

Minutes of Meeting No. 20 held at Woori Yallock on 18 July 2017.

1. Welcome and acknowledgement of traditional owners of the land:

Convenor Anne Langworthy opened the meeting, welcomed the committee members, and other invitees, and acknowledged the traditional owners of the land.

Conflicts of Interest:

Nil

Attendance:

Members: Anne Langworthy (Convenor), Cr. Jim Child (Yarra Ranges Council), Jeff Latter (Community Rep – Cardinia), Dan Harley (Zoos Victoria), Ben Cullen (Trust for Nature), Dan Robertson (Melbourne Water), Bob Anderson (Community Rep – Yarra Ranges), Sue Tardif (Community Rep – Yarra Ranges) Peter Cooper (Community Rep – Yarra Ranges), Merryn Kelly (DELWP), David Renkin (CFA).

Guests: Steve Hosking (Melbourne Water), Victoria Purdue (DELWP), Jessica Pocklington (DELWP), Emma Trottman (PV).

Secretariat: Keith Longridge

Apologies: Stephen Thuan, Craig Bray, John Terrick.

Convenor Anne Langworthy noted that Stephen Thuan was resigning his position at PPWCMA and would no longer be attending meetings of YCACC.

MOTION:

That a letter of thanks be sent to Stephen Thuan and David Buntine at PPWCMA for their valuable contributions to the operation of YCACC and the prompt replies to committee enquiries.

Moved: Sue Tardif **Seconded:** Dan Harley

CARRIED

2. Minutes of the previous meetings:

Acceptance of the minutes meeting No. 19, held on 20 June 2017

MOTION:

That the minutes of meeting No.19 held on 20 June 2017 as circulated be confirmed, noting that the August meeting of YCACC be held at the Healesville Sanctuary.

Moved: Bob Anderson **Seconded:** Cr Jim Child

CARRIED

3. Matters arising from previous minutes

3 (a) YCACC Tour of the YCA draft itinerary

Executive Officer spoke briefly to the proposed itinerary circulated with the agenda. Specific committee members were nominated as 'guides' at the specific sites, and undertook to provide a description of the key issues and identify the specific location at each of the nominated sites and provide the Melway Map reference to the Executive Officer.

(b) Clarify nature of planned burns

At YCACC meeting No. 19, at Item No. 7 (Presentation from coalition of conservation groups), it was asserted that at least three recent planned burns within Nature Conservation Reserves were not consistent with VEAC Recommendation R3 because they 'must have ecological purpose'. Craig Bray undertook to investigate the veracity of that assertion. Consequently, he circulated copies of the maps for the relevant planned burns with the meeting agenda.

In his absence Victoria Purdue pointed out that at Victorian Government Response to VEAC Yellingbo Investigation Final Report Recommendation A (General recommendations for nature conservation reserves) at Note (5), that

Fire may be utilised as a land management tool, including for public safety, where compatible with ecological values.

(c) Review of stakeholder databases

Merryn Kelly spoke briefly to the stakeholder databases integrated by Jessica Pocklington and circulated with the meeting agenda. Merryn indicated that the data has been categorised as best as possible to align with the groups identified in the Communications and Engagement Plan. There may still be some gaps e.g. Yarra Valley Tourist associations.

The committee noted the extensive work involved in integrating the databases and thanked Jessica for her efforts in developing them to the current stage and requested members to send any errors or omissions to Merryn Kelly in Excel format.

(d) Haining Farm Concept Consultation Submissions

Convenor Anne Langworthy provided a brief explanation about the form of the YCACC submission to the Engage Victoria process in relation to public consultations for the Haining Farm project authorised at Item No 6 (b) (DELWP – YCA Project team) from the previous meeting. Anne explained that all public submissions would be directed to the Haining Farm working group, not Parks Victoria or DELWP.

Therefore, on the advice of Victoria Purdue, Anne forwarded a long form submission to Chris Hardman at Parks Victoria and Kelly Crosthwaite at DELWP, and a shorter form to the working group.

Victoria Purdue noted that all data use would be the responsibility of the working group; its role being to develop a final recommendation to government. The next meeting of the working group was expected in the next 10 days, with the expectation that a final recommendation would be developed by the end of July.

Cr Jim Child as a member of the working group spoke to the value of the consultation process. The committee noted Bob Anderson's comment that a range of issues were raised in the development of the Haining Farm process and he would discuss those further in his report later in this meeting.

4. Correspondence

- (a) Letter from Yarra Ranges Shire Council in acknowledgement of the YCACC submission to the Council about the proposed route of the Yarra Valley Trail.
- (b) Email from DELWP in acknowledgement of the YCACC submission to the Haining Farm project.

5. Regular updates

(a) Budget update

Merryn Kelly spoke briefly to the budget papers distributed with the agenda and addressed the apparent discrepancy showing as a nominal \$61,000 deficit, where savings are in hand. Merryn noted that indicative forecasts have been drafted and that they will change in line with changes in the timing of works.

Merryn offered to provide a briefing note to the next YCACC meeting. Merryn also advised that Jo Wand had indicated that she could present to the August YCACC meeting about the status of fire planning at the landscape level.

Further, committee members canvassed the implications of a range of scenarios for fire planning at Haining Farm and at the broader landscape level.

(b) DELWP – YCA Project team

Victoria Purdue presented the project update as circulated with the agenda papers and taken as read. In addition, Victoria highlighted the following points,

- A process has been undertaken to select revegetation works, e.g. treatment of ‘tobacco plant’ has been incorporated into Melbourne Water works programmes;
- Victoria emphasised the importance of posting revegetation and other establishment works on the YCACC website;
- Site inspections by staff have been used to gain historical data and collect preliminary information.

Committee members also requested that additional details be provided in future reports, e.g. more details around location and the nature of site inspections by staff with licence holders.

(c) Melbourne Water

Dan Robertson and Steve Hosking briefly outlined the planned or schedule capital projects including priorities on Little Yarra River to Woori Yallock Creek. They also reported that there has been limited uptake of the incentives programs by landowners within the YCA at the current time.

(d) Parks Victoria

Emma Trottman, in the absence of Craig Bray reported the following in relation to the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve (NCR):

- Green Army commenced 10 July and is into the second week of training before commencing various environmental projects in the reserve;
- The 2016/17 works program was delivered with key focus on pest animals (foxes, cats and deer), pest plant control, support for the FOHH and site preparation of the first stage of the Youngs Swamp revegetation project;
- Planning is underway for the development of the PV action plan for 2017/ 18. This will see the involvement of PV, Melbourne Water, and the FOHH to ensure works are coordinated across the reserve;

Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee

- Ranger Miles Stewart-Howie was taken off line for three months to develop discussion papers on hydrology, revegetation and pest plant control. None of these have been completed to date.

(e) Haining Farm working group

The YCACC representative on this working group, Bob Anderson outlined the composition of the working group, its role, and his role representing YCACC.

Bob briefly outlined the deliberations in the most recent working group meeting that canvassed the following:

Victoria Purdue presented an overview analysis of the community survey responses, including total number of responses, their geographic distribution, frequency of visits, the themes illustrating potential uses evident in responses, and the relative support for the three concept plans or development plans presented for consideration.

The committee noted that this information is provided in confidence to members until the project work is completed and the information is made public. It is also noted that the report may be posted to the Victorian Government website after the working group has made its recommendation to Parks Victoria and DELWP.

There followed a general discussion around the implications and issues of the working group process as they applied to the community consultation, including the role of the working group itself. Cr Jim Child outlined his perspective of that role and the contribution made by the working group.

(f) Tall Trees Survey

Jeff Latter briefly outlined some recent email exchanges he has had with Brett Mifsud regarding the tall trees in the Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve. There are at least 25 trees that exceed 80m in height along Sassafras Creek in the Dandenong Ranges. The tallest of these have been climbed to get a very accurate height estimate. These trees originated in the 1920s and are around 85 – 90 years old and adding about a metre of height every four or five years. Jeff added that this site is relatively close to Melbourne and therefore very accessible to that major population centre and may be of significant community interest. The trees are very fire sensitive, an attribute of the narrow streamside reserve, and will likely become the tallest specimens in Victoria within about a decade.

Committee noted the following links:

<http://victoriasgianttrees.weebly.com/tall-trees.html>

<http://victoriasgianttrees.weebly.com/tall-tree-stats.html>

(g) YCACC Actions list

Keith Longridge spoke briefly to the Actions list circulated with the agenda papers. The committee worked through the actions to eliminate completed items and to note the status of others.

The committee requested that the list note the month and year that each action item originated in and the version noted in the footer.

At 11:50 am David Renkin was excused with approval of the committee.

6. Committee response to Conservation Alliance

Merryn Kelly spoke to the briefing paper circulated with the agenda papers outlining a draft response to the issues raised by the Conservation Alliance at the previous YCACC meeting, compiled by herself, Victoria Purdue and Craig Bray. Following a brief discussion of the issues, the committee approved the draft response with several minor alterations.

7. Determining YCA Boundaries

Victoria Purdue spoke to the briefing paper circulated with the agenda papers. Victoria expanded on the proposed categories and staging in three parts for the Surveyor-General to undertake survey works.

The committee requested that Sheepstation Creek be included in the first stage. It was noted that Warramate Reserve, Shepherd's Creek and Doon Reserve have already been surveyed.

Dan Robertson agreed to send Melbourne Water river and creek survey data to Victoria Purdue.

8. Communications and Engagement Plan

Merryn Kelly and Anne Langworthy spoke to the draft circulated with the agenda papers and outlined the development process to date.

Following brief discussions, the committee agreed to add:

- Key messages and to update same; and
- Mission, Vision and Values following the introduction section.

In section 10 (Evaluation and Review), the committee suggested adding processes/ actions undertaken, and to note the changes in attitudes at time of review in 12 months' time. Merryn Kelly undertook to circulate revised key messages to committee members for review prior to their inclusion in the plan.

MOTION:

That the draft Communications and Engagement Plan be approved in – principle as circulated, with the additions noted above.

Moved: Merryn Kelly **Seconded:** Sue Tardif

CARRIED

9. Future Funding Process

Merryn Kelly spoke to the briefing paper circulated with the agenda papers. Merryn outlined the process about making funding bids to the government's Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) and the advice that YCACC support ERC bids via DELWP submissions.

After discussion, it was also noted that YCACC needs to identify funding gaps e.g. for Office of Surveyor – General works, and that the Concept Plan will also identify further funding gaps.

Committee noted that Merryn Kelly and Victoria Purdue would provide a series of dot points to committee members to further discuss this and other funding processes over the next six months.

10. Draft Action Plan

Keith Longridge spoke to the briefing paper outlining the development of the Action Plan to date, and the draft of the Action Plan circulated with the agenda papers. Following limited discussion to review the draft, several suggestions were made by committee members, including:

- To include the names of land agencies individually in the actions tables;
- To incorporate the decision by the Minister, known as ‘the 10-metre rule’; and
- To minimise the use of acronyms or include in a glossary of terms section.

The committee recommended that the working group meet ASAP to finalise the draft and noted that the next meeting of the working group is scheduled for Tuesday 25 July at Knoxfield at 9:30am.

11. Other business

Lowland Leadbeater’s Possum

Dan Harley reported that, based on data collected in June, the estimate for the total wild population of Lowland Leadbeater’s Possums at Yellingbo NCR is 38 individuals. Zoos Victoria are working with Parks Victoria to develop a contingency plan that includes enhanced habitat protection at Yellingbo NCR and new recovery measures to increase numbers.

12. Development of Concept Plan workshop

Merryn Kelly and Anne Langworthy spoke to the briefing paper circulated with the agenda papers and addressed a range of issues raised by committee members.

Given the limited time available to review the development of the concept plan, the committee nominated a working group, comprising the following committee members to pursue its development, namely: Anne Langworthy, Merryn Kelly, Victoria Purdue, Dan Robertson and Sue Tardif and a yet to be nominated Parks Victoria representative.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 15 August 2017, at Healesville Sanctuary.

Close

The meeting closed at 1400 hours.

Keith Longridge

Executive Officer