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Media statement

Fire claims south-west plantation

The Forest Product Commission (FPC) has estimated the damage from a fire which swept through more than 1,300 hectares of trees in the Ferndale plantation near Kirup at approximately \$4million to replace and \$21million in potential stumpage value to the State Government.

FPC General Manager, Dr Paul Biggs, said the *Pinus radiata* plantation was originally established more than 40 years ago and had produced one full crop of timber. Most of the trees damaged in the blaze were replanted less than 12 years ago and at this young age were unsalvageable.

“There are approximately 100 hectares of damaged trees which are more mature and we are currently assessing how many of those can be salvaged.

“We estimate the loss of juvenile softwood timber at more than 150,000 tonnes or the equivalent of one annual harvest at maturity. The loss is significant as it was to form the basis of future feedstock for the mature radiata industry in the Bunbury region,” Dr Biggs said.

He said the cause of the fire, which also swept through 500 hectares of farmland and native forest, was still being investigated.

“I am very grateful to staff from DEC and FPC as well as local volunteer fire-fighters, whose efforts for the second time in four weeks had brought a blaze under control.

“Despite fire-fighters having to contend with hot conditions and battle against very strong winds, it is a great relief that there was no loss of life or privately-owned property.

“Our priority is to commence salvage operations as soon as practicable in a bid to recover as much saleable timber as possible,” Dr Biggs said.

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