



PUBLIC LAND COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

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PLCV NEWS

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LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL'S WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

The LCC has recommended 13 areas to become Wilderness. The Council has recommended that minimal impact minerals exploration be permitted in Wilderness areas and that recreational deer hunting be permitted in three Wilderness areas. On the other hand however, the recommendations will have a severe impact on four-wheel-driving and cattle grazing in the Alpine Area.

The following is the policy of the PLCV in relation to the LCC's recommendations:

- * That the concept of wilderness areas be rejected.
- * That the concept of protecting the remote and natural attributes of public land be supported.
- * That, given the likelihood of the Government accepting the LCC's recommendations on Wilderness, the PLCV propose a series of amendments:
 - That no Wilderness areas be proclaimed until a management plan has been prepared, and that this include a fire management plan.
 - Wilderness areas should not be proclaimed until the law is changed in relation to recreational deer hunting and minerals exploration.
 - That hunting be permitted in any Wilderness area in which there is vermin.
 - Limited mechanised access should be permitted in order to provide access to the 95% of the population who are not bushwalkers.
 - Given the agreement on alpine grazing, no wilderness area should result in the removal of alpine grazing.
 - That research into fire management be a high priority and that until some conclusive results are available, fire management in wilderness areas be the same as on surrounding land.

FUNDING PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT

As part of the Wilderness campaign, we have reminded the Director of National Parks and Public Land and the Chairman of the Land Conservation Council that most LCC recommendations are qualified by the recommendation:

"That the authorities responsible for managing and protecting public land be allocated the resources necessary for the task."

We have asked for information on funding levels before and after various proclamations and whether it is considered that funding is adequate to manage these areas in the context of the Council's recommendations.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ABOUT VICTORIA'S PUBLIC LAND

The survey material that we have obtained from the Department of Conservation and Environment has provided us with some useful information on public perceptions about Victoria's public land. (This resulted from a request by the ADA for an Alpine Visitor Survey and our meeting with the Minister.) The following summarises some of the results. The full report, complete with sources, is available from the PLCV office.

Generally, people do not have a good understanding about Victoria's public land and relatively few people have visited Victoria's National Park areas.

In 1990, there was a general view that Victoria's Public Land is well managed.

People who considered public land was not well managed appear to be mainly concerned about facilities such as toilets and rubbish bins.

- * There was support for the continuation of grazing of cattle in the Alpine Area and concern about the phasing out of grazing
- * There was only limited concern about the use of horses in the Alpine Area.
- * There was limited concern about feral animals.
- * There was limited concern about logging.
- * There was moderate support for four-wheel-drive vehicles but strong feeling against trailbikes.

In one survey, 30% of respondents considered regulations (as they existed in 1990) in National Parks to be a major or minor barrier to their use of Parks.

Importantly, there was virtually no consistent concern about vehicle tracks, four-wheel-drive vehicles, hunting, logging and the grazing of cattle. However, 7% of those who

believed public land to be badly managed gave their reason as "overdone/too much/greenies too much influence". Bushwalkers were consistently opposed to cattle grazing and four-wheel-driving.

In mid 1990, prior to the consideration of the voluminous new management plans for the Alpine National Park, people considered that we had about the right balance of regulations in National Parks. Although Victoria's Public Land was perceived to be the most heavily regulated of all the States, respondents generally considered that regulation was necessary to protect the land.

One survey found the following to be priority areas for management of parks. They are listed in order of priority:

- * Improve access within public lands and buildings for older people and the disabled.
- * Set aside more unspoilt and undeveloped areas.
- * Provide more signs to locate and identify Victoria's Public Land.
- * Increase number of shelters, toilets and picnic facilities.

As at April 1990, there was a good balance between conservation and development.

People generally are not aware that there are Wilderness areas in Victoria and, having been told that there are, are unable to state where they are.

There is some incongruity in the public wanting more unspoilt and undeveloped land set aside and at the same time wanting improved access and more facilities on public land.

The majority of people are not opposed to hunting and fishing. One survey showed that

- * 23% of respondents engage in some type or hunting or fishing,
- * 46% are not interested in hunting or fishing but are not opposed to these activities.
- * 31% are opposed to hunting or fishing.

MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

We have recently met with representatives of the Victorian National Parks Association (Doug Humann, Director and Stephen Johnston, President) and The Wilderness Society (Georgia Stuart and Rod Waterman)

Despite areas of obvious disagreement, we achieved some movement on issues such as:

- * Co-operating on a program emphasising individual

responsibility in the utilisation of public land.

- * Jointly seeking funding for research into aspects of public land management in which there is a common interest.

COALITION CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The Shadow Minister for Conservation and Environment, Mr. Mark Birrell has requested information from the PLCV to assist in developing the Coalition's conservation and environment policy. This is being provided.

FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE ACT

Despite the good response to our submission on the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Regulations, it now appears that the Subordinate Legislation Committee has decided not to disallow any of the regulations.

The feeling now seems to be that because the Act was finally supported by the Liberal Party, the members are content to wait and see how the Act is implemented. It is highly unlikely that the Liberal Party would, even if it did have some reservations about the Act, included amendment to it as part of its pre-election policies. It now seems a matter of building a dossier of cases adversely affected by the implementation of the Act.

The Shire of Bass has again written to the Minister for Conservation and Environment and advised that "Council objects to the listing (at the proposed marina site) but is not prepared to spend further public monies in scientific research to contribute to a process which it believes to be flawed in terms of the application of the principals of natural justice."

NEWSPAPERS

The President, Mrs. Heather Mitchell has met with the Editor-in-Chief of "The Age" and a further meeting is being arranged with Leith Young from "The Age"

GRAEME STONEY

Mr. Graeme Stoney, high profile member and Executive Officer of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association has won Liberal Party pre-selection for the Legislative Council seat of Central Highlands. This seat had been held by Marie Tehan who is seeking pre-selection for a Legislative Assembly seat.