

VEAC
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29/10/2018

Submission on the VEAC draft proposals for future use of public land in the central west of Victoria.

To the VEAC Chairman and Board;

I would like to make a submission on the draft recommendations for the future use of public land in the central west region of Victoria.

I am a member of the Deep Creek Landcare Group which is one of the original Landcare groups forming over 30 years ago in the areas covering the townships of Lancefield, Romsey, Monegeetta and its surrounds. This area is within the boundaries of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council in the North West corner on the study area known as the Wombat-Macedon block.

Overall I am pleased to see many of the recommendations put forward in this draft document. Increasing levels of protection for public land by changing the classification from state park to conservation and national park seems to be a positive step particularly at the landscape level. It is also noted that an increased consultation with local indigenous groups is also positive component of the document.

While there are positive elements, there are some issues regarding the overall document. It appears that as a general theme there is little comment regarding fire management of these areas. While the group understands that fire management issues may be considered outside of the VEAC review, it still requires consideration. Fire management is a complex area, both politically and environmentally, but as VEAC is independent of government it should be free to make recommendation to the best scientific standards currently available. Poor fire management does and has occurred in the past and we need to undertake the best practices while protecting life and property. This includes conserving natural values and diversity.

Another overall concern is while increased levels of protection by changing the areas public land status are positive, it is unclear what funds and resources will be made available to achieve the increased level of management and protection. This again may be somewhat outside of the scope of VEAC, but it is critical that adequate funding to resource relevant land management agencies to administer and enforce the changes is essential.

At a more local level, I wish to comment regarding the Cobaw State forest, which sites within the north west corner of the Wombat-Macedon study area. The recommendation in the draft document is for the Cobaw State park to become Conservation Park. This on the surface is a positive change. However the main concern is the type of activities that would or would not be allowed under this change in classification.

The most concerning is that trail bikes would still be allowed in the park. The sandy soils of this park are particularly vulnerable to erosion, and past abuse of the site by trail bike riders has lead to significant erosion. While they are supposed to stay on formed roads, it is obvious that they do

not and are unlikely to into the future. This erosive process impacts vulnerable flora, fauna and water quality, not to mention the noise and other issues to other park users. My view is that the exclusion of trial bikes should be recommended.

It also seems at the same time that some lower impact activities would be excluded. For example camping, horse riding and dog walking. These activities do have their issues, but in comparison are much less damaging to the park than motor bikes. These lower impact activities keep the community involved with the park and give an overall sense of ownership and care for the area. People need to use the area to value it. It is hoped that it could be recommended to allow these activities to continue. If left up to the management agency to designate areas for these activities it is feared that they will simply never nominate areas, so they do not have to undertake the extra expense and work that this may require.

Similarly, it is noted that shooting would be excluded. Again this is an activity that has possible negative impacts on the park, but there is an element of pest animal control from this activity that would be lost which is valuable. It is hoped that some specific recommendation could be made regarding other pest animal control strategies in the park, whilst protecting other users.

I have been part of the Deep Creek Landcare Group activities which includes introducing community involvement in the Cobaw ranges by regular flora and fauna monitoring, monitoring by spotlighting and motion activated night vision cameras, Spring wild flower walks and many more such activities are also used to raise awareness and educate our local community in the beauty of this area.

I will be grateful for your consideration of this submission.

Yours sincerely

Ken Allender

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