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Media statement

CHESTER: FPC WELCOMES UMPIRE'S DECISION

FPC General Manager Dr Paul Biggs today welcomed a new report from the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), providing an exceptionally high level of detail on diverse ecotype zones (DEZs) in Chester coupe.

Dr Biggs said, "Harvesting in Chester has been the subject of much public debate over the last few months, so this latest report is important to prove to the public that DEC is subjecting the harvest operation to the highest level of scrutiny."

"The whole of Chester coupe measures just over 1,300 hectares. The current harvest plan is restricted to a small area, measuring only about 200 hectares, in the north-west corner of the coupe. In practice, this means a maximum of about 135 hectares will actually be harvested."

"This part of Chester has been harvested before and has grown back. FPC has always been aware that many parts of Chester block contain zones of high biodiversity and woodland and, of course, we will stay out of those areas."

"The new report from DEC has identified 27 hectares of diverse ecotype zones, which will now be protected as informal reserves."

"This will mean nearly 500 hectares of Chester will be protected in informal reserves, leaving around 800 hectares which is theoretically available for harvest. In practice, as I've said before, FPC currently intends to harvest about 135 hectares in the north-west corner. That's roughly a sixth of the available area, or 10% of the total coupe."

"Based on this new report from DEC, FPC will review its harvest plans for Chester and we may make some changes to our original plan. DEC has indicated the entire area is already affected by dieback, which will obviously be having an impact on biodiversity. We may have to change the layout of our tracks into the coupe and that would mean we have to do another flora survey. Naturally, any changes will also require further sign-off from DEC before we go ahead."

"I believe this situation proves the Western Australian public should be proud that our local environmental assessment processes are much stronger than in most other parts of the world. I strongly advise all members of the WA community to show their support for the environment and the local economy by actively choosing WA timber for furniture and construction."

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