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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

No.2, 1985

Is the bandicoot a mythical creature and do they occur in the F.R.N.P?

No, a bandicoot is not a myth. We do not know if they occur in the F.R.N.P. but they do live near West River, Ongerup and in the Ravensthorpe Ranges.

This, and other questions, are shortly to be answered by a Heritage Commission funded biological survey of the F.R.N.P. This is an interesting process, involving a variety of techniques which demonstrate that wildlife (apart from kangaroos and emus) do really exist in the Australian bush. The survey involves a number of practical and theoretical considerations which will be explained at a public meeting in August.

The results will be relevant to a wide variety of Park users. For example we will be better informed to answer the many questions which begin "I saw a plant/bird/mammal/reptile which" As well as providing descriptive details of the flora and fauna, the survey will examine such problems as the effect of fire, and whether firebreaks interfere with the movement of small animals. Also a biological survey indicates a strong commitment by the Government to the importance of Reserves and National Parks.

For this survey, which commences in August 1985, the plants, birds, reptiles, frogs, mammals and inland fish will be examined in some detail for one year, possibly two. Ken Newbey and Andy Chapman will be working on flora and fauna respectively.

The fauna work requires some 400/500 pit traps which are merely 60 cm long, 14 cm diameter PVC tubes set into the ground. Some of these will be joined by a low fence to guide the animals into the pits. The assistance of the F.R.N.P.A. members (and others interested) is required in the second and third weeks of July and possibly the first week of August. A small drilling rig is available (pending approval) for digging some holes. Assistance is required sawing up PVC pipe, crow-barring holes where use of drilling is inappropriate and erecting fences. If you are able to help please contact Andy, P.O. Box 216, Ravensthorpe 6346, or phone 098 381186 in the second, third or fourth week in June.

Now a note from our recently appointed Education and Information Officer.

Hi folks, I want to start getting some information together that I can begin to compile for an eventual display of the Park, for Twertup. The list of topics might be:-

- (a) Management problems
- (b) Community/Association activities
- (c) Landforms/scenery
- (d) Plants/animals - and/or any other suggestions

If anyone has any information they might care to send me (no matter how small) or photos they might send (making sure they have the negatives) I would very much appreciate it. My address is C/- P.O., Ongerup 6336.

Thanks,
Coralie Crowe

As a result of discussion following the Management Objectives weekend of May 4/5, the committee recommends constitutional additions and changes to section 2, OBJECTIVES.

Present constitution

2. OBJECTIVES

The long term policy of the FITZGERALD RIVER NATIONAL PARK ASSOCIATION (inc) shall be to press for:-

- (a) the inclusion in such NATIONAL PARK of a substantial part as wilderness;
- (b) a proper study of the ecology and resources of the Fitzgerald Reserve; especially with its respect to its management for maintenance of flora, fauna and scenery and as a NATIONAL PARK.
- (c) the protection of the catchments of streams flowing into and through the reserve from pollutants borne in from outside the boundaries;
- (d) the limitation of vehicles to existing tracks;
- (e) the construction of airstrips in the reserve to be forbidden;
- (f) discuss with the National Parks Authority of W.A. the extending of boundaries of the reserve to include all inlets and permanent water in rivers and streams and to be extended to two (2) kilometres off-shore;
- (g) resumption by the National Parks Authority of W.A. of mining tenements previously worked.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE NOTICE OF MOTION

Notice of motion is given that this be changed at the July 7 meeting to read:-

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 MANAGEMENT - The ASSOCIATION may involve itself in the management of the PARK to assist in the achievement of the following objectives:

- (a) The primary objective is to allow and encourage the continuation of previously more widespread natural processes in as natural a form as possible. This includes allowing and encouraging the conservation of species naturally occurring in the PARK and the conservation of landscapes and landforms in as unaltered a state as possible.
- (b) Secondary to (a) is allowing and encouraging the enrichment of human life through experience of natural surroundings without placing achievement of the primary objective at risk.

2.2 Long term policy of the ASSOCIATION shall be to press for:-

- (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) as per existing constitution.

In (f) and (g) remove the term 'NATIONAL PARKS AUTHORITY of W.A.' and replace with "appropriate bodies".

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Your executive also needs to know your opinion on the following. This involves Conservation Council policies during the Chairmanship of the Environmental Protection Authority by Mr Barry Carbon. We have been asked to forward our views to the Council on the desirability of their adopting one or both of two suggested policies.

(a) in appropriate circumstances, seek the assistance of the union movement in the imposition of 'green bans' on proposed developments which would have environmentally unacceptable impacts. An example of such a project was given as the proposed Goldfields toxic waste disposal plant.

(b) encourage the formation of a political party along the lines of the German "Green Party" (a party whose attentions are focused on issues of social and environmental welfare rather than having it's priorities determined by being dependant upon a particular social class or closely defined community group for support.)

They would like a prompt reply, so would you either give me a ring on 098 383183 or drop me a line C/- P.O., Hopetoun 6348 to let me know your feelings. The subject will be discussed at the next meeting before a reply is sent.

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STOP PRESS CALM hosted a seminar at Jerramungup on May 16 to discuss the proposed experimental strip burns in the Park. some 30-40 people attended, including a number of Association members. The Department intends using a plane to drop incendiary capsules in the north west section of the Park. Although the initial burn is experimental it is hoped to burn a strip up to 500 metres wide and 20km long. If successful it is hoped to strategically place such strips through the Park so as to contain future wildfires without the need for bulldozed firelines or intensive control methods.

NEXT MEETING Sunday, July 7 at 10.0.a.m. at Bob Bathgate's, Quiss Road - to the east down past the Rangers house. Bring your own lunch.

Sorry it's rather a dull old newsletter this time. We'll try and do better in future!

Drive carefully,

Your secretary

Helen Taylor

Present: Bill (Chairperson) Amelia Moir & Simon, Keith Bradby, Heather Pearce, Valerie & Phillipa Milne, Doug Watkins, Martin Lloyd (Ranger), Betty Shepherd, Brian Schneider, Bill & Peter Lullfitz, Claudia Hadlow, Kaye Vaux, Helen Taylor.
 Special Guest: Dr. John Watson, CALM.
 Guest Observers: Anne-Marie Scatt, Zoe Brock, Sandy Lawson.
 Apologies: Ken & Brenda Newbey, Andrew Chapman, Merle Bennett, Mike Linto, Susanne & Alan Dennings, Dennis Ludlow.
 Minute Secretary: Coralie Crowe.

Bill opened the meeting and Keith read us a poem. General issues were raised before discussing the specifics of Park Management Objectives.

General issues being -

- # Should the Association involve itself in Park Management? Though fears were expressed that doing so might affect the activities we enjoy so much, it was generally agreed that if we care for the Park, then we have that obligation to care for the Park.
- # A need for further research to find out what the natural processes within the park are.
- # A need for a full account of fire regime history.
- # There seemed to be an apprehension from people in the past to not become too involved in fear of the political aspects and hierarchy, i.e. restricting our own feel for the park for the sake of the hierarchy.
- # Imperative that an enrichment of human life through experiencing the natural surrounds of the park be catered for without jeopardising those natural processes occurring within the Park.
- # The possible importance of zoning in the future management of the Park.
- # The fact that not even the Biological Survey will supply all the data we need to adequately care for the Park, but management cannot stand still.

It was generally agreed that the first three points of the Draft Management Objectives be amalgamated into one Primary Objective with human enrichment becoming a secondary objective.

After lunch we split into three workshops to discuss the following topics.

1. Outside Influences
2. Fire
3. Access
4. Specific Ways of Implementing Our Policies.

As there was general agreement within the groups (except perhaps on the matter of implementation) and group reports complemented each other, they have been combined.

1. OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

(a) off farm - salinity, stock, fertilizer drift, soil erosion, aesthetics
 Recommendations - FRNPA seek official input into both local Soil Conservation District Committees (Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe). The view underlined through these bodies that the FRNP be recognised as part of the legitimate land use of the region and regarded as an asset.

Keep a buffer zone North of the Park to help protect water from pollutants.

Educate farmers to replace chemicals with other means of control that are efficient and ecologically sound with farming.

(b) vermin - rabbits, foxes etc. disease - dieback.

Recommendations - (i) Vermin control within the FRNP be considered by CALM as part of Park Management.

(ii) Appropriate methods of control be thoroughly investigated through avenues such as research, local input and experimental programmes.

(iii) Take precautions against further introductions e.g. European Rats, dieback.

(iv) Baiting and trapping programmes set up for foxes, rabbits etc.

(v) Investigate ways of cleaning down vehicles before entering and leaving Park to reduce dieback spread.

(c) aesthetics - visual pollution

Recommendation - An awareness be fostered in FRNP neighbours about the need to consider the aesthetic implications of their land management practices on private, public and shire lands.

2. FIRE

Research.

Recommendations: Research needed into

(i) Fire suppression methods (on-ground research might be considered in similar habitats outside the park where appropriate).

(ii) Ecological effects of wildfires and control fires.

(iii) Manipulative management (e.g. for species preservation etc.)

There needs to be co-ordination of all research data between CALM,

the Bushfires Board and any other relevant body.

(b) Motivations.

Recommendations: The motivation behind any decision to suppress wildfire within the park to be fully considered before

- (i) suppressing fire at all
- (ii) deciding on suppression methods.

Recommendation: The above decisions to be the responsibility of CALM.

A buffer system to protect both parks and farms.

Fire management to be in the hands of CALM so as to protect park from fire control methods incompatible with other management objectives. (Following later discussions the Fire Management Objectives section of the draft was expanded upon and accepted as representative of the views of those present.)

3. ACCESS

Recommendations: (a) A need for restricted access during adverse conditions (weather, fire etc.) in the interests of public safety and the protection of the park environment. Education and publicity essential.

(b) Environmentally fragile areas on existing tracks be assessed and possibly repaired so as to avoid further environmental damage.

(c) Information and interpretive material to enhance visitation. Availability of same be a priority - distribution through Rangers, local business, state tourist bureaus etc.

(d) Walking Trails - (i) More trails and in different grades.

(ii) More defined depending on grades.

(iii) Better publicised and more interpretive material.

(iv) Consider provision of water points.

(v) Association to assist in planning and construction.

(e) Regulated access through a management plan which restricts to a certain extent where vehicles can go, by a network of tracks e.g. allow one direct track for fishermen to avoid 4W.D. damage. (No gravel or bitumen).

(f) Heavily fine offenders using tracks after ignoring closures, particularly if rescue assistance is necessary.

(g) Tourist buses restricted to periphery areas.

(h) Loop roads to be permanent tourist roads.

(i) Encourage foot access i.e. walk trails along major rivers.

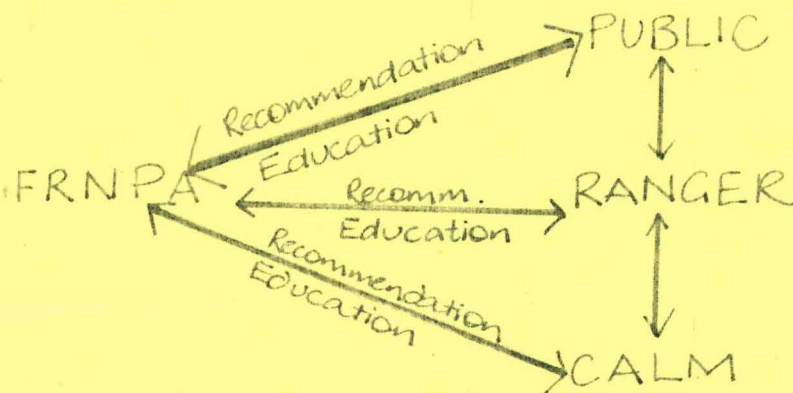
(j) Know related laws regarding closing of tracks etc.

(k) Information bays at entrances of routes.

(l) Upgraded signposting on access routes.

4. SPECIFIC WAYS OF IMPLEMENTING OUR POLICIES

Two of the groups suggested formation of a formal management advisory committee containing representatives of various groups. The last group produced the following diagram and thoughts on what was required.



The freeing up of the above communication links be encouraged. The formation of, and the motivation behind the formation of a new management committee be considered. If FRNPA participates in such a committee, the association not substitute that body for other avenues of persuading objectives, but use it as an extra medium.

Other points raised were -

(a) Educational boards on endangered species etc.

(b) Buffer zones implemented.

(c) An encouragement of resource gathering.

(d) Endeavour to make Education & Information Officer permanent pos'n.

(e) Better preparation of Rangers with regard to plant and animal knowledge.

(f) A set of guidelines users - managers, groups.

Next up was dinner and a mad hatters ball....which all had something to do with the zoning of the park. At times it seemed like the up and competitive consuming characters (French tourists, press, fishermen and the like) versing the meek who would inherit the earth (botanists, farmers?!) all before a shy president. Brian eventually solved the evening's dilemma by producing an already zoned park with a piece for everyone. (No need to panic-it was in the form of a cake.) Bed at last.

After a torrid drafting session (by a self appointed sub-committee) over the breakfast barbecue, the four draft management objectives were rearranged slightly to a form which the meeting decided to support as an amendment to the FRNP's constitution. Adjustments to the Draft Fire Objectives were also put to the meeting and agreed upon.

The idea of a formal advisory committee were discussed further and it was agreed that the Association write to the Executive Director of CALM suggesting a meeting to discuss the possible structure of such a body.

At this stage John Watson appeared. Points that John raised included - # Advertising through tourist bureaux undesirable as this would eventually outride the primary concern of maintaining natural processes in the park. Information could be found at entrance of points of interest.

Was pleased to hear the association wanted the roads closed under adverse conditions and asked for our support with this matter.

Pointed out the importance of not extending the committee because CALM looked on the FRNPA to fulfill the advisory body role as it is now, and if we become outnumbered in this respect, we could all too easily be outvoted in our aims.

CALM is in the process of appointing a Fire Management Officer who will be stationed at Albany whereby Rangers who are the fire officers of their own parks will be assisted.

Stressed importance of a good communication level achieved between CALM, Rangers and FRNPA.

Congratulated the standard of the Management Objectives paper drawn up.

The need to protect Landscapes as well as Landforms.

The present loop road and "wilderness core" concept of management for the FRNP is an informed arrangement.

Need to be wary of upgrading facilities slightly when this can lead to greatly increased pressure for a higher and unacceptable level of upgrading.

After discussion with John we broke for lunch which was followed by a summing up by invited guest Sandy Lawson, from the Rural Youth Movement Council.

Sandy first congratulated the participants on the way they functioned over the weekend as a "reasonably effective group". In short, he felt that we largely had "our act together". He felt we perhaps needed to improve our image slightly as we may possibly be viewed in some quarters as a "Greenie" group which he could see we definitely were not. He had held discussions with CALM before coming down and felt they were very interested in assisting us.

He agreed, however, that we should not be watering down our objectives to accommodate conflicting interests, and should be stressing the value of the Park to the district. Not as regards tourism alone but as an educational and research resource. He claimed the weekend was a "beautiful demonstration of the marriage possible between local and wider knowledge."

Sandy then spoke briefly on the role played by RYMC in assisting Rural Communities maintain their local character and integrity, which sparked a discussion on the FRNPA's role in the local community.

Bill then closed the meeting.

Comments on the points raised in these minutes is welcomed to P.O. Box 199
RAVENSTHORPE
6346