



NEPEAN CONSERVATION GROUP INC.

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NCG April Newssheet

Dear members,

This Newssheet provides you with updates and highlights work undertaken and in progress since our AGM in February 2021.

We had the first 2021 NCG Committee meeting on Sunday 21 March, held in person at the PV Visitor Centre, Collins Settlement site, Sorrento.

Your committee members are: John Atchison, Eddy de Jong, Ursula de Jong, Priscilla Donald, Barend Frielink, Ian Gray, Lisa Howard, Shannon Richards, John Trewarne, Catherine Walker and Peter Walker.

Ursula de Jong accepted nomination as President; Ian Gray and John Atchison accepted nomination as Vice Presidents; Catherine Walker accepted nomination as Treasurer. Eddy de Jong continues as Company Secretary. Pete Walker will take on Membership Officer – so expect to hear from him shortly.

Please welcome your committee - they look forward to working with you all over the coming year.



The Golden Whistler spotted in the E G Ritchie Flora and Fauna Memorial Bushland Reserve – a rare visitor, April 2021.

Updates from your committee:

- 31 January 2021 World Wetlands Day, Boneo Reserve, Committee members manned the NCG marquee in shifts – excellent contacts made, plus new members recruited
- 5 February 2021 meeting with Hannah Brown and Nature Links for work plans for Bridgewater Bay Reserves and St Johns Wood Road Car Park Bushland Reserve
- 5 February 2021 President met with Chris Brayne, Member for Nepean and Josh Sinclair @Dromana
- February 2021- letters, emails, contacts, phone etc in preparation for NCG AGM on 20 February
- 20 February - thanks to committee and Barend Frielink for zoom set-up for successful AGM
- 24 February 2021, U3A, President Environment Circle presentation: Protecting and nurturing habitat on the Nepean Peninsula, Victoria (the role of community in conservation and place making, using the Nepean Conservation Group as a case study)
- 3 March President attended the Point Nepean National Park Management Advisory Committee meeting – new chair Christine Trotman; site visit planned for 9 April 2021
- 9 March Cr Hugh Fraser resigns from MPSC – The Victorian Electoral Commission will announce results of back count on 13 April 2021
- 9 March 2021 President NCG and Richard Doery (Community 3942), met with MPS Tom Haines-Sutherland, Mark Newnham, Ramesh Khanal, Josh Gunn, and Cr Sarah Race at St Johns Wood Rd to consider the St Johns Wood Road pedestrian improvement project, by looking at the proposed path/ track and roadside bushland reserve. We believe that we have agreed that the revised alignment needed some modification to minimise the destruction of the existing vegetation.
- 9 March president attended Community 3942 meeting
- 10 March the NCG wrote to Heritage Victoria re Conti Hotel re follow up restoration works
- 10 March UdeJ and PD met to start the MPS BioLink grant application for \$10k, to be submitted before 19 March 2021
- 13 March – walk around Sorrento’s Conti to check works and progress
- 17 March 2021, NCG President met with Cr Sarah Race to do a walk and talk
- 18 March 2021, NCG President acted as a guide for Yr 12 Cornish College field trip to Collins Settlement Site, Portsea Pier and Point Nepean National Park, telling stories of place, noting the relationship between people and place across eons and highlighting the role of the NCG on the Nepean Peninsula
- 1 April - NCG completed and submitted three grant applications to DELWP:
2021 Community and Volunteer Action Grants - Stream 1 Strengthening Environmental Volunteering: “Volunteers are an essential part of the Ecosystem” (up to \$30k).
2021 Community and Volunteer Action Grants - Stream 2 Biodiversity On-ground Action and Stewardship: “Hands-on Biodiversity Stewardship across agencies on the Nepean Peninsula” (up to \$50k).
2021 Port Philip Bay Fund: “Stewardship of the Bay: conserving coastal habitat - Portsea to Rye” (up to \$50k).
- 11 April – NCG Vice-President attends Biodiversity and sustainability forum held at Flinders
- Planning permits across the Nepean Ward - 16 objections put in over the month of February. The NCG reviews many applications and on average is submitting 25 objections a month. The NCG is having some impact on landscaping with the MPS now requiring an indication of what is to be reinstated.
- Sorrento Retirement Village – VCAT case is being prepared; NCG a participant.

The NCG Committee identified four areas that form the scaffold of our Strategic priorities:

A. MEMBERSHIP

Membership – updating and consolidating our membership database. Identified actions:

- a) membership drive, b) alerting the wider Nepean community to our significant work and c) inviting them to support us.

B. ENVIRONMENT

(i) Short term: Biodiversity/Bushfire workshop in 2021 (June or August). This would include dealing with Biodiversity and Climate Change policies, State fire management regulations and the impact on the environment, etc. This will be a follow up to a successful workshop the NCG ran 3 years ago. This is a vehicle to get all agencies together State/ LGA/ Community across different jurisdictions; to untangle accountability and responsibility; to understand how we all should work together for a positive outcome for the Nepean Peninsula on the Mornington Peninsula.

(ii) Medium term: Planning policy. Development impact on our environment and vegetation and biodiversity - the need to tackle MPS policies in this regard. Need to follow up Neighbourhood Character and Ocean Beach Rd Sorrento amendments sitting on Minister Wynne’s desk.

(iii) Long term: Distinctive landscape. Working to get the Mornington Peninsula classified as a “distinctive landscape”, and thus removing the MP from metro Melbourne. Distinctive Landscape is not the same as regional. Sort fact from fiction. Research needed to follow up question around re green wedges; status of Bellarine, Surf Coast, Bass Shire, Macedon Ranges; advantages/ disadvantages; regional v metro.

(iv) Ongoing long term: Climate Change – the long view. Engage with MPS, local groups, State government, researchers. Note MPS Climate Change policy. NCG to work with the MPS – 2040 plan to be carbon neutral.

C. FRIENDS GROUPS

Ongoing Friends Groups - updating and consolidating our Friends Group database.

Working with and supporting the work of our Friends Groups:

- MPS BioLink grant application for \$10k submitted 19 March.
- 2021 Community and Volunteer Action Grants - Stream 1 Strengthening Environmental Volunteering: “Volunteers are an essential part of the Ecosystem” (up to \$30k) submitted 1 April.
- 2021 Community and Volunteer Action Grants - Stream 2 Biodiversity On-ground Action and Stewardship: “Hands-on Biodiversity Stewardship across agencies on the Nepean Peninsula” (up to \$50k) submitted 1 April.
- 2021 Port Philip Bay Fund: “Stewardship of the Bay: conserving coastal habitat - Portsea to Rye” (up to \$50k) submitted 1 April.

NCG is following up our MPS Environment Agreement – formerly MOU; is actively re-engaging with Friends Groups; and seeking to recruit new members; seeking signage for Friends Groups – visibility = power and acknowledgement; have projects ready to go for grant application opportunities as they emerge - develop a grant spread sheet which will aid this strategy.

Appoint NCG Friends Group Co-ordinators.

D. ENGAGEMENT

- (i) Nepean Coalition monthly meetings
- (ii) Members: regular communication
- (iii) Engage with the wider community through social media, local newspapers etc

GOOD NEWS

On 31 March 2021 the Minister for Planning rejected AGL’s proposed Crib Point gas terminal, saying it would result in “unacceptable environmental effects” to the internationally significant Westernport Bay.

This is a huge win for Environment Victoria, Victorian National Parks Association and Save Westernport, as well as the community, who have been campaigning to save Westernport Bay for more than three years, and of course for the precious nature and wildlife that live there.

The proposal was for a 300-metre-long floating gas terminal off the Mornington Peninsula, which would have discharged up to 180 Olympic swimming pools of chlorinated water into Westernport every day.

The Minister’s assessment reflects the overwhelming and sustained opposition from a broad alliance of groups including scientists, residents, tourism and fishing businesses. This proposal should never have progressed to this stage, especially given Westernport Bay is an internationally recognised wetland under the Ramsar Convention and home to a number of endangered species.

Further decisions now sit with state ministers, state agencies and the federal government. Environmental Justice Australia will be closely monitoring their decisions to make sure they are consistent with the Planning Minister’s assessment and the overwhelming community opposition to the project.

OPPOSITION TO QUARRY PROPOSAL ARTHUR’S SEAT

The NCG opposes the proposal to re-open a quarry on land adjacent to the Arthur’s Seat State Park and damage/remove 38 ha of mature bushland.

MP Landcare have advised of a beautiful video by Rachel Coffey and Tom Day showing the diverse habitat that will be destroyed if the proposed quarry goes ahead.

The Peninsula Protection Group held a Virtual Town Hall Meeting on Thursday 25 March 2021. PPG is running a fantastic campaign to protect Arthurs Seat from the latest quarry proposal by the philanthropic Ross Trust. Ironically, the founder, Roy Everard Ross, was a bushman and an

environmentalist, but his Trust is now proposing to clear bushland and extend their quarry to raise money to continue his environmental legacy, plus other good works.

Please refer below to the PPG campaign, including their full page open letter in The Age and their interview with Neil Mitchell on 3AW.

Their meeting was a quick zoom catch zoom to:

*Be reminded about impact of the proposed new quarry on our community

*Be reminded about the loss of remnant bushland, native flora and fauna.

*And to find out what you can do to join the campaign.

<https://www.savearthursseat.com/open-letter-ross-trust>

Bridgewater Bay track closure, Mornington Peninsula National Park, Blairgowrie – a dilemma.



Various strategies by PV to close off the track at both ends have not been successful (February 2021 photo above). These have included various barriers; signage (explaining the need for the track closure, the track collapse and sand dune slide, the environmental and cultural values of the cliffs, the exposure of the Bunurong middens, the unstable cliff edges, continuing erosion and danger to persons traversing the former track); the removal of all original track infrastructure and fencing; and the laying of brush on the original track. The NCG has previously corresponded with PV regarding the possibility of realigning the track to make it safe for continued use. The NCG was advised that a cultural heritage study and plan needed to be undertaken, that this was expensive and that the Bunurong wanted the track closed.

Over Summer 20/21 the barrier was deliberately disassembled, so it could be stepped over, and all the information signs vandalised or completely removed. This wanton destruction has left the track “open” and many individuals, groups, locals, visitors, etc. used the track on a daily basis. Local walking groups, as well as school groups and tertiary excursions walked this track and climbed over the barriers at either end. The NCG wrote to PV, seeking to work with them to find a solution.

Parks Victoria advised the NCG that “PV is compelled by legislation and policy not to willfully /knowingly harm or allow further harm to aboriginal cultural heritage. Bunurong Land Council assessed the site and would not approve a deviation of the track. Parks Victoria is also obliged through common law and public policy to do everything possible to ensure visitors are kept safe when undertaking legitimate recreational activities on public land, particularly when it is associated with the built assets we provide and maintain”.

NCG was advised further that “Ahead of the likely Easter crowds, the current actions are to once again brush over the entry point of the closed track, as well as resetting the existing signs in an effective position, install assertive regulatory signs, remove any evidence of the previous track alignment fencing, particularly at the land slip site, and restore the log barriers by adding steel mesh (@1.5m) to make it quite apparent and difficult to pass through, which will look similar to the typical access fencing nearby”.

Below LHS – new brush and signs in place March 2021; RHS steel mesh in place April 2021.



The new brush, signs and fencing were installed prior to Easter. Over the holiday period the warm weather has dried out the brush, and we have observed individual joggers and groups of young people climbing over the fence and “walking” over the brush, continuing along the old track and down the cliffs to the rock pool. They simply ignore the signs and the barriers. DO YOU HAVE A SOLUTION? Suggestions gratefully received info@nepeanconservationgroup.org.au

The NCG looks forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards
Ursula

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