

# Media release



## FROM THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

**DATE: Thursday, November 24, 2005**

### BOOST FOR ALPINE NATIONAL PARK

Environment Minister, John Thwaites, today launched a comprehensive program to tackle weeds and pests in the Alpine National Park, restore alpine bogs and boost regional tourism.

"We now have a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve and ensure a healthy and sustainable future for the Alpine environment," Mr Thwaites said.

"This program will capitalise on the decision to end cattle grazing in the Park, and provide a boost for the whole region."

The *Alps, A fresh start – a healthy future* is part of the Bracks Government's \$7.5 million package of High Country initiatives, which also includes assistance for graziers and funding for the Bogong High Plains Road.

Speaking in Bright, Mr Thwaites said that the Government would work closely with groups such as Clean Up Australia, 4WD Victoria, the Sporting Shooters Association and the Australian Deer Association to ensure a healthy future for the Victorian Alps.

Significant projects such as Alpine bog rehabilitation and removal of tens of thousands of willow seedlings from alpine watercourses would be a focus over the next 12 months.

The program would also include:

- Management of weeds including the highly invasive English Broom and blackberries;
- Pest management targeting foxes, wild dogs, pigs and goats; and
- Large-scale revegetation with native plants

"Management of pest animals such as goats, pigs, brumbies, foxes and wild dogs will be a key initiative, especially in areas which are home to some of our unique native animals including the Mountain Pygmy Possum," Mr Thwaites said.

"Parks Victoria will establish roving pest plant and animal management teams across the State as part of a long-term solution to restore and manage the precious and complex Alpine environment that has been damaged over the years.

Bob Cooper, President of Sporting Shooters Association of Victoria, said the Association was committed to protecting the natural environment and was pleased to be involved in a

statewide program with Parks Victoria to reduce numbers of feral animals.

"We are looking forward to playing our part in protecting the precious Alpine environment through the continuation of this successful partnership with Parks Victoria."

Deputy Chair Clean Up Australia, Kim McKay, said the organisation was pleased to be supporting the High Country initiatives.

"Clean up Australia has, for the past 15 years, helped improve the health of Australia's waterways and the Victorian Alps play a vital role in supplying fresh water, not only for river systems but also for Victorian communities," she said

"It is a critical ecosystem that requires an holistic approach and we are looking forward to working with local communities and the Victorian Government to restore the bogs, remove weeds and control pests in the Alpine National Park."

Mr Thwaites said the initiatives announced today complemented the decision to end cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park.

"The scientific evidence is clear that cattle grazing damages the fragile Alpine environment."

"However cattle grazing can continue in State forest outside the Park."

The Bracks Government's legislation reinforcing its decision not to renew grazing licences in the Alpine National Park passed through State Parliament in June this year.

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