



Central West Investigation submission

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to:

veac

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To: veac@delwp.vic.gov.au,

RE: Response to Draft Recommendations for Central West Investigation

My response particularly relates to the Wombat State Forest, which is in the local area where I live. As the proposed Wombat Lerderderg National Park:

1. Horse riding on roads and tracks as specified by land manager, no overnight camping with horses.

What does "as specified by land manager" mean? This is ambiguous and unclear. Horse riding on forest tracks should unambiguously be allowed to continue as it has for 180 years.

At present the Wombat State forest, particularly in the section west of the Daylesford Ballan Road, is only lightly used by horse riders. As a horse riding user of the forest for more than three decades I have infrequently encountered another rider on the forest tracks in this section. The tracks are generally well formed vehicle tracks - mostly with high gravel content from past mining - and well used by walkers, mountain bike riders, dirt bike riders and four wheel drivers. Any damage to tracks is caused by vehicles, and not by horses.

No rider would risk venturing off the tracks as the whole region is full of mine shafts and dangerous fallen timbers and undergrowth. It is also unsafe to ride horses on the narrow access roads where vehicles tend to appear suddenly and at speed. Horses spreading weeds is an old chestnut. Birds and tyres spread weeds especially where past mining activities have disturbed the earth. The Wombat forest is full of weeds, gorse and blackberry and it's not because of horses.

Please do not limit access to horse riders in the Wombat Forest/ or proposed Wombat Lerderderg NP..

At the VEAC community consultation in Daylesford recently VEAC councillors were unaware of the existence of the Goldfields Track - Tourism Victoria's iconic walking/riding track that traverses the western section of the Wombat State Forest, roughly south to north. This is a long distance track that is currently used and enjoyed by horse and bike riders and walkers. How can VEAC form recommendations for public land use when it has no idea of what that land encompasses and its major uses and attractions?

At the same public consultation VEAC councillors indicated that horse riding would be permitted in the proposed new regional parks in the vicinity of Daylesford, Trentham and near Bullengarook, giving the impression that riding in the proposed National Park would **not** be permitted. This was also ambiguous and unclear. The proposed new Hepburn regional park near Daylesford is less suitable for riding as it has busy access roads, and is bordering housing areas.

No overnight camping with horses. On the contrary there are several easily accessible sites within the Wombat State forest that would be perfect horse camping sites. One is Wombat Station in the western section, which has the old railway siding often used by campers and is accessing the Goldfields Track. Water would have to be brought in. The other is near the Werribee River just off Daylesford Ballan Road, where there is already a large open campsite. There are horse camping sites in other national parks such as the Alpine National Park, why not here?

2. No domestic firewood collection: The Wombat State Forest is subject to regular storm damage - tornadoes have ripped through the forest on several occasions in recent years - and as a consequence, the forest floor is littered with fallen timbers creating a fire hazard. One only has to look at the forest on entry to Daylesford from the southwest on the Midland Highway to see the massive hazardous fuel load from past storms very close to houses. Daylesford is virtually encircled by forest and to limit firewood collection is nonsense and dangerous to residents. Not to mention

denying the community a resource that they have relied on for decades.

3. **Deer hunting to be allowed on Mount Cole:** It seems very brutal and inhumane to turn a deer sanctuary of more than a century into a slaughter zone. The deer have learnt to be unsuspecting, and can't easily escape, so allowing shooters in is hardly sporting. Really, in this day and age when gun control is a real issue, to open up a sanctuary to shooters is a truly bizarre and worrying recommendation.

Virginia Imhoff