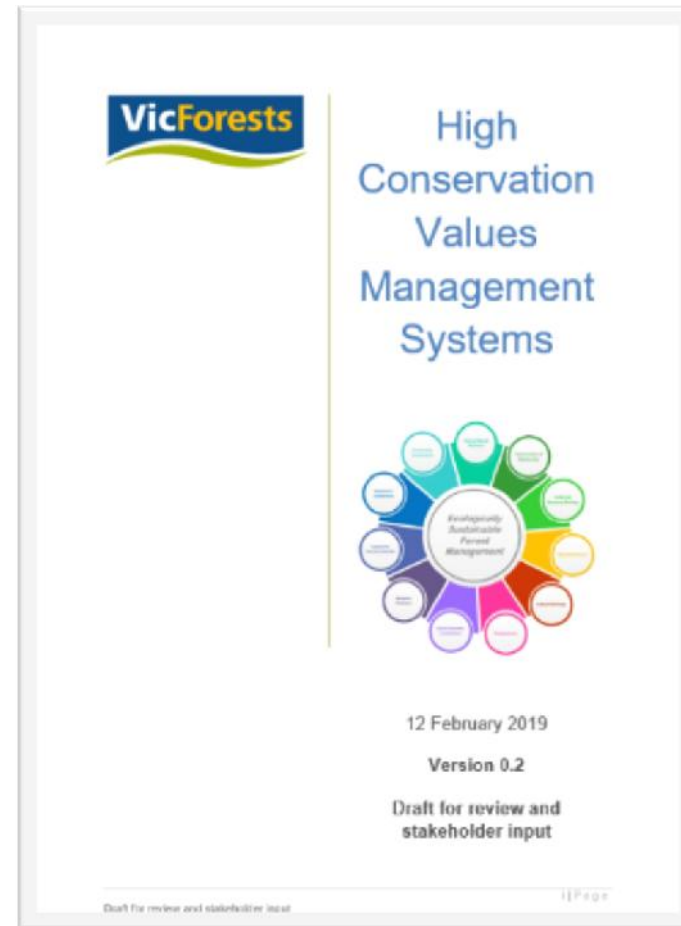
Stakeholders engagement

FSC engagement with a broad range of stakeholder groups, delivered through an iterative, staged process to obtain vital input



Stakeholder engagement

VicForests is reaching out to the broad range of stakeholders interested in native forest management in Victoria, with two key documents reflecting commitment to FSC principles



Next two months - FSC 2020 Roadmap

Key next steps, February to April 2019

New
harvesting and
regeneration systems

- Share VicForests' draft *Harvesting and Regeneration Systems*
- Seek input from external experts and other stakeholders
- Concurrent application across a range of evaluation sites

HCV retention,
protection and
compliance

- Share VicForests' updated *HCV Management Systems*
- Circulate for stakeholder input and feedback
- Concurrent application across a range of evaluation sites

Enhanced stakeholder
engagement

- Facilitate engagement across all work streams
- Circulate updated strategies and communications
- Maintain liaison with FSC Australia and its FSC auditors

Summary of key points

VicForests recognises FSC Australia's role is to *promote the environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management* of Australia's forests

VicForests is now clearly focused on:

- **High Conservation Values**

- improved methods of identification, retention, protection and compliance

- **New harvesting and regeneration systems**

- variable retention harvest and alternative regeneration treatments across sites

- **Managing forests for multiple forest values**

- increasing focus on biodiversity and conservation at the landscape level and local level

- **Strong connection with a broad range of stakeholders**