



Media Release

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Ecological thinning demonstration site now underway

WITH some WA forests struggling in a drying climate, a forest health project is demonstrating how ecological thinning can help.

The Ecological Thinning for Forest Health demonstration site commenced work last week in native regrowth forest near Balingup.

The site aims to highlight how ecological thinning techniques improve overall forest health and increase forest resilience.

Last week's site opening marked a significant milestone for the project's steering committee and community reference panel, made up of a unique group of scientists, environmentalists, representatives from the forestry industry and community members.

According to community reference panel member Peter Beatty, although counterintuitive, ecological thinning was needed for forest restoration.

"The process focuses on removing smaller diameter trees in order to allow larger trees to thrive," Mr Beatty said.

"This improves forest health, as the younger trees are much thirstier. If we do nothing, we risk an increased fire risk, poor forest health and an increase in sudden forest die-off events.

"We have seen such events in 2011 when patches of jarrah forest, which is normally resilient, suddenly collapsed under the extreme pressure of drought.

"The research has already been done and is conclusive, but this demonstration site, when complete, will allow the wider community to see the benefits."

The project began in 2019 with the formation of a working group, which included former South West Greens member Chrissy Sharp (dec.) as its passionate spokesperson.

Supported by the State Government through Minister for Forestry Dave Kelly, the Environmental Thinning for Forest Health project is an objective linked to the Djarlma Plan, to "undertake ecological thinning and smaller trees in imbalanced jarrah-marri regrowth forests, as required by the Forest Management Plan and use operational trials to demonstrate improved forest health and resilience."

"One of the truly unique aspects of this project is the diversity of those involved," Mr Beatty said.

"You wouldn't normally find environmentalists working alongside forestry representatives, but in this instance, the common ground is the future of our forests."



Mr Beatty said ecologically thinning was not a one-size-fits-all approach, but other sites had been identified that would benefit from the management technique.

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