Liberal MP part of illegal cattle drive

A GROUP of Victorian mountain cattlemen, including an upper house Liberal MP, droving a mob of cattle through the state's Alpine National Park, have defied rangers' orders to turn back.

The cattlemen, including MP Graeme Stoney, are protesting against the State Government's ban on grazing cattle in the park.

Doug Treasure, president of Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, who is riding with a separate group of protesters, confirmed the first group had been intercepted yesterday.

Speaking by satellite phone near Wonnangatta Station in the alpine park, Mr Treasure said the first group had ignored a request to turn their cattle around and leave the park.

Riders in the first group were interviewed by a park ranger and had their names taken down, he said.

Three groups of rebel mountain cattlemen are following traditional but now forbidden stock routes through the park and plan to converge at the Wonnangatta Station cemetery tomorrow.

The alpine park's chief ranger, Peter Jacobs, said the authorities had been aware the cattlemen had planned to push cattle illegally through the park.

The maximum fine for bringing an animal into the park without permission was just over $1000, he said.

The park authorities would consider evidence from yesterday's incident before deciding whether to lay charges against the group, Mr Jacobs said.

The muster is the first test of the Government's controversial ban on grazing cattle in the national park, an attempt to protect the alpine environment. AAP