

State Forest of the Dinner Plain Area

State Forest surrounding the Dinner Plain Village is managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The Alpine National Park to the west is managed by Parks Victoria.

Situated 375 km (approximately 4.5 hours) north-east of Melbourne, this area offers year-round recreational opportunities.

Getting there

From Melbourne travel east on the Princes Highway through Gippsland, then head north on the Great Alpine Road through to Omeo and on to Dinner Plain. Alternatively, travel via Mt Hotham.

European history

European settlement in the area began with stock movement between Gippsland and north-east Victoria with Omeo being settled in 1835. Grazing interest was followed by mining when gold was discovered in the many river valleys.

It is believed Dinner Plain was named by early cattle drovers who stopped for their midday dinner at the grassy plains.

Aboriginal history

The Alpine region of Victoria was used extensively by Aboriginal people who have a comprehensive knowledge of the cultural sites, oral history and ancestral stories that relate to this area.

Throughout the year Aboriginal groups would travel great distances from the coasts and outlying regions to meet with mountain tribes for intertribal ceremonies. Cultural objects and materials for tools would be exchanged during these gatherings.

Significant flora and fauna

The Dinner Plain area is dominated by Snow Gum Woodland and open Sub-Alpine Grasslands. Heathlands occupy areas of poor drainage or exposed weather.

At lower elevations these communities are replaced with Montane Forest dominated by Alpine Ash (*Eucalyptus delegatensis*), a focus of timber harvesting. Threatened plant communities such as Montane Grassy Woodland are dominated by Snow Gum (*E. pauciflora*) and Mountain Gum (*E. dalrympleana ssp. dalrympleana*), with a grassy understorey.

Significant flora occurs in this specialised habitat including the Shining Anchor Plant (*Discaria nitida*) near Cobungra Station and an endemic eucalypt – Omeo Gum (*E. neglecta*) that occurs locally.

The majority of this area was burnt in the 2003 Alpine Fires that totalled 1.1 million hectares in Victoria. Flora has recovered well but weed invasion is a major threat. A significant population of the critically endangered Alpine Tree Frog (*Litoria verreauxii alpina*) occurs in the woodlands, heaths and bogs of the Dinner Plain area, including State forest.

Similar to other frogs this species has suffered a dramatic decline in abundance and distribution over the last ten years. Formerly found throughout the highlands of eastern Victoria, the ACT and southern NSW the Alpine Tree Frog is now extinct in the alpine zone and restricted to lower elevations. The two recorded State forest localities of Alpine Tree Frog are on Horsehair Plain and Flour Bag Plain.

Significant populations of rare or threatened flora and fauna are protected for

conservation purposes by Special Protection Zones in State Forest.

Walking tracks

- Dinner Plain Alpine Village Trails

Camp sites

- Victoria Falls Historic Area
- JB Plain

Picnic sites

- Dinner Plain Village
- Black Sallee Picnic Area
- Victoria Falls Historic Area

State Forests and National Parks

There are differences between the activities permitted in State Forest and National Park.

Due to conservation objectives National Parks generally have tighter restrictions on activities.

Mobile activities including: trail bike riding; motorcycle riding; four-wheel driving are restricted to formed roads and tracks in both State Forest and National Parks.

Both land tenures have some areas that exclude mobile activities because they are reference areas or conservation zones. Seasonally closed roads, which restrict vehicle traffic, should not be accessed for any activity.

Further restrictions may apply in National Park particularly if the activity imposes a significant threat to conservation or the use of these areas by other visitors. For example, **horse riding** in National Park in alpine and subalpine environments is permitted only between 1 December and 30 April inclusive; restrictions also apply to horse riding group size.

Dogs are generally (with some small exemptions) allowed in State forest, but should be under direct control at all times and are expected to be kept on a leash in picnic/camping areas or when near other visitors. National Parks are closed to dogs and other pets.

Campers are welcome in most areas of State Forest. In National Park some sites are designated. Fees are more common to camp sites within National Park. Refer to the

Forest Note 'Camping in State Forest' and the 'Bush Camping Code'.

Hunting is another key difference between the two land tenures. Hunting is permitted within State Forest, in an appropriate way according to the rules set out for this activity. In National Park however, with a few exceptions hunting of any type is generally not permitted at any time.

Events of a competitive nature and larger group activities in State Forest require a permit. Permits are not required for small-scale, non-competitive, non-profit events however a courtesy call to the local DSE office will benefit both the club and DSE.

Events and functions may be allowed in some National Parks and other Reserves though they generally require a permit. When planning your activity, day / camping trip, or group event, contact the appropriate land manager for advice.

Tread Lightly. Both State Forest and National Park land managers encourage visitors and users of the bush to "tread lightly", to minimise our impact on the natural environment.

The DSE Forest Recreation Notes series provides information on minimal impact use and recreational activities in Victoria's forests. See DSE contacts below.

For more information

For information regarding National Parks and Reserves see: www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

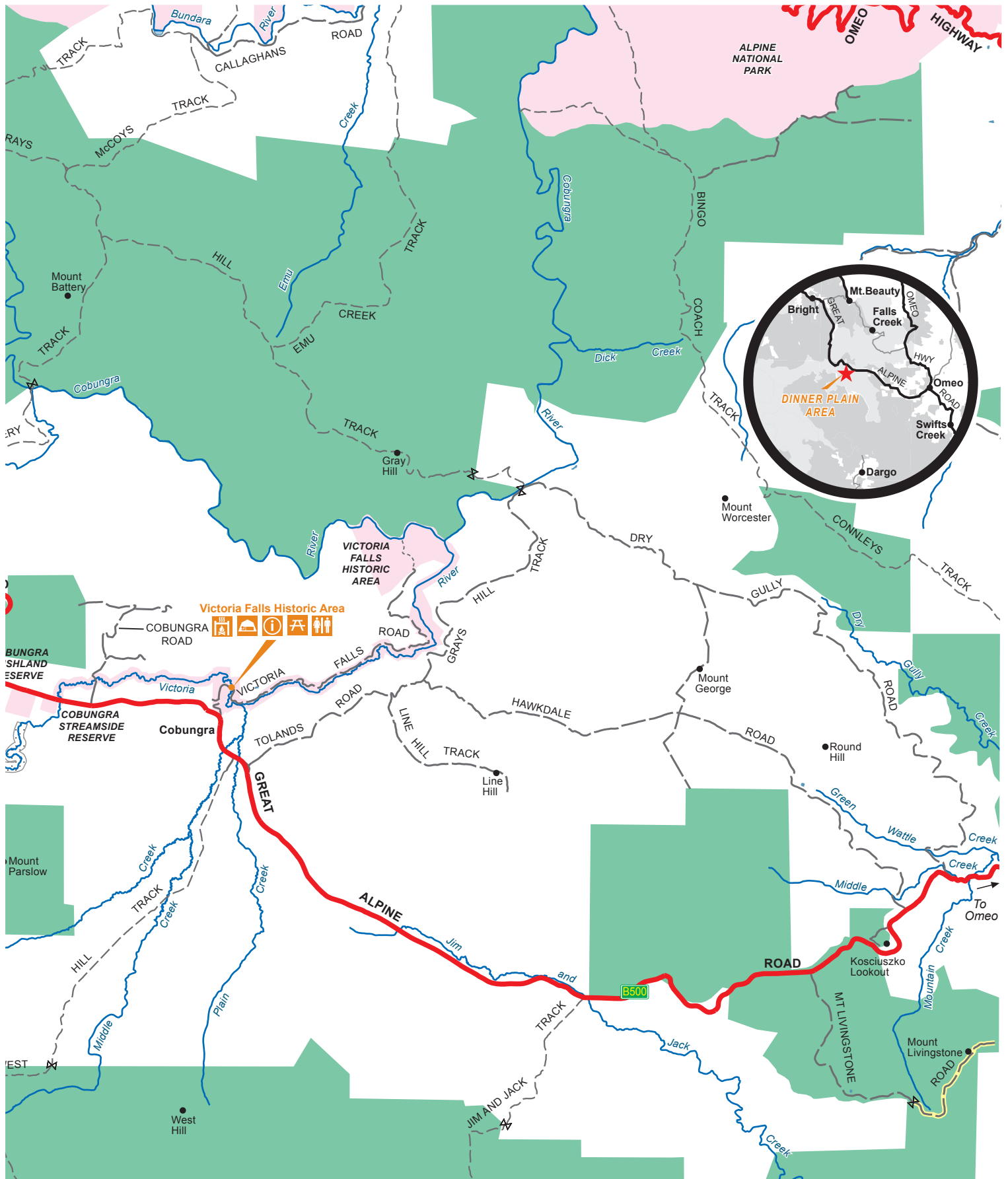
Parks Victoria Hotline ☎ 13 1963

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is responsible for managing Victoria's State Forest.

For further information contact DSE's Customer Service Centre on 13 6186 (TTY: 1800 122 969) or visit DSE's website at <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/forests>

DSE Swifts Creek office ☎ (03) 5159 5100

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