



Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

P.O. BOX 119, SPRINGWOOD. 2777

JULY NEWSLETTER 1982

President; Christine Stickley Ph. 53-6380

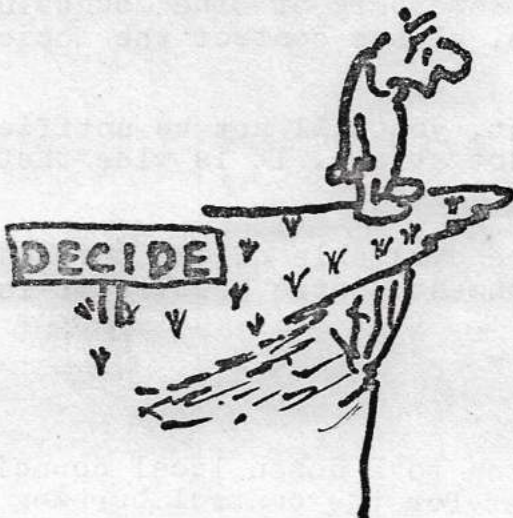
Secretary; Wendy Godfrey Ph. 39-1748

Editor; Paul Godfrey Ph. 39-1748

EDITORIAL

The environment makes the news. Every day, newspapers, magazines and radio and television programmes around the world, broadcast further episodes in a story that is as old as Man's occupation of the Earth. While many listen how the environment is changing through men's actions or neglect, few become actively involved. Many feel that such change is part of the "natural" scheme of things - a sort of evolution. All members of this conservation society must agree that such matters are not pre-ordained. People's attitude and beliefs can and should be changed. This must remain fundamental to our society's underlying philosophy and this can only come about through active - not passive - participation. Perhaps through our action the news may become brighter. The world's forests, for example, are being cleared at a rate of 14 hectares per minute, a frightening figure. All of us are horrified by such a statistic - but being horrified does not alter it - it is only through action that forestry policies can be modified to accommodate the "wise use" doctrine that this society prescribes to. Use the following to influence others regarding our environmental dilemma.

- less than one third of the area of N.S.W.'s rainforest existing at the time of European settlement remains.
- a total of 48 fauna species appear on the Endangered Species Schedule of the National Parks and Wildlife Act or are proposed additions.
- we have poisoned or wasted the fundamental pre-requisites for a sustained existence; food, air and water.
- on a worldwide scale, we are currently losing one entire species per day to extinction. Unless a radical change occurs this will increase to one per hour by the year 2000.
- soil conservationists estimated that one completely unprotected paddock lost soil at the colossal rate of 300 tonnes per ha. Some of these soils took perhaps 30,000 years to reach their present fully developed form. Washed away to the sea or blown across to New Zealand!



The environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of a crisis of mind and spirit. There could be no greater misconception of its meaning than to believe it to be concerned only with endangered wildlife, human-made ugliness and pollution. These are part of it, but more importantly, the crisis is concerned with the kind of creatures we are and what we must become in order to survive.

Lynton K. Caldwell.

Next Meeting

General discussion on the "business of the day" (see report of July meeting), plus members slides. Bring along a few of your latest bush excursion.

PAST MEETINGS

JUNE

The June meeting attracted a full house, with people standing outside the door to hear Mr. Phil Koperberg speak on "hazard reduction by controlled burning". Mr. Alan Catford from the Australian Conservation Foundation was a member of the audience, along with members from local bush fire brigades, presenting both sides of the argument. Mr. Koperberg was supported by his Deputy, Mr. Vince Ward. We must thank Mr. Koperberg for engaging in meaningful discussion under a somewhat "hot" cross-fire.

The two and a half hours that Mr. Koperberg spoke and answered questions was not long enough as many questions had to be left unanswered. Mr. Koperberg illustrated his talk with reference to a number of maps showing areas that had been recently control burnt. The maps show these burns cover many hectares in a broad region around the towns.

Alan Catford mentioned methods being used in other Council areas where clearing of leaf litter and growth behind houses is done by hand.

Time did not allow Mr. Koperberg to "discuss in detail" the particular concerns that were raised in the Society Newsletter that brought Mr. Koperberg to speak to the Society. After Mr. Koperberg's letter of reply printed in the Gazette 11.11.81, it was hoped that the "substantial evidence available" would have been presented at the meeting. Mr. Koperberg stated during the evening that the "ample evidence available to substantiate the claim that flora and fauna communities subjected to high intensity wildfire are more likely to undergo ecological change" was also partly based on his observations, which he said were better than nothing.

Whilst no-one seemed to go home with their viewpoints changed, it is felt that some progress was made. Mr. Koperberg suggested that the Society form a Committee to work with the Bush Fire Brigades such that when control burns are to take place, areas of significance that should not be burnt can be singled out by the Society. The Committee would have the opportunity to walk over the land with the brigade and suggestions could be made for placement of fire trails (breaks) for that particular burn. No guarantee was made to always abide by these suggestions, yet it is a beginning. Perhaps local knowledge in areas to be burnt will help save some animals and particular plant communities. If you live in an area proposed to be burnt, and would like to save some special spots of importance, do not hesitate to contact Mr. Koperberg at Blue Mountains City Council. If you'd like some assistance, please contact the Society Executive.

Unless you own the land to be burnt, you will not be notified more than a few days in advance, or maybe not at all. It is wise that you check with the Council for future burn programmes.

For those interested we have a tape available of the proceedings. The following extract from the Total Environment Centre Newsletter is interesting and relevant.

Control Burning in Urban Bushland

Five environment groups have written to a dozen local councils requesting an environmental impact statement for the control burning of

The Nature Conservation Society, Willoughby Environmental Protection Association, South Turramurra Environment Protection, Australian Conservation Foundation and T.E.C. told the Councils that the effects of control burning are "significant" for the purpose of s112 of the Environmental and Planning Assessment Act, and therefore required an E.I.S. with public review. If satisfactory replies were not received, legal action would be initiated.

Where necessary, fuel reduction with hand tools is a preferable alternative. This is already carried out in Mosman and Willoughby municipalities. Ku-ring-gai Council considers hand clearing to be as effective against bushfires as control burning.

JULY

Changes to Format of Meetings

Due to the volume of business now confronting the Society, all correspondence will be dealt with by the Works Committee who will report to each monthly meeting seeking consensus of opinion on new matters and advising of progress on others. This change will allow us to highlight meetings with speakers, films, slides etc.

WALKS

Business has been so time-consuming for the Executive, that we have not been able to organise many walks or excursions. This should now change and the following are planned for the latter part of this year:

- a Sunday excursion to the Housing Commission's solar subdivision at Bonnyrigg. We hope to get a Commission engineer or planner to show us around. The date will be announced in the next newsletter.
- a day walk to the Colo River via Bob Turner's Track (in the warmer weather).
- 26th September, a midday BBQ at the picnic area in Mount Wilson. Just a nice lazy day with the opportunity to walk down to the Wollongambe River.
- Behind Mountain Lagoon there is a large patch of rainforest called the "Green Scrub". The date and way in are yet to be finalised.

LOCAL EVENTS OFFERED BY OTHER GROUPS

SATURDAY 31st JULY 7.30pm

The following films will be shown at Springwood Pre-School, Macquarie Road, Springwood.

"Home on the Range" - a film on U.S. nuclear bases and C.I.A. involvement in Australia.

"The Land My Mother" - Aboriginal Land Rights.

These will be followed by a speaker. Bev Symons is an Executive Member of the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament. Bev is an activist in the Nuclear Free Pacific Movement and on the Committee for the Pacific Concerns Resources Centre.

SUNDAY 1st AUGUST 7.30pm

These films will be shown again at the Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre (10 Station Street). There will be a different speaker.

FRIDAY 6th AUGUST 6.00pm HIROSHIMA DAY

A commemorative candlelight march from Belmore Park near Central Railway proceeding to Town Hall and Sydney Square. B.Y.O.Candle.

International and local speakers and singers will make contributions appropriate to the commemorative nature of this tragic anniversary.

SATURDAY 21st AUGUST 7.30pm

Two films on the S.W. Tasmania Dams Issue will be shown at Springwood High School, Grose Road, Paulconbridge. Liquid refreshments will be provided but bring your own eats.

YEAR OF THE TREE

The Society has been involved in two official plantings so far.
Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve 4.6.82

This was well-attended but the atmosphere was initially marred by a destructive break-in into all the sheds and the main building in the Reserve. However, Peter and Margaret Quirk and groups ranging from associations for girl guides, environmental education, gardening groups to conservation societies planted a total of 18 trees. Our Society planted a Tasmanian Blue Gum, Euc. globulus.

Nepean College of Advanced Education 7.6.82

Our Society was represented in the official planting for the Metropolitan West Environmental Education Association. Numerous species were set into a group planting at the front of the College.

The Works Committee will be meeting with a representative from Blue Mountains City Council following a letter from them seeking maximum community participation in appropriate Year of the Tree Projects. We have been specifically asked to advise on;

- "1. Recommended Australian Native species for street tree planting.
2. Recommended Australian native species for planting in parks, and -
3. any particular locations your Society would like to see beautified and landscape suggestions for such a locality.
4. Whether your Society would like to participate in any particular project by physically planting trees, or providing other assistance."

We would like the guidance of all members on this matter. Please phone the Secretary re preferred localities or species. One eyesore that springs to mind is the highway and we will be endeavouring to achieve the same co-operation from the Department of Main Roads as we are receiving from Blue Mountains City Council.

GLENBROOK TREATMENT WORKS

On our last excursion to Lennox Bridge, many members commented on the amount of foaming in the creek. The treatment works has an outlet into the creek. We made an enquiry to the M.W.S. & D.B. and the following is an extract of their reply;

"The Board is well aware of the problem of foaming on the creek and recognises the adverse impact on the amenity of Lennox Bridge and its environs. A reduction in the amount of foaming and a general improvement in the overall quality of the effluent will occur when the tertiary sand filters are recommissioned at Glenbrook Water Pollution Control Plant. Due to a structural failure in the filter tank walls the tertiary filters have been out of commission since July 1981. It is anticipated that the filters

Chemical analyses have indicated that the level of detergent in the Glenbrook Plant's effluent is not excessive for a treatment plant of its type. Nevertheless the turbulence generated as the effluent flows down the creek may result in some minor foaming persisting in the creek even after the tertiary filters are recommissioned. Should the foaming continue to be excessive the Board will, of course, investigate and give consideration to other methods of eliminating the problem."

BUSHROCK - BELONGS IN THE BUSH
BUSHROCK - AN IMPORTANT HABITAT
BUSHROCK - WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT?

The following is a summary of an interview with National Parks and Wildlife Service Senior Ranger, Rod Rose. Mr. Rose is in charge of the lower Blue Mountains area and southern Wollemi National Park. Both places have been plundered of bushrock for some time.

WHAT IS BUSHROCK?

It's the colloquial term for any natural rock exposed above ground level or lying loose on the ground. Around the Sydney region most bushrock is sandstone but basalt, granite and other rock types are also included.

WHAT IS THE BUSHROCK PROBLEM?

Basically it is the desire by people to have bushrock used for landscaping shopping centres, public areas and their own homes. And the rock is taken from natural bushland where it is a valuable component of the environment.

HOW IMPORTANT IS BUSHROCK TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

Like many aspects of the environment, the value of bushrock is difficult to measure. It is certainly a vital habitat for some plants and animals, particularly in the Hawkesbury Sandstone areas.

Rocks prevent soil from drying out and provide a 'microclimate'; a barrier to sudden changes in weather conditions. They are also an essential refuge for animals during bushfires and help prevent soil erosion.

WHAT ARE THE LONGER TERM EFFECTS OF REMOVING BUSHROCK?

Again it is difficult to be certain. But many small animals such as earthworms, slaters, snakes, spiders, lizards and small mammals could be removed from the food chain. At least in some areas.

Depending on the extent to which the rock is removed this link in the food chain may reduce the number of many other animals.

WHERE IS THE BUSHROCK TAKEN FROM?

In the areas west of Sydney - just about anywhere you can drive a vehicle. Those who steal bushrock have driven up to 15 kms off formed roads. They usually 'bushbash' their way along ridgetops to sites where rock is plentiful.

Much of the National Park and certainly state forest and vacant crown land has been affected. Even private lands, have been robbed in the Blue Mountains.

CAN ANY BUSHROCK BE TAKEN LEGALLY?

At present, the Forestry Commission and the Department of Lands have some areas where bushrock can be collected legally by licenced operators. These areas are mainly east of Colo Heights and on the Newnes Plateau. But there are only about eight licenced areas.

IS THERE ANYTHING THIS SOCIETY CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION?

I suppose it depends on how enthusiastic you are. In the short

this must be done immediately to allow Rangers or Police to catch the offenders in the act, otherwise you will have to be prepared to go to court. Wherever possible, the vehicle registration number and the exact location and status of the land is useful. But by no account should offenders be approached as many are regarded as dangerous. Particularly if it appears that they are being reported.

In the longer term, but starting now, we should try and change landscaping fashions. We don't have to have bushrock in our gardens. There are many alternatives such as old railway sleepers, quarried sandstone or better still a garden edge not defined by 'imported' goods.

There are many very attractive native garden settings without timbers or bushrock. These should be promoted and when next 're-doing' your own garden, think about alternatives to bushrock.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Firstly, thanks must go to Mr. Rose for availing himself for interview - it is up to us now to help reduce the demand for this resource.

Secondly, the situation is not just simply a few inanimate rocks but the removal of a habitat supportive of it's own unique living entity.

SPREAD THE WORD - HANDS OFF OUR BUSHROCK - make it socially unacceptable!

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DARKS COMMON

The Minister for Local Government and Lands, Mr. E.L. Gordon, has approved the agreed upon proposed additions to Lapstone Pre-School, Boy Scouts site and Lapstone Public School subject to certain formalities. Mr. Gordon has also approved that the Common be dedicated for the "Promotion of the Study and Conservation of Native Flora and Fauna under Section 24 of the Crown Lands Consolidation Act, 1913.

A Trust is being formed to manage the Common. The Society will be represented on this Trust by Mick Dark who, along with Jill has worked long and hard to have the Common preserved.

A.C.F. SPECIAL HABITAT

As reported in the last newsletter, copies of this issue to commemorate the Year of the Tree are now available from either the Secretary, our monthly stall at the Ivy Market or at monthly meetings.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES - BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL

The Works Committee will be reviewing this document and submitting preferred changes that should allow Council to head in an environmentally-sound direction.

ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER - BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL

The position will be advertised in the near future.

RAINFORESTS OF N.S.W.

A decision on their future is imminent. The campaign could be assisted by letters to the Premier urging that all logging must cease and that all rainforest is preserved in National Parks.

EASTERN ESCARPMENT

a precedent. It is now in the hands of the Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr. E.L. Bedford. We will probably have to contest this issue via a Local Environmental Plan for the area.

At Lapstone, 10 additional netball courts are proposed in a conspicuous locality. The F4 extension from Emu Plains to Lapstone will add another boom.

WHEN WILL THIS ASSAULT ON THE ESCARPMENT CEASE?

HATS OFF TO THE HOUSING COMMISSION

The Commission has sought the Society's input into a large parcel of land at Regentville. They asked if there was anything we thought needed to be brought to their attention. The Works Committee conducted several field inspections and offered some suggestions on what should be preserved, why and how. This 'new' attitude by the Commission is admirable and should set an example to other instrumentalities and government departments.

SUMMER SCHOOL ON MOUNT KOSCIUSKO

Been a good conservationist - deserve a well-earned reward - and you are interested in the following:

- The history of the Snowys
- Songs and ballads of the Snowys
- The landforms at Mount Kosciusko
- Australia's Alpine wildflowers
- The fauna of the alpine region
- Man and the Snowys, Managing the Kosciusko National Park
- Investing \$130.00 in your future education
- Devoting January 23-28, 1983 to the pursuit of environmental knowledge.

All of the above and more, may be experienced through the Department of Continuing Education, University of New England. This is a magnificent opportunity for people who qualify. Further information from our Secretary, Wendy, as soon as possible.

PENRITH "PIT" SCHEME.

Members may have noticed in the local press that a Commission of Inquiry was held on 15th and 16th of June at Penrith Council Chambers to examine;

"Development application by Penrith Lakes Development Corporation Ltd. in respect of the interim continuation of gravel and sand extraction and rehabilitation programme in the Penrith Lakes Area".

There was a varying attendance of approximately 60 people in the gallery. Government departments present were the Department of Environment and Planning and the State Pollution Control Commission.

Commissioners were Mr. J. Woodward, Dr. A. Gilpin, with assistance from Mr. K. Brooks. 18 parties registered submissions, mostly local residents. Our Society sympathises with these people but perhaps Penrith City Council should not have allowed a subdivision at Cranebrook in the first place!

The Society's submission suggested that the application should not be considered at this stage. Throughout the Environmental Impact Statement, there is a severe lack of evidence to support the "potential" for a lakes system. Apparently, ground water is being extracted

The Society maintained that a great deal is left to the imagination and the forthcoming Regional Environmental Study. Also, much is made of the proposed Regional Environmental Plan. However, while the studies continue, the Corporation proposes to increase extractions by 30%. After 1983, extractions will increase by only 1%. This shows total disregard for the environmental and public decision-making process.

We questioned the proposed rehabilitation scheme. The Corporation is having trouble with erosion and stabilisation. Incidentally, the glossy photographs submitted as evidence by the Corporation were taken at an angle that neatly hid all the erosion gullies.

Our submission also questioned the assurances by the Corporation that extraction close to the immediate banks of the Nepean River will not increase flood liability.

On page 94 of the E.I.S., a neat little paragraph offers an 'out' for the Corporation if they so wish. It states,

"It has also been recognised in the discussions of the Working Party that the Scheme as a whole must be feasible from the point of view of regional water supply and water quality and in overall economic terms."

The economic climate is deteriorating and there is no Deed of Agreement with Penrith City Council that these environmental and recreational objectives will be met. The Community could be left with a highly degraded and dangerous environment. Our concern is shared by the Department of Environment and Planning. The final title of the land has not been decided by a formal agreement either.

Our submission prompted a response from the Corporation as follows,

"...Society, that the ideal course would be to make a complete study of the area and reach final decisions as to landuse and rehabilitation before carrying out any extractive industries. However, it is not possible to adopt that ideal course."

So much for the proper process of planning and decision-making!

The Corporation claimed some 420 people would be dismissed in August if this application was not approved in the near future.

Incidentally, at 3.50pm on the last day, evidence on the health effects of dust pollution was submitted by the Corporation. Until then, known was thought to be available. The Inquiry was closed ten minutes later at 4.00pm., much to the disgust of local residents and Penrith City Council who saw that evidence as vital and should have been read. The Corporation didn't think it was an issue.

It didn't take long.

Penrith Press headlines of July 14 were,

"Minister approves mining"

"LAKES TO GO AHEAD"

There is no formal agreement or guarantee that the Lakes Scheme will go ahead at all! At least not to the extent that it has been publicised. The Penrith Press should get their preferences straight. What the community is getting is dust and noise pollution, lots of big holes with a few trees around them and only the NEAR possibility of a large recreational amenity.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS (of which we in the Mountains have several)

The Hon. P. Lenda, Minister for Energy and Water Resources, has established a committee to investigate wild and scenic rivers. This follows a deputation to the Minister from Total Environment Centre.

- * The development of criteria to evaluate and classify rivers as wild and scenic.
- * The adequacy of existing legislation to permit the preservation of wild and scenic rivers.
- * The environmental and public review procedures to be followed before a wild and scenic river proposal is approved, including the means of resolving competition between the need to preserve wild and scenic rivers and the need to develop water resources.
- * The preparation of an inventory of wild and scenic rivers in order of importance.
- * The means of achieving the dedication of selected sections or rivers as wild and scenic.

From the T.E.C. Newsletter Hune.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL CONSERVATION STRATEGY

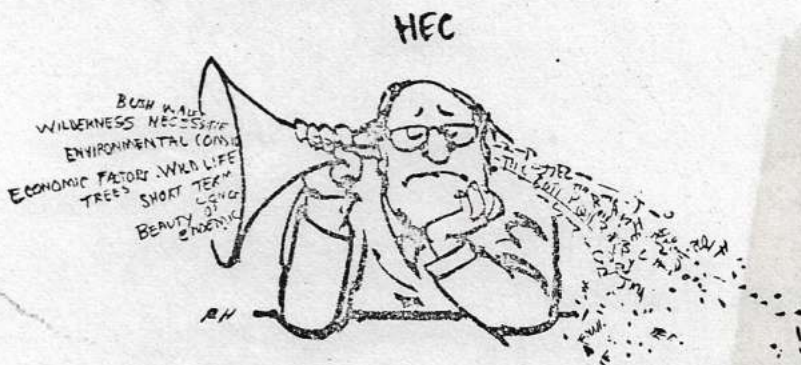
The Fed. Department of Home Affairs and Environment has produced a discussion paper titled,

"National Conservation Strategy for Australia

Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development

Comments on the paper will be received and should be submitted as soon as possible and not later than 15.9.82. The document is available from,

The Director,
National Conservation Strategy Task Force,
Department of Home Affairs and Environment,
P.O. Box 1252,
Canberra City A.C.T. 2601.



THE ECO SHOW

