wombat NEWS and Views

newsletter for community management of the wombat forest

The Wombat News and Views is the newsletter for the Wombat Forest Community Forest Management Trial, endorsed by the State Government of Victoria.

Working Groups:

* **Biodiversity**
* **Wood Products**
* **Hydrology**
* **Pest Plants and Animals**
* **Non-Timber Products**
* **Recreation**
* **Tourism**
* **Heritage**
* **Education**
* **Tracks Forest Roads Operations**
* **Fire**

Contact Tim Anderson Community Development Officer 5321 6811 tim.anderson@dse.vic.gov.au for further information.

The deadline for Issue 7 is March 1st.
Please send articles and letters to the editor: Tanya Loos c/ Guildford Post Office Vic 3451, or e-mail unformatted word documents to pollen @netconnect.com.au

Short articles and letters of 500 words, or contact me to book a feature of 1000 words or more (5348 2778 AH). Thank you very much!

This newsletter was printed courtesy of the State Government of Victoria

Welcome to Issue 6 ! Many seasonal greetings to Community Forest Management participants and their families.

This is a special issue: each of our Working Groups present a short article that showcases their groups' activities and aspirations. For those of you who are new to Community Forest Management or CFM, Wombat Community Development Officer Tim Anderson's article on p .2 will give readers some background .

A number of projects and their budgets are in preparation over the busy Christmas period, and Issue 7 of the News and Views will showcase these projects. This issue will come out in March. This later date is due to the naturally quiet time of January and February, and the fact that many of us are concentrating on fire issues during this time. Issue 7 will include times and dates of all working group meetings and events.

There will be a mailout next year to advertise the date and place of the next Forest Assembly, which will occur in February. Working Groups and other News and Views contributors will also be reminded of the March 1st deadline!

There are many people already active in CFM who are frustrated by the lack of practical projects while issues such as structure, decision-making and a bit of political pushing and pulling have occupied our energies. A quick read of all the energetic and enthusiastic projects detailed in the following pages by the various Working Groups will show that the tide has turned, and CFM proper is well on its way.

Tanya Loos, on behalf of the Education Working Group

PS As most people are aware, Christmas can be a difficult time. None more so than for the Wombat Forest's largest wildlife shelter, currently in Trentham. Jon and Gayle and over 20 injured and orphaned animals must move into new premises ASAP. Please turn to page 11 to find out how you can help.



Daylesford Agricultural show, November 2004. The tent on the left is the Wombat CFM stall, and the Daylesford DSE fire department on the right added plenty of colour and action! See the back page for further details...

Community Forest Management : an Introduction, by Tim Anderson



In 2003 a brave and new experiment in forestry commenced in the Wombat Forest, one hour west of Melbourne. The Wombat Forest was chosen by the Bracks' Government as the place for a trial of Community Forest Management. Community Forest Management has been an emerging alternative in forest management in many countries overseas for a number of years. The Government has given the Wombat CFM trial a broad framework to work within, which has meant that CFM has been able to evolve into a form that suits the way in which the community wish to engage. It is time for an alternative to the conflict based approach to forest issues in Australia that has dominated for the past 30 years. Finding the best environmental, social and economic outcomes for our forests will be better achieved by communities and stakeholders talking and working collaboratively, than by screaming matches between opposing sides.

Wombat CFM has the ongoing commitment to supply the remaining 2 sawmills their license volumes up until 2008/09, when the final license expires. It is then up to the community in consultation with the mill(s) to decide on ongoing sawlog supplies. This is being done via a level of public consultation that is unprecedented in Victoria. Operations will be based on restorative measures for the forest, which will have a number of outcomes, some of which will be sawlogs and firewood.

The Wombat Trial saw a series of introductory meetings held across the region and in Melbourne towards the end of 2003. From these meeting an 'Interim Stewardship Council' and a number of associated Working Groups were formed.

Over the past 12 months some of these groups have been involved in the development of a workable management framework for the community to work collaboratively with DSE and other agencies on issues relating to the Wombat Forest.

A number of other Working Groups have also been at work within the forest, carrying out a range of new and exciting projects. These have included the establishment of Waterwatch; weed mapping; habitat assessments; the Wombat News and Views newsletter; Wombat CFM web-site- www.wombatforest.org; arranging sawlogs to local sawmills from the North-East bushfire salvage; coupe assessments; governance issues and joint application with DSE for $250k funding to upgrade forest roads and crossings to protect water quality.

The Wombat CFM has moved into its next phase, with the formation of the Council of Stewards. This Council will have the role of coordinating CFM activities and facilitating community involvement while working collaboratively with DSE. The Council of Stewards is composed of 11 Working Group representatives. Work is progressing to appoint the 3 indigenous representatives, one from each of 3 traditional nations that have connection with the Wombat Forest and 2 local area representatives, one from the north of the divide and one from the south of the divide. DSE have two non-voting, ex officio positions.

The 11 Working Groups will cover all aspects of management and activities relating to the forest and the community. These will include: Biodiversity Conservation; Timber Products; Streams and Catchments; Forest Protection- Fire; Pest Plants and Animals and Pest diseases; Recreation; Tourism; Cultural Heritage; Other Forest Uses (non-timber products); Research and Education and Tracks Forest Roads and Operations.

Over the past 12 months sections of the community that had been in deep conflict with each other have demonstrated the potential for CFM, by putting their differences into the past and working collaboratively and amicably towards the future. The number of people that have registered their interest in Wombat CFM has risen from 200 one year ago to over 2,500 groups and individuals representing over 30 000 people at present.

The formal phase of CFM in the Wombat Forest commenced in October 2004. The stakeholders involved have decided that they only wish to remain in an advisory role with the Department of Sustainability & Environment until 2008. In that time the community and all agencies involved with the forest will work on the production of a "Community Forest Management Plan."

Cr Michael Cheshire of Hepburn Shire has been appointed Chair of the new Council of Stewards. The Council is currently establishing its working protocols as well as developing a number of forest based projects to be carried out over the next 12 months. CFM has been able to attract an operating budget form DSE that will enable some of these projects to be carried out as well as funding the operational aspects of CFM.

(Adapted from an article published in the Spring 2004 edition of Australian Forest Growers.)

Pest Plant, Pathogen, and Animal Working Group

Despite our rather unwieldy title, the working group is working on primarily on weeds at the moment. We hope to move on to the rest, once we get a grip on the size and nature of the weed infestations in the Wombat.

At the moment, our priority is to get a better idea of where the weeds DSE has already had a trial of weed mapping with some *University of Melbourne* students, which we plan to expand on. We have been working on mapping as much of the Wombat as feasible each year. However, to do this we will need your help (see box at right).

We plan to set up a weed-mapping project, in order to increase the amount of information that we have about the size of the weed problem. This will involve using GPS units to accurately record the location of the weeds, filling out a form with relevant details, such as the weeds species and the size of the patch, and the information then being recorded in the DSE flora database. This could then be used to update the *Wombat Explorer* CD-ROM, and will enable DSE to make more informed decisions regarding weed control, and how they go about undertaking roading and logging works in the forest.

At the moment, DSE have little funds available for weed control in the Wombat, and what they have is being used to reduce fire hazards from around townships, like the Gorse from around Barry's Reef. We aim to get additional money, either from an extra allocation from within the DSE budget, or more realistically, as a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust, or some other source. This will mean that we could get a Regional Environmental Employment Program (REEP) team, a "Work-for-the-dole", or prison works crew, stuck into weed control. Obviously what gets done will be determined by what funding we can find, what weeds are identified as part of the weed mapping project, and what DSE determine as being the priority.

The final strand that we are looking at is community education. Initially this will be determined by how much money we have out of the CFM budget, but we are pricing a seminar or field day on weed control techniques, and possibly some weed identification.

If you would like to get involved, come to one of our monthly meetings.

Cheers,
Luke Bennett, Convenor

Weed Mapping Project

Are you concerned about weeds in the Wombat Forest?

Gorse and Broom on the sides of roads and tracks pissing you off?

Blackberry and Willow choked creeks and rivers getting up your nose?

Well, we want to know about it!

Initially, we can provide you with a large map, on which you can draw the location of the weeds.

In the future, we plan to offer some training and resources, such as weed identification information, and GPS units.

For further information, contact Tim Anderson 14 Mineral Springs Drive
Daylesford
VIC 3460
(03) 5321-6811
tim.anderson@dse.vic.gov.au



Some omissions and apologies!

Due to a variety of reasons, (many of which are related to the madness of compiling a newsletter in December!)
The Wood Products Working Group and the Recreation Working Group are deferring their reports until next issue.

The Wood Products Working Group is a very active group and is currently lobbying the Council of Stewards to seek funding to carry out non-commercial thinning in the Wombat Forest. More next issue!

Issue 7 will also include a full report from the Council of Stewards. Thanks! Tanya Loos

Biodiversity

The Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) was established on 9 November 2003 as part of the Community Forest Management process for the Wombat State Forest.

One of the aims of the group is to involve the community in the biodiversity issues in the forest, and we are actively seeking participation from the community. We would welcome people with interests ranging from an enjoyment of nature, to those with specialist skills and knowledge. Or you may just wish to be notified of upcoming events.

The group has been operating at a number of levels. Workshops, information events and forest picnics have been conducted, and others are in the planning stages. We have also participated in the workshops for future sawlog supply with regard to biodiversity issues. The depth and detail of consultation involved with the Sawlog Supply project has been considerable, and thus very time consuming. This commitment has greatly delayed our ability to proceed with other projects.

A picnic was held at Stewart's Creek in October as a preliminary for a planned project. Stewart's creek is located in the Wombat Forest Reservoir catchment and the site is an area of approximately 17 hectares, recently logged for pine and surrounded by native vegetation. The area has been returned to the DSE (from the owners of the pine plantation) to revegetate as native forest.

This site will give us the opportunity to run plant identification and seed collection workshops in the adjacent forest with an aim to some revegetation of the gully. We are also working on a proposed seed bank and plant nursery for the Wombat Forest.

Recently, Richard Loyn, head of Biodiversity at the Arthur Rylah Institute talked to our group and other community members on the topic of "Changes in bird and mammal populations after timber harvesting in East Gippsland". A videotape of the event was made to be shown to those unable to attend.

Ballarat University is conducting research into bats in the Wombat Forest and a number of people have volunteered to participate in the legwork.

Murray Ralph, author and seed collector has developed a draft document titled "Achieving Biodiversity Goals in the Wombat Forest".

This is the beginning of a very exciting process and a chance to have an input into the management of the forest. However, we are a small number of people, starting from scratch, developing processes and programs. For this to work we need more involvement from the community.

It is important that the community values the forest and to achieve this we need to increase people's knowledge of forest ecosystems and habitat for fauna.

We are seeking more involvement from the community – please do not underestimate your skills, you will be surprised by what can be achieved.
Gayle Osborne, convenor

Australian Government Envirofund: Deadline for applicants: 18 Feb 2005

According to the Natural Heritage Trust website, " the Australian Government Envirofund is the local action component of the Australian Government's $3 billion Natural Heritage Trust. It helps communities undertake local projects aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable resource use".
I had a quick read of the Guide and Application form, and have drawn out a few points that may interest Working Group members, both current and future!

Incorporation

Many CFM participants are worried that we will be unable to apply for funding if we are not an incorporated body. In this case we simply " nominate an incorporated organisation (such as local government or an incorporated community group) as our 'sponsoring organisation' in the Application Form."

Some "eligible activities" that may be applicable

- Awareness –raising activities that directly lead to significant local on ground benefits for biodiversity conservation or sustainable resource use.
- Demonstrations or trials of new techniques for sustainable farming or forestry practices
- Monitoring of water quality, species, habitats, or other natural resources where this will have a clear local benefit.
- Holding workshops or similar resources that build the capacity of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups to engage local Indigenous communities in natural resource management.

There is also a massive list of "ineligible activities", one of which is " activities which are more appropriately funded by other bodies such as private landholders, government agencies, regional NRM bodies and industry". We have to make our projects very innovative and exciting it seems!
Please contact Tim Anderson, at 5348 2211 for further details on the Envirofund. Tanya Loos

Tracks, Forest Roads and Operations

The Tracks, Forest Roads &Operations working group have really swung into action. Prior to August this year, the Recreational Users Group addressed issues confronting recreational users of the Wombat Forest. There were over 300 individuals and groups on this working group and it became impossible to adequately cater for all concerns, views and ideas and meetings. Following the third stakeholder meeting in June where the basic composition of a new council of stewards was affirmed by those present, it was decided at a RUG executive meeting in August to split RUG into two different recreational groups. RUG would continue under the leadership of Mr. Phillip Brown (SSAA) and gather the non-motorised recreational groups together to work on specific outcomes for the Wombat Forest related to their areas of expertise. A second new working group was formed - T-FRO. T-FRO would gather the motor recreation groups. The convener of T-FRO is Milton Oliver and this appointment was ratified on August 10th, 2004.

Since that time both T-FRO and RUG have drafted distinctly different Terms of Reference, which were eventually ratified by the Interim Stewardship Council. The Terms of Reference for T-FRO are comprehensive. At the last general meeting of T-FRO on November 17th, at CAMS headquarters in Malvern, some significant new decisions were taken to progress strategic priorities we have wanted to tackle for some time. In short, two new sub-committees have been formed and we have detailed these here from the minutes of meeting …

It was resolved that two sub-committees be formed to expedite these two strategic priorities. (By consensus) That a sub-committee for "Track Classification and Infrastructure Review"(TCIR) be formed and immediately begin working and consulting with whomever necessary to prepare a draft proposal ready for ratification and implementation by February 15th, 2005 (By consensus)

That a sub-committee for "Recreational Motoring Standards & Codes of Conduct" (RMSCC) be formed and immediately begin working and consulting with whomever necessary to prepare a draft proposal ready for ratification and implementation by February 15th, 2005. (By consensus)

These two sub-committees will use our Terms of Reference as their working brief and begin work immediately. We're keen to get two major proposals costed and ready for implementation by February 15th, 2005.

The TCIR sub-committee has already met with Mr. Lee Gleeson (Friday 26th November at the DSE offices in Bacchus Marsh) and canvassed many issues and CFM themes related to this sub-committee's scope. The major issue is to establish a starting point for this review that will better enable effective and enhanced outcomes for the forest. This will most likely be commencing, with Lee's advice, with the necessary research and data gathering work on tracks and roads in the Wombat Forest in the first instance, so that a tracks classification system may be set up. In addition, a review of recreational forest assets will also be carried out. Once the research is done, it is planned to involve many clubs and individuals to work on these projects so that the tracks, roads and recreational infrastructure is brought up to a standard that will attract tourism, and that will enhance safety and forest enjoyment for all. A net effect we're hoping for in all this is human impact in the forest will be minimised. This aspect of T-FRO's working brief is a huge logistical undertaking, but we are confident that many motoring groups in the area will assist. Lee was very encouraging of T-FRO and an important working relationship has been established.

The second sub-committee (RMSCC) has begun work on researching what would be helpful in communicating a code(s) of conduct booklet for motoring users of the forest, as well as a set of accredited "Adventure Activity Standards" for use by clubs and groups using the forest for eco-touring, rallying, four wheel driving, camping and fishing and so on. These will raise safety and environmental awareness, and thus reduce environmental pressure in the Wombat. Hopefully, this education strategy will also encourage clubs to become engaged with CFM outcomes. We haven't been able to do so yet, but we'd like to collaborate with other working groups where appropriate to produce a Recreational User's Guide to the Wombat (or similar) specifically for the motoring public. This might also include contributions from the tourism, heritage and historical working groups.

Another aspect of T-FRO's work is the removal of car wrecks and rubbish dumped in the forest. It concerns us when criminal elements steal cars, strip them and then dump them in the forest to rust and cause acids and other chemical to leach into our waterways. Last year several local clubs, at their own expense, removed 17 'dead' cars from the Wombat. Two weekends ago at Mount Disappointment, another 21 car wrecks were removed from the forest there. So far this year we have located six other abandoned vehicles in the Wombat and once the research and review has been done by the first sub-committee (who will GPS these wrecks), we hope, with Lee Gleeson's blessing, to mount a major clean up in the forest in the new year.

T-Fro report: continued

Well, this is just for starters! There's so much to do. We are rather hoping that our critics who have accused us in the past of not really being committed to CFM will see things very differently in the near future as these very significant projects are shaped and rolled out. It's the kind of stuff we have been doing informally for many, many years – now it's officially part of a community program and we're pleased about that. We love the Wombat and we're committed to seeing it thrive. Many local motoring clubs have been engaged in clean ups and the removal of 'dead' cars and such for years. Now we have the opportunity to raise a much greater broad community awareness concerning these issues and get more of the community engaged in the health of the forest.

T-FRO is also keen to know if it can lend a hand, or offer practical support to other working groups engaged in the Wombat CFM program – please let us know if there is something we can do to work collaboratively to help you carry out your project. We now have a core group of 38 members who represent clubs and networks that touch in excess of 36,000 people – I wish they were all actively on board. We're working on it!!.

- Milton Oliver (T-FRO Convener)

Tourism

The Tourism Working Group has just undergone a change of convenor, and therefore will include a report next issue. In the meantime….

KYNETON & DISTRICT TRAIL RIDERS INC

We are a responsible group of people who have a love of horse riding and an appreciation of the bush.

Our trail riding club rides once a month (the last Sunday) and ride for approx
3 - 4 hours at various locations.

We have a range of ages riding from about 7 to 70.

Our club operates under the umbrella of ATHRA (Australian Trail Horse Riders Association) which is our governing body.

If you are interested in coming out with us please contact Joan Rattray
5348 7704 or e-mail on jlrat@iinet.net.au

Cultural Heritage

The idea of working groups started as a way of encouraging people to use our forest as a place from which we can draw nourishment, both materially and spiritually. We hope that it will become a place where we can work and play, honour the past, and take care of the future.

The Cultural Heritage working group is made up of members who have a great interest in pre- and post European history, both natural and human. Now that the structure of CFM looks to be settled, we are getting started on some activities, which, we hope will be of interest to many people living in and around the forest. We already have links to some of the organisations in the area with similar interests, and we hope that this networking will continue and expand, to the mutual benefit of all.

We are planning a series of articles for the newsletter on bush foods in the forest, and also on local family history. We fee that it is important to recognise everyone who has called this forest home and workplace over the years, as well as the associated forest sites.

We are also intending to get out in the forest and hold some informative (and enjoyable) events which will increase our knowledge and appreciation of our local heritage.

There is a wealth of history tucked away in homes, archives and people's memories, and it would be good if we could make it known, so that our forest history can be fully recognised, appreciated and preserved for generations to come.

Anyone with ideas and interests in this field is welcome to contact us. We meet monthly at 10 Morton St, Glenlyon, and the contact phone number is 5348 7884.

Non-Timber Products

Welcome to the latest news letter. Our working group would like to thank Tanya for her dedicated effort in producing, compiling, editing & organizing the publication of this valuable communication document. Also thanks to all the other working groups that are working so well behind the scenes to build a better Wombat Community & Forest. We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Chairman & Steward Ship Council Members, & look forward to a positive outcome for the forest. Last but not least, thanks goes to Tim Anderson, for the coordination of the C.F.M processes, you have done an unbelievable job.

This is an introduction to our working group.
We are looking at different ways Non Timber Products can be utilized to enhance the Wombat Forest. This can be done, for example, through the collection of indigenous seed from selectively logged coupes and revegetating degraded areas, after mining activities or weed infested areas are cleaned up. These seeds can also be sold to provide a possible money stream, which can then be spent on direct enhancement of the forest.

Such enhancement could include refurbishing the abandoned fish farm in Daylesford, which would then provide farmed indigenous aquatic species to be released back into the streams, which then helps to maintain as pristine an environment as possible. Again surplus stock could also be sold to enhance the income stream.

Other funding steams may be obtained from say, commercial bee keepers, harvesters of native flora, bush tucker & group activities like campers & bush walkers, only to mention a few. These people in return would require properly provided, managed & maintained facilities in return. In the long run these funding possibilities should be self sustainable.

By attracting this necessary money stream other activities can be subsidized. The more exciting ideas that are generated, the more possibilities arise, it is endless. We are also very conscious that resources are finite and very delicate and must be managed accordingly.

When I first became involved in the Community Forest Management Process, I didn't realise how fulfilling it was. We must now work together and start achieving some goals, and promote activities that the community can get involved with. With the close proximity to Melbourne, this forest is now becoming a very popular recreational area and pressures will increase to manage this forest well over coming years. All these activities require a great deal of both money and labour.

Our group is now looking at building our manpower base to put into practice some of the planned activities, so if any members of our community have anything to contribute please-please come and give our forest a helping hand, you will love it. If you wish to participate please contact Tim Anderson (refer number at front of newsletter) or myself Graham Connell on 54262243.

Education

One of the aims of the Education Working Group has been to improve communication and information exchange between Working Groups, and also between CFM participants and the wider community. The newsletter and the website, have been our main methods thus far, in addition to a number of community activities.

The Wombat News and Views

We have put together 6 issues of the newsletter to date. This has been a most rewarding project for me personally! I have been visiting many working groups (four to go!) for feedback on the newsletter thus far, and the response has been very positive. Thank you all! All I can say is keep writing , keep contributing—the News and views is a wonderful opportunity.

The Website

Mary Ann located a gem of a couple in the Blackwood Trentham region, Miles and Juliet, of Young Earth, who have been most generous with their time and expertise. Not only have Miles and Juliet put the website together, they produced a training manual and took us through a very helpful training session. For various reasons, CFM as a whole has not exactly leapt on to the web, and much of the site has remained empty! In 2004, our working group will look at improving the current level of engagement, as the website Miles and Juliet have created has fantastic potential.

Liason with Educational Institutions and other local groups

As education is all encompassing topic, and necessarily covers all aspects of community forest management, we have liased with a number of institutions and groups. Mary Ann in particular has been very active in the Trentham Blue Mount Blackwood area, and has carried out community engagement and monitoring activities such as weed mapping, Waterwatch, water soak mapping, community stalls and nature walks. These activities have involved the Weeds working group, Hydrology working group, Landcare groups, Melbourne University, local Field Naturalists, CMA's, local council, schoolchildren, landowners and other locals.

Next issue I will report upon three fantastic CFM workshops, which were held through the Creswick Landcare Centre.

The Education Working Group welcomes people with experience in all things educational: writing, layout, festival organisation, community stalls and school/ university engagement. We meet fortnightly at the Trentham Neighbourhood House.

Tanya Loos, co - convenor, 5348 2778 AH

Hydrology

The HWG had a very successful and fun display at the CFM stall at the recent Daylesford show. Invertebrates (insects) were collected from water sampling at Jubilee Lake, big and little kids alike flocked to the magnifiers and digital microscope to get a close look at what lives in the streams around Daylesford. We received a lot of interest in the HWG Waterwatch project .

Over the last few months the HWG has been considering ways to involve the community in the complex set of forest water issues that arise. The Group has decided to run a feature topic each month and facilitate various activities to explore and develop ideas around these topics. The HWG has developed a Planner for 2005 with a description of monthly activities all are welcome at these events.

Hydrology WG meetings:

*Meetings held monthly on the 1st Monday from 4-6pm, at DSE Daylesford.
*Informal meetings held on the 3rd Monday of the month (not minuted).
*Meetings will go for no longer than 2 hours.
*Minuted meetings will follow a set format and time constraints.
*Meetings are open to anyone who wants to attend.

Hydrology Working Group 2005 Planner

Jan Threats to waterways
information collection draft statement

Feb Definition of What is a waterway in the Wombat?
forum - experts,

Mar Waterwatch (community monitoring)
community water testing

Apr PROJECT PLANNING - Mapping Wombat Waterways
workshop project concept and scoping

May Water Management - Who's responsible?
workshop - update and renew contacts

Jun Mineral Springs
expert presentation - discussion about fact sheet

Jul PROJECT PLANNING - Mapping Wombat Waterways
presentation and discussion about draft research proposal

Aug Networking with other working Groups.
attendance at other working group meetings to explore partnerships

Sep Waterwatch - Community monitoring
community water testing - update results

Oct Waterway & wetland restoration
expert presentation - discussion about fact sheet

Nov PROJECT PLANNING - Mapping Wombat Waterways
finalisation of research proposal

Dec Water safety and enjoyment
information collection- draft statement - media, tourist info campaign

Fire

The fire working group has met several times since its formation. Meetings have included representatives from DSE, CFA, Community Fire Guard, Hepburn Shire, Macedon Ranges Shire and other working groups.

It is aimed that the fire-working group expand the representation within the group to include a more diverse range of stakeholders into the discussion.
The primary focus of the group to date has been preparedness for this years fire season and the preliminary works that have been conducted. This has included discussion surrounding the Fire Protection Plan and feedback from the fuel reduction burns that have already been conducted by DSE in the Wombat and surrounds.

It would be hoped that this group expands significantly and discussion has taken place regarding the location of the meetings and the capacity to have 2 working groups, Fire East and Fire West. This process may take some time now due to those that are currently involved and those that could be involved will be concentrating on this year's fire season.

It is hoped, through a coordinated approach to fire related issues many aspects of the use of fire, as a management tool and the suppression of wildfire could be addressed utilising as much input from the community as possible.

One project that has been suggested is the development of a pro-forma that could identify issues of all kinds within the forest for data collection, collation and future addressing. If an issue is identified that could be a risk to the forest for whatever reason data relating to this risk could be collected and collated through this process to be included into DSE databases for the identification of works required for future planning.

At this point there is no such simple collection tool available to the many locals and users of the forest. If such a tool was to be made available then the collection of the required data to forward plan work schedules including track maintenance, weed removal, ecological burns, fuel reduction burns etc would mean the most effective and efficient use of resources to maximise the outcomes and protection and enhancement of all forest values.

At present if a fire related risk is identified then this risk can be placed into the operating work schedule for this season. It would be hoped that over the next year information is gathered through the development of this tool to assist plan for the maximum benefit of resource allocation and prioritisation.

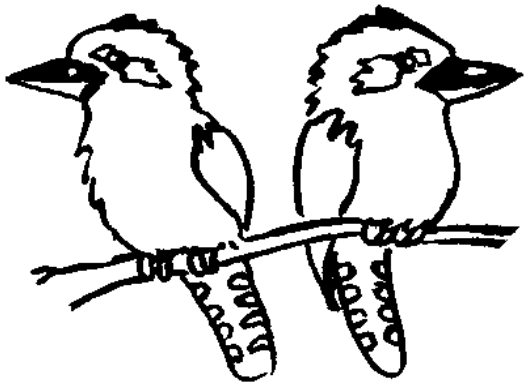
If you do happen to see a relevant risk that is associated with a fire risk including track maintenance, weed infestations that constitute a risk to the protection of Zone 1 & 2 priorities then this can be reported to Lee to be followed up. If it is deemed to be a fire risk then the works required can be conducted within current fire management budgets. There would need to be a definite linkage to protection of assets as an outcome in these instances but an assessment can be conducted when the risk is identified and be programmed into work schedules.

Thanks all and have a safe summer season.

Phil Millar
FWG Convenor CoS Representative

Convenor: Phil Millar
PO Box 21
Daylesford VIC 3460
Mob: 0414 539 206
Ph: +61 3 5334 5468
email: pmillar@hepburn.vic.gov.au

Secretary: Lee Gleeson
Wombat Forest Manager
East Midlands
Department of Sustainability and Environment
14 Mineral Springs Drv
Daylesford 3460
Ph (03) 5321 6810
Fax (03) 5348 2310
Mobile: 0417 323 604



Report from the Department of Sustainability and Environment

Staff movements
Management arrangements for the Wombat State Forest are still in a state of change. Phil Timpano has stayed on the with south-west region, fire business in a permanent role and Lee Gleeson continues acting Wombat Forest Manager while the role is being filled. Tuesday Phelan has taken a well-deserved break and Darryl Glover has returned from Melbourne to help out for a short while. Tim Anderson will continue in his community forestry facilitation role for the next two years.

Roading
Works have moved from our winter potholes to spring grading. Grading is done in spring to consolidate roads for the dry summer period. Road maintenance provides a significant protection to waterways by reducing the amount of sediment and nutrient transfer to waterways. Major roads to be graded include Camp Rd, Blackwood Ridge Rd, Bridge Rd and Loddon River Rd. DSE across the state is also working on developing a road management plan in line with the new Road Management Act. This involves updating the current roads database and the Vicmap transport layer (used fro emergency dispatch by police, CFA and Ambulance and DSE fire response)

The Fire Season
The fire season is now upon us with all staff dusting off their gear, retraining and being prepared. A number of fires have already occurred in the local area and a major fire in the mallee. Existing fire boundary trails between State forest and neighbouring landowners are being brushed up, summer project fire fighters have commenced and the fuel reduction burning program is well underway.

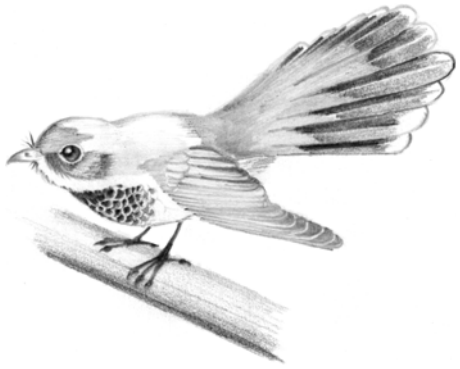
Recreation
The Firth Park recreation area is facing a number of problems due to vandalism including the recent theft of one of the historic ploughs. The toilet block is being consistently damaged and there have been reports of poor behaviour from visitors. If we are unable to provide a safe environment at the site, temporary closure will have to be considered.

Wombat Sawlog Supply Plan
DSE has been undertaking consultation around the proposed Wombat Sawlog Supply Plan. This has involved information sessions, consultation workshops and field trips to develop a proposed plan for the supply of sawlogs to local mills and firewood for the community. The proposed plan has been circulated to working groups, authorities, and interested individuals, an open house was held on the 25th of November at the Daylesford CFA and a bus tour will be held on the 6th of December. Everyone is encouraged to make a comment on the plan. A submission reference group representing the CFM Council of Stewards will review all comments and recommendations made to DSE to form the basis of the final plan.

Got a question for DSE?
If you wish to speak with Daylesford DSE staff about forest management in the Wombat, or make a comment on the plan we can be contacted by phone on 5348 2211, email on wombat.cfm@dse.vic.gov.au, or vibsit us at 14 Mineral Water Drive, Daylesford.

Animal Snapshot : Grey Fantail

Grey Fantails are part of a whole suite of bush birds that are known as altitudinal migrants. The birds spend the winter on the lowlands, in the parks, gardens and farmlands of Melbourne and surrounds, and then come spring, the birds head to the high country!
Many altitudinal migrants are well known in the Wombat Forest , such as Grey and Rufous Fantails, Rufous and Golden Whistlers, Pied Currawongs, Gang Gang Cockatoos and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos.
Altitudinal migration occurs the entire length of the Great Dividing Range, all the way to Far North Qld. The Wombat Forest is special in that we are both the southernmost and most westerly tip of this across Australia migratory phenomenon.



The Grey Fantail's call is beautifully described in Pizzey and Knight's Birds of Australia: " Sweet, tinny, animated fiddle-like song, ascending, ending in drawn out, rising, silvery notes" .
The above picture was drawn by Jon Rowden.

Trentham Wildlife Shelter Needs a New Home!

As many of you may be aware already we now have final word from our landlord that we must vacate our current premises by 3 January 2005 and no extension to this date will be considered. Our search for a more secure home in the region has become a matter of urgency and possibly a matter of survival for some of our 20 or so animals currently in care.

We are deeply concerned (not to say stressed and distressed) about our situation. We have exhausted our efforts to attract a mortgage sufficient to purchase suitable land and we continue to investigate all rental property avenues. One of our difficulties is that our needs are quite specific. Given the round the clock work required for wildlife care, the shelter requires land which can house ourselves, our equipment, supplies and the enclosures we use to house the animals in care. It needs to be a quiet location with access to secure healthy forest for the release of rehabilitated orphans.

We have so far made appeals to politicians, the Department and the local community asking for their assistance. This process is still underway and although we have received a great deal of moral support we seem no closer to a solution. As one of only a few shelters operating on our scale in the region we fear for the future of our current batch of injured and orphaned animals and for the increasing number of animals and community members likely to need our help.

We would love to stay in this region to continue to promote and pursue this essential work. With increasing development and tourism into the region we feel assistance with and education about wildlife is of vital importance.

Another sad event which has caused us much distress is the ³road kill² death of one of our much loved wombats ŒBear¹ who was about two and a half years old and had been released into the local forest earlier this year. He was making one of his regular home visits when he was hit and killed on the road at our front gate and was left in the middle of road for us to find. We are feeling a bit shattered as it seems that not even relatively remote unsealed forest roads are safe for wildlife.

On the whole, the Trentham Wildlife shelter is as busy as ever and the calls keep coming from the local community asking for help with local wildlife. As I write this we are awaiting the arrival of 12 microbats (insectivorous bats) rescued from a house having its roof space redone. Magpie fledglings have also been popular customers lately. Some of the maggies in our care are the victims of malnourishment and suffer feather, beak and feet deformation due to a poor diet. This is usually mince meat or dog food fed to them by well meaning people who try to raise orphaned chicks. Most wildlife requires a very specialised and complex diet so it is vital for their long term health for them to be fed properly. Please contact a local wildlife shelter or Wildline on 0500 540 000 if you find wildlife in need of care.

Thank you all for your support so far.

Jon Rowdon and Gayle Chappell





A tawny Frogmouth and a very little wallaby are just a couple of the many animals under Jon and Gayle's care...

Daylesford Show 2004: Wombat CFM Stall.

Wombat Community Forest Management held a stall at the 2004 Daylesford Show. The stall was in conjunction with the DSE Fire Management section that kindly allowed CFM to use their tent. Thanks especially to Lee Gleeson for booking the site and providing assistance. The stall carried a range of material sent to us by the Murray Darling Commission, Central Highlands Water and DSE as well as CFM based material including our wonderful Wombat News and Views. Wombat CFM thanks them all for their support.

The stall was also adorned with a number of stuffed fauna (well and truly), that proved to be of great interest to many children and adults. These included a Powerful Owl, a Brush-tailed phascogale, platypus and a Wallaby, kindly lent top us by the DSE Flora and Fauna section, again many thanks. A large satellite image of the whole forest and the region was also a popular drawcard.

The display was an opportunity to showcase CFM and the work that some of the Working Groups are doing. The Hydrology WG set up a computer-linked microscope that allowed many people passing through the stall to see a range of invertebrates from our local waterways.



I would like to thank Rebecca Pagan, Loris Duclos, Phil Millar, Denise Dalton and Tanya Loos for finding the time to help me on the stall.
Tim Anderson

At left: Phil and Becky discuss CFM with a Powerful Owl and a disinterested Black Wallaby!

If Undelivered, please return to Daylesford DSE, Mineral Water Drive, Victoria. 3460

Postage Paid
Australia

wombat NEWS and Views
newsletter for community management of the wombat forest

Victoria
The Place To Be