

ForestrySA Community Service Obligations MOAA

Annual Report 2023-2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ForestrySA respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their Elders, past, present and future. We are cognisant of the traditions of the Kurna, Nukunu, Peramangk, Boandik, Ngarrindjeri and Ramindjeri peoples and their direct connections to lands under our custodianship.

BACKGROUND

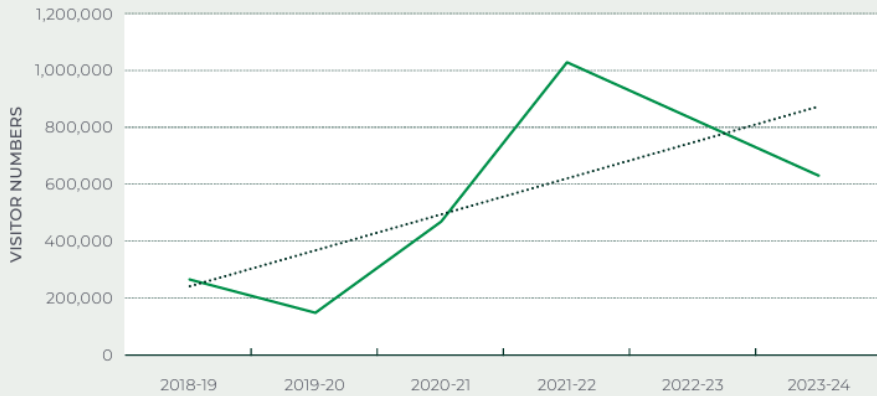
ForestrySA has custodianship of approximately 32,310ha of land mainly comprised of standing pine plantation (*Pinus radiata*) and Native Forest Reserve in the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Green Triangle.

ForestrySA's non-commercial activities include community service obligations carried out on behalf of the South Australian Government. Total funding of \$4.0m was provided by the Government during the year for those obligations. The services provided by ForestrySA in 2023-24 included community fire protection, native forest management, including management of 16,065ha of Proclaimed Native Forest Reserves, and ensuring the safe and accessible community use of, and recreation in, our forests.

ForestrySA prioritises sustainability, both in terms of management practices and environmental outcomes. Land management practices consider and incorporate public access for recreational purposes.

Both commercial plantation and native forest areas are certified by Responsible Wood to the Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (AS4708:2013), which requires compliance with internationally accepted criteria.

FOREST VISITATION



630,000

visitations to forests



52,548

climbers at **TREECLIMB KUITPO**



491

community events engaging **10,099 PEOPLE**



4,617

students attending **74 CAMPS**



8,843

permits for camping, horse riding, fossicking and adventure caving



3,970

volunteer hours delivered under the community engagement program



9,980

visitor enquiries

Figure 1 – Community Service Obligations at a glance

1. NATIVE FOREST COMMUNITY SERVICE OBLIGATION

In 2023-24 the Native Forest CSO facilitated the management of over 16,500 hectares (ha) of Proclaimed Native Forest Reserves (NFRs) and 2,819ha of natural features, totaling over 18,800ha in the Mount Lofty Ranges and Limestone Coast. 100% of proclaimed Native Forest Reserves were covered by a management plan in this this period.

During 2023-24, surveys of native vegetation in native forest reserves were ongoing, contributing to management planning across the Mount Lofty Ranges. Work continued developing comprehensive flora and fauna databases, prescribed burning and wildfire database and vegetation mapping of Mount Crawford native forest reserves to assist with the revision of the Mount Crawford Management Plan. This work identified areas of native vegetation and natural features which would meet criteria for proposing proclamation as Native Forest Reserves.

Our staff are often called to address wildlife issues in and outside our forests. Where possible we take actions to save native species injured on roads. During 2023-24, we entered a partnership with Barossa Wildlife Rescue to support the great work the organisation does with looking after injured or orphaned wildlife.



Figure 2 – ForestrySA staff and volunteers from the Barossa Wildlife Rescue

Across its estate ForestrySA continued to be actively involved in threatened flora and fauna species conservation, biodiversity monitoring partnerships and local and landscape-level recovery projects, including:

- Planting 1000 native plants at Rock Shelter NFR in partnership with local aboriginal community and schools.

- Monitoring and survey for threatened fauna species - Ear Wormed Lizard, Red Tail Black Cockatoo, Southern Bent-wing Bat, Southern-brown Bandicoots, Square-tailed Kites, Bassian Thrush, Swamp Wallaby, Mount Lofty Ranges Woodland Bird Recovery and a new Shrubland Birds monitoring project.
- Recovery works, monitoring and survey for threatened flora species - *Caladenia argocalla* and *Thelymitra cyanapicata*, in partnership with the Botanic Gardens threatened flora recovery projects, and Swamps of the Fleurieu Peninsula.

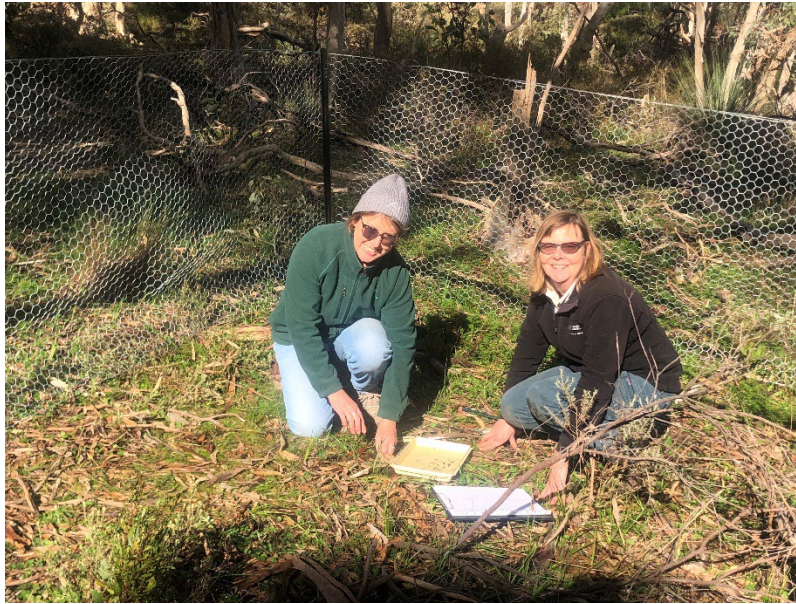


Figure 3 – Monitoring and survey for threatened fauna species

In both regions, pest plant operations were prioritised for areas of early infestations and emerging weeds, as well as high conservation value and plantation areas adjacent to Native Forest Reserves, with over 1,500ha of invasive weed control. This included blackberry control and removal, wild pine, Blue Bell creeper, pampas grass, gorse, cape tulip, arum lily and Lavatory creeper.

Pest animal control focussed on managing vertebrate pests of national or regional significance through formal landscape-level programs in partnership with Primary Industries and Regions SA, Landscape Boards SA, other public land management agencies and neighbours. ForestrySA played an important planning and facilitation role in 5 goat and deer control operations in Fleurieu Peninsula, Mount Lofty Ranges, and South-East forests, and supported the first ever aerial deer management program in Mount Crawford Forest.

At a local level, volunteers contributing 480 hours assisting with grazing pressure management and feral animal control.



Figure 4 – Volunteers collecting koala food

Across both the Native Forest CSO and the Community Forestry CSO, volunteers continued to play an important role augmenting formal works, on projects such as the koala food program, weeding to protect threatened orchids, wild pine removal, planting native species, participating in fauna surveys, trail maintenance, infrastructure development and maintenance (Figure 5) and assisting with feral animal control, which have all contributed outcomes to specific and landscape-scale biodiversity conservation and recreation program.



Figure 5 – Volunteers deliver new infrastructure

2. COMMUNITY FORESTRY COMMUNITY SERVICE OBLIGATION

Community use of forest reserves remained high during 2023-2024 with solid progress made in community engagement, partnerships, and programs such as Aboriginal cultural projects and Friends of the Forests.

Projects to understand, protect and restore culturally significant Aboriginal sites and heritage were undertaken in partnership with local elders, Aboriginal community and schools. There was a focus on developing a practical forest access policy for communities engaging in cultural practices on country.

During this period, cultural activities included shield, Yuki (canoe) and Coolamon (shield) cutting events with Kurna and Ngarrindjeri community, a gathering of Peramangk women at important cultural sites at Mount Crawford Forest and a Walk on Country and cultural site assessment with a Peramangk leader.

ForestrySA also coordinated a Cultural Burning Workshop and hosted a Kurna Indigenous Plant workshop during the 2023 Nature Festival, facilitated heritage site visits and learning for schools with the Burrundies Community and hosted an artist in residence as part of the Aboriginal Art project. The new Purrumpa Trail in Mount Gawler Native Forest Reserve was named in consultation with the Kurna as part of National Reconciliation Week 2024.



Figure 6 - Volunteers Clive and Clare Chesson

Approximately 3,970 volunteer hours were delivered under the community engagement program. As part of National Volunteer Week 2024, ForestrySA paid homage to the Torrens Valley Community Centre, Aldinga Community Centre, Human Projectiles Inc. MTB Club, and

conservation volunteers, Clive and Claire Chesson (Figure 6), who have worked in our forests for over 30 years and average 100 volunteer hours per month.

ForestrySA campground and accommodation facilities continued to be popular, with the booking system opened 12 months in advance. Upgrades were made to Chookarloo Campground, Old School House and Thomas Hill House, and new horse yards erected at Ponderosa (Figure 7), made with timber harvested from Mount Crawford Forest.



Figure 7 – New horse yards at Ponderosa

Projects to support and enhance visitor management included multiple trail re-routes and closures due to forest operations, work to reinstate the arboretum walk at Bennetts plantation, interchangeable sign designs for campgrounds, new signage for Lake Edward, revegetation, and new picnic facilities. Along with a Ranger stationed fortnightly at the Fleurieu Visitor Information Centre, the first ever visitor brochure for Second Valley Forest was developed, both receiving positive feedback.

The Fox Creek Bike Park, rebuilt after the 2019 Cudlee Creek bushfire, has continued to develop and evolve, enhancing ForestrySA's strategic purpose to support multi-use forestry with flow on effects of a bike economy on the local community, the fire recovery and State's tourist and economic benefit. During 2023-24 the park was enhanced through trail maintenance and volunteer working bees.

Grant funded projects during 2023-24 were primarily focused on Fox Creek Bike Park. The Human Projectiles MTB Club Inc., in partnership with ForestrySA, received a grant from the Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing for two new adaptive trails, which facilitate three and four wheeled bikes, opening further opportunities for people living with disabilities.



Figure 8 – Mount bikers of all abilities get involved at Fox Creek

Grants were also gratefully received from Bendigo Bank and the Adelaide Hills Council, for safety and amenity upgrades at the Trail Hub. Combined with sponsorship from various local businesses, and staff and volunteer time, the Trail Hub is now a safer and more inviting place.

Collaborative engagement initiatives during 2023-24 included hosting the South Australian Ranger Association (SARA) Annual Migration at Second Valley which included field trips and presentation by ForestrySA staff to highlight forest management.

The Disability and Inclusion program was launched at Chookarloo campground (Figure 9) in collaboration with Bedford Group, Department for Environment and Water and SA Water, with activities such as fossicking, koala food collection, campfire fun and a wildflower walk.



Figure 9 – launch of the Disability and Inclusion Program at Chookarloo Campground

ForestrySA continued to engage with the broader community through attending local fairs and events such as the WalkFest, Adelaide Hills Council ‘Discover, Play, Bikeway!’, Lobethal Christmas

Pageant, Meadows Country Fair, Yankalilla 'Ag Fest', and through web page updates and social media posts.

During 2023-24 the Community Forestry CSO supported over 630,000 recorded visitors to forest reserves, with the majority being in the Mount Lofty Ranges forests and facilitated 491 community events and activities involving over 10,000 people. This includes facilitation of the Pines Enduro motorsport event in pine plantations managed by OneFortyOne near Mount Gambier involving 2,000 people.

Visitation Statistics

- 52,548 climbers at TreeClimb Kuitpo
- 4,617 students attending 74 school camps
- 8,843 permits for camping, horse riding, fossicking and adventure caving
- 9,980 visitor enquiries¹
- 3,970 volunteer hours conducting trail audits and maintenance, weed control, feral animal control, revegetation, and management of the Kuitpo Forest koala food plantation for provision of koala food for Cleland Wildlife Park

Sponsorship

The Community Forestry CSO facilitated multiple initiatives via the ForestrySA annual sponsorship program, which supports projects, programs and events in alignment with promoting plantation forestry, recreation, conservation and sustainable forest management values and practices, through grants, in-kind support or waiving of fees to the value of \$42,000 in 2023-24. Highlights include:

- A two-day Kurna shield making exchange in Kuitpo Forest in collaboration with a collaborative project between Art Gallery of NSW, Djamu Youth Justice, Kurna Community Shield Project, James Tylor and Wesley Shaw.
- Sponsorship of the South Australian Rangers Association Migration at Second Valley (pictured over page).
- Festival and community event partnerships with the Meadows Country Fair, ROAR Barossa, the 8th Nature Play SA and RADL GRVL (Tour Down Under).
- Support of the History Trust of South Australia's Yuki Storytelling Vessel Project in collaboration with Uncle Moogy Sumner and the Maritime Museum.

Our forest reserves continued to provide an important location for school outdoor education camps, and for emergency services, police and military training, and for TAFESA studies and research. The South Australia Ambulance Service (SAAS) responded to an injured horse rider in Kersbrook Forest Reserve, which was filmed for the Paramedics TV Show.

¹ Excludes enquiries via social media platforms



Figure 10 – South Australian Ranger Association Migration at Second Valley

Illegal activities continue to be monitored and addressed, with education and awareness prioritised over expiations. No camping/no fires signs were installed at compliance hot spots and surveillance cameras installed and monitored as part of a compliance program. During 2023-24 compliance staff undertook de-escalation training, to support their efforts in managing illegal activities, and actively worked with South Australia Police on firewood theft and Operation Nomad.

Compliance

- 48 expiations notices
- Over 418 reported incidents, with most common incidents being:
 - Illegal entry
 - entry on a day of total fire ban
 - firewood theft
 - possession & use of chainsaw
 - entry to an active harvesting site
 - vandalism
 - use of a firearm
 - illegal camping

Reconciliation Action Plan

ForestrySA's vision for reconciliation is to be an organisation that has deep and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and importantly, each of the different Traditional Custodians of the lands that we manage and care for.

We want to be an organisation that uplifts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our community, and which proudly plays our part in the journey of all of Australia to reconcile with the

inequality and inequity of our past and present. We intend to work towards this goal with awareness and education, by fostering relationships and by increasing meaningful employment opportunities.

In 2022, ForestrySA implemented a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which was successfully completed in 2023-24. Our Reflect RAP was endorsed by our Board, driven by a RAP Working Group, with all areas of the organisation responsible for implementing RAP initiatives.



Figure 11 – Interpretative installation of Moogy’s Yuki

Staff engaged to deliver the Community Forestry and Native Forest Management CSO contributed significantly to the development and implementation of the RAP and achievements during 2023-24 including:

- New and meaningful relationships built with Ngarrindjeri, Kurna and Peramangk community leaders.
- Guidelines and documents developed to guide and support our staff in best practice principles when working with Aboriginal people, cultural protocols and enabling forest access for cultural activities.
- Nature Festival 2023 events, hosting of Kurna Artist James Tylor in residence at Thomas Hill House, Nature Play SA Walk on Country with Kurna Elder Uncle Tamaru, and coordination of an interagency Cultural Burning workshop.

- Welcome to Country and launch of Accessible Outdoors Program in Kuitpo Forest.
- Support of the History Trust of South Australia’s Yuki Storytelling Vessel Project in collaboration with Uncle Moogy Sumner and the Maritime Museum (Figure 11).
- Active involvement in the Ruwe (land) and Kiki (fire) Management Project and Kurna Firesticks Alliance activities.
- Walk on Country and cultural assessment in Mount Crawford Forest with Peramangk leaders.
- Meetings, training, events and strategic documents show respect and understanding by incorporating an Acknowledgement of Country.



Figure 12 – Kurna Community Shield Project, Djamu Youth Justice, Meadows Flat

3. Community Fire Protection Community Fire Obligation

Over 2023-24, ForestrySA continued to work closely with the South Australian Country Fire Service (CFS), DEW, SA Water and local government to keep communities safe and protect plantation and native forest assets in and around the public forest reserve network in both the Mount Lofty Ranges and Green Triangle regions.

The Community Fire Protection CSO contributed to ForestrySA’s broader fire program of fire appliances, equipment, staffing, capability and capacity including weekly training during fire danger season.



Figure 13 – South Australian Police training and awareness

On behalf of ForestrySA, DEW responded to 3 fire incidents in the Green Triangle during the season and ForestrySA responded to 28 fire incidents in the Mount Lofty Ranges.

One prescribed burn was delivered by DEW in the Green Triangle. The persistence of dry conditions late in autumn 2024 disrupted prescribed burning program plans in the Mount Lofty Ranges, with one prescribed burn being delivered.

In addition to fire prevention, preparedness and bushfire response, the Community Protection CSO facilitated the following initiatives during the 2023-24 fire season:

- Attendance of Fire King at Meadows Country Fair and Yankalilla ‘Ag Fest’
- Facilitating a Cultural Burning workshop as part of Nature Festival 2023
- ForestrySA representation at the State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC), Bushfire Management Committee (BMC) and CFS group meetings
- South Australia Police training and familiarisation (Figure 13)
- CFS cadet training (Figure 14) and CFS property familiarisation session



Figure 14 – CFS cadet training and property familiarisation

Communications & Media

During 2023-24 the Community Forestry CSO supported community engagement via the ForestrySA and Fox Creek Bike Park webpages and social media platforms to ensure current information was available and to enhance education and awareness of commercial and community forestry. There was a focus on risk and safety, education and awareness of forest use, commercial forestry, and interesting events and activities.

The website was reviewed and updated during this period to provide more ready and useful information for both plantation management and community use.

ForestrySA actively sought to cross promote initiatives and campaigns from allied bodies and groups to boost education and awareness of forestry, conservation and recreation, including SA Health public safety messaging regarding mushroom safety.

Sustainable Forest Certification

ForestrySA is strongly committed to the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable forestry. Our Forest Management System is certified by Responsible Wood's Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (AS 4708:2013), which requires compliance with internationally accepted criteria. This ensures protection of production, indigenous, heritage, social and environmental values across our estate.

More information about our certification and policy for Sustainable Forest Management is available via our website, at www.forestrysa.com.au/forest-management.

ForestrySA

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