

Policy Statement: Dendrochronology research in public reserves and protocols for collected material.



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Introduction.

Tasmania is one of the best locations in the Southern Hemisphere for conducting research based on dendrochronology. There are several factors that contribute to Tasmania being a preferred location for this type of research; the most important being that it has a number of long-lived conifers in environments subject to climatic and environmental changes.

Dendrochronology research is a well established discipline which contributes to climate change science and palaeo-environmental understanding. There is now a particular need to understand the implications of climate change, consequently resulting in great interest from various research groups wanting to carry out tree ring sampling in Tasmania's reserves.

Much of the range of the preferred target species for dendrochronology (chiefly huon pine, king billy pine, pencil pine and celery top pine) occurs on public land. They are mainly to be found in reserves managed either by the Parks and Wildlife Service or Forestry Tasmania. These species are widely regarded as important long-lived Tasmanian endemic species that are significant in the understanding of plant evolution and palaeo-geography.

Legislative and policy context.

DPIPWE through its Parks and Wildlife Service Division are responsible for the management of a considerable reserve estate where the majority of the State's population occurs of the target conifers used in studies based on dendrochronology samples.

Material taken (as in Section 4(1)(a) of the *National Parks and Reserved Land Regulations 1999*) or collected or removed (as in Section 4(1)(c) of the same Regulations) for dendrochronology purposes, namely cross section slabs or cores, are included in the definition of "plant" in the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* and covers both live and dead material. *The National Parks and Reserved Land Regulations 1999* part 2, Section 4(1) (a) requires that taking a growing or standing plant is prohibited on reserved land unless authority is granted. Plant material that is not growing is also prohibited from interference, collection or removal from a reserve under 4(1) (c) because it is deemed to be included in "timber, firewood, humus or other natural substance".

This policy statement covers land vested in the Crown and managed by the DPIPWE. This includes land reserved under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* and the *Crown Lands Act 1976*. Specifically the land categories mostly targeted are listed in Schedule 1 of the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*. To conform to *Crown Land Regulations 2001*, RMC staff issuing permits for Crown land should be Crown land bailiffs.

The usual target species for dendrochronology are not threatened. If threatened species are to be targeted, their assessment is under the provisions of the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* and the *Threatened Species Protection Regulations 2006*. The activity would be described as "taking" and the provisions for issuing a permit to "take" is encompassed in the Regulations particularly Sections 4 and 5.

A permit under the *National Parks and Reserved Land Regulations 1999* may be granted by the Director of National Parks and Wildlife. A permit application will first be assessed by specialist staff in the Biodiversity Conservation Branch and or the Land Conservation Branch, and the permit including appropriate conditions subsequently issued under the signature of a delegate of the Director of National Parks and Wildlife. Such a permit applies to all categories of reserves managed by the DPIPWE.

Purpose and scope of this policy statement.

DPIPWE is responsible for ensuring that activities permitted in the reserves that it manages are appropriate, environmentally sustainable, and that no significant harm is done to natural values during the conduct of those activities.

The purpose of this policy statement is to help achieve the above responsibility by providing guidance to DPIPWE specialist officers in support of decision-making when processing applications.

These principles are of a high level general nature and more detail is found in the underpinning subordinate documents.

Subordinate documents.

This policy statement comprises principles in combination with two underpinning subordinate documents of the dendrochronology policy package. These documents are:

1. **Permit application information, standard conditions, background information and guidelines** for collecting and conserving dendrochronology samples from Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) managed reserves.

The permit application information, standard conditions and background information itself includes more general requirements and obligations of collectors beyond those specifically relating to dendrochronology. These general requirements include for example, such things as notification of field staff prior to entering a reserve for the purpose of sampling, furnishing a report following completion of the research and provision of data about collections in a form suitable for the DPIPWE Natural Values Atlas.

Guidelines for collecting and conserving dendrochronology samples from Tasmanian public reserves are amongst the matters to be considered when the permitting authority considers applications to collect samples from reserves. General procedures for field sampling and care of collections are outlined. Many standard collecting conditions on a dendrochronology permit will reflect the guidelines. Other responsibilities in terms of reporting to DPIPWE and the form of the material in the reports are also explained on the website.

2. **Memorandum of Understanding relating to long term storage for Tasmanian tree wood (dendrochronology) samples.**

For researchers proposing to collect in Tasmanian reserves, the MOU means the Tasmanian permitting agencies will require the researchers to properly curate and care for the specimens indefinitely (during “interim arrangements”) or until Tasmania has resources to recall and to properly curate dendrochronology specimens in a Tasmanian public museum. Tasmanian authorities will seek to repatriate collected material post-analysis, for lodging in a Tasmanian public museum *when* resources become available for curation. The MOU clarifies the position in relation to ownership, custodianship and repatriation of collections.

Principles

1. Research activity for dendrochronology on reserved land should have minimal impact and ideally further the purposes of reservation.
2. Sampling for dendrochronology should inflict minimal impact and be carried out in a way that poses no unacceptable risks to the target trees, the species or the environment.
3. Application to sample wood cores or discs from species that have a high conservation status such as threatened species, will have a higher level of scrutiny than other species in accordance with legislative requirements.
4. Dendrochronology sampling in reserves is governed by a permit system that carries strict compliance obligations.
5. The administration of permits for sampling for scientific purposes is kept under continuing review as more knowledge becomes available, therefore criteria for assessing permits may change.
6. The Department supports the principle of transparency in the administration of its scientific permit system.
7. This policy applies to reserves and Crown land administered by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

Notes on the application of the policy principles.

More detail on the background to these principles can be found in Harris *et al.* (2009)* and other subordinate documents to these policy guidelines.

While permits will be considered in a consistent manner according to principles and guidelines covered by this policy, applications will be considered on a case by case basis and may need to have different conditions apply. If there is a risk of the general intention of these principles being compromised then a permit may be denied. Permits may be denied for other reasons such as failure

to comply with the conditions of previously issued permits, for example to lodge reports of work previously carried out under permit.

It is recommended that applicants should consult with DPIPWE officers well in advance of their deadline for securing a permit, to ensure that they meet all of the Department's requirements. This will help to avoid delays in the processing of their application.

*(Harris, S., Allen, K., Baker, P., Bird, T., Bowman, D., Connolly, A, d'Arville, L., Harwood, C., Rozefelds, A., and Wardlaw, T. (2009) Guidelines for collecting and conserving dendrochronology samples from Tasmanian public reserves. *Tasforests* 18;145-157.