



January/February/March 1994

## Lower Mountains Eco-News

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC.

RETURN ADDRESS:  
LBMCS  
P.O. BOX 119  
SPRINGWOOD 2777

### Notice of Meetings

#### .....MONTHLY MEETINGS.....

8.00 pm Springwood Neighbourhood Centre  
Fourth Friday of every month.

Friday	25 February 1994
Friday	25 March 1994
Friday	22 April 1994

## AIMS

To inform the public on environmental and conservation issues; research into population and distribution of fauna in the Blue Mountains and neighbouring region.

## MEMBERSHIPS

Australian Conservation Foundation.L  
Nature Conservation Council of NSW

## OTHER GROUP INVOLVEMENT

Society for Growing Australian Plants  
(Blue Mountains Branch)  
The Total Environment Centre  
National Parks Association (NSW)  
Upper Blue Mtns Conservation Society  
WIRES  
The Wilderness Society  
CHANGE

Glenbrook Lagoon Society  
Eastern Escarpment 530A Cmte  
Darks Common Trust  
Nepean River Committee  
The Colong Foundation (Inc.)

## SOCIETY CONTACTS

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## THE GREEN VOICE

An International Green League of Nations survey conducted by a London economic group has revealed that Australians are the world's biggest producer of household garbage and have contributed disproportionately to greenhouse gas and fossil fuel emissions. Australians are the world's most wasteful householders. ***Only 4 nations failed the 'clean and green' test (Australia one of them) with the United States ranking lowest in environmental responsibility and cleanliness.*** A recent OECD report has also revealed that Australia has spent the lowest amount in the OECD on environmental protection (SMH 2/2/94). These facts don't include the legacy we've inherited from generations of unsustainable farming which has resulted in massive land degradation (costing the taxpayer millions of \$ to repair) and issues like the extraordinarily high incidence of skin cancer arising in the last decade, simultaneous to the discovery of damage being done to the protective ozone layer from our unsound manufacturing practices.

In the aftermath of the January bushfires a petition was circulated throughout the lower Blue Mtns area claiming that the 'greenies' have held too much power for too long. This petition was obviously a cynical political exercise making ultimate mileage from the sensationalism of the media, the appalling lack of sound knowledge during the fires and the amount of unsubstantiated allegations on the reason for the fires which fuelled the "greenie" bashing that permeated society during those fires.

Obviously the source of the petition is not aware of or does not care about the environmental realities of our society and in taking the political stand of suppression of green values is advocating an irresponsible and dirty world. The reality throughout the world is that the environmental voice is not being heard enough - they have too little power, not too much. Otherwise we wouldn't have these enormous environmental problems.



## ➔ ➔ URGENT ACTION NEEDED ON WILDERNESS AREAS

The NCC has provided member groups with factsheets on the wilderness issue in NSW. This issue is **CRITICAL** at the moment and needs urgent action to help pressure the Fahey government into positive action.

A total of 10 Wilderness areas on the eastern side of NSW were nominated by environmental groups under the Wilderness Act. These areas were Bingi, Lost World, Washpool, Mann, Guy Fawkes, Oxley, Kanangra-Boyd, Deua, Goodradigbee and Nadgee. They totalled some 800,000 ha (approximately 1% of NSW). *Less than half the areas nominated for wilderness status were included in cabinet's 350,000 ha proposal and it evolved that only approx. 280,000 ha or approx 0.35% of the State were declared by the Fahey govt.*

Almost all prior access rights were unaffected by the decision. *The NCC feel that the excessive concessions to prior access rights breached the spirit, if not the letter, of the Wilderness Act.* Regardless of those concessions, a coalition of groups such as the mining lobby, the Farmers Federation (graziers), eco-tourism operators, and some 4-wheel drive users and horse riders are vigorously opposing the nomination of these remaining areas as Wilderness and putting pressure on Fahey through ultra-conservatives such as Albie Schultz and Peter Cochran. Needless to say, any more concessions to these users will seriously compromise wilderness because of the destructive nature of their practices.

There are many reasons why preservation of Wilderness areas is essential, here are just a few:

ACTION NEEDED

- ♥ *to protect bio-diversity and gene pools*
- ♥ *as a pristine research centre*
- ♥ *for the protection of Australia's unique species and the scientific discoveries they hold*
- ♥ *as a haven for native flora and fauna*
- ♥ *to ensure the long-term health of the environment we need for the life-giving air we breathe and the water we drink*
- ♥ *for the peace of mind and enjoyment it gives to those people who walk in wilderness to escape from the pressure of our technological world.*
- ♥ *for the joy to the spirit it gives to people who maybe cant get there - but need to know it's there anyway*
- ♥ *for its own sake !*

↓  
**ACTION NEEDED**

There are many more reasons. **It's very important that you let the government know you care.**

PLEASE WRITE Mr John Fahey  
OR FAX TO : Premier of NSW  
Parliament House  
SYDNEY. NSW 2000

AND: Mr Chris Hartcher  
Environment Minister  
Parliament House  
SYDNEY. NSW 2000

(plus Bob Carr, Leader of the NSW Opposition - and your local MP (perhaps just with copies of your letter to Fahey if you're pressed for time.)

Express your support for Wilderness declaration, stating that you vigorously oppose any watering down of the 23rd December decision and consider that decision to be a downpayment only. Fahey could be making some type of decision early next week (15 February) - **SO THIS IS MOST URGENT.**



## **PLANNING IN THE LOWER MTNS**

Community involvement was a big issue at the public meeting held in Springwood on Sunday 2 February to discuss the Town Plan for Springwood being vaunted by the BMCC. The meeting was chaired by Duncan Berriman and addressed by the new Manager of City Planning Malcolm Ryan.

Probably the most pertinent question asked was that posed by local resident Anne Kentwell when she asked "Who controls the future of the Mountains?" In the perception of many people in the area, it appears developers/speculators have fundamental control. Issues of space, quality of life, fresh air and preservation of bushland and the National Park run a poor second to the wishes of the development lobby.

Concern pivoted around the projected medium density housing planned for David Road (70 dwellings), St. Columbas, Winmalee (1300 dwellings), the old TAFE site off Macquarie Road and the Prospect depot site which butts onto Fairy Dell reserve. Speakers from the community expressed concern about the increased traffic flow and inadequate traffic planning with the subsequent increase in air pollution, the lack of consideration for shoppers (particularly the elderly), the destruction of the "village" atmosphere, and the on-going sale of public (Council and State) land for short-term gain which results in community resources lost forever to future generations. Citizens spoke against the on-going release of homesites on ridge areas which because of their vulnerability during a bushfire, should never be developed. It was argued that the infrastructure of community facilities does not support the existing population adequately so further development is just not viable. Residents are concerned that the rapid rate of development makes it impossible for the community to keep up with what is going on and therefore prevents them from having a say in what happens.

Motions from the floor (unanimously carried) called for no further developments before traffic flow implementation takes place, for a halt on rezonings until the completion of EMP Stage 2, when it can be determined that such rezonings will not impact unfavourably on the

heritage values of the mountains, and for a committee to be set up for the formulation of a town plan for the Springwood area, with community representatives to be part of that committee.

## **UPDATE ON DEANII FOREST**

Bessie Bramsen has approached Virginia Bear, BMCC Bushcare Officer, with a suggestion that any panel formed to choose a consultant to assess the necessary work on the Deanii Forest include community representatives with an active interest in the forest. This suggestion has apparently been acted on.



## **PUBLIC MEETING ON BUSHLAND**

A public meeting has been called for :

**SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY**  
**at ELLISON SCHOOL HALL**  
**Ellison Road, Springwood**  
**commencing 9 am**

**(Cost \$4 includes morning tea & lunch)**

The meeting will centre on the theme "The Blue Mtns bushland is special but - recent bushfires raised many questions for residents and volunteers who care for our bushland.

Speakers will be:

*Stuart James - Technical Officer, BMCC Bushfire Control.*

*Win Jones - National Parks & Wildlife Service.*

Win will speak on the subject - World Heritage listing depends on bushcare.

For more information phone:  
 51-6046 or 39-1427



## **BUSHFIRES - THE AFTERMATH**

We all await the report of the Coronial Enquiry into the January bushfires.

In the meantime the following facts from the NPWS should be noted:

- A combination of extremely dry weather conditions, high temperatures, strong winds and in many cases arson led to the 1994 bushfires.
- *Of more than 800 fires registered by the Department Bushfire Services from Boxing Day to mid January, less than ten percent were associated with national parks and nature reserves.*
- At least 80 percent of National Park fires were believed to have started through negligence (eg. campfires) or by arson.
- *There are 30 wilderness areas in NSW. Only three fires occurred in declared wilderness areas. Two of these were very small fires - the Ettrema and Broga fires affected about 10 ha and the Mann 1500 ha. The fires were not considered a threat to life or property.*
- Over 670 of the NPWS' 850 staff were involved in the bushfire fighting effort.
- *The Services' record in containing fires on parks is very good, with less than 7 percent of fires leaving national park boundaries in the past four years. In these years:*

*942 fires occurred in National Parks  
64 (less than 7%) of these left park boundaries; but  
341 fires came from neighbouring lands onto parks.*

- There are almost 10 000 km of fire trails in parks with an estimated replacement value of \$83 million.
- In the four years between 1982/86, 36 000 ha on National Parks were involved in hazard reduction burning. In the past four years 1989/93, 81 000 ha were involved in hazard reduction burning.
- *Simple figures do not reflect the fact that the Service hazard reduction burning is carefully planned and strategically placed to maximise its protection value (ie. it is concentrated at the interface between houses and bushland).*
- Endangered Species Legislation has no effect on hazard reduction burning as the Bushfires Act explicitly overrides all environmental legislation.

In the light of community concern being expressed on hazard reduction burning at present, it is worth quoting from a 1993 paper "Hazard reduction burning - the Tasmanian experience" by J. Gledhill of the Tas Fire Service ... "From a Fire Service perspective it is not so much a concern that we may be degrading the floristic complexion of vegetation, but that too frequent burning may be causing a more flammable fire prone vegetation. Short term protection may be at the expense of fire protection in the long term."



## **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**

The Open Training and Education Network (part of TAFE NSW) offers many correspondence courses to people unable to attend regular TAFE classes.

One of these courses is **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT** (Course No.1324). The course consists of two subjects:

**Wildlife Management** - covering basic plant and animal classification, basic community ecology and the study of plant and animal populations.

**Basic Environmental Studies** - providing in-depth study of ecology and ecosystems to an advanced level.

The course assumes no previous ecological knowledge. It must be completed within two years and each subject is equivalent to 4 hours per week of class attendance for 18 weeks. Cost is \$75 - end result is a Statement of Attainment.

All applications should be directed to:  
**OTEN, 199 Regent Street, Redfern. 2016.**  
Telephone - (02) 318 7222.

Get in as soon as possible - applications close end February but places could fill before that date.

## **NATIVE GRASS FOR AUSTRALIAN GARDENS**

The seed for "Weeping Grass" (*Microlaena stipoides*) will be generally available in about a year.

This native grass can be used as a lawn, can withstand difficult conditions and grows over much of Australia. It should be used instead of kikuyu, buffalo, etc.

This release is the result of studies into its use by a botanist at New England University.

### **LBMCS RAFFLE WINNER**

**The winner of the Tapestry  
donated by Wynne O'Brien  
is orange ticket No. F33  
Ken Shaw.**

## **REPAIRING THE HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN RIVERBANK**

A report by botanists Doug Benson and Jocelyn Howell, commissioned by the Water Board, has recommended that up to 2.5 million native trees be planted along the banks of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River to stem erosion and run-off problems. About 100 kilometres of the river's banks has been denuded or has less than 25 percent tree cover. Some of the land concerned is privately owned. It has been recommended that public land be given the highest priority for replanting and private landholders be encouraged to take part in the scheme through tax and other economic incentives. (SMH Nov. 93). This report is presently being printed by the Board.

Because of the location of the first white settlements, the Hawkesbury floodplain was the first part of the Australian continent to be drastically cleared of vegetation and has subsequently borne nearly two centuries of human impact. This impact has also been documented in another report commissioned by the Water Board, "The Environmental History of the Hawkesbury-Nepean Region" by Sue Rosen (1993).

Benson and Howell call for the protection of all remnant natural vegetation and trees, and state that the long-term goal of the replanting program should include the river's tributaries. They are the authors of the book "Taken for Granted - the Bushland of Sydney and its suburbs" published in 1990.