

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



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To:
VEAC

22 June 2015

Re: **Statewide Assessment of Public Land** – a submission from HFNC in June 2015

We wish to comment on two aspects of the investigation: Current Public Land Categories and Current Reservation Status of Public Land.

1. Current Public Land Categories

There are too many categories and this is most confusing. We suggest the following categories need to be changed to simplify the system and to cater better for multiple values of many reserves:

State Parks – we contend that this category should be amended, as follows:

- (a) Changed to National Park where it has obvious status and cannot be combined with a near-adjacent NP of similar landscape and complementary values
- (b) Incorporated into an existing near-adjacent National Park (NP) where there are obvious similarities in landscape and vegetation attributes (e.g. volcanic landscape)
- (c) Reduced to a general category called Nature Reserve. This would include Flora & Fauna Reserve & Flora Reserves but would have broader connotations – e.g. it would include Streamside Reserves. We think it would be better understood by the public and more consistent with reserves in other States.

Streamside Reserves – we contend that this category should be removed and the areas currently in that category be transferred to Nature Reserve. In order to allow for camping in former Streamside Reserves, that would need to be stipulated as being in certain sites. We understand that the present legislation for Flora Reserves does not preclude camping anywhere – that should be revised also because it currently allows tracks into such reserves and that has a bad impact on the reserve. We understand that managers have been hampered by not being able to enforce no-camping rules.

Nature Conservation Reserves – this label does not appear to be obvious on many of the former Flora and Fauna, Flora Reserves or Bushland Reserves. We suggest changing it to Nature Reserve to give it a wider appeal and to allow more reserves to be included.

Natural Features Reserves – this is a dreadful title and we can see no reason why all reserves in it should not simply come under the category of Nature Reserve.

Forest Parks – we do not see the relevance of this category. There is very little recreation done in these Parks that cannot be done in National Parks or Nature Reserves. Activities such as horse-riding and motoring is supposed to be kept to recognized tracks. We recommend transferring all of the land of the Forest Parks to adjacent National Parks (where that proximity occurs) or be named as Nature Reserves.

Lakes and other wetlands – the existing names are rather confusing. We have Game Reserves, Wildlife Reserves, Lake Reserve and other designations. All appear capable of being shot over. We would like to see no hunting on Lake Reserves – and all wetlands that are Brolga flocking sites and significant migratory bird feeding sites be declared Lake Reserves where hunting is off-limits. There are a multitude of wetlands where hunting is permitted and there is good reason why the very few wetlands that are vitally important as sanctuaries should be protected.

2 Current Reservation Status of Public Land

We contend that there are examples where the current distinction between National Parks and State Parks is not appropriate. We will give 3 examples:

- (a) Black Range State Park – we see no good reason for listing a Black Range State Park when there is Crown Land linking it to the Grampians/Gariwerd National Park near Cherrypool. The linking blocks of State Forest near Cherrypool, the River Red Gum woodland at Woohlpooer and the heathlands both sides of the Henty Highway at Glenisla, should be added to the Grampians/Gariwerd NP, along with the Black Range (Burrunj) area. The Black Range SP contains vegetation and Aboriginal art sites that would expand the importance of the Grampians NP as a biological reserve and area of Aborigine art. There is a large element of Yellow Box (*E. melliodora*) and some Grey Box (*E. microcarpa*) and Yellow Gum (*E. leucoxydon*) woodland in the Black Range – these species are either poorly represented in Grampians NP or are absent (Grey Box). The Black Range is an important unit and the current categorisation results in management that is sub-standard.
- (b) Mt Napier State Park – there is justification for including this reserve in a greater Budj Bim & Tappoc National Park (i.e. the former Mt Eccles NP & Mt Napier SP). The vegetation and volcanics are similar and the volcanic features of the current Mt Napier SP are worthy of National Park status (particularly the lava caves of the Byaduk Caves system which is second in Australia only to the Undara system in Queensland). The significance of the Byaduk Caves was hardly appreciated when the current reservation was made. Tappoc itself is a significant landmark and one of very few lava cones in Victoria that has not been disrupted by quarrying. Current management is poor in some respects (e.g. control of feral goats has taken more than 20 years since HFNC first raised the matter, and agitated many times since then for action). There is currently no ranger on-site for either area.
- (c) Fulham Streamside Reserve – the current reservation status does nothing to preserve the floristic values of this important reserve. There are some 325 native species of flora on this 860 ha reserve, including several outliers from the Mallee. The current management is sub-standard in that there is little protection of flora from off-road activities and control of weeds. While the pools on the Glenelg River are popular camping and fishing spots the overall significance of the reserve is botanic and that should be reflected in the name. Thus, we recommend changing it to Nature Reserve (i.e. the old ‘Fauna and Flora Reserve’). Our club has spent 8 years every spring trying to control the most insidious weed pests from spreading through the heathlands from the river area and tracks. The weeds include *Sparaxis bulbifera*, Cape Tulip and Wild Gladiolus. Past practice in control of the Cape Tulip was to use broadscale spray and that created large denuded areas in the heathland and very little impact on the resilient Cape Tulip. That approach would not have been sanctioned in a Flora Reserve. HFNC has employed a herbicide-wiping technique to remove the Tulip without effecting the native vegetation, but the task is vast as a result of past neglect, possibly resulting from an inappropriate designation as Streamside Reserve.

When the Discussion paper and Draft Proposals paper are available we will make further submissions, particularly in respect to State Forests (areas that should be incorporated into National Parks or Nature Reserves) and the possibility of the State Forestry department taking on the management of some of the conservation reserves that are currently poorly managed by PV, an organisation that has had a severe cut to its staffing. Conversely, the Forestry department appears to have more staffing but less forest logging application than in years past.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rod Bird

Secretary
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club