

Rubicon Valley Historic Area

Situated within the Rubicon State forest, the Rubicon Valley Historic Area comprises of 1470 ha of State forest set aside for the protection of the area's historic sites and values.

The Rubicon Valley Historic Area has a long and rich history, with timber harvesting and hydro-electricity generation being the major human influences on the forest over the last century. Both activities remain significant to the area today.

Getting there

The Rubicon Valley Historic Area is approximately 150 km north-east of Melbourne (see map overleaf). Follow the Maroondah Highway to Taggerty, turn right onto Taggerty-Thornton Rd and turn right again onto Rubicon Rd.

History

Timber harvesting was historically the major industry of the region, beginning in the early 1900's. Eight sawmills were operating in the Rubicon forest in the first half of the century.



The first sawmill to operate in the Rubicon forest in 1907

Photo: courtesy Peter Evans

A network of wooden tramways connected the sawmills to the edge of the forest. A 2ft gauge steel tramway connecting Rubicon forest to the township of Alexandra carried the sawn timber by steam engine, then in 1935, by diesel engine. These two diesel engines, the first Victorian built diesel locomotives, have been restored and are in operation at the Alexandra Timber Tramway and Museum. Many of the former mill sites and associated tramways are still apparent in the forest today, and several have now been added to the Victorian Heritage Register.

The Historic Area is the site of the first Victorian hydro-electric power scheme. The Rubicon scheme, completed in 1929, consists of four power stations and associated dams, aqueducts and pipelines. During the 1930's, the scheme contributed about one-fifth of Victoria's electricity needs. While still in operation today, its contribution to meeting the State's energy needs is now small.

A 1.3 km haulage, with an average grade of 1 in 3, from the Rubicon Power Station to the top of the spur, still exists today. A steel tramway used to maintain the aqueduct between the Rubicon Power Station and the Rubicon Dam was in operation until the mid 1990's when 4wd motorbikes took over the work of the tramcars. Three impressive trestle bridges form part of the tramline at Lubra Creek, Beech Creek and at the Fifteen Thousand Foot Siphon. The entire scheme has been added to the Victorian Heritage Register. While still in operation today, public access to the power stations and associated infrastructure is not permitted.



15000' Siphon trestle bridge, named because of its distance in feet from the beginning of the tramline at the top of the haulage, has recently been reconstructed to original specifications

Severe fires in 1939 destroyed a large part of the forest and sawmills and associated tramways. Some of the sawmills and tramways were reconstructed to salvage the fire-killed timber. Damage to the hydro-electricity scheme was largely restricted to the steel tramway adjacent to the Rubicon aqueduct that had badly buckled from the heat, and sections of wooden-stave pipes and power lines. Twelve men lost their lives in the Rubicon forest during the 1939 fires.

Flora and Fauna

The Rubicon Valley Historic Area rises from 400m to 900m above sea level and displays the associated transitional changes in vegetation. The forest type changes

from foothill mixed species dominated by Messmate (*Eucalyptus obliqua*) to forests of Mountain Ash (*E. regnans*), Alpine Ash (*E. delegatensis*) and Shining Gum (*E. nitens*) at higher elevations. Much of the area is covered by regrowth from the 1939 fires.

The Rubicon forest is important habitat for a number of threatened species. The Leadbeater's Possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*), a small, nocturnal and arboreal marsupial, lives in the hollows of large old trees, either alive or dead. It is found only in Victoria and is one of Victoria's faunal emblems. The Rubicon River is habitat for the Barred Galaxias (*Galaxias fuscus*), one of Australia's most threatened native fish, but occurs in only two locations in the upper reaches of the Rubicon where natural waterfalls prevent access to introduced trout. The Superb Lyrebird and Gang-Gang Cockatoo are also commonly found in the area.

Attractions

The Historic Area and surrounding forest provides excellent opportunities for fishing, recreational four-wheel-driving, camping, mountain bike riding, bushwalking, horse riding and trail bike riding. However, when on forest roads, be prepared for the unexpected. Timber trucks, 4WD's, hikers, horse riders, trail bike riders, cyclists and native animals may also be using your chosen track.

Kendalls Camping and Day Visitor areas

The Historic Area has many opportunities for camping, including two popular, large camping areas, Kendalls A and Kendalls B camping and day visitor areas. They are located on the western bank of the Rubicon River on Rubicon River Rd. A 1.5 km pedestrian and bicycle track connects the two camping areas. The track is an easy walk and winds through a range of picturesque settings.

Morris Lookout

Morris Lookout is a short drive from Kendalls Camping and Day Visitor Areas and provides stunning views of the surrounding area, including the townships of Thornton and Eildon. Access to the lookout via Rubicon Rd is restricted during winter months. See Seasonal Road Closures below for more information.

Mt Torbreck summit

Just to the east of the attached map (refer Forests Note FS0054 – Mount Torbreck Walking Track) lies Mt Torbreck, rising to an altitude of 1516 m. The walk to the summit is a 2 km walk from the Barnewall Plains visitor area on Barnewall Plains Rd. The walk takes approximately 2 hours return, and is steep and rocky in sections. On a clear day, views from around the summit are breathtaking and well worth the long climb. A rock cairn marks the summit location. Access to the beginning of the walk is restricted during the winter months, when Barnewall Plains Road is closed to within a 10 minute walk of Barnewall Plains.

Snobs Creek Falls

Snobs Creek Falls offers spectacular views as they drop more than 100 metres over a series of rocky outcrops. The pristine waters of Snobs Creek are an important supply to the Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery six kilometres below. A short walk from the carpark to the base of the Falls includes a number of observation platforms. For further information, refer to Forests Note FS0056 – Snobs Creek Falls.

Lake Eildon National Park

Situated on the shores of Lake Eildon, the Park protects 27,750 ha of rugged hills with open woodlands through to dense forest. It is very scenic, and offers the opportunity to experience an array of wildlife, natural and historic features and a wide range of recreational activities.

Seasonal Road Closures

Some roads within the forest are closed each year between mid June and late October, to protect track surfaces and the environment, and for public safety. Road closures may be extended beyond these dates, depending on weather conditions. These closures are usually enforced by a gate or sign. Seasonally closed roads within the Historic Area include Rubicon River Rd, Tom Burns Tk and the western end of Herbs Tk. Contact DSE for more information on road closures.

For more information

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State forests. For further information contact the Department of Sustainability and Environment Office at Alexandra (☎ 5772 0200) or DSE's Customer Service Centre on ☎ 136 186.

Visit DSE's website

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>

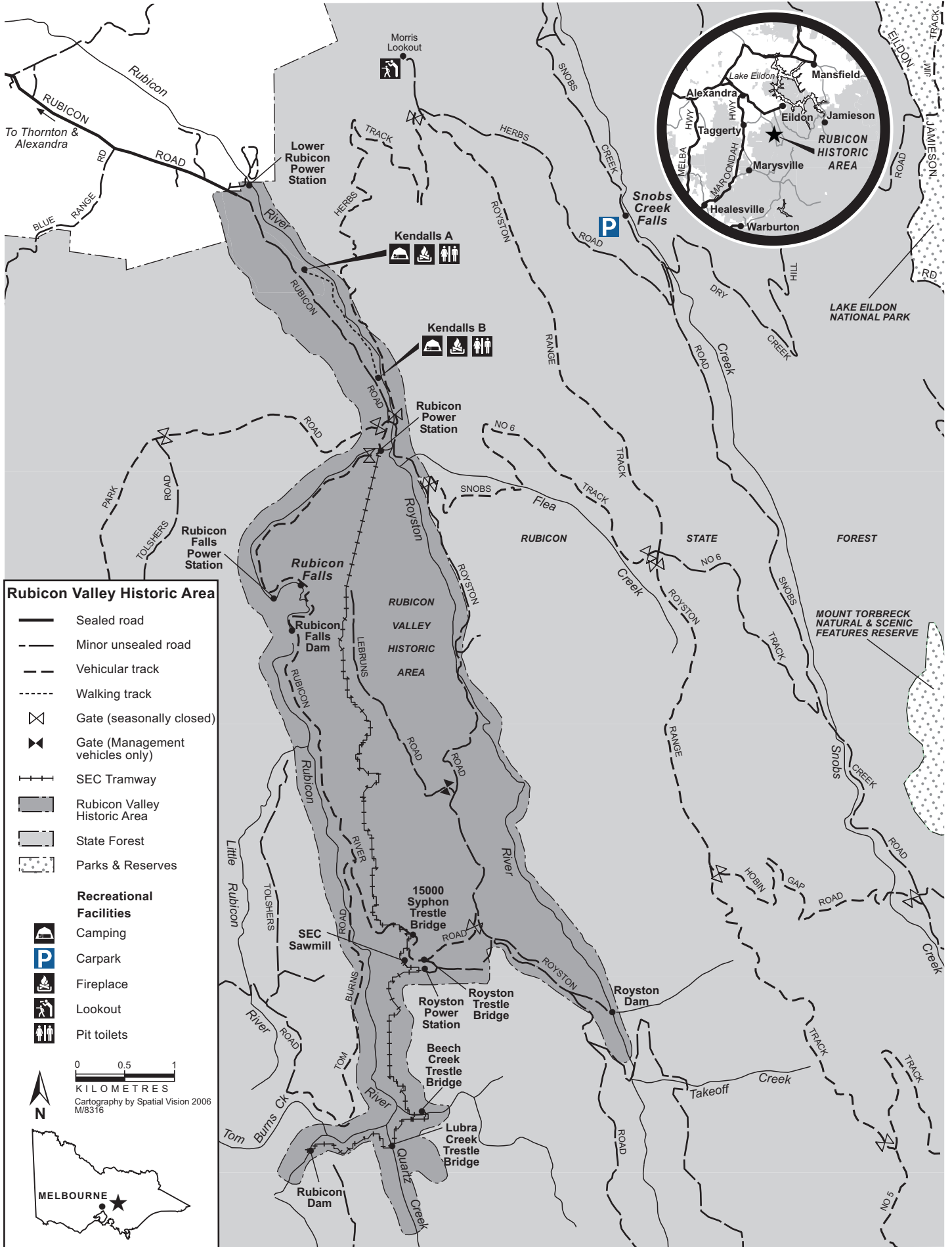
then select "Forestry".

The Rubicon State forest is managed for a wide range of uses including catchment protection, timber production, recreation and conservation. If you are interested in how State forests are managed, the current Central Highlands Forest Management Plan can be viewed on the Department's website on the Internet at

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>

then select "Forestry", then select "Publications".

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