

**Old growth forest and large old trees in coupe 889-506-0023 (Nextpatch)
Tennyson forest block, East Gippsland**

*Prepared by GECO for Minister Lily D'Ambrosio and Department of Environment Land
Water and Planning*

Report author: Ed Hill Date: 13th December 2017



Introduction:

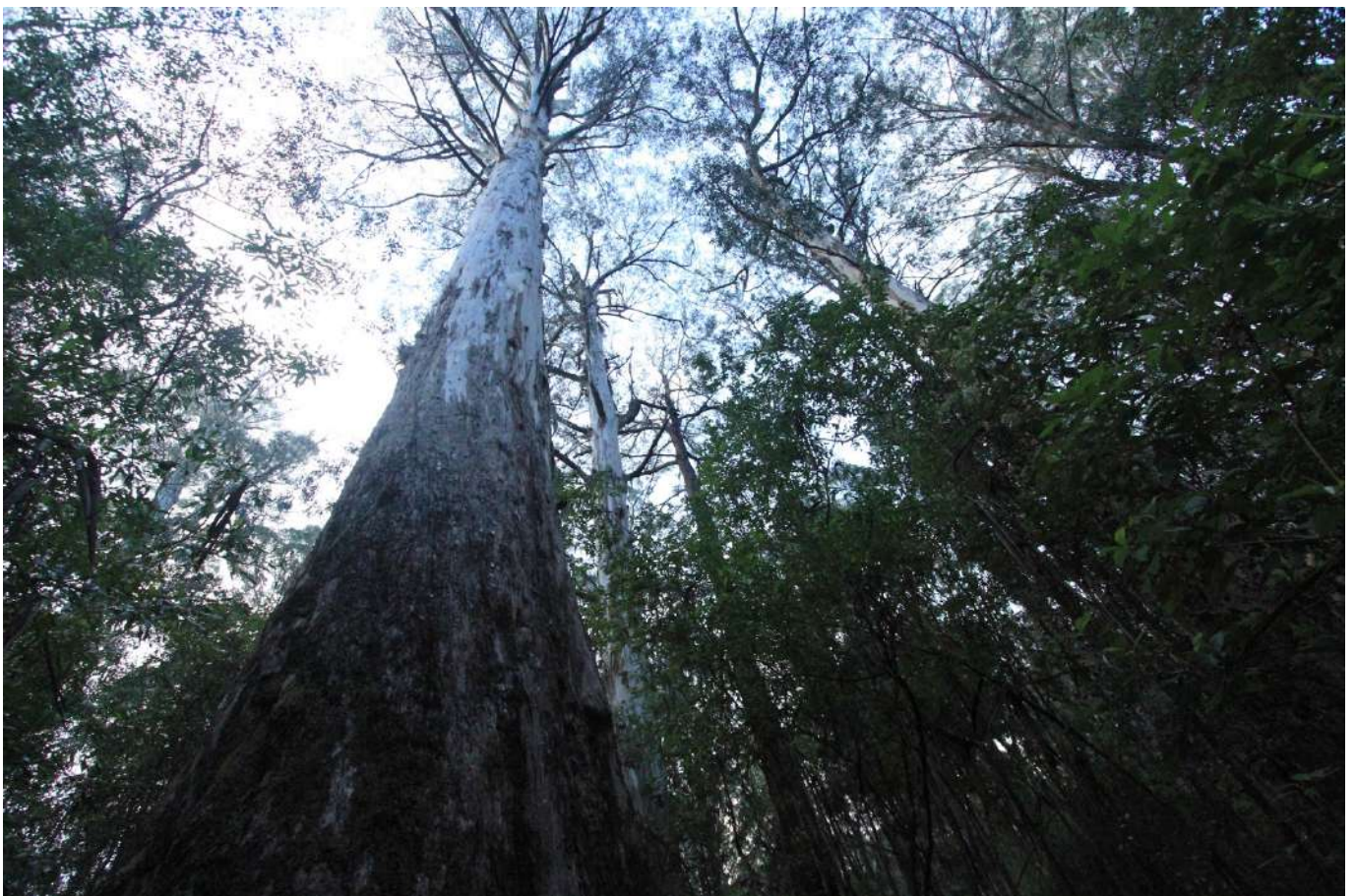
This report has been prepared to alert Minister D'Ambrosio and the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) to the presence of very large old trees and old growth forest in coupe 889-506-0023 (Nextpatch), in the Tennyson forest block in far East Gippsland.

We document findings from a preliminary investigation of the values of coupe 889-506-0023 and the forest that is scheduled be logged within that coupe and the neighbouring coupes 889-506-0017.

We present findings and evidence of dozens of large old trees within coupe 889-506-0017 that were able to be sampled during our half day survey period.

We raise a number of questions to the Minister and DELWP regarding current protections for large old trees and the status of the review of protections for large old trees in East Gippsland.

We make recommendations to Minister D'Ambrosio and DELWP to implement protection measures for this stand of untouched old growth forest by declaring a large old tree Special Protection Zone (SPZ) and linking it to the existing SPZ to the east.



Old growth forest in coupe 889-506-0023

Summary of old growth values of coupes and current threats

Coupe 889-506-0023 and 889-506-0017 has never been logged. It remains in an untouched state despite decades of clear fell logging that has destroyed large swathes of forest in the Tennyson forest block.

Despite the lack of logging history in this coupe and the presence of high numbers of large old trees, the area is not mapped as Modelled Old Growth (MOG 2009) by DELWP. The forest was mapped as modelled old growth in 2003 (MOG 2003), however when the data set was updated the area was no longer considered old growth, despite the lack of any logging activity between 2003-2009. This suggests a data error has occurred.

VicForests survey report for coupe 889-506-0023 noted that the coupe contained a high density of old growth trees.¹

"Nextpatch supported a high density of old growth Errinundra Shining Gum Eucalyptus denticulata, including, several very large individuals, as well as other old hollow- bearing eucalypts."

Preliminary investigations by GECO have confirmed the presence of many large old trees in the coupe, including one individual that is over 10m circumference (>3.2m DBHOB). GECOs preliminary survey was constrained by time and volunteer availability. A more extensive search and survey of the coupe would likely document more old growth trees within the coupe.

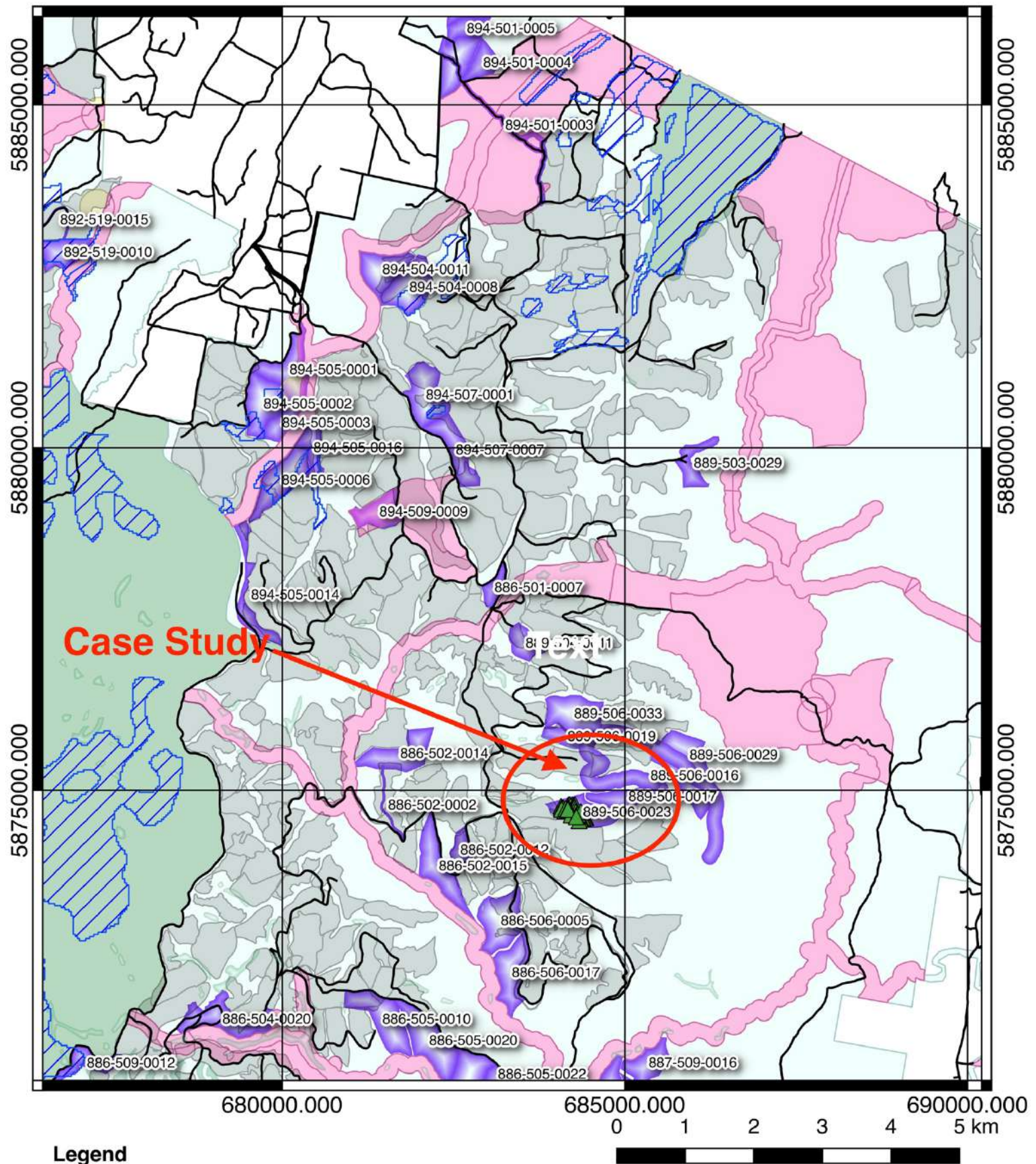
Over 30 old growth trees that supported hollows and exhibited old growth structural characteristics were observed by GECO surveyors in a small section of the coupe that was searched, their locations were marked as waypoints using a Garmin 64s GPS unit. These locations are displayed on maps on pages 9 and 10.



Giant stag in 'Nextpatch' coupe

¹ VicForests survey report package 24.2 - <http://www.vicforests.com.au/static/uploads/files/phs-vicforestes-package-24-2-final-report-wfwepxnuapih.pdf>

**Figure one: Context Map of East Errinnundra / Cann River
coupes 889-506-0023 and 889-506-0017**



Legend

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| — Contours (20m) | — Watercourses | ■ Parks and Reserves |
| ▨ Modelled Old Growth (2009) | ■ Logging History | ■ VicForests coupes |
| ■ Rainforest | Forest Management Zones | |
| ▲ Large old tree | ■ General Management Zone | |
| — Roads | ■ Special Management Zone | |
| | ■ Special Management Zone | |

GDA 94 / MGA Zone 55

North

Current protections for large old trees in East Gippsland and threats to old growth forest

1. Protections for large old trees in East Gippsland are so weak they are almost non-existent. The Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State Forests 2014², requires that trees greater than 4 m Diameter Breast Height Over Bark (DBHOB) are protected from the direct effects of timber harvesting, it does not require buffers and offers no protection from the in direct effects of timber harvesting, such as exposure and wind throw. Trees greater than 4m DBHOB (or 12.56m circumference) are protected and included in the Gippsland Giant Trees Register, however trees of this size and age are so rare in East Gippsland that the register only protects three trees³.
2. In response to public concerns about the destruction of large old trees by VicForests logging operations DELWP commenced a review of protection measures for large old trees in October 2015⁴. The purpose of the review was to investigate options for lowering the minimum protection size threshold through legislative changes in the long term and establish interim protections for large old trees in the short term. The review has so far produced no recommendations that have been made public, DELWP has been unable to provide stakeholders with any information regarding the progress of the review and have deleted the page on their website that provided information about the review⁵.
3. In October 2016, Minister D'Ambrosio published a tweet declaring that trees greater than 2.5m DBHOB would be protected in the Princess Cut coupe in Kuark forest. Logging in this coupe was halted by a Supreme Court injunction. There has been no further announcement from the Minister's office or DELWP regarding protection measures for large old trees in East Gippsland in coupes other than Princess Cut. Nor has there been any information relating to how large old trees would be protected with appropriate buffer zones.



² Department of Environment and Primary Industries, *Management Standards and Procedures for Timber Harvesting Operations in Victoria's State Forest 2014*, P. 45

³ Department of Environment Land Water and Planning , *Large Old Trees Discussion paper*, October 2015 https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/gecoforests/pages/55/attachments/original/1512278756/Large_old_trees_discussion_paper_19102015_Final%281%29.pdf?1512278756

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Department of Environment Land Water and Planning, News and announcements, Environmental regulator to examine greater protection for large old trees in East Gippsland, 2015 <http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/news-and-announcements/environmental-regulator-to-examine-greater-protection-for-large-old-trees-in-east-gippsland>

4. On November the 1st the Supreme Court of Victoria awarded an injunction to halt logging in old growth forest in the Princess Cut coupes in the Kuark forest. Legal action was taken by the Fauna and Flora Research Collective (FFRC) who are now suing DELWP for failing to protect the minimum required area (60%) of old growth wet and damp forest in East Gippsland.
5. The FFRC are arguing that in order to meet the required protection area thresholds (60%) for old growth wet and damp forest, additional areas of old growth forest that are currently scheduled for logging may need to be protected.
6. Coupes 889-506-0017, 889-506-0023 have been listed by VicForests as 'Harvest Pending' as of December 2017, a clear signal that logging of old growth forest and large old trees will go ahead in the coming days.



Old growth Cut-tail Ash (*Eucalyptus fastigata*) in coupe 889-506-0017

Missing old growth forest data set in far East Gippsland

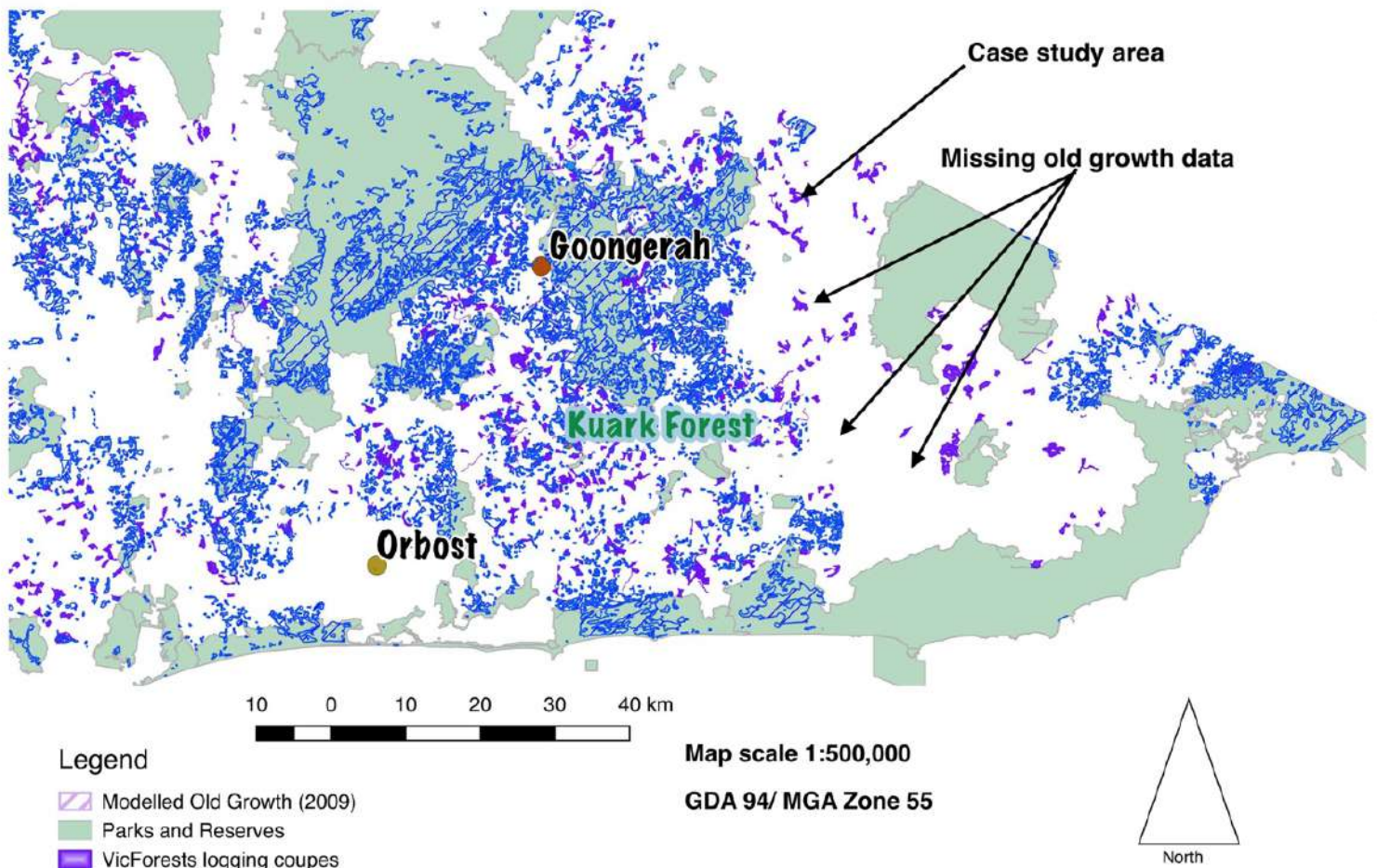
The 'Nextpatch' coupe is situated in the Tennyson forest block, near Cann River in the states far east. This forested region contains some of the best examples of old growth forest remaining in Victoria. However, after a new Modelled Old Growth data set was produced by DELWP in 2009, the extent of mapped old growth forest appears to have gone missing.

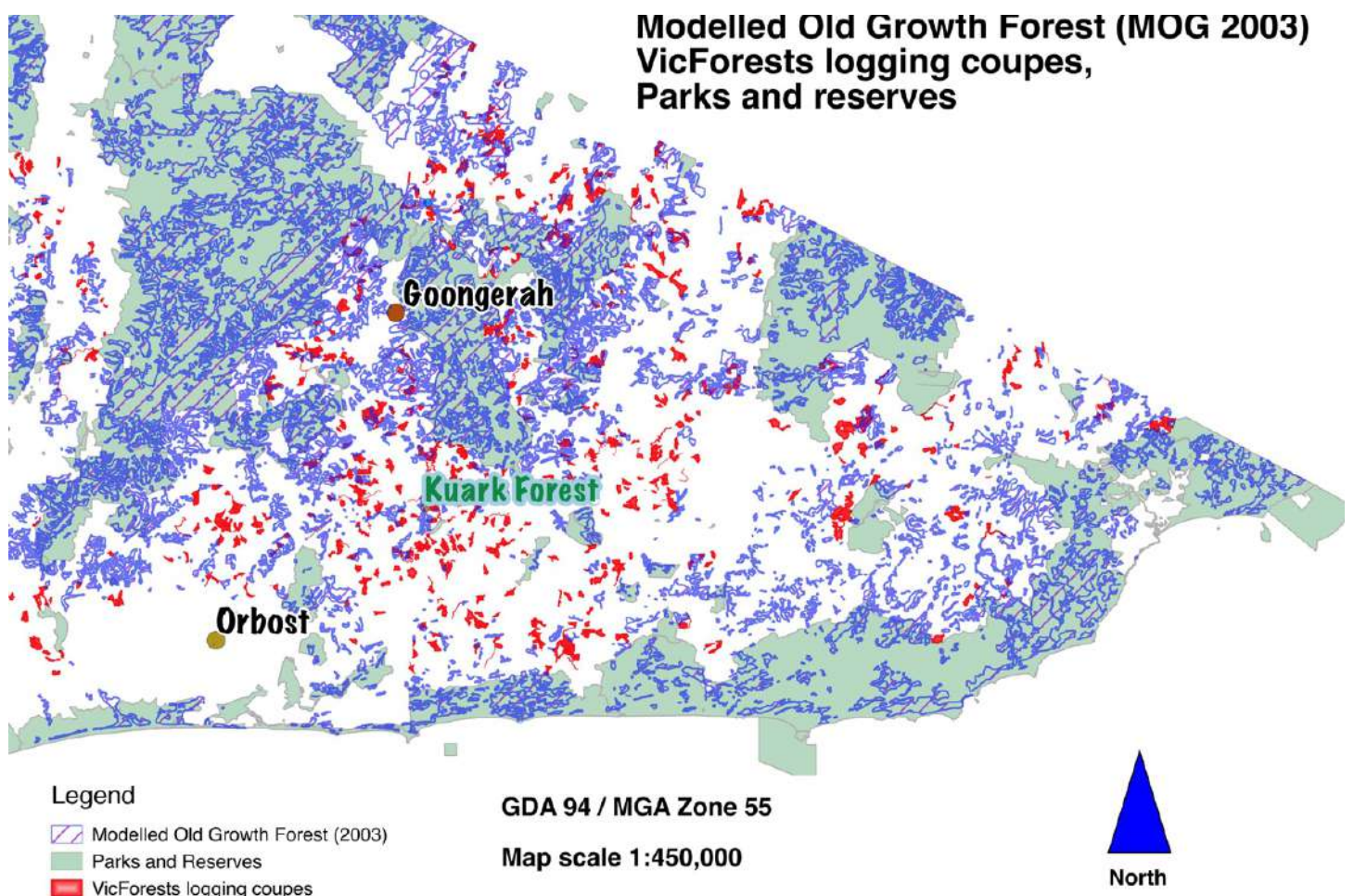
In 2003, extensive forest areas within this region were mapped as Modelled Old Growth (MOG 2003). These same areas are no longer mapped as old growth under the 2009 data set (MOG 2009), but many of these same areas have not been subject to logging and are still old growth.

The forest within coupes 889-506-0017, 889-506-0023 was considered old growth by DELWP in 2003. Despite no logging occurring in these areas of forest from 2003 up until the present date, these areas are no longer considered old growth on the MOG 2009 data set.

The extent of the missing data is quite large, see the missing MOG block in the map below.

Modelled Old Growth (2009) in the East Gippsland region

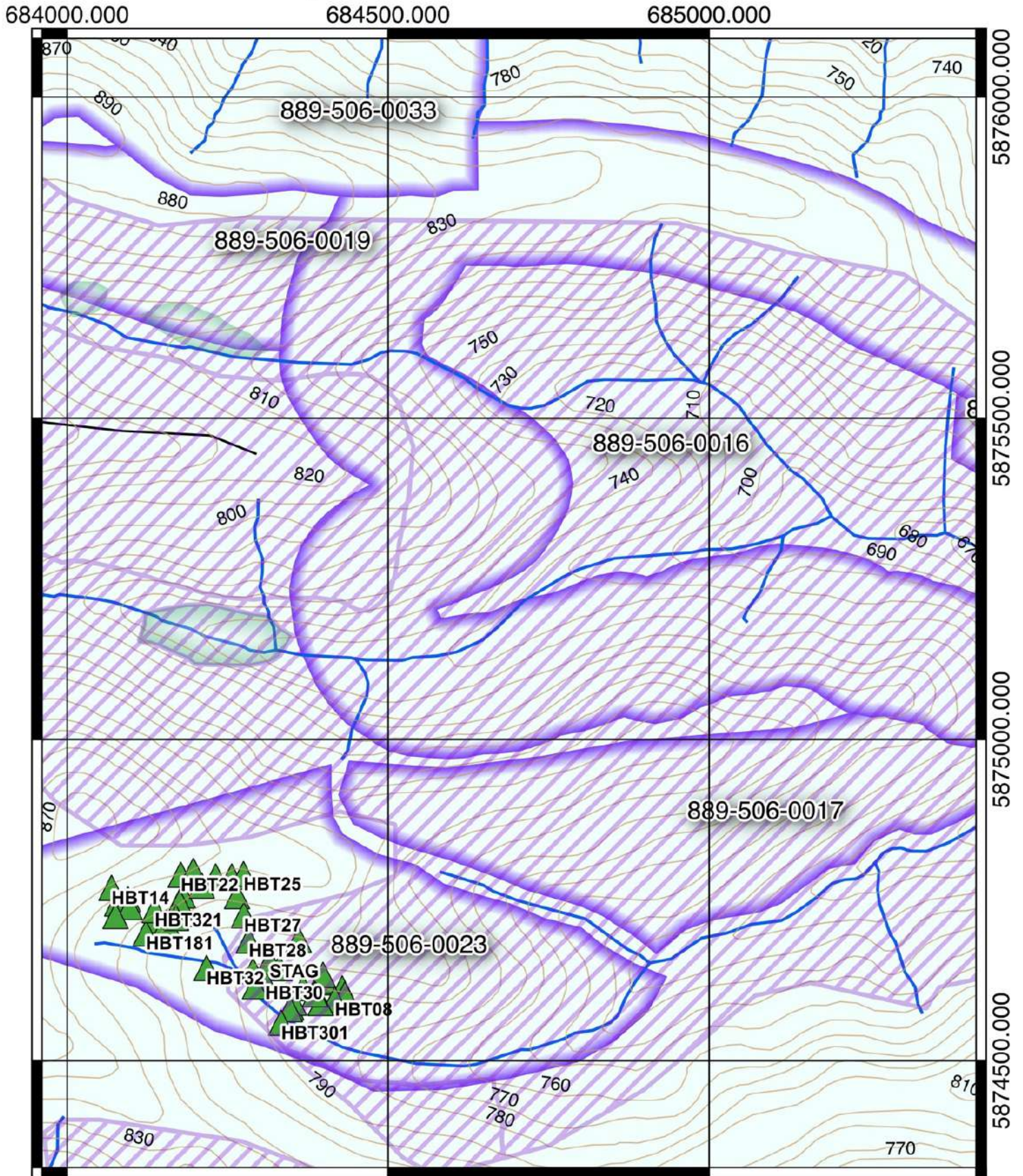




Giant stump of tree greater than 10m circumference (3.3m DBHOB) in area of forest that was modelled old growth in 2003 but was not in 2009.

This area was logged in 2015. Last Minute coupe on the Errinundra plateau.

Large old trees and modelled old growth forest (MOG 2003) in coupes 889-508-0023 and 889-536-0017



Legend

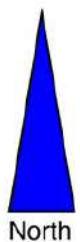
- Modelled Old Growth Forest (2003)
- contours (10m intervals)
- Rainforest_layer
- NextPatch_HBTs waypoints
- TR_ROAD
- Watercourses
- VicForests logging coupes

100 0 100 200 300 400 m

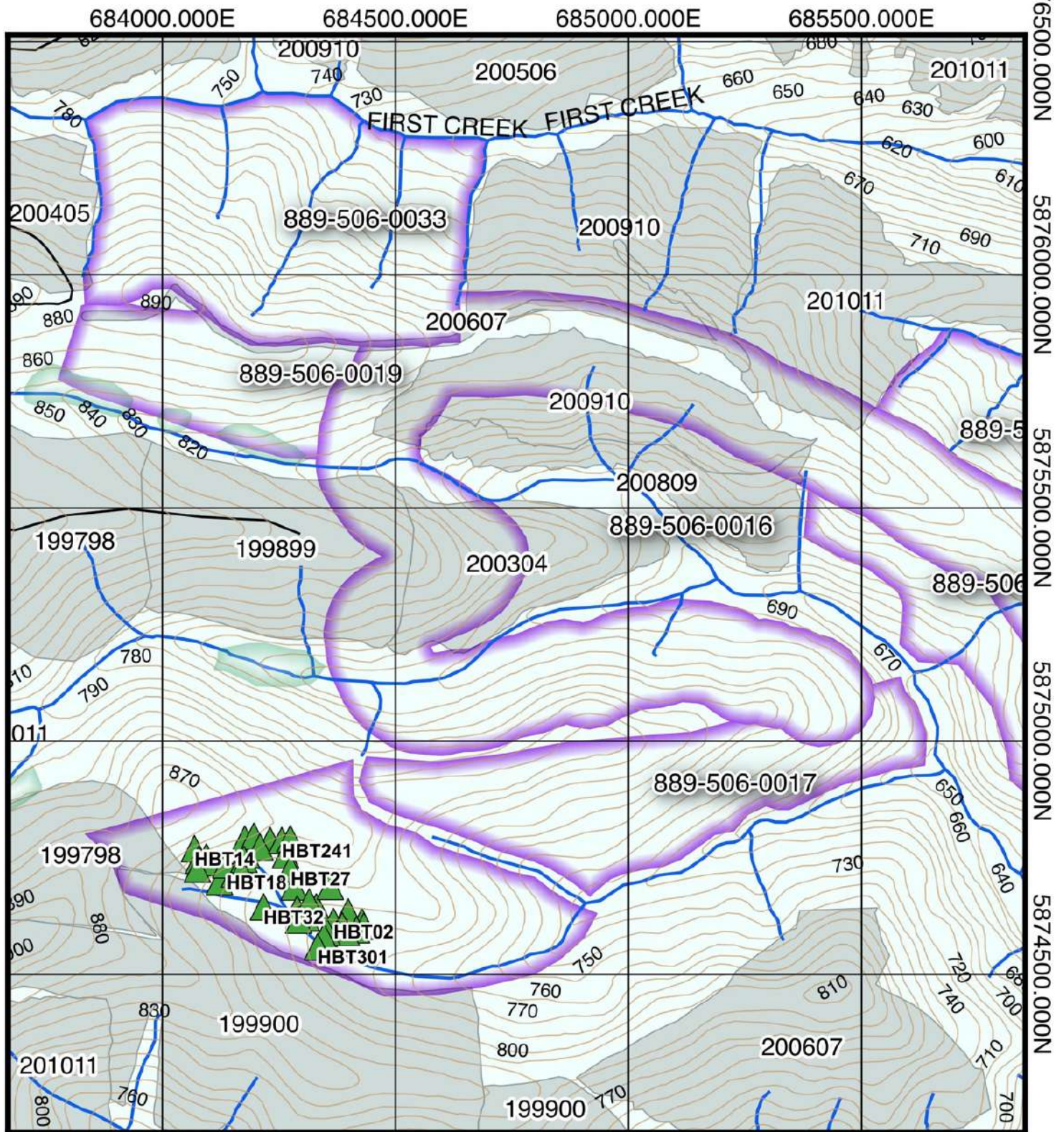


GDA 94/ MGA
Zone 55

Map scale
1:4000



Large old tree and logging history Coupe 889-506-0023 889-506-0017 Tennyson Forest Block - East Gippsland

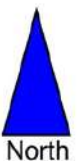


0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 m



GDA 95 / MGA Zone 55

Map Scale: 1:5000



Legend

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Contours (20m) | Roads | Forest Management Zones |
| Modelled Old Growth (2009) | VicForests logging coupes | GMZ |
| Rainforest | Watercourses | SMZ |
| Large old tree | Logging History (season) | SPZ |



Large old tree at waypoint "HBT11" near (southern boundary of coupe) measuring 3.287m DBHOB (approx) or 10.3m circumference

Measurement displayed below





Above: Large old tree (waypoint HBT018) measured at 2.512m DBHOB (below)



Table 1: Old growth trees and stags in coupe 889-506-0017

Old growth feature	Location (UTM) GDA 94/ Zone 55		Waypoint name	Date and Time
Living large old tree	684231	5874787	3TS	2017-12-09 T01:36:56Z
Living large old tree	684330	5874644	HBT	2017-12-08 T07:42:13Z
Living large old tree	684367	5874613	HBT02	2017-12-08 T07:48:21Z
Living large old tree	684397	5874622	HBT03	2017-12-08 T07:51:58Z
Living large old tree	684400	5874624	HBT04	2017-12-08 T07:55:24Z
Living large old tree	684398	5874634	HBT05	2017-12-08 T07:58:52Z
Living large old tree	684428	5874612	HBT06	2017-12-08 T08:04:00Z
Living large old tree	684432	5874603	HBT07	2017-12-08 T08:05:55Z
Living large old tree	684416	5874595	HBT08	2017-12-08 T08:10:29Z
Living large old tree	684394	5874590.	HBT09	2017-12-08 T08:14:28Z
Living large old tree	684386	5874604	HBT10	2017-12-08 T08:16:45Z
Living large old tree	684348	5874583	HBT11	2017-12-08 T08:24:59Z
Living large old tree	684353	5874590	HBT12	2017-12-08 T08:28:03Z
Stag	684346	5874580	HBT13	2017-12-08 T08:29:06Z
Living large old tree	684069	5874769	HBT14	2017-12-09 T00:35:44Z
Living large old tree	684077	5874745	HBT15	2017-12-09 T00:40:04Z
Living large old tree	684094	5874751	HBT16	2017-12-09 T00:42:03Z
Living large old tree	684097	5874739	HBT17	2017-12-09 T00:52:47Z
Living large old tree	684075	5874725	HBT171	2017-12-09 T00:54:56Z
Living large old tree	684137	5874718	HBT18	2017-12-09 T01:01:33Z
Living large old tree	684122	5874698	HBT181	2017-12-09 T01:11:40Z

Old growth feature	Location (UTM) GDA 94/ Zone 55		Waypoint name	Date and Time
Living large old tree	684154	5874715	HBT19	2017-12-09 T01:13:59Z
Living large old tree	684179	5874729	HBT20	2017-12-09 T01:18:37Z
Living large old tree	684180	5874757	HBT21	2017-12-09 T01:22:34Z
Living large old tree	684176	5874789	HBT22	2017-12-09 T01:27:49Z
Living large old tree	684196	5874796	HBT23	2017-12-09 T01:29:56Z
Living large old tree	684209	5874773	HBT24	2017-12-09 T01:32:34Z
Living large old tree	684256	5874787	HBT241	2017-12-09 T01:38:17Z
Living large old tree	684274	5874790	HBT25	2017-12-09 T01:40:19Z
Living large old tree	684264	5874756	HBT26	2017-12-09 T01:44:45Z
Living large old tree	684275	5874726	HBT27	2017-12-09 T01:48:32Z
Living large old tree	684282	5874687	HBT28	2017-12-09 T01:52:41Z
Living large old tree	684289	5874640	HBT29	2017-12-09 T02:00:21Z
Living large old tree	684308	5874621	HBT30	2017-12-09 T02:04:00Z
Living large old tree	684333	5874559	HBT301	2017-12-09 T02:36:43Z
Living large old tree	684217	5874644	HBT32	2017-12-09 T02:48:49Z
Living large old tree	684136	5874734	HBT321	2017-12-09 T02:56:24Z
Living large old tree	684175	5874746	SG01	2017-12-08 T07:14:59Z
Stag	684315	5874655	STAG	2017-12-08 T07:41:04Z
Stag	684360	5874688	STAG02	2017-12-08 T08:39:05Z
Stag	684169	5874722	STAG03	2017-12-09 T01:17:17Z
Stag	684292	5874616	STAG04	2017-12-09 T02:41:32Z

Summary of survey results

GECOs survey was constrained by time, therefore only a small section of coupe 889-506-0023 was searched for presence of old growth forest and large old trees. With more time and resources it is highly likely that many more large old trees and a greater extent of old growth forest would be identified.

From GECOs survey there appears to be a band of old growth forest in the southern half of the coupe. This band runs south east and east along the stream that is just within the southern border of the coupe. We located at least 30 large old trees, whose structural make up, presence of hollows, size and abundance indicate this area is old growth forest.



Large old tree: (Waypoint: SG01)



Large old tree: (Waypoint: HBT002)



Large old tree: (Waypoint: HBT002 displaying satellite



Large old hollow bearing tree at waypoint HBT004



Large old tree (HBT03)



Photo: Large old tree, waypoint – HBT005 (above), large tree waypoint - HBT0006 (below)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT007)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT007)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT008)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT009)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT010)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT011)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT012)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT014)



Giant stag (waypoint HBT013)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT015)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT016)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT017)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT018)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT019)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT020)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT021)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT022)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT023)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT0241)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT024)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT025)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT026)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT025)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT028)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT027)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT0281)



Large old tree (waypoint HBT029)



Old growth forest in southern section of coupe 889-506-0023

Questions to Minister Lily D'Ambrosio and DELWP regarding the protection of old growth forests and large old trees in East Gippsland.

- In light of the Minister's Tweet about protections for large old tree in the 'Princess Cut' coupe, will trees greater than 2.5m DBHOB be protected in the 'Nextpatch' coupe, and other coupes containing large old trees? If so, will these trees be protected from disturbance and edge effects through the provision of appropriate 100m vegetative buffers, as recommended by leading forest scientists⁶?
- Can the Minister's office and DELWP provide information to stakeholders and the Victorian public about the review of large old tree protections in East Gippsland. Specifically, what protections for large old trees have been developed and what protections will be implemented?
- Can DELWP provide information about why a large section of the Modelled Old Growth 20009 data set appears to be missing from the Cann River/Buldah/Coopracambra region?

Recommendations:

1. We strongly urge to Minister to immediately halt logging of old growth forest in East Gippsland, this could be done by conducting a desktop assessment of coupes in potential old growth forest in East Gippsland, using the 2003 and 2009 MOG data sets, aerial imagery and logging history data and immediately placing a moratorium on logging coupes within these areas.

Given the high level of public concern over the continued logging of old growth forests under the Labor government, an initiative such as this would be very well received by the Victorian public and environment groups.

2. Stop logging in coupes 889-506-0017 and 889-506-0023 whilst completing the review of protections for large old trees and immediately implement protections for old growth forest and large old trees across East Gippsland. Former Minister Neville started this review over two years. Under Minister D'Ambrosio, DELWP has not finalised this review and allowed logging of large old trees and old growth forests to continue.
3. Protect the forest in coupes 889-506-0017, 889-506-0023 within a Special Protection Zone that would join onto the existing Special Protection Zone (SPZ) to the north east of the coupes. This would protect the areas of intact old growth forests that are still contiguous with the SPZ.

⁶ Lindenmayer, D., Blair, D., McBurney, L., Banks, S., Stein, J., Hobbs, R., Likens, G. and Franklin, J., 2013. Principles and practices for biodiversity conservation and restoration forestry: a 30 year case study on the Victorian montane ash forests and the critically endangered Leadbeater's Possum. *Australian Zoologist*, 36(4), pp.441-460.