

Minutes of Meeting No. 21 held at The Brolga Room, Healesville Sanctuary on 15 August 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.

Ross Williamson, Healesville Sanctuary Director, welcomed YCACC members and reinforced Zoos Victoria support for the work in establishing the YCA.

Conflicts of Interest:

Nil

Attendance:

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

Guests: Victoria Purdue (DELWP), Joanne Wand (DELWP).

Executive Officer: Joan Howard.

Apologies: Bob Anderson (Community Rep – Yarra Ranges), David Renkin (CFA), Marianne Sawyer (Cardinia Shire Council), Steve Hosking (Melbourne Water), John Terrick (Wurundjeri Tribe Land Council).

Convenor Anne Langworthy introduced Joan Howard as the newly appointed Executive Officer for the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee. Joan has been employed to assist the Committee two days per week.

It was agreed that the order of proceedings would begin with Agenda Items 6 to 12 to enable more time for discussion on these issues.

2. Minutes of the previous meetings:

Acceptance of the minutes meeting No. 20, held on 18 July 2017

MOTION:

That the minutes of meeting No. 20 held on 18 July 2017 be confirmed subject to the following amendment:

- that Don Reserve on page 5 be amended to Doon Reserve

Moved: Cr Jim Child

Seconded: Jeff Latter

CARRIED

3. Matters arising from previous meeting

- YCCAC Tour of the YCA- those committee members who attended found the tour most informative.
- Additional details in DELWP reports – *see item 5 (b)*.
- YCACC Action List – *see item 5 (f)*.
- Determining the YCA boundaries – *see item 7 re licences*.

4. Correspondence

Outgoing:

- (a) Email to Simon O'Callaghan, CEO of Yarra Ranges Tourism, requesting information about tourism groups and stakeholders who may wish to be included on the YCACC stakeholder database;
- (b) Letter of farewell to Mr Stephen Tuan, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, with thanks for his contribution to YCACC;
- (c) Letter of response to Yarra Ranges Conservation Alliance regarding a range of concerns raised at the YCACC Committee Meeting on 20 June 2017; and
- (d) Email to Mr David Buntine requesting information about who would be the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority representative to fill the position vacated by Mr Stephen Tuan.

Incoming:

- (e) Email from Mr David Buntine, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, indicating that no one would be nominated to replace Mr Stephen Tuan.

Note: Whilst there is no representative of the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority attending YCACC meetings Mr David Buntine has requested that all relevant documents/reports be sent to him.

5. Regular updates

(a) Budget update

Budget documents were provided to the committee by Merren Kelly. These included:

- Yellingbo Conservation Area Indicative Budget; and
- Yellingbo Conservation Area Finance Report.

A briefing note was not submitted and the discussion was limited. Issues arising from the budget will be addressed at the next YCACC meeting.

(b) DELWP – YCA Project team

Victoria Purdue presented the project team update as detailed in the briefing note circulated with the meeting papers. YCA Project Team activities included:

- finalising the Working Group recommendations for Haining Farm as detailed in Agenda item 5(e) below;
- undertaking background work for the Engagement and Communication Plan, the Concept Plan; and the Action Plan;
- further YCA Project Officer site visits in the YCA – a map of site visits is currently being prepared for YCACC information in response to a YCACC request for more details about the location and nature of site inspections related to licence agreements;
- a site visit to the now closed Yellingbo Primary School to discuss development possibilities for this site with Bob Anderson;
- a meeting with staff developing the Engage Victoria website within the Department of Premier and Cabinet; and
- stakeholder meetings with:

- Friends of Warramate to discuss the concept planning process and mountain bike riding in Warramate;
- Greening Australia, Zoos Victoria, Parks Victoria to discuss Haining Farm;
- Landscape architects TCL to discuss products for the Concept Planning process.

(c) Melbourne Water

Dan Robertson - due to time constraints, no specific report was given. However, Melbourne Water's perspective was presented in the discussions regarding licensing and Concept Planning.

(d) Parks Victoria

Craig Bray - due to time constraints, no specific report was given. However, Parks Victoria's perspective was presented in the discussions regarding licensing and Concept Planning.

(e) Haining Farm working group

The Haining Farm working group met on 27 July 2017 to review the community engagement results. A final meeting of the working group will be held on Thursday 17 August 2017 and final recommendations will be presented at the next YCACC meeting. The working group recommendations will be submitted to Chris Hardman and Kelly Crosthwaite.

(f) YCACC Actions list

An updated Action List was circulated with the agenda papers. The format of the Action List was adjusted in line with the Committee request to include the month and year in which each action item originated, and the version noted in the footer. Completed Action Items were noted but there was no further discussion regarding ongoing items.

6. Bushfire Planning (10:45am to 11:45am)

Joanne Wand, a Bushfire Risk Analyst working with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) was asked to prepare a bushfire risk assessment for the Yellingbo Conservation Area given two criteria:

- I. the current bushfire risk taking into account existing housing and other infrastructure together with the existing vegetation type and density; and
- II. the possible future bushfire risk taking into account predicted housing and infrastructure growth together with maximum revegetation of the public land and, separately, private land.

The PHOENIX RapidFire bushfire modelling tool was used for the risk analysis. This tool was developed by Associate Professor Kevin Tolhurst and other researchers at the University of Melbourne working out of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC). The tool is considered to have a high degree of reliability and progressively includes data from recent fires to increase its accuracy as a modelling tool.^{1 2}

The risk analysis for the Yellingbo Conservation Area was assessed across three spatial areas within YCA notionally: South, Middle, and East. The modelling indicated that there was no measurable increase in bushfire risk associated with maximum landscape revegetation in the YCA.

¹ <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-computer-program-that-saved-a-town>

² <http://people.math.sfu.ca/~dean/forestry/talks/NICDStolhurst.pdf>

It was noted that the Bushfire Risk Assessment for the Yellingbo Conservation Area is important information for the community, and strategies for circulating this information needed to be considered by YCACC.

Joanne Wand (DELWP) advised that the Minister will be releasing a state-wide Bushfire Management Plan in the next few weeks.

Joanne Wand agreed to forward the PowerPoint presentation to the Committee.

7. YCA Licences

Victoria Purdue spoke to the briefing paper circulated with the meeting papers. Victoria noted that the Victorian Government supported VEAC recommendations:

- 5(e)(i) – management agreements with public authorities to manage specific land included on Schedule Four A [VEAC recommendation R5(d)]; and
- 5(e)(ii) – conservation agreements with adjacent landholders, for land on Schedule Four A [VEAC recommendation R5(d)] within 100 metres of both a permanent waterway and the private land boundary.

and that the *National Parks Act 1975* would be amended to allow for these agreements. Victoria advised that prior to the land being reserved under the new amendment to the Act, Riparian Management licences would be issued by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) under either the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* or the *Land Act 1958*, and that these licences may include the use of grazing as a management tool. It was noted that, under DELWP coding for licence agreements, the ‘type’ would be listed as ‘riparian’ and the ‘purpose’ would be listed as ‘conservation’.

There was extensive discussion about the conditions under which the Riparian Management licences would/should be issued. Key discussion points included:

- the benefits of collaborative management, inclusive of public land managers, private landowners, volunteer groups, and other active groups within the Yellingbo Conservation area;
- there was some disagreement that the use of grazing licences as a management tool will provide the best conservation outcome for public land in the Yellingbo Conservation Area given that the VEAC report indicates that ‘nature conservation is a primary management objective’;
- YCACC has not yet seen the final Spatial Categorisation Mapping and Report that will inform licence agreements;
- information was sought about how licences would be regulated and monitored;
- clarification was sought about how the Riparian Management/Conservation licences/agreements would ensure that stock are kept away from waterways;
- clarification was sought about the positioning of fences under the licence conditions given the 10-meter revegetation rule being applied to revegetation initiatives along waterways in the North-East area as per the Minister’s November 2016 ruling;
- concern was raised about the complexities of managing the public land that extends beyond the revegetation zone of 10 meters from existing waterways; and how partnerships with private landholders (including grazing licences) would meet the VEAC and Government objectives of reversing habitat fragmentation and improving biodiversity in the YCA.

- issues related to the validity of the licences after 2018 when Parks Victoria will take over management of the Yellingbo Conservation Area given that licences can be issued for up to a 10-year period;
- concern that the 'community' does not understand how the licencing regulations, and the broader changes being planned for the Yellingbo Conservation Area, will impact on them and the land around them.

Victoria Purdue advised that *DELWP* is currently tasked with the issue and management of grazing licences within the YCA, and this strategy is consistent with VEAC and government recommendations. The licence system will be used as a 'riparian management tool for conservation'. The application and approval process follows legislative and department guidelines, regulations and local area management plans governing the use of land within the YCA. Current grazing maps and the Spatial Categorisation Report would inform the allocation of grazing licences; and grazing licences will only be granted in areas where grazing is currently active.

The meeting was advised that many of the queries raised by the Committee (in the discussion points above) would be determined in the assessment of individual applications on a case by case basis.

Craig Bray indicated that when *Parks Victoria* assume responsibility for YCA management in 2018 licencing agreements would be consistent with the protocols and procedures set in place by DELWP. The licences approved by DELWP could be issued for up to 10 years, and are legally binding. If new legislation changed the terms or conditions of the licences then PV would adjust/update the licence agreements to accommodate the legislative changes whilst still honouring the essence of the landholder agreements/licences issued by DELWP. Craig indicated that new PV resources would have to be allocated to licence management including the appointment of additional staff.

The River Red Gum Management Plan (PV) was raised as a good example of conservation management involving many stakeholders.

MOTION:

that 'in principle' support be given to the Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (DELWP) to enter into licence agreements for conservation purposes with adjoining landowners within the Yellingbo Conservation Area; and that these licences may include the use of grazing as a management tool where this is consistent with YCACC's spatial categorisation process.

Support for this motion is conditional on the provision of further detail regarding the criteria for licence approvals including a flow chart of the decision making process and conditions applied to management. Examples of three or four licence agreements will be tabled at the next YCACC meeting.

Jeff Latter opposed the recommendation indicating that he believed that DELWP is not ready to issue licenses given the limited information regarding the terms upon which individual licences are granted.

Moved: Dan Harley

Seconded: Dan Robertson

CARRIED

8. Engagement and Communication Plan

Merryn Kelly and Anne Langworthy spoke to the draft plan Engagement and Communication Plan circulated with the agenda and meeting papers. The mission, vision and values statements as approved by YCACC have been included in the document and the key messages have been amended

in response to discussions arising from the previous YCACC meeting. It was requested that the fifth dot point of the 'Key messages for YCACC' on page 9 be explained in more detail.

There was extensive discussion about the communication strategy. It was decided that the Engagement and Communication Plan will remain an unpublished working document with many aspects, including the stakeholder database, to be developed further by the Executive Officer.

9. Development of Concept Plan

Merryn Kelly and Anne Langworthy spoke to the briefing paper circulated with the meeting papers.

Requested amendments to the Concept Plan include:

- that the document copyright and branding reflects YCACC as the lead organisation and includes an acknowledgement of all contributing government departments and agencies;
- that references to the Engagement and Communication Plan reflect the amendments noted above;
- reference to 'project sponsors' will be replaced by reference to approval process which includes all relevant CEOs of YCA land manager agencies; and
- naming of the 'Conservation Landscape' (current YCA) as part of the Concept Planning process.

There was extensive discussion about the Concept Plan and the community information sessions. It was decided that:

- the committee consider learning from the Haining Farm consultation before progressing the Concept Plan;
- key stakeholder agencies would be invited to attend a concept planning session on Tuesday 19 September 2017 (YCACC member agencies plus Greening Australia and VicRoads);
- targeted stakeholder sessions will be scheduled subsequent to the 19 September Agency meeting;
- community information sessions will take place in November once clear objectives have been established for these sessions;
- YCACC members will host the information sessions with the assistance of the YCA Project Implementation Team;
- the YCA Project Implementation Team in consultation with the YCACC Concept Planning Working Group will prepare: an information booklet, a PowerPoint presentation, maps, plans, and other media to support the information sessions;
- a single survey instrument will be prepared to gather and record community opinion and information at the November information sessions. This instrument will be available online and in hard copy; and
- updated information will be posted to the YCACC website on an ongoing basis.

MOTION:

that subject to amendments noted above 'in principle' approval is given to the Concept Plan.

Moved: Cr Jim Child

Seconded: Ben Cullen

CARRIED

Note: The committee agreed that when finalised the Concept Plan should be posted to the YCACC website as a public document.

10. Draft Action Plan

The final draft of the Action Plan was circulated with the meeting papers. The changes requested at the previous YCACC meeting have been incorporated into the document. Two further amendments were requested before the draft document is forwarded to all stakeholder departments and agencies for comment, approval, and sign off:

- the flow chart on page 5 be replaced with the flow chart on page 2 of meeting attachment no. 11; and
- to shift the section 'What is the Yellingbo Conservation Area trying to achieve' from page 21 to the front of the document.

MOTION:

that subject to amendments noted above 'in principle' approval is given to the Action Plan.

Moved: Merryn Kelly

Seconded: Craig Bray

CARRIED

11. Other business

No further business raised.

12. Optional tour of the Coranderrk

The tour was cancelled due to bad weather.

Meeting Close

13:00 – Meeting closed

Lunch

13:00 – Lunch provided by Healesville Sanctuary

Date of Next Meeting

Date: Tuesday 19 September 2017

Time: 09:00 to 14:00

Place: Woori Yallock