

Guidelines for public access to Forest Practices Plans

Forestry Tasmania seeks to maintain open consultation with neighbours and the local community and provide reasonable access to information on certified Forest Practices Plans.

The intent of these guidelines is to enable a clear and consistent procedure to be used by FT staff.

Forest Practices Plans (FPP) are valuable commercial working documents. They are legal documents prepared under the requirements of the Forest Practices Act, and Forestry Tasmania complies with the requirements of the Forest Practices Authority in respect of public access to FPPs.

Commercial and in-confidence aspects should not be disclosed. This includes the names of contractors and processors, specific wood volumes and the specific locations of Aboriginal heritage sites or threatened species.

A. Enquiries by directly affected parties

- Operations staff should offer to provide full briefings to all direct neighbours and/or persons directly impacted by the FPP in question (such as adjacent property owners, water off-take licensees, local government, etc).
- Such briefings should be undertaken during the preparation of the FPP. Copies of draft FPPs should not normally be provided until in final form.
- Copies of the certified plan, including any variations that are in place at the time, but with commercial-in-confidence data removed may be provided at no charge.

B. Enquiries by Indirect and Non-Affected Parties

- Districts should have arrangements in place to ensure prompt and efficient response to any public enquiry regarding access to specific FPPs.
- After suitable notice is given copies of certified FPPs, including any variations in place at the time should be available for inspection at the district office specific to the area for which the operation is planned.
- Where possible any such inspection should involve a basic briefing on interpretation of the document (approximately 30 minutes).
- Copies of certified FPPs or part thereof, including any variations that are in place at the time, should be provided on request. If the requested FPP is available through the Forestry Tasmania e-commerce FPP Shop customers should be directed to purchase a copy there. If the requested FPP is not available through the e-commerce FPP Shop charges for material and administration costs should be at the rate of 60c a page, with a minimum charge of \$20 per FPP.
- Persons making the enquiry must be informed beforehand of the format of the briefing, reasons and costs for providing a copy of the FPP.
- Staff must document (on a file note) the details of the enquiry and any actions undertaken, proposed or arising.

NB Printed copies of this document are uncontrolled. Refer to the Forest Management System for the latest version.

C. General notes

- All responses and briefings to enquiries should be prompt, courteous and helpful.
- If the enquiry is complex, the person should be asked to put the details of the request in writing. Replies should be provided in a timely manner (within 10 working days of receipt of written request).
- Difficult enquiries should be referred to the forest manager or his nominee.
- An FPP consists of the certified plan including the facing page, Sections A, B, C, the special values prescriptions (D1-D6), Section E, and map. For confidentiality reasons the signature page is excluded and any "sensitive" special values sites on the map are also excluded (eg aboriginal sites). The Special Values Report and Evaluation Sheets do not form part of the plan.
- If specific requests are received relating to special values and the FPP has been certified, then the Evaluation Sheets, Special Values report and supplementary specialist replies and reports can be made available at the discretion of the district forest manager. An additional charge should be levied as per provision of an FPP. Information relating to the specific location of threatened species, cultural and Aboriginal sites must be removed.
- Any release of an FPP or part thereof must be accompanied by the standard explanatory notes shown below.

Explanatory notes
(Applicable to briefing sessions)

Authority

- Under the Forest Practices Act the basis for operational planning for forest operations is the Forest Practices Plan (FPP).
- FPPs are required for all forest operations including road construction, timber harvesting and forest establishment.

Plan preparation

- Planning involves the collection of site information and consultation with relevant persons and organisations.
- Soils, water, air quality, site productivity, biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage and landforms are potentially affected by forest operations and are considered at the planning stage.
- Independent specialists' advice is used in the preparation of FPPs to ensure that any impacts on these environmental values are minimised and within acceptable limits.

Approval

- Within Forestry Tasmania draft FPPs are subject to an internal peer review process before being submitted to a Forest Practices Officer (FPO) for certification. FPOs are trained and authorised by the Forest Practices Authority to certify FPPs.
- Operations cannot commence until the FPP has been certified.

Relationship to other plans

- Three-Year Plans indicate the proposed areas of operations for which FPPs may be prepared.
- While some special value information is collected over a period of time, most FPPs are not finalised until close to the commencement of the operation.
- Forestry Tasmania's Sustainability Charter provides the longer term, strategic focus for forest planning.

Variations

- The term of an FPP is set to allow sufficient time for the completion of all the operations covered by the plan. The term sometimes needs to be extended by variation.
- An FPO can authorise changes by variation to certified. Variations are sometimes necessary to accommodate unforeseen changes such as indicating the location of a stream not shown in the original FPP. Variations to FPPs are filed with the master copy of the original FPP and are available for inspection at the Forestry Tasmania district office responsible for the FPP. Variations are electronically merged into online shop copies of FPPs as they occur.

Monitoring of FPPs

- Forestry Tasmania FPOs monitor all operations on a continuing basis to ensure that they comply with FPPs and the Forest Practices Code.
- A 15 per cent random sample of FPPs is monitored annually by independent auditors nominated by the Forest Practices Authority. The results of the audits are published in the Forest Practices Authority Annual Report and the FT Stewardship Report.

Operational Phases

- FPPs may contain a series of discrete operational phases such as roadworks, harvesting and establishment. Each of these phases will have a completion date associated with it in the FPP. The completion date can be altered by a formal variation of the FPP.

NB Printed copies of this document are uncontrolled. Refer to the Forest Management System for the latest version.

Completion of FPPs

- At the completion of each operational phase in an FPP, the Forest Practices Authority requires a Certificate of Compliance for that phase. The Certificate of Compliance must be lodged with the Forest Practices Authority within 30 days of completion of the operation.