



Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria

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1 April, 2003

**Agenda for a meeting with Mr. Mark Stone, Parks Victoria
Thursday 3rd April 10.00 to 11.30am, starting at Falls Creek.
Meet at Windy Corner, Falls Creek at 10.00am
Agenda**

Parks Victoria Mark Stone
MCAV Simon Turner, Jack Hicks, Harry Ryder, Tim Barker 0419 35 43 93

1. Inspection
2. Proposed Memorandum of Cooperation
3. The process for reviewing the condition of runs for the next grazing season
4. The difficulties regarding constructions on the Bogong High Plains

1. Inspection

Discussion points:

- Weather conditions on the days the fire came out onto the Bogong High Plains.
- On the unburnt area of the Bogong High Plains, there is no sign of over grazing.
- Restrictions on grazing in this 7yr licence have allowed the Bogong High Plains to become more over grown than is desirable.
- Cattle are being taken home early, without using Parks Victoria's offer of assistance.

2. Proposed Memorandum of Cooperation

A draft, attached to this agenda has been provided to Parks Victoria

3. The process for reviewing the condition of runs for the next grazing season

This process acknowledges the points (below) made in the open letter by Mark Stone circulated in local media in early 2003:

- *"Now that the fires are finally abating it's time for us all to look forward. And of course what all of us want to know is when we can go back to our favourite places, trails and tracks.*
- *"Parks Victoria is working with recreational and environmental groups to ensure that we re-open fire-affected areas as soon as possible.*
- *"We are also making a special point of talking to those small businesses that depend on the alpine area for their livelihood. The Victorian Government is engaging many of these operators to help with the assessment process and has offered \$50,000 to do this. Their*

knowledge and expertise will complement that of Parks Victoria staff, ensuring that we can open up areas to the public immediately after safety and environmental criteria have been met.

- *“There is no intention to make any rash and unfounded decisions on the future of any fire affected areas. I am aware that there are rumours that Parks Victoria has already decided to close some tracks permanently or for the long term. This is simply not true.*
- *“Burnt areas will be assessed and opened as soon as possible. Some will be opened prior to Easter, while we expect the majority to be opened by November 2003.*
- *“I will say again, Parks Victoria has not made any hasty decisions about the future of any area.”*

The process also acknowledges

- Livestock producers have specialist expertise in assessing the capacity of land to run livestock in a sustainable manner. This is second nature to cattlemen. The same simple on-ground assessments undertaken on thousands of properties throughout Victoria on a daily basis are totally adequate to assess the carrying capacity of pastures on licenced runs.
- Cattlemen’s understanding of animal behaviour experts. Cattle removed from an environment for more than one season will have trouble re adjusting to the area, and the feed will become long rank and unpalatable.
- Fences can create problems. They force traffic (horses, cattle, native wild life and people etc.) around and into confined areas
- Both parties should seek to avoid the unacceptable cost in scientific assessments and arguments surrounding the Caledonia discussions.
- The fact that the scientific argument on the fire affected areas in the Caledonia “lost the plot” to such an extent that the argument became about the science rather than about the capacity of the land to carry livestock and the protection of conservation values.

The suggested process is:

- A. MCAV will provide an assessment, run by run, in fire affected areas by end May, 2003. This will include consideration of:
 - assessment of the area actually burnt
 - grazed grasslands have not burnt hot so the regrowth next spring will be very good. Regrowth has already started on the lightly burnt areas.
 - there is a legislative mandate for cattle grazing
 - cattlemen will be able to monitor and report any weeds and feral animals on there runs.
- B. If the assessments are not acceptable to Parks Victoria, each party to document its concerns and pass these on to an on-ground assessment team consisting of one nominee of Parks Victoria and one nominee of MCAV.
- C. If there is no agreement through this process, the issue to be considered by Mark Stone and Simon Turner.
- D. If there is no agreement through this process, each party to document its concerns and pass these on to another assessment team. Parks Victoria to nominate a person from Department of Primary Industry and MCAV to nominate a person from the Victorian Farmers Federation. This team to make a further assessment.

- E. If there is no agreement through this process, Parks Victoria to implement its preference and MCAV to undertake its preferred course of action which could include reference to the Minister and the media and any other action deemed appropriate by the Association.

4. The difficulties regarding constructions on the Bogong High Plains

Draft Pretty Valley Master Plan.

Cattlemen applied for and were granted permission by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Parks Victoria to develop a stock management area at Pretty Valley. This permission was granted in writing.

Reasons for choosing this site were:

- Central to most runs,
- Good road access,
- Sited on already developed land,
- Strategically sited so as not to be in the public's eye or way.

Unfinished development. Mountain cattlemen still have permission to build a holding paddock and priority use hut on this area.

Draft Pretty Valley Master Plan. We received this plan and replied pointing out the above and other problems. We specifically asked to be involved in the final draft which was to include an onsite meeting prior to any final decisions. There has been no further correspondence with us.

At this years pre-season alpine grazing meeting at Falls Creek, Parks Victoria was asked why there has been no reply and was there a final draft. We were told that it is coming along nicely. The cattlemen objected strongly at this point. Within days a permanent toilet was erected. It has been situated so the public have to walk within very close proximity to the contained stock and transports. This could create unnecessary problems. This is not acceptable on grounds of OH&S.

Further item. Ron Briggs has requested permission to rebuild his hut.

Proposed Memorandum of Cooperation

Parks Victoria & Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria

1 Purpose of the document

To establish and maintain a positive and professional relationship between Parks Victoria (PV) and the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria (MCAV)

2 Communication

- 2.1 Meetings will be held in a spirit of co-operation and a partnership in public land stewardship.
- 2.2 Information relevant to the relationship, including matters of mutual concern, will be shared at all opportunities.
- 2.3 Correspondence and other communications will be handled promptly.

3 Land management

3.1 Principles

- 3.1.1 It is recognised that Parks Victoria operates under a mandate of protection of environmental values, and is required to implement Government decisions in this regard. Published management plans for the relevant areas, which are produced following consultation with the community, prescribe how this direction will translate to on-ground management activities.
- 3.1.2 It is recognised that both parties seek a professional relationship and together will seek to improve the environment and to enhance the value of the area to the Victorian community.
- 3.1.3 The relationship recognises the considerable land and animal management skills and knowledge of the cattlemen.
- 3.1.4 The parties will treat each other as partners in the management of the land and the protection of conservation values, while recognising that the licensed cattlemen are the custodians of a heritage that the community supports and

embraces.

- 3.1.5 Through the MCAV, licensed cattlemen will propose practical initiatives that will lessen the administrative burden on PV, protect and enhance conservation values and generally assist in the management of the land. This could involve a considerable focus on pest plant and animal control.
- 3.1.6 The relationship will be moved forward with a view to the MCAV becoming responsible for self-regulation with a view to freeing up the funds currently devoted to the administration of licences to be available for use in the practical management of land.

3.2 Detail

- 3.2.1 The parties will establish a management committee which will meet and liaise on management issues. This will be the joint PV/MCAV management committee. (JMC)
- 3.2.2 The JMC will consist of 3 persons from each organisation.
- 3.2.3 The MCAV will review transgressions and incidents reported by PV, positive management initiatives, conservation and protection initiatives and present recommendations to PV through the JMC.
- 3.2.4 The terms of reference for the JMC will be:
 - 3.2.4.1 The annual review of arrangements.
 - 3.2.4.2 To establish any new arrangements for the coming year.
 - 3.2.4.3 To meet as required by either party.
 - 3.2.4.4 To develop ideas on joint ventures. (See below)
 - 3.2.4.5 The chair of the JMC will alternate between the parties.
- 3.2.5 Decisions on land management issues will be timely. It will be the responsibility of the MCAV to advise PV on any timelines that need to be imposed because of the land and animal husbandry issues.

4 Scientific research

- 4.1 Both parties will
 - 4.1.1 share relevant scientific information
 - 4.1.2 seek to ensure that scientific views are openly reviewed to ensure agreement
- 4.2 Where disagreement exists on scientific views, both parties will seek to establish a process through which these views can be reconciled. This may involve respective scientists meeting to discuss their approaches.

5 Cooperative ventures

- 5.1 The JMC will consider options for cooperative input/activity relating to
 - 5.1.1 area inspections and maintenance,
 - 5.1.2 positive signage and information regarding history including early settlement, cattlemens' activities and huts.
 - 5.1.3 removal of rubbish and debris from protected areas,
 - 5.1.4 participation in events eg Clean Up Australia Day, Environment Day etc,
 - 5.1.5 Aboriginal site maintenance,
 - 5.1.6 helping with flora and fauna surveys,
 - 5.1.7 bird counts,
 - 5.1.8 educational and community tours,
 - 5.1.9 assistance with disadvantaged group access to protected areas,
 - 5.1.10 cooperative training programs.

6 Policy

- 6.1 The MCAV will be consulted in relation to policy issues.

7 Resolving issues

- 7.1 The process for dispute resolution is outlined below. This should be read sequentially. This means that as issues remain unresolved, they move up the hierarchy of each organisation.

- 7.2 Both parties will seek to resolve local disputes at the local level.
- 7.3 Unresolved issues will be dealt with at the regional level
- 7.4 Unresolved issues will be dealt with at a meeting of the JMC
- 7.5 Unresolved issues will be dealt with by the lead people in PV and the MCAV
- 7.6 Unresolved issues in relation to licence terms and conditions will be dealt with under Section L, 29 which states, "In the event of an unresolved dispute regarding the terms and conditions of this licence, an independent panel will be appointed by the Minister after consultation regarding the panel's composition with the Alpine Advisory Committee."
- 7.7 Ultimately, the parties may seek resolution at the Ministerial level.

8 Term and Review of the Agreement

- 8.1 The Memorandum of Co-operation agreement is annual.
- 8.2 Each year, at an annual review conducted by the JMC, each party will have an opportunity to advise the other on any:
 - 8.2.1 good/adverse outcomes or good/poor performance,
 - 8.2.2 proposals to further enhance the relationship.
- 8.3 Each year the review will produce a written report. The party to prepare this report will alternate each year.

Note: The final document will include a list of contacts at the local, regional and head office levels.

1 April, 2003

From Jack Hicks
Secretary of The North East Branch of the,
Mountain Cattlemen's Association Of Victoria Inc.
RMB 6525,
Wodonga, 3691.

To Andrew Christie and Cath Renwick
Out in the Open.
16 Fairbridge Cres,
Ainslie, Act, 2602.

11th June, 2002.

Dear Sir Madam,
Re: Draft Pretty Valley Masterplan

We refer to the Draft Pretty Valley Master Plan forwarded to us for comment.

Firstly we would like to commend Parks Victoria on its initiative to try and address the problems surrounding the Hut and Horse Yards at Pretty Valley.

The area under consideration for development is Licensed for cattle grazing to the Blair Family. On September 14, 1994 approval was given by Mr. Bob Jones, Chief Ranger Alpine DC&NR to Max Blair to construct the Steel Stock Yards , Adjacent Holding Paddocks & A Priority Use Hut . The latter 2 are still to be constructed. The cost of these facilities has been paid for entirely by Cattlemen. Conditions were set out and adhered to.

The Stock Yards were strategically sited to give minimal visual impact to the public.
Sensitive Areas such as bog communities have been avoided.
Protection from the north westerly weather for the stock was taken into consideration.
Good road access and parking area is necessary for large and small trucks at all times. A reasonable buffer zone is necessary between livestock and people so as not to cause stress to the cattle and erosion from trampling.
The Stock Yards must be accessible at all time during the grazing season for animal husbandry eg calving difficulties or transporting etc.
The yards are kept locked during the grazing season to keep trampling to a minimum and also for security reasons.

Cattlemen have been involved with the management of stocking rates the movement of stock using horses and dogs etc in the Pretty Valley area for over 150 years.

We ask that we be involved in the drawing up of this Pretty Valley Masterplan and seek to have further discussions and an onsite meeting next season.

Yours Sincerely
Jack Hicks
For and on Behalf of Bogong High Plains Cattlemen.