

ADDRESS - MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

JULY 1977

The Soil Conservation Authority has had responsibilities in regard to the prevention and mitigation of soil erosion on all lands in Victoria for many years.

During the 1950's, amendments to the Soil Conservation and Land Utilization Act firmed and enlarged these responsibilities, particularly in relation to water supply catchments (Proclaimed). The Premier's directive of 1957 specifically charged the Authority with the responsibility for the supervisory control of grazing, and all matters of soil disturbance on land above 1219 metres (4000 ft).

The Authority, in implementing its policy of multiple use of alpine lands, has sought the planned co-ordination of all public authorities and people concerned. (enumerate) Such action has inevitably meant the restriction of certain activities, but has brought about the cessation of degradation and is at the same time materially assisting the maintenance and re-establishment of vegetative cover upon these extremely important and fragile water catchment lands.

The importance to the State and to the nation, of Victoria's relatively small areas of mountain range as water catchments, cannot be over-emphasised.

Generally speaking, the rate of precipitation is several times that of the lower country, and the area could be likened to the main source of water supply on otherwise dry farmlands, and as such must be protected at all costs. Protection of course, involves maintenance of vegetation and mitigation of soil erosion, hence the Authority's aim to maintain a perennial yield.

Those of you who conduct irrigation enterprises must realise the absolute importance of perennial yield. This can only be maintained if the capacity of the high country to absorb and slowly release water is continued.

#### Grazing

The Authority is very grateful for the ready co-operation of cattlemen and others concerned in implementing the grazing control methods adopted. It has meant in practice, that the Authority's task has been made easier. (Outline D.A.C. local committees)

To assist with the existing liaison and to cope with the increasing requirements from resort development, roading, recreation pressures and other activities, the Authority recently appointed a District Conservation Officer (Alpine) and enlarged its Alpine staff.

#### Recreation

The rapidly increasing numbers of people seeking to use the high country for a variety of recreational activities has brought about a demand for developments which place an increasing demand upon the soil and the resources of the area. It is not difficult even for the layman to see evidence of this people-pressure, and it seems more than likely that continued restraint upon certain forms of activity will be needed.

#### Conservation

In keeping with modern trends, recent years have brought forth an ever-increasing clamour for conservation and/or preservation. While some of these demands may be extreme, there are nevertheless many genuine people involved. It

is significant that some individuals and groups appear to suffer from a selfish "corridor vision" attitude which leads to an inevitable conflict of opinion as individuals and/or groups tend to maintain selfish rights.

Whatever may be the requirement of people, they must be politically heeded and Government must attempt to rationalise and, where practical, satisfy the demands.

#### Land Conservation Council

In formulating the, about to be published, base technical report, the L.C.C. appear to have sought a wide range of opinion and reports, indeed the usual very thorough investigation has been conducted.

Subsequent to the publication of the base report, a period of sixty days is allowed for written expressions of opinion and submissions to be made to the Council.

Council upon expiration of this 60 days, will, after examination of each submission, prepare and issue proposed recommendations. Again, a period of sixty days is allowed for the public to examine and make submissions on these recommendations.

Ultimately, the final recommendations of the L.C.C. are submitted to Government for acceptance and action. From past experience, we may expect that Government will act as recommended.

We must also expect that there will be recommendations for parks, resort development and roading, in addition to recommendations designed to preserve and protect the area as a perennial high yielding water supply catchment, at

the same time servicing the requirements of people and the State.

Without pre-empting the Council's decisions, I suggest that we may expect recommendations for further restrictions of grazing in some areas. The incompatibility of grazing and park land prompts this observation.

I understand that the consultant who prepared a report (as yet unseen by me) for your Association, has been engaged to prepare material for the L.C.C. I believe that the purpose is to examine the financial aspects of Crown land grazing but I do not know of any conclusions.

An examination of recent reports, from other sources, on the vegetative condition of the Bogong High Plains reveals that recovery from the effects of the 1939 fires is not yet complete. This is particularly so in the more fragile areas. These reports are not encouraging from a grazing point of view.

In conclusion, I emphasise that the final recommendations of the Land Conservation Council may be influenced by your activities as indeed may be the decisions of Government. Your action needs to be co-ordinated and objective as there is little doubt that the submissions for change will be very numerous and substantial. Equally, I have no doubt that the final recommendations will include proposals for substantial changes.

In the meantime you can be assured that the Soil Conservation Authority will pursue its policy of multiple use with the aim of catchment protection.