

LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER.

AUGUST 1979

P. O. BOX 119, SPRINGWOOD, 2777.

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NEXT MEETING: Friday, August 10th. 8 p.m. Glenbrook Primary School. John Argent, lecturer in ecology at Nepean College of Advanced Education will speak on aspects of his work.

EXCURSIONS: Another long awaited spotlighting trip has been planned for Saturday night, SEPTEMBER 8th at Blue Gum Swamp at Springwood. Bring a Barbeque dinner to meet at the end of the bitumen on Whitecross Road at 5 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 16th. A walk around the environs of Waratah Park along Bells Line of Road. Meet at the picnic area at 10 a.m.

NOVEMBER 17th-18th. A weekend camp with a number of walks around the Boyd Plateau in Kanagra Boyd National Park, is being planned. This is a very beautiful part of the Mountains, with some spectacular scenery, steep valleys, waterfalls and quiet forests of gums. More details will be given at the October meeting.

COMING EVENTS: Sunday, AUGUST 12th. A day to help Gary Tooth with planting of land near the Glenbrook kindergarten. Gary is working hard to rehabilitate this parcel of land with rainforest species, and has planned to build a small path system, eventually down to the creek, so that the children are able to appreciate certain highlighted trees along the way. Any help at any other time would be appreciated too. Meet at the site in the morning, all welcome.

Saturday, AUGUST 18th Ivy Market at Springwood. Anyone who could help Jill and Aileen man the stall, selling native plants, would be most welcome.

Saturday night, AUGUST 18th. 8p.m. The Friends of the Earth and the Katoomba and District Wildlife Conservation Society are running a dance at the Lawson Community Hall with traditional Irish music supplied by "Mountain Folk". Take along a plate of food for supper, and have a swinging night.

Sunday, AUGUST 26th is another weedin day at Glenbrook Lagoon, from 2 p.m. onwards.

September 7th. Saturday night is the Annual Dinner of the Nature Conservation Council when Mr. Paul Landa will be the guest speaker. The venue is the Australian Museum at 7.20 p.m. costing \$10 per head for a 5 course meal. Tickets are available from the Environment Centre, 399 Pitt St., Sydney.

Sept. 29th - Oct. 1st. The Society will be holding a display at the Native Plant Reserve, Glenbrook in association with the S.G.A.P. show.

October 12th. Annual General Meeting at Glenbrook Primary School at 8p.m. and election of officers for the coming year.

October 28th. The Penrith Community "Life-Be-In-It" Committee has asked the society to participate in the day's events by mounting a display and stall. This will be a good opportunity to tell people of the Nepean District of the work of our Society.

NEPEAN GORGE

Heartening news was received on July 18th when Mr. Paul Landa released the news, along with Mr. Peter Anderson, that the eastern bank of the Nepean River (10 kilometers) is to be added to the Blue Mountains National Park. "Six hundred and eighty acres of some of the most magnificent river front landscape in Australia is now permanently protected" said Mr. Landa. "The visual significance of these additions to the Park is immense. The newly proclaimed land runs from the area known as Norton's Basin downstream to the northern limits of the natural sandstone gorge on the eastern bank of the Nepean."

However, the land around the north and eastern banks of Norton's Basin has still to be added to the National Park. This is the area developed for picnic and boat launching facilities by Anwrack Pty. Ltd. The N.P.&W.S. are adamant about including this portion in the National Park and are anxious to begin a proper careful management program there to help it recover from the damage already perpetrated. This depends on the outcome of legal proceedings underway now.

The addition of the eastern bank is extremely important in maintaining the Park as a visual whole. Already, the approaches of development can be seen from the western bank of the Nepean. As Paul Landa says; "The inherent beauty of the gorge can be best appreciated when view from the river by boat, or from the Blue Mountains National Park looking east."

Again, congratulations to Mr. Paul Landa for the declaration of this important feature, and it is hoped the remaining section of Norton's Basin will soon be added to the National Park.

LONG ANGLE GULLY. The large scale clearing operations and road building in this once quiet, beautiful wooded valley have not gone unnoticed by Blue Mountains City Council, and legal proceedings are under way against the "developer".

GREAT BARRIER REEF.

"SAVE THE REEF"

"To stand on a reef of the outer barrier and watch the surf crashing in, the air filled with thunder and sea mist, and to know that waves have been assaulting these same reefs for thousands of years, and yet they stand firm underfoot - this is the beginning of appreciation of the truly marvellous coral structures called reefs and the tiny architects responsible for them.

Coral reefs lie beneath the sea. Here in this silent world their beauty lies revealed. To swim amongst the corals and fishes, to be at home in their underwater world is to enter a new dimension of awareness. The undersea landscape of living corals provides an exquisite setting for the other inhabitants of the reef. All possess beauty. In this tranquil world of subdued light, brilliantly coloured fishes with their often bizarre shapes add to the feeling of unreality. Perhaps it is this unique combination of beauty and strangeness that gives coral reefs their mystique"

So writes marine biologist, Steve Domm in his book with its beautiful photographs on the "Corals of the Great Barrier Reef".

Australia's prime natural heritage, the Great Barrier Reef, stretches for 2,000 km from 24'S to 10'S, comprising a complex of some 2,500 coral reefs with over 500 islands, covering 272,000 square kilometres. It is the greatest assemblage of marine organisms living in the largest coral reef system in the world.

Here, the Queensland Government want to allow mining and drilling for oil.

The Federal Government has recently agreed to extend the powers of the States to encompass three miles of territorial sea, including the seabed. The States now have the same powers thereover, as they possess over the land mass. The result; in Queensland, a mosaic of Federal and State controlled waters, with all the attendant bureaucratic tangles, reducing the possibility of establishing a world class Marine Park.

The Federal and Queensland governments have been discussing the manner in which this agreement should be effected in case of the Great Barrier Reef and any agreement to proclaim a marine park will need to take account of these discussions.

The fact is that the Queensland government will allow reef mining and oil drilling. Four major oil companies, with the support of the Queensland Government, wish to carry out exploration drilling for oil in waters surrounding the Great Barrier Reef. There is also interest in mining the reefs for limestone.

The Federal Government, in May this year, decided to maintain the ban on drilling until the results of further long and short term research are known. In a letter to the society on June 4th, Malcolm Fraser emphasized that the "Commonwealth position is unequivocal - there will be no drilling on the Reef and the Commonwealth Government will not allow any drilling or mining that could damage the reef."

However, the key to that statement is that the Queensland government now has control over parts of the Reef and that no drilling will be allowed that could damage the Reef, itself. Drilling may therefore take place in the vicinity of the reef, and here the danger lies in the lethal effects on marine organisms from the results of spillage or blow outs from off-shore rigs. The reef's complex currents would easily carry the effects of the oil far from the immediate location of a spill. Oil affects directly any floating organisms such as eggs or larvae while the heavier parts eventually sink to form a layer on the seabed.

Falling tides lower oil on to the emergent reefs where the hot sun on the black substance substantially adds to its lethal properties. The total effects on such a complex ecosystem could be incalculable.

Envisage the Reef dotted with huge oil rigs lying in a path of a cyclone with the wind velocity of that of Cyclone Tracey. Oil pipes could be ruptured and rigs destroyed, oil spillage would be inevitable. The Queensland beaches risk great damage due to accompanying high seas and gale force winds. Fishermen and others gaining their living from the sea or coastal shores would find it difficult to recover.

The 1974 Report by the Royal Commission into Exploratory and Production Drilling for Petroleum in the area of the Great Barrier Reef recommended an intensive research campaign to enable the assessment of the long term value of the Reef and its environs as a major tourist project and food producing area. A submission is being prepared for a research program to be considered in the Budget. As yet, no research has been done into the effects of oil spills on the Reef. Marine Biologist, Dr. Frank Talbot said that due to insufficient knowledge about the current movements in the area; no area, if any, can be recommended as "safe" for drilling. "The Great Barrier Reef area is a total system - you can't isolate one part of it."

There are a number of other threats to the Reef apart from drilling and mining.

- Shipping of oil and toxic materials through dangerous waters.
- Over-fishing of giant clams and other marine life by foreign fishermen.
- Cumulative effect of tourists, skindivers, amateur and professional fishermen.
- Commercial shell, coral and aquarium fishing
- Water pollution from coastal waterways, including silt and pesticides.

The only lasting protection to the Reef and its surrounding waters is dedication of the whole unit as a Marine Park, as provided for in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act of 1975. Such a Marine Park, with sufficient staff and funds, could protect the Reef from illegal clam poachers, excessive shell, coral and other collecting and provide adequate management of the more damaging tourist activities.

The Reef has been recommended by Mr. Fraser as Australia's first World Heritage Area nomination. Let's work to keep it worthy of the future world's heritage, without oil rigs.

CROWN LANDS.

In April, the Minister for Lands, Mr Bill Crabtree, issued a statement regarding Crown Lands, the result after a detailed submission presented by the N.C.C. and continued negotiations by Council's chairperson, Chris Pratter. The N.C.C. opposed the continuing unlimited conversion of Crown leasehold lands to freehold, especially where the land is timbered and unimproved, and of marginal value for Primary Production.

The policy in relation to applications for conversion of Crown Land now requires "retention in the Crown's ownership wherever legally possible, of all lands which have no prudent use other than scenic and catchment area protection, timber production, recreation or nature and habitat conservation."

Also the policy is to retain travelling stock and camping Reserves under Crown ownership even if no longer required for their original purpose. "Former reserve land is now retained for protection of the environment, unless it is not timbered, is indistinguishable from the adjoining land and is not required to meet the needs of the travelling public, or for any other public purpose."

There was a reconfirmation of the policy, that, "wherever possible, upon conversion of a lease to freehold, strips of land should be excluded to give the public access to and along water frontages, within or adjoining that lease".

A greater emphasis has been placed on the retention of closed roads and the purchase of roads for conservation purposes.

The main categories of leasehold from which the Crown can withdraw, are known specifically as Crown Lease and Special Lease both of which cover a significant portion of the remaining natural timbered leasehold lands.

Chris Pratten asks that member societies report any breaches of this policy, especially with regard to any appropriate leasehold lands, T.S.R.'s or riverbank leases.

MR. RON MULOCK'S STAND ON MINING AND NATIONAL PARKS.

In an address to the Coal Preparation Society in May the Minister for Mineral Resources and Development, Mr. Ron Mulock, spoke of the problems of sorting out competing interests between those who wish to preserve the environment and those who wish to mine.

Mr. Mulock feels there is a need to ensure on the one hand that an industry vital to the Economy of the state is not irresponsibly damaged by unreasonable pressures exerted by environmental interests, and on the other hand, to ensure that the natural beauty of our state is not despoiled by mining operators enjoying 'open slather'.

In this May address, Mr. Mulock stated that, "National Parks, we know, cover a significant portion of the area of this state, about 3.4% of the total. Of course, coal exists in only a very small number of areas or parks where coal is present there will still remain a total prohibition on mining activity. Varying degrees of activity will be permitted in other areas after the most thorough

environmental scrubbing. All semi-permanent features, such as ventilation shafts and pitheads will be planned and constructed with the greatest care so that minimum damage to the environment is caused. Access to mines will be permitted only along existing trails, and helicopters will be used where necessary to minimise surface disturbance.

In other words, every effort will be made to ensure that the public's enjoyment of our National Parks is not interfered with unduly. There is no chance that our national parks will be despoiled and scarred permanently by ill-planned mines or irresponsible operators. All proposals for exploration or mining will have to conform to the highest environmental standards before approval is even considered."

MOVEMENT AGAINST URANIUM MINING.

This active group are organizing events as part of a campaign to have Australia declared a Nuclear Free Zone, meaning no mining of uranium, no export of uranium and no nuclear power or nuclear weapons for Australia. On August 11th, a mock uranium convoy will travel from Lucas Heights to White Bay, in an effort to draw attention to the fact that uranium is transported this way, usually at night. Councils and residents are not informed, and there is no insurance in case of spillage. While this is the least dangerous part of the fuel cycle, it is still a significant factor, and one about which citizens can take some positive steps.

In Melbourne, eight City Councils have declared their areas Nuclear Free Zones. Penrith City Council has recently declared itself a Nuclear Free Zone. Ald. Pardey, who moved the motion, also called on the authorities to ensure that no nuclear waste was deposited in or conveyed through the area.

A large amount of information and magazines are available for research etc. and a detailed list is enclosed with M.A.U.M. newsletters, available from our society's secretary.

GUM TREES, EMU PLAINS

Forestry Commission experts have said that in most cases, the gum trees in Emu Plains and the Mountains, which appear to be dying, will recover. A tiny insect is believed to be responsible for the setback of growth of the trees. The insect, a Lerp, settles on the back of a leaf, causing the trees to look as if they are dying. Birds are responsible for carrying the insect in from outlying areas. This disease has nothing to do with the eucalypt dieback affecting trees in the eastern Tablelands.

EXCURSION TO GREEN SCRUB. Members are invited to join the Trustees of the Acacia Papesceus Reserve on August 25th to walk to Green Scrub, a remnant rainforest featuring many large red cedar. This is a time when the rare wattle should be in full bloom, and promises to be an enjoyable day. Meet at the corner of Mountain Lagoon Road and Bells Line of Road at 9.30 a.m.

SNIPPETS. Erskine State Forest logging operations are still being investigated by the society, and a letter of protest about logging a sacred aboriginal mountain, Mumbulla near Bega was sent to the appropriate authorities. A \$30 donation was sent to Project Jonah.