



Yarra Ranges Environment Advisory MINUTES

Thursday 11th November 2021

Meeting Open	5.30pm	Chairperson: Cr Johanna Skelton
Members Present		Ron Sawyer (member), Graeme George (member), Jeff Barlow (member), Laurence Gaffney (member), Lauren Dwyer (member), Melanie Birtchnell (member), Cr Johanna Skelton (YRC), Mark Varmalis (YRC), Jessica Rae (YRC), Jess Baillie (YRC), Kym Saunders (YRC), Jen Ellison (YRC), Suzanne Burville (YRC), Alison Fogarty (YRC), Ben O'Leary (YRC), Amanda Smith (YRC), Corinne Mays (Port Phillip and Westernport CMA), Steve Hosking (Melbourne Water)
Apologies		Cr Tim Heenan (YRC), David Harper (YRC), Merryn Kelly (DELWP), Joanne Antrobus (Parks Victoria)
Welcome	5.30	Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 9 September 2021 Moved: Graeme George Seconded: Jeff Barlow
	5.35	Declaration of Interest None
	5.35 – 5.55	ACTION: Organise a site visit to Dixon's Creek to observe the impact of firestick practice over time. <i>Darren Wandin/Garry Detez Ongoing</i> ACTION: The targeted vegetation condition and assessment project 2010-2012 to be supplied in a raw format. <i>Amanda Smith</i> ACTION: David to determine how best to achieve reporting on the Liveable Climate Plan and how this is reported at YREAC <i>Completed</i>
Item 1	5.55 – 6:35	Storm Recovery <i>Alison Fogarty/Ben O'Leary</i> The new Storm Recovery team has 3 responsibilities – planning/rebuilding, public infrastructure and biodiversity and natural environment. The biodiversity and environment working group's purpose is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align rehabilitation works across land tenures Build a knowledge base to allow us to better respond to future events Share environmental clean-up responses Ben O'Leary from the Bushland Team is assessing the most affected sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some sites are yet to be cleared because of the ongoing wet conditions Clean-up of areas is being done in stages to minimise disturbance to wildlife i.e. Powerful Owls

		<p>Discussion</p> <p>Concerns were raised this type of storm event will happen regularly.</p> <p>Council should provide property owners guidance on dealing with insurance companies.</p> <p>Q. Is there a correlation between weed removal (i.e Pittosporum) and heavily impacted areas? A. Alison Fogarty responded that it was possible correlation not causation and would look into if it would be possible to map this.</p> <p>Q. Would any of the waste be going to the new Biochar facility? A. Unlikely due to the inability to stockpile it until the facility is ready.</p> <p>Q. How is data being gathered about the storm event? A. Control agency conducts review of impacted areas and provides information of house damage they are aware of and a municipal buildings survey.</p> <p>Q. Could there be training on how to access / work with insurance companies – insurance council training for residents A. A great suggestion, will look into this being part of community education program.</p> <p>ACTION: Alison Fogarty to determine if we can map weed removal overlain with the heavily impacted areas of the June 9 storm and determine if training could be offered for residents to understand working with insurance agencies.</p>
Item 2	6.35 – 6.50	<p>Committee Members: Open Floor</p> <p>MOTION:</p> <p>That the organisation review and report to Council on its use of fire as an agent for land management, to ensure that perverse fuel outcomes (e.g., fuel production) and/or adverse ecological outcomes (e.g. shortfall of essential long unburnt habitat) are not a result of the organisation’s actions, and the following matters be considered and reported on during the review process:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That a formal Reserve Management Plan (or at least medium-long term Management Objectives for a Reserve) be adopted before any Burn Proposal is approved for that Reserve. The Reserve Management Plan and/or Management Objectives should establish what is the vision for the Reserve? What is the desired fire regime being proposed for the Reserve? What implications could be realised from the proposed fire regime? What monitoring, reviewing and reporting frameworks will be implemented to ensure the vision is being achieved for the Reserve? b) Assess the current state of habitat in all YRC managed reserves within which planned fire has been applied. Where historic use of fire has increased fuel, determine any implications of historic Fuel Production Burning for ongoing fire risk, ecosystem health and costs (for example, can it be demonstrated that these burns confer any lasting reduction in flammability? Do these necessarily repeated & costly burns lock our forested reserves into a perpetual state of young flammable regrowth?). c) Implement a system that requires completion of pre-burn ecological assessments that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Include a comparison of the current vegetation condition with the benchmark for the vegetation type; ii. include a Plant Recruitment Assessment using an approved methodology for all proposed Planned Burns to assess current status and adequacy; iii. investigate the status of the Key Fire Response Species (KFRS); and

- iv. assign abundances to all species recorded, and with particular attention to the KFRS.
 - v. Apply best practice methodology (e.g. Geometric Mean Abundance) when comparing the actual EVC Growth Stage/s evident within a Reserve with the optimal Growth Stage Distribution at appropriate scales (i.e. local Reserve scale and/or Yarra Ranges scale).
- d) That Overall Fuel Hazard Assessments (OFHA) be undertaken on a regular basis post burn (e.g. 1, 2, 5, 10-year intervals) and be used to inform the Adaptive Management process, as well as being reviewed and reported to Council.
- e) Develop and apply Adaptive Management Principles to all aspects of use of fire as an agent for land management within Council activities, including Reserve Management. The Adaptive Management Principles must necessarily:-
- i. Clearly define the problem/s (e.g. insufficient recruitment of a key species).
 - ii. Explain why the proposed action will help [i.e. scientific knowledge/models indicate a burn (with specific attributes) will help shift the Reserve towards the desired state].
 - iii. Make specific predictions as to the expected outcome/s. (e.g., specifically named species will become more - or less – abundant. Another example would be the prediction of fuel reaccumulation (OFHA) over time)
 - iv. Measure, review and report the actual outcomes and apply these learnings to inform future predictions as to expected outcomes.
- f) Because current science continues to indicate forest flammability is enhanced by disturbance: that least disturbance options for vegetation removal should be considered as the general rule.

Moved: Laurence Gaffney

Seconded: Graeme George

Unanimous support.

ACTION: Lawrence's motion to be presented to council. *Cr Johanna Skelton*

ACTION: Council Officers provide an Officers report in response as part of the Bushlands' Team review of the Fire as a Land Management Tool.

Jeff Barlow presented an action to move forward on the Climate Plan reporting:

- Create an arrangement between YREAC and Council to report on the Liveable Climate Plan.
- Concerned the reporting isn't getting much traction.
- Would like to see additional procedures in place to move outside the 'business as usual' model as we are in a climate emergency.

ACTION: Reporting to be quarterly as a separate item as per current business plan reporting and an annual report as a 'sustainability scorecard' presented to YREAC prior to the community. *Jess Rae*

Graeme asked for an update of the C148 amendment. Cr Skelton noted it is still with the minister.

Pre-meeting administration and file sharing needs refining to ensure all members can easily find/access files. We are looking into how this can be improved for the new SEAC committee.

		<p>ACTION: Investigate new systems that include a calendar, file sharing, communication (chat). <i>Suzanne Burville</i></p> <p>Acknowledgment of the one-year anniversary of Darcy Duggan's passing on 31 Oct 2020.</p>
Item 3	6.50 – 7.10	<p>Sustainability and Environment Team Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Strategy mid-term review • Biodiversity Offset program • Ribbons of Green program • Environmental assessments on private property • Internal infrastructure environmental referral services • Micro-grid project • Grant-funded programs • Solar projects • Gardens for wildlife
Item 4	7.10 – 7.30	<p>Agency Reports</p> <p>Melbourne Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central and Gippsland region sustainable water strategy • Yering backswamp and Spadonis monitoring • Flooding and storm events • Little Yarra River (Birraring) revegetation works and trail proposal • Dixons Creek weed work • Yarra River/Woori Yallock Creek <p>Parks Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Yarra Reserve park coming back to Parks Vic • Dandenong's storm recovery • New contemplation points supplied by Men's Shed • New gate installation at Mt Donna Buang • Wine-lipped Spider Orchid found in the Dandenong Ranges • Re-opening of Nash Creek campground • Illegal mountain bike closures/signage <p>PPWCMA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration with Melbourne Water • Regional catchment strategy • Zero emissions farming conference <p>DELWP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No report
Next Meeting		The new Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee will commence meetings February 2022 with an informal meeting on 9 th Dec to meet the new committee members.
Meeting Close		7:55pm
Deferred Topics		ROG presentation