



FORESTS OF THE CENTRAL WEST

WELLSFORD FOREST (7,122 HECTARES)

WHERE

Just 15 kilometres north-east of the historic goldfields town of Bendigo.

VALUES

Dominated by eucalypts, wattles and wildflowers, it's a place to explore and enjoy Victoria's box-ironbark forests as they recover from a long history of logging.

The forest provides important habitat for threatened wildlife: brush-tailed phascogale, diamond firetail, grey-crowned babbler, speckled warbler and the nationally endangered swift parrot.

It offers excellent examples of recovering forest, and contains native bushland of high conservation significance, linking patches in the north and south.

THREATS

Logging operations with seven areas scheduled (including one with swift parrot records); gold mining/prospecting; poorly maintained and illegal tracks causing erosion; and rubbish dumping.

VNPA has assessed the area for being suitable for protection under the *National Parks Act 1975* (VNPA's 2010 report, *Better Protection for Special Places*)

VEAC DRAFT PROPOSALS

Wellsford Forest to include an addition of 3,950 hectares to the Bendigo Regional Parks, and the creation of a 3,160-hectare Wellsford Nature Reserve, covering almost half of the Wellsford forest.

KEY MESSAGES AND TALKING POINTS

- Wellsford is worthy of better protection and the proposed new regional park and nature reserve are welcome. But local groups have long been calling for protection under the National Parks Act.
- Any regional park needs to be properly managed. We support the draft proposals, which should be committed to and implemented. However their needs to be the requirement for the regional park to have a management plan (which is not always the case) to manage uses including mountain bike riding
- In the regional park, all existing recreational uses would be accommodated, and some domestic firewood collection would occur. The parameters of firewood use are vague within the report, and their needs to be a long-term strategy to address appropriate management given there is likely only a few years left for harvest.
- Wellsford Nature Reserve encompasses most of the highest strategic biodiversity values in this block.
- Nature reserves differ from national parks in that they are generally smaller, often protect specific features, and have a lower level of recreation.
- The protections will help protect habitat for key threatened species including the brush-tailed phascogale, pink-tailed worm-lizard, lace monitor, Ausfeld's and whirrakee wattles; and a range of woodland birds such as swift parrot, chestnut-rumped heathwren, brown tree creeper, hooded robin, speckled warbler and crested bellbird.
- The reserve would also protect the few remaining large trees in this block.