Move for new plan on forest

By PHIL SKEGGS, environment reporter

A CONSERVATION group is planning to hire a consultant zoologist to prepare an alternative management plan for the Wombat forest in central Victoria.

The Wombat Forest Society is worried the Conservation and Natural Resources Department has been preparing a draft forest management plan for the area without sufficient flora and fauna information to protect threatened wildlife.

The department's plan, which outlines logging quotas and conservation guidelines, was due for release this month.

But a spokesman for Natural Resources Minister Geoff Coleman said the plan had been delayed at least until September.

Wombat Forest Society spokesman Tim Anderson said the forest had been too heavily logged. The last flora and fauna survey was done in 1972.

He said the society decided to raise funds for a consultant zoologist, who would report on threatened wildlife including powerful owls and tiger quolls, and examine the forest's importance to the community.

"We envisage our plan will look more closely at eco-tourism and urban development."

He said they would also detail the importance of Wombat as a water catchment for regional centres such as Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh.

Sections of the timber industry share concerns about the sustainability of logging in the Wombat forest and whether adequate flora and fauna field surveys have been made.

Victorian Association of Forest Industries executive director Norm Huon said there was evidence to suggest regenerated areas couldn't be logged at current levels and that remedial action was needed.

– Herald-Sun, 1/6/95