

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

OPERATION IRONBARK

Eleven people have been booked during Operation Ironbark, a series of forest patrols around Bendigo, Inglewood and Dunolly.

Officers from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), Parks Victoria and the Victoria Police conducted the patrols last weekend, focusing on trail bike riders and people cutting domestic firewood.

The team issued 11 infringement notices to trail bike riders for offences relating to unlicensed and unregistered riding, and off-road riding. They also issued a fine for littering and plan to charge another rider on summons for unlicensed and unregistered riding.

Trail bike riding is legal in State Forests and Parks provided the bike is registered, and the rider has a licence and stays on the legal road network.

Riding trail bikes off-road can cause significant environmental damage through erosion and damage to vegetation, and riding without a licence and registration can attract fines in excess of \$800.

DSE Forest Officers and Victoria Police are conducting compliance operations focused on unlicensed and unregistered motorcycle use throughout the year, as part of the State Government's \$5 million *Trail Bike Project* to improve the management of trail bikes on public land.

Operation Ironbark was not all about trail bike enforcement, however.

The patrol team spoke with seven members of the public who were cutting firewood and the Forest Officers were pleased to find all had the appropriate licences. There were two that required instruction on correctly filling in their licence check sheets.

DSE manages the collection of domestic firewood in State Forests so as to benefit the forest's overall development and maintain a sustainable supply to local communities.

Since the start of the firewood collection season in March this year, DSE has issued licences to local people for the collection of over 6,000 cubic metres of firewood from State Forest in the Bendigo district.

The firewood collection season in the Bendigo district will close at the end of August. People wishing to collect firewood can purchase a permit by visiting their local DSE office or by calling the DSE firewood hotline on 5430 4666.

Ends...