

Hon Leon Bignell MP

Minister for Forests

Friday 16 February 2018

New future for Mid North Forests

Public access to the Mid North Forests area has been preserved and jobs in the region are expected to be retained, with more generated, as a result of the Mid North Forests Future Strategy.

In a first for the State, Spring Gully Foods will explore the viability of Manuka honey production in the Mid North, as one of the businesses pursuing a diverse future for the area.

The iconic South Australian brand has been offered a \$150,000 grant from the Regional Development Fund (RDF) to advance a three-year trial to assess the viability of establishing a Manuka plantation on 10-hectares of land in Wirrabara Forest Reserve.

The trial represents a joint research agreement between Spring Gully Foods, Primary Industries and Regions SA through its research division, SARDI, and ForestrySA.

New land uses for the area will include commercial forestry, cropping, grazing, apiculture, horticulture, mixed agriculture, conservation, tourism, biochar production, firewood cutting, and the transfer of the Bundaleer forest sports grounds to the Bundaleer Sport and Recreation Association.

The enterprises involved will help retain up to 63 local sawmilling jobs and generate around 10 new jobs from additional and expanded agriculture, with the potential for more jobs over time as enterprises develop.

Four new greenways have been created through Bundaleer and Wirrabara forests, preserving public access to these sections of the Heysen and Mawson Trail networks for hikers and cyclists.

This all comes on top of the transfer of more than 3,500 hectares of land in Wirrabara forest from ForestrySA to the state's parks system under the management of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, announced in September 2017.

Background

The greenways through the Bundaleer and Wirrabara forests have been established under the *Recreational Greenways Act 2000* following extensive public consultation last year. This is the first time the *Recreational Greenways Act 2000* has been used.

Further discussions with the association and wider community will determine ongoing management arrangements for the picnic grounds and associated local trails.

Existing minor trails in the Wirrabara Forest such as the Forest Circuit Trail, Ippinitchie Trail and access to the King Tree are located on land that is proposed to remain under State Government ownership.

Maps of the trails and picnic grounds can be downloaded at www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/greenways

For more information on the Mid North Forests Future Strategy visit www.pir.sa.gov.au/forestry

Quotes attributable to Forestry, and Recreation and Sport Minister, Leon Bignell

The State Government is pleased to be helping establish a diverse and sustainable future for the Mid North Forests lands.

The Spring Gully Foods project is an exciting collaboration between industry and government, with PIRSA's research division SARDI contributing its research expertise with upfront advice and ongoing data analysis over the life of the trial.

The mix of new business enterprises and recreational use will bring renewed use to the forest land and not just retain but create jobs for people in the Mid North – which has been our priority since the devastating bushfires.

We are pleased these diverse businesses will now be able to get their projects underway.

The establishment of greenways over the Heysen and Mawson Trails ensures continued walking and cycling opportunities for the local community and importantly visitors to the area.

Quotes attributable to Sustainability, Environment and Conservation Minister Ian Hunter

The future use of the Mid North Forests lands we're announcing today will diversify land use while maintaining fire mitigation outcomes and preserving the forests' natural and cultural benefits.

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The land transfer to DEWNR creates one linked-up area for conservation, recreation and tourism providing continued enjoyment for both the local community and visitors.

I am pleased to announce that there will be continued public access to the visitor areas on the sections of Crown Land transferred to DEWNR, including the Forest Nursery, picnic ground, Ippinitchie Campground and the King Tree.

Planning is also underway to establish a Southern Flinders/Upper North District Office for DEWNR at the former Wirrabara Forest Headquarters.

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