

PART 1

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 2 THE OTWAYS: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides general recommendations to facilitate an integrated management approach to the protection of natural values and features across the public land of the Otway region, including the sustainable development of recreational and tourist potential, provision of adequate resources and enhanced community involvement.

VEAC recommends the creation of an integrated management framework to respond to the distinctive environment of the Otways and ensure a consistent approach to land management and protection of natural values across the region. This will enable the region's tourism potential to be developed and marketed in an integrated and sustainable manner; as well as providing certainty and consistency in approach for adjoining land owners and other stakeholders. Such a management regime provides an overall context for the two main land-use categories that have been recommended by VEAC—the national park and forest park as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4.

A Distinctive Environment

The lands in and around the Otway Ranges form a distinctive and significant environment. The Otways are an island range—isolated for over a million years from similar mountain ranges in Victoria and Tasmania. The ranges rise above the surrounding inland plains and the ocean and provide habitat for endemic plants and animals found nowhere else. The rich soils and high rainfall of the Otways have produced some of the most dense forests in southern Australia including extensive rainforests and towering eucalypt forests, comprising the world's tallest flowering plant, mountain ash.

Three major rivers rise in the Otways—the Aire, the Gellibrand and the Barwon—each sustained by regular and substantial rainfall. A major proportion of Victoria's waterfalls are found here, most on short, fast-flowing streams that, as a result of uplifting and faulting over millennia, plunge through steep narrow valleys to Bass Strait. The highest rainfalls in the State are recorded in the Otways, as are some of the highest average wind speeds.

For thousands of years Aboriginal people have lived with and used the land of the Otways, with a particular presence near the rich resources of the lakes, rivers, estuaries, coastal environment and inland plains.

Prehistoric fire regimes within the Otways forests were mostly intense late summer fires following lightning storms. Current fire management regimes attempt to moderate these wildfires, with controlled burns for the protection of towns and assets, and ecological burns to mimic natural events, combined with a policy of rapidly suppressing all wildfires.

Roads have been put through the forests, with barely an unroaded ridge remaining in the Otways. The Great Ocean Road was pushed through previously undisturbed mountain slopes and settlements are spread throughout the forests, behind sandy embayments, and on estuaries.


Over half the Otways are in private ownership, much of which is cleared farmland. The majority of public land has been extensively used for timber harvesting. Sand, gravel and rock have been quarried, and riparian environments have been cleared and grazed. While forests are still widespread, the landscape is also defined by areas devoted to grazing, dairying, fishing, small business, coal mining, urban settlements and tourism.

While the Otways do not meet nationally accepted definitions of wilderness, as characterised by large remote essentially unmodified areas, they remain a fascinating mosaic of natural and cultural environments. Small remote valleys, pockets of little-disturbed tall trees and rare and threatened species remain, with the scenic grandeur of the Otways coastline, the more accessible waterfalls, and the Great Ocean Road now attracting visitors from all over the world.

A New Approach to Public Land Use

By the 1880s and 1890s most of the Otways had been sold or made available for sale for farming. Early in the 20th century the forests were reserved for water supply and timber. After World War Two, the forests again came under





pressure with increased demand for timber and new timber cutting technology. Many species have had their distribution significantly reduced and some have become locally extinct. Timber plantations have been developed on previously cleared lands and, most recently, the Government has decided to phase out logging and woodchipping. The boundaries of the existing land-use categories have not changed significantly since the Land Conservation Council assessed the area over 25 years ago.

Community needs and expectations of public land vary over time and between different sectors of the community. Some needs and expectations are fully or partly compatible with each other while others are incompatible. The inherent values of the natural environment also vary. Some parts of the Otways are especially significant, while other areas have lower natural values. Some parts are quite robust, while others are sensitive to even minor changes in the intensity or type of use. In addition to its significance for particular uses, public land also plays a vital role in meeting broader objectives that operate across entire landscapes and are important to the whole community.

VEAC does not consider that the status quo is adequate to address the expectations and issues facing the Otways today, let alone the future. Many of these expectations and issues can be of great importance but are often large, complex, and inherently difficult to manage or resolve.

VEAC's view is that the allocation of public land into a great variety of land-use categories with different managers and distinctive management regimes is not the best way forward—rather, that public land should, as far as possible, be managed in an inclusive manner that is clear to all stakeholders. It has recommended that the greater majority of public lands in the Otways be allocated to two land-use categories both of which have the protection of biodiversity, natural landscapes and water supply as key management objectives, but each providing for a distinct suite of uses reflecting potentially conflicting community demands. It is recommended that both categories be managed in an integrated manner.

While VEAC cannot make recommendations for private land, it is important that programs on public land are coordinated with related programs on adjoining private land to maximise their effectiveness.

VEAC considers that such an integrated management approach will provide consistent and sustainable natural resource management and protection of the very special natural and tourist features on public land across the region.

The Management Rationale

A number of the management issues affecting the Otways demand a regional approach, including:

- maintenance of natural landscapes, soil stability, water quality and yield;
- conservation of biodiversity, especially threatened flora and fauna;

- control of pest plants and animals and disease pathogens;
- fire management, including ecological burning and protection of settlements;
- development, maintenance and servicing of recreational and other infrastructure on public land, including fencing, signage and vehicular tracks;
- enhancement of the region's tourism potential;
- maintenance and enhancement of the scenic amenity of the Great Ocean Road and other main roads that traverse the Otway Ranges; and
- acknowledgment of the role of private land.

Natural Landscapes

Natural landscapes function on a regional as well as local scale. The creation of roads, development of facilities, installation of services and utilities can, and do, visually and physically affect distant areas. The maintenance of regional landscapes thus requires that local management decisions be undertaken in a regional context. Similarly the management of river systems demands a broad-scale response, with maintenance of their cultural, biological, recreational and landscape values being reliant on appropriate use and management of adjoining lands. Less-disturbed landscapes on public land also provide a reference point for the management and restoration of similar land types modified elsewhere.


Soil and Land Stability

While much of the Otways is naturally stable, there are extensive areas susceptible to sheet and gully erosion. There are also significant areas subject to mass movement such as rock-slides, landslips, slumps and earth flows. Mass movement is aggravated where the Great Ocean Road cuts across steep geological bedding planes or the toe of existing landslips.

Along the coast there is major undercutting and collapse of cliffs rising in some places 100 metres above the sea. Coastal dunes are naturally dynamic and sea cliffs are subject to active erosion, which may conflict with the maintenance of permanent structures such as coastal roads.

While the soils in the Otway Ranges are generally deep and fertile, there are some areas of acid soils with nutrient and structure decline. Such forms of deterioration are aggravated by the modification of vegetation and soil and affect the natural hydrological balance, especially where such disturbance occurs on steep slopes.

Such common features underscore the logic of gathering and disseminating knowledge about land systems, land capability and soil erosion hazards on a regional basis to all land managers.



Water Quality and Yield

The surface waters of the Otways, and the groundwater aquifers fed by the Otways, have a key role in the maintenance of in-stream and riparian ecosystems both within and beyond the region. They also provide water vital for the residential and industrial development of Victoria's second largest city, Geelong, and the largest coastal city in western Victoria, Warrnambool. Notwithstanding the vital role that public land has for water supply, the catchments above many water offtakes include freehold lands subject to an array of land uses. Defining environmental flows, allocating bulk entitlements to water authorities and managing in-stream biodiversity occurs on a catchment basis irrespective of land-use category. Whole of catchment planning is thus important.

Biodiversity Conservation

While national parks and nature conservation reserves provide the core of biodiversity protection, remnant native vegetation across all land types has an important contribution to make. The survival of many species of threatened fauna depends on landscape-scale programs. For example, spot-tailed quoll and powerful owl (see Appendix 2 for scientific names of all species in this Report) distribution is more directly related to the extent of suitable habitat and predation or competition (particularly from foxes) than land-use categories as such. Consequently, regional programs of protection and monitoring are required if meaningful contributions are to be made to biodiversity conservation.

Control of Pest Species

Pest plants and animals do not recognise land-use category boundaries. Blackberries and foxes occur on both public and private land in the Otways. Cooperative arrangements between public land managers and adjacent landholders are critical for successful control programs.

Local programs are currently undertaken within the context of statewide and regional strategies. However, the setting of priorities and targeting of funding programs would be facilitated further by regional approaches where land managers act in concert. The ability to seek and attract research funding may also be improved. A regional approach to the control of pest species on public land will also facilitate the fostering of partnerships between the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Landcare groups, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and other community groups.

The containment of pathogens such as cinnamon fungus requires both a localised and regional approach.

Fire Management

Wildfire is a serious potential hazard in the Otway forests. Although many of the forests are located in a damp environment with a relatively low risk for most of the year, they also have the capacity to burn with the utmost ferocity under certain conditions. Many townships lie within or close to forest and are therefore vulnerable to uncontrolled fires.

Adverse effects of fire on biodiversity can include the local extinction of particular species and reduced abundance of habitat features such as fallen timber, dead standing trees and hollow-bearing trees. In the long term however, as with almost all eucalypt forests, fire is an important element in forest ecology.

Fragmentation of the public land estate, together with the extensive existing road network means that the forests are relatively accessible for fire-fighting compared to similar forest types in eastern Victoria. While major fires are infrequent in the wetter forests, they are relatively frequent in the drier forest. In particular, the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires in the Otways, in which three lives were lost and 800 homes were destroyed, highlight the necessity for adequate fire prevention and suppression measures on all public land.

Fire prevention and suppression on public land of all categories is the responsibility of DSE. Fire management planning, works and operations are currently undertaken on both a statewide and regional basis. Parks Victoria, committees of management, the Country Fire Authority, private plantation owners and other relevant agencies or groups have a vital role to play in fire management planning.

Recreational Infrastructure

Many recreational activities rely on the development, maintenance and servicing of infrastructure. Such infrastructure may be fundamental to activity, such as constructed roads providing vehicular access through the forests and to features of interest. Other infrastructure is less critical but may nonetheless facilitate or enhance recreational activity. Such infrastructure would include hang gliding launching sites, signage and picnic facilities. A regional approach enables linking routes to be developed, providing a diversity of experience without compromising the special values of particular localities by spreading visitor pressure and directing people to suitable areas where resources can be most effectively applied.

Capitalising on the Region's Tourism Potential

The Otways lie in the Geelong Otway and Shipwreck Coast tourist regions, with the Great Ocean Road being an internationally-recognised tourist feature. The region is already one of the key tourist destinations in Victoria and much work is being undertaken to provide directions for further growth—including the Great Ocean Road Region Strategy, the draft Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism Development Plan and various regional and municipal tourism plans and strategies.

The natural landscapes and features of the Otways are key factors in the appeal of the region for tourists. Tourism experiences—such as scenic drives and short walks—are highly dependent on appropriate public land management. Recent studies indicate that the management and promotion of natural features of the hinterland areas will be important in meeting desired tourism outcomes, such as an expanded range of tourism products, increased length of stay and increased quality of experience.

DSE is currently preparing a tourism plan for public land in the Otway Hinterland area and the recommended Otway Ranges National Park and Otway Forest Park will provide a greater focus for such consolidated planning.

Scenic Amenity of the Great Ocean Road and other Main Roads

The Great Ocean Road offers an internationally acclaimed scenic journey. Its particular attraction lies in those sections of road providing views of a spectacular coastline on the edge of steep forested slopes, interspersed with pockets of open farmland and small settlements.

Hinterland roads such as the Winchelsea–Deans Marsh–Lorne Road, the Birregurra–Forrest–Apollo Bay Road and the Colac–Lavers Hill Road serve as important through roads but also offer highly scenic routes through the forests of the Otway Ranges. Other routes, such as the Grey River Road, Turtons Track and Mt Sabine Road linking to Erskine Falls Road are being promoted as touring routes to support dispersal of visitors to the Otways hinterland.

Such road networks necessarily operate on a regional scale and require a consistency of approach, whilst reflecting and responding to the sensitivities of the lands through which they pass.

Private Land in the Otways

Because just over half (52 percent) of the Otways study area is private land, many objectives which contribute to achieving balanced public land use, such as reversing biodiversity loss or increasing the value of timber production, are more likely to be achieved if supported by sympathetic management of private land. Many private landholders are already implementing management practices that make a significant contribution to achieving these objectives.

While VEAC cannot make recommendations applying directly to private land, it would be remiss not to acknowledge and support initiatives that foster sympathetic management of private land. Government can and does play a pivotal role in nurturing cooperative programs across a variety of land tenures and involving a diverse range of landholders and other stakeholders, in particular improving

communication and coordination between the stakeholders. In recent years, cooperative approaches such as management agreements and Good Neighbour programs have demonstrated the valuable role to be played by Government and landholders.

Approximately 12 percent (around 20,000 ha) of native vegetation in the Otways is found on private land. Often this freehold bush has characteristics that are rare on public land, making it particularly important for biodiversity conservation. For example, all but 20 ha of the 2106 ha of the stony rises woodland Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) remaining in the study area is on private land (that is, over 99 percent).

Accordingly, the protection and restoration of native vegetation on private land across the region and programs such as Bushcare and Land for Wildlife are important components of biodiversity conservation. Effective programs to facilitate cooperation of landholders in retaining, protecting and restoring remnant native vegetation should continue to be funded.

Private land in the Otways can support existing native vegetation, indigenous revegetation, plantations and farm forestry woodlots (indigenous species or otherwise). These activities can provide alternative sources for wood products, habitat, and/or land care benefits. In recent years, commercial plantations have been established over large areas of Victoria, including many parts of the study area. Planting for indigenous revegetation, plantations, and farm forestry enterprises should be encouraged through new and existing programs and VEAC strongly supports the continuation of Government programs that encourage such activities.

Recommended Land Use

VEAC is recommending that all public lands of the Otways be managed in a coordinated manner to provide a range of community benefits, including conservation of biodiversity, recreation and tourism activity, and water supply while providing for limited resource utilisation, and to complement the opportunities available on freehold lands. To this end it has recommended that the majority of public land be allocated to two main units, to be known as Otway Ranges National Park and Otway Forest Park.



GENERAL LAND-USE RECOMMENDATIONS

RI: PUBLIC LAND-USE

That:

- (a) the public lands of the Otways be generally allocated to two main land-use categories, to be known as:
 - (i) the Otway Ranges National Park (see Chapter 3, Recommendation A1); and
 - (ii) the Otway Forest Park (see Chapter 4, Recommendation B1);
- (b) the Great Ocean Road not be included within the Otway Ranges National Park; and
- (c) existing management coordination mechanisms be retained and where necessary improved or supplemented, and opportunities for community involvement enhanced (see also Recommendations R10-11 below and Recommendation A2).

- Notes:
- 1. Smaller more isolated areas with particular values or functions have been recommended to be retained or created as separate reserves - see Chapter 5.
 - 2. Existing management coordination mechanisms include the Great Ocean Road Region Strategy, regional catchment management strategies, regional fire plans, regional tourism plans, and the Great Ocean Road Roadside Management Plan.

Statutory Land-use Overlays

A number of statutory land-use overlays are available and have been applied in the past across the public land of the Otways. It is envisaged that these mechanisms would continue to apply to relevant areas. They apply in addition to the main underlying land-use category.

Declared Water Supply Catchments

Public land within the declared water supply catchments of the Otways, has been mostly included within either the Otway Ranges National Park or Otway Forest Park. This designation alerts planners, landowners, managers and the wider community to the importance of the area for water supply. Special area plans provide detailed prescriptions for appropriate use to ensure that harvested water meets accepted community standards. Three declared water supply catchments are no longer harvested, and the catchment of one area proposed for water harvesting is not declared.

Reference Areas

Reference areas are relatively small sections of public land, containing viable samples of one or more relatively undisturbed land types, reserved in perpetuity. Such areas are set aside to maintain natural systems as a scientific reference to enable comparative study of modified and unmodified environments. Reference areas may be applied over any land-use category, including, but not restricted to national parks and nature conservation reserves.

Seven existing reference areas within the study area provide samples of most, but not all, land types within the Otways region. Three additional reference areas are recommended.

Heritage Rivers

Victoria's heritage river system was established to identify and protect those rivers with outstanding values for current and future generations. Part of the corridor of the Aire Heritage River, the only designated heritage river within the Otways, was previously reduced to accommodate timber harvesting. Council recommends that the width of the scheduled corridor be extended to form a consistent width.



LAND-USE OVERLAY RECOMMENDATIONS

R2: DECLARED WATER SUPPLY CATCHMENTS

That:

- (a) if the proposed relocation of the Apollo Bay water supply off-take to downstream of the confluence of the west and east branches of the Barham River proceeds, the whole catchment of the Barham River be considered for listing on Schedule 5 of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* as a declared water supply catchment;
- (b) declarations of the following water supply catchments which are no longer used for water production be revoked and removed from Schedule 5 of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*:
 - (i) Erskine River (a sub-catchment of the Lorne declared water supply catchment);
 - (ii) Gosling Creek (a sub-catchment of the Pennyroyal, Matthews and Gosling Creeks declared water supply catchment); and
 - (iii) Skenes Creek;
- (c) special area plans be prepared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* for all declared water supply catchments in the Otways used for water production and, once approved, incorporated into management plans and planning schemes.

Note: Special area plans have not been prepared for the following declared water supply catchments: Barwon Downs Wellfield Intake Area, Lorne (St Georges River) and Pennyroyal and Matthews Creeks.

R3: REFERENCE AREAS

That:

- (a) existing proclaimed reference areas be retained and continue to be managed under the auspices of the *Reference Areas Act 1978*;
- (b) the following area totalling 977.6 ha, indicated on Map A, be used as reference areas and proclaimed under the *Reference Areas Act 1978* and managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment:
 - (i) Porcupine Creek (particularly representing wet heath and sedgy riparian woodland ecological vegetation classes);
 - (ii) Aquila Creek (particularly representing herb-rich foothill forest/shrubby foothill forest and shrubby wet forest ecological vegetation classes); and
 - (iii) Painkalac Creek (particularly representing shrubby foothill forest, and shrubby dry forest ecological vegetation classes).

R4: HERITAGE RIVERS

That:

- (a) the Aire River Heritage River be retained and, together with a 100 metre wide addition on either side of the existing heritage river between the Aire River Gorge and public land plantations vested in the Victorian Plantation Corporation as indicated on Map A, continue to be managed under the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992*.

Notes:

- 1. VEAC notes that a management plan has not been approved for this river; nor indeed for any Victorian heritage river, despite this being a statutory requirement.
- 2. The aim of the 100 metre wide addition is to create a consistent 200 metre width through the recommended Otway Ranges National Park.

Roads

The Great Ocean Road

The Great Ocean Road extends from Torquay to Warrnambool and, where it traverses public land, is mostly within a road reserve of varying width. While key sections of the Great Ocean Road traverse public lands of high nature conservation and scenic value, extensive sections are within townships and pass through farmland.

Parts of the road reserve carry remnant native vegetation and road works can have a significant effect on landscape values on both a local and regional scale. Because the road passes through areas of great structural instability, road maintenance costs are high and, in the past, sections of the road have been closed to enable major repair works to be undertaken. VicRoads is responsible for the road and maintains it in accordance with a regional roadside code of practice and the Great Ocean Road Roadside Management Plan.

As well as being an internationally recognised tourist road, the Great Ocean Road serves as an essential transport route for local businesses, residents and holiday makers. Although sections of the road are already over-capacity at times, there is an on-going steady increase in use. The Great Ocean Road Region Integrated Access Study noted, for instance, that the acceptable level of service of the Great Ocean Road between Torquay and Anglesea was an average 10,000 vehicles per day—the present average is 12,000 vehicles per day, with 13,000 at Easter and 26,000 during Christmas peaks.

Further discussion of the issues informing VEAC's recommendation for the Great Ocean Road is included in Chapter 11 Roads.

Hinterland Roads

Recent planning studies, such as the Great Ocean Road Region Strategy, have looked at options to encourage as much traffic as possible to utilise hinterland routes rather than the Great Ocean Road itself. The strategy proposes that the Winchelsea–Deans Marsh–Lorne Road, the Birregurra–Forrest–Apollo Bay Road and the Colac–Lavers Hill Road be further developed and promoted as alternative routes. All of these roads pass (to a significant degree) through the Otway Ranges National Park or Otway Forest Park. While road development is outside VEAC's charter, the Council supports the general thrust of the strategy. Council notes that these alternative roads traverse steep mountain forests in areas susceptible to erosion and that they are scenic roads in their own right in areas of high landscape quality.

VEAC acknowledges that upgrading of these inland routes to redirect traffic from the Great Ocean Road may in some cases require compromise with the values of the land through which these roads pass (including the Otway Ranges National Park in some areas).

Management Approach and Principles

VEAC considers that the primary management objective of the Great Ocean Road and alternative routes is their maintenance as both key tourist roads and also as through roads catering for local business and residents. Accordingly the roads should be contained within defined road reserves and be managed by an agency whose primary function and expertise is to manage roads. While these roads are key access routes into the park, they are not envisaged to ever be primarily park access roads. VEAC does not believe that incorporating sections of the Great Ocean Road, nor other main roads, within the national park would result in significant benefits and is likely to result in disadvantages due to confusion as to who is responsible for aspects of the road management.



Nonetheless Council believes that where these roads traverse the natural environments of the Otways, such road reserves should be of the minimal width for operational and safety needs and managed in a manner that reflects the natural landscapes of the road. Council has developed a series of principles for the complementary management of the Great Ocean Road—and other relevant declared arterial roads and municipal roads—with the Otway Ranges National Park and Otway Forest Park:

- the scenic character and natural values of the road and surrounds require the highest possible level of protection;
- the tourism value of the road is internationally significant and must be protected;
- the road is currently, and will continue to be, important for local residents, holiday-makers and businesses and the ability of the road to continue to cater for these users must be protected;
- a high standard of safety and amenity is required and should continue—encompassing road maintenance, appropriate speed limits, provision of turning lanes to main roads and park access roads, and improvement of turn out points to lookouts or other attractions;

- consistent signage is important to indicate primary tourist routes and features, alternative inland routes and warn of hazardous areas;
- the natural values of adjoining park areas must be respected—road impacts should, where possible, be contained within the road reserve;
- where an existing road formation does not correspond to a road reservation, the road reservation should be amended or created;
- road reserves should be of a width—generally not exceeding 20 metres—necessary to encompass the roadway, including any turning lanes, the road shoulder (whether or not constructed or sealed), and any associated pathway or ancillary area (such as a rest stop or scenic lookout).

While formerly a declared tourist road, the Great Ocean Road is now declared as an arterial road under the recently proclaimed *Road Management Act 2004*. VEAC considers it important that its tourist function be specifically recognised.

ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

R5: GREAT OCEAN ROAD AND OTHER KEY ROADS

That:

- (a) the Great Ocean Road be managed principally as a tourist road, whilst also servicing an arterial road function;
- (b) where the Great Ocean Road or other declared arterial road, or a declared municipal road, passes through or adjoins the recommended Otway Ranges National Park or other public lands, it remain or be included within a defined road reserve (thereby excluding the road from the adjoining park or reserve);
- (c) where a road reserve is created in accordance with (b) above that, other than where the road is within a township, the road reserve be generally no greater than 20 metres in width;
- (d) where works are necessary on adjoining public land outside the road reserve to maintain the stability of the road pavement, such works be permitted subject to the consent of the land manager and in accordance with any conditions that the land manager may determine; and
- (e) roadside management plans be prepared by the responsible road authority in consultation with the adjoining land manager, to define roadside management goals, outline management prescriptions and apply relevant codes of practice.

- Notes:
1. Arterial roads include roads formerly known as declared tourist roads and declared main roads. They are managed by the State level road authority, VicRoads. The Great Ocean Road is a declared arterial road.
 2. If it is not possible to precisely define these road reserves prior to the scheduling of the national park, VEAC suggests that a process be established that will enable the formal delineation of the road reserve to be subsequently defined.
 3. Where a realignment of a road is required outside a road reserve, this would entail revision of the road reserve boundary and consequential adjustment to the adjoining park boundary. Such realignments may require formal environmental assessment.
 4. Section 27 of the *National Parks Act 1975* provides for a public authority to exercise its functions and powers within a park subject to consent and any conditions that may be determined.
 5. Recommendation A2 also covers various matters associated with the Great Ocean Road and the management of other roads that traverse the Otway Ranges National Park.

Implementation

Enhancing Public Land Management

Throughout the consultation process of the Angahook-Otway Investigation, submissions, briefings and meetings frequently raised the perceived need for more expenditure on public land management. Management issues included pest animal and weed control, fire protection, presence of rangers, the provision and servicing of recreation facilities and track maintenance.

In VEAC's view, these concerns arise from genuine public observations about what is required and that there is a real need for additional resources. The application of additional resources needs to be targeted to priority areas identified on a regional basis across all land-use categories.

Resources for Implementation

VEAC stresses the importance of appropriate resources being allocated for the implementation of these recommendations. Additional resources will be required to identify boundaries precisely, for signage, for education programs and for the establishment or upgrading of basic facilities to reflect the new management objectives.

Resources will also be required to ensure that management planning for the Otway Ranges National Park and the Otways Forest Park is undertaken in a timely and inclusive manner.

Adjustment Issues

VEAC's recommendations have been designed to provide for a net benefit for all Victorians. Where individuals, businesses or particular communities are disproportionately affected, it is appropriate for the wider community, through the Government, to assist in overcoming adverse impacts.

Environmental Management Systems

Council believes that managers should develop and pursue processes that will further improve Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) outcomes—that is, processes to facilitate decision-making which increases equity, improves welfare and well-being, and protects and maintains biodiversity and ecological processes.

At an operational level, ESD decision-making frameworks are typically in the form of an environmental management system. Such systems provide for continuous review and feedback. Monitoring current activities may identify new management needs. New information and discoveries will feed into the appropriate management of the forests. VEAC encourages land managers to continue such adaptive management programs and develop and apply targeted new research and monitoring programs where appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

R6: IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

That the Government allocate adequate resources for implementation of the recommendations of the Final Report to ensure that the objectives of the report and recommendations are achieved.

R7: LAND MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

That the Government allocates additional resources to address the current and future public land management needs across the region, with priority given to fire protection, pest plant and animal control, track maintenance, on-ground presence, and provision and serving of recreation and tourist facilities.

R8: ASSISTANCE

That where individuals or local communities are directly or adversely affected as a result of the implementation of approved final recommendations in this report, Government establishes a process to evaluate mechanisms and levels of assistance that may be required.

R9: INTERIM MANAGEMENT AND MINOR BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

That, upon Government approval of VEAC recommendations:

- (a) relevant land be managed in accordance with those recommendations; and
- (b) subsequent implementation of recommendations and land management allow flexibility for minor boundary adjustments.



Enhanced and Coordinated Management Planning

VEAC recommends that the principles and integrated management approach across land-use categories be put into place through formal coordination arrangements being established between land managers, water authorities, road authorities and local government.

Building on existing mechanisms will be emphasised, although new mechanisms will need to be established for setting region-wide priorities and to implement continuous review and improvement processes for coordinated programs. Most obviously, the preparation of management plans for Otway Ranges National Park and Otway Forest Park should be undertaken in a coordinated manner. The establishment of advisory committees will also assist.

Ongoing Community Involvement

Education and Awareness

Awareness raising, promotion, interpretation and education are important for maximising ESD outcomes. Such activities could include materials or services provided at feature sites, posters, books, displays, field days and talks. The creation of networks between managers and local communities, and provision of opportunities for involvement in park planning and management are also important for improving ESD outcomes within the Otways. VEAC encourages the Government to support measures to increase awareness, appreciation, education, interpretation and promotion of all aspects of the Otways region.

Community Consultation

Public consultation undertaken by VEAC clearly identified the importance and value that communities place on providing input into public land management, particularly in relation to involvement of Indigenous communities, and in the provision of access for recreation. It is desirable that formal opportunities be created for community input into public land management in the Otways.

Community needs and expectations are diverse and tend to change over time. As such public land management needs to be informed and to respond appropriately. Accordingly, VEAC recommends the establishment of advisory committees to help guide management decision-making throughout the Otways. Advisory committees could assist in the implementation, detailed management planning (when management plans are developed), and ongoing management following Government acceptance of VEAC's recommendations. As a result, the form of the committees may change over time and it may be appropriate for there to be more than one committee at various times—there could be several regional or issue-based committees, for instance. It is beyond VEAC's brief to specify such details, however, the establishment of formal committees should not exclude existing or new ad hoc committees or other consultation mechanisms as appropriate.

Issues that may be dealt with by advisory committees include track access, pest plant and animal control and strategic recreational management. Committees would not review land-use category boundaries, previous land manager decisions based on legislative responsibilities, or management objectives of land-use categories. Instead, they would provide the opportunity for communities, interest and user groups to contribute to the management of public land.

Membership of the advisory committees would include—but not be limited to—representatives of the Indigenous community, environment and recreational user groups, relevant industry representatives, and local communities. Committee members would act as lines of communication both to and from their respective constituencies, thereby ensuring that communities, interest and user groups are represented and that there is increased awareness of actions taken by the land manager to address land management issues.

In addition to the recommended advisory committee, opportunities for the involvement of Indigenous communities in public land management are discussed in Chapter 10 and Appendix 3, and are the subject of Recommendation R12.

Involvement of Aboriginal Communities

The special relationship Aboriginal people have with their land transcends an interest in a particular area or site. The relationship intertwines spiritual, ecological and economic connections with land and water and is reflected in the desire by Aboriginal communities for greater involvement in land and water management. The integrated management framework across the major public land categories aids in the development of effective relationships and consultation protocols with traditional owners, as well as providing a consistent approach to the involvement of Aboriginal communities in land and water management in the Otways.

Key issues for the Aboriginal community in land and water management include: recognition and respect for the indigenous connection to country; involvement in resource management; effective consultation; protection of cultural sites and places; addressing of cultural requirements; and economic opportunities.

VEAC notes that native title may exist in regard to the study area and that Aboriginal people are concerned to ensure that these rights are not inadvertently extinguished or impaired as a result of their own actions or actions by Government agencies. In view of these concerns, VEAC stresses that nothing in these recommendations should be taken to prejudice or diminish any native title rights to land, water and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RI0: COORDINATED MANAGEMENT PLANNING

That:

- (a) management plans be prepared for the Otway Ranges National Park and Otway Forest Park within three years of the acceptance of these recommendations; and
- (b) management plans for the Otway Ranges National Park and the Otways Forest Park be prepared as part of a single coordinated process.

Note: Other VEAC recommendations promoting coordinated management planning include Recommendations R2 and R11 (this chapter) and Recommendation A2 (Chapter 3).

RI1: ADVISORY COMMITTEES

That an advisory committee or committees, representing community needs and expectations, be established to provide input into decision-making within the Otways public land management framework.

RI2: ENHANCING ABORIGINAL INVOLVEMENT

That:

- (a) planning and management relating to traditional interests and uses acknowledge the unique relationship of Aboriginal people with country and be based on recognition and respect for the traditional and contemporary relationship of Aboriginal peoples with the land.
- (b) prior to implementation of VEAC recommendations for the parks and reserves, and changes in public land management, Government consult with traditional owners and Aboriginal groups regarding their native title rights and interests.
- (c) Government, in consultation with traditional owners and Aboriginal groups, investigate and report on a preferred model for joint management structures and arrangements between Government, and traditional owners and Aboriginal groups with regard to public land, water and resources in the Angahook-Otway study area, within 12 months of responding to these recommendations.
- (d) Government, in consultation with traditional owners and Aboriginal groups, establish mechanisms to improve indigenous participation in land and water management including:
 - (i) development of principles and protocols to improve the policy and planning processes of public land and water management agencies and the representation and participation of Aboriginal peoples in these processes;
 - (ii) preparation of a strategy to improve the participation of Aboriginal peoples in land, water and resource use decision-making and day-to-day management;
 - (iii) provision of information to assist the facilitation of land and water use agreements between agencies and local Aboriginal communities;
 - (iv) facilitation of surveys and site visits necessary for planning and development purposes;
 - (v) development of cross-cultural awareness programs for land, water and natural resources agency staff to improve knowledge and understanding of, and communication with, Aboriginal communities; and
 - (vi) assistance to provide Aboriginal communities with the capacity (including resources and skills) to fully participate in future consultation and management planning arrangements.
- (e) Government, in consultation with traditional owners and Aboriginal groups, assist in the establishment of one or more Indigenous cultural and interpretation centres in the Otways.
- (f) Government, in consultation with traditional owners and Aboriginal groups, develop and implement principles to provide appropriate access for Aboriginal cultural customs, and traditional practices.
- (g) Government more actively publicise existing notification and consultation processes, required under the *Native Title Act 1993* and other relevant legislation such as the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*, the *Archaeological and Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act 1972*.
- (h) Government stringently enforce and take action against breaches of legislation that protect Aboriginal cultural sites, places and objects.
- (i) Opportunities for increased employment and training for local Aboriginal people be encouraged in the implementation of Otway Forest Park and Otway Ranges National Park.

CHAPTER 3 NATIONAL PARKS

National parks are generally extensive areas of public land of national significance because of their outstanding natural features and diverse ecosystems. They are securely set aside primarily to conserve these values and to provide public enjoyment, education and inspiration.

Victoria's national park system aims to protect viable representative samples of the State's natural ecosystems occurring on public land. National parks provide high-level, long-term protection of relatively undisturbed natural environments and their indigenous flora and fauna. They also protect features of ecological, geological, scenic, archaeological, historic and cultural interest. National parks are particularly important for the conservation of features or species that are rare, threatened and/or susceptible to disturbance.

As a result of their outstanding features, national parks are also important and popular visitor destinations, providing significant opportunities for enjoyment, education, recreation and inspiration in natural environments. However, protection of cultural and natural values, particularly biodiversity, remains the primary role of national parks. Consequently, activities that involve the removal or damage of natural resources, such as timber harvesting, mining, prospecting, stock grazing, hunting (and carrying of firearms), are normally not permitted. Activities that involve the introduction of non-indigenous plants or animals into national parks, such as beekeeping, horseriding and dog walking are permitted only in defined areas, if at all.

Many activities are, however, compatible with national parks, including bushwalking, car touring, picnicking, nature observation, camping, canoeing, bird watching and visiting scenic and historic sites. Many other outdoor activities, such as mountain and trail bike riding, four wheel driving, motorcycling, fishing, hang gliding, rock climbing, caving, orienteering and rogain are undertaken in suitable areas. Visitor numbers can be very high.

Interpretative services and other facilities are required to direct and enhance visitor experiences. At the same time, facilities and activities may need to be confined to sites of appropriate size and location to minimise their effect on sensitive values and other uses.

Another important element of national park status is the imperative for active conservation management. Management of fire, overuse, soil erosion, water quality, track networks, illegal activities, commercial concessions, visitor facilities and pest plants and animals are all integral aspects of the management of national parks.

Astute planning is required to minimise potential conflicts between different uses and particularly the conflict between access to, and protection of, special features. The precursor

for such management is the preparation of management plans. Community involvement in the planning and management of these areas of public land is essential. The protection and recovery of natural ecosystems, protection and respect for cultural sites and places, and involvement in the management of national parks are also aspects of special interest to local Aboriginal communities.

The management and use of national parks is primarily directed by the *National Parks Act 1975*, although other legislation may apply, for example where a national park encompasses reference areas, heritage rivers and declared water supply catchments.

VEAC is recommending the creation of a single large national park within the study area—the Otway Ranges National Park—to form a highly protected core within the wider sustainable land-use framework envisaged for the Otways.



AI OTWAY RANGES NATIONAL PARK

The Otway Ranges National Park encompasses an area well known for its spectacular waterfalls, impressive forests and scenic landscapes. It supports a remarkable number of threatened species, extraordinarily diverse heathlands, significant areas of old-growth forest, majestic tall trees and extensive areas of rainforest. The recommended national park offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities and its outstanding biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage values attract an increasing number of visitors, enhanced by its proximity to the world-renowned Great Ocean Road.

The recommended park covers an area of 102,470 ha. It straddles the main range of the Otway Ranges, extending along the coast and inland to encompass the forests of the foothills and inland plains. The park is readily accessible from a number of main roads, including the Great Ocean Road, but also includes deep remote valleys, windswept heathlands and impenetrable mountain forests. While parts have been disturbed by past land uses, the park encompasses the largest relatively undisturbed areas remaining in the Otways. The protection of nature conservation values is an overriding objective of the recommended park.

The park comprises twelve main sectors across three bioregions:

Warrnambool Plain Bioregion

- Kennedy Creek forest

Otway Plain Bioregion

- Gellibrand heathlands (Devondale, Mt McKenzie/Crinoline Creek and Carlisle)
- Sheeppark Creek forest
- Wonga forest
- Barongarook forest
- Anglesea heathlands

Otway Ranges Bioregion

- Carlisle River catchment
- Melba Gully
- Aire River catchment
- Northern catchments: West Gellibrand, Olangolah, West Barwon, Lake Elizabeth/East Barwon, and Pennyroyal
- Southern fall

with a western coast sector straddling all three bioregions.

Natural Features

The national park will provide excellent representation of the landforms and vegetation of this unique part of Australia. It ranges from spectacular coastlines, with their salt-hardened cliff-top heaths, extending inland to the cloud-shrouded ranges of towering mountain ash. Together with the nationally significant rainforests and their cascading waterfalls, the landscape diversity of the Otways provides habitat for a large suite of fauna, some of which are found nowhere else in the world.

Physiography

The park encompasses all of the geomorphic units that occur in the Otways. In particular, the park is dominated by the Southern Victorian Uplands. These uplands have an average elevation of 500 metres, but extend from sea level to 675 metres at Mt Cowley. They are composed mostly of Lower Cretaceous non-marine sedimentary rock (geologically the oldest strata in the study area) which has been uplifted and eroded to produce steep, rugged terrain. The south-eastern slopes of the park descend rapidly to the sea, producing short, fast-flowing streams and an abundance of waterfalls.

Parts of the park, at Barongarook, Carlisle and Chapplevalle, consist of undulating country on Tertiary marine sediments. Elevation of these areas is between 100-300 metres above sea level. The park also includes outcrops along the coast as high vertical cliffs, in areas such as west of Moonlight Head. Elevated plains of windblown coast dunes also lie within the study area, with most included within the park. These plains are only found within five kilometres of the coast and rise up to 150 metres in elevation.

Average annual rainfall varies from 600 mm to 2000 mm and the park encompasses some of the wettest forests in Victoria.

Geology and Geomorphology

The landscapes of the Otways are not only diverse and spectacular, but also of great geological and geomorphological importance. Two sites of international significance and six sites of national significance are within the national park.

Geologists from around the world use the stretch of coastline between Torquay and Aireys Inlet (now within the park) to undertake sequence stratigraphic analyses of the exposed sedimentary rocks. The site enables viewing of sedimentary depositional cycles from approximately 10 million to 40 million years ago.

Dinosaur Cove is the other internationally significant site in the park. Scientific study—requiring specialised excavation of fossils—has made a major contribution to our knowledge of dinosaurs in the Australian part of Gondwana. The nationally significant dinosaur bone site at Point Lewis is also in the park.

Nationally significant sites in the park include the impressive features along the eastern Port Campbell coastline—including large landslip amphitheatres, caves and one of only two dinosaur footprints known in Victoria. Lake Elizabeth and its catchment is a nationally significant example of a recent (1952) major landslip and its consequences.

The park also contains many and diverse geological features, such as waterfalls ranging from small cascades, fast-flowing rapids, tall single-drop falls, and large multiple-drop waterfalls. The national park includes the entire length of the Aire River Gorge, which is the most rugged river gorge and the least modified large river in south-western Victoria.

Vegetation Types

The Otway Ranges National Park contains several unbroken corridors spanning the range of vegetation types from dark, damp cool temperate rainforest, through wet and dry eucalypt forests to the botanically diverse coastal and inland heaths. In high rainfall areas, the eucalypt forests may be pure stands of tall mountain ash, whereas drier foothill sites may consist of a range of eucalypts such as messmate and narrow-leaf peppermint. The understoreys of these forests vary greatly, from open, grassy and herb-rich, to dense low heaths and shrubs. The park's heathlands and heathy woodlands are of particular significance. The Anglesea heath alone contains seventy-nine orchid species, presenting a dazzling wildflower display in spring.

Protection of ecosystems (or Ecological Vegetation Classes—EVCs) in a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of dedicated reserves is the backbone of biodiversity conservation. The recommended park comprises nearly all of the dedicated reserve system within the Otways. In particular, the park includes significant areas of several widespread EVCs that are currently poorly represented in the dedicated reserve system—lowland forest, herb-rich foothill forest/shrubby foothill forest complex, shrubby wet forest, and herb-rich foothill forest.

The addition of the majority of the Kennedys Creek Forest to the national park has substantially increased the representation of the lowland forest and shrubby foothill forest in the Warrnambool Bioregion.



As well as being poorly represented in existing dedicated reserves, cool temperate rainforest is highly valued for its rarity and beauty, as testimony to the evolutionary history of flora in Australia. This fragile vegetation community is particularly in need of protection from fire, weeds and disease. The park contains over two-thirds of cool temperate rainforest and all rainforest sites of national and state significance in the Otways—delivering secure long-term protection for this ancient vegetation type and its unique biodiversity.

Old-Growth and Senescent Forest

As with rainforest, the importance of secure long-term protection for old-growth and senescent forest was a recurring theme in submissions to VEAC—particularly given its antiquity, scarcity and susceptibility to several common threats. To this end, most major areas of old-growth and senescent forest (identified using a combination of techniques) in the Otways are contained in the park, focussing especially on the largest patches and a broad range of vegetation types.

The inclusion of these areas will ensure that irreplaceable source of inspiration and information on the function of undisturbed and ancient natural systems is not compromised. Their value to future generations—and specifically in management decision-making and research—is invaluable.

Threatened Flora

The park encompasses all of the wetter vegetation communities for which the Otways are recognised. These are home to a host of different species of ground and shrub layer plants as well as a variety of tree species. Many of the threatened flora species found in the study area occur in these wetter environs. In particular, the Otway Ranges are a stronghold for the threatened tall astelia and slender tree fern (see Appendix 2 for scientific names of all species in this report). The cool, damp environment of the rainforest also favours many of the other threatened flora species like the small ferns and fern allies including beech finger-fern and slender fork-fern.

In contrast, wrinkled buttons, found primarily in the vegetation communities between Lorne and Aireys Inlet, depend upon periodic fire to maintain significant populations. The park includes the vast majority of locations where wrinkled buttons have been recorded. This species was not detected in the study area for many years until after the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires. More recently, a decline in numbers has been noted. The future conservation focus of management in these areas will contribute to ensuring the long-term survival of this species.

The well-known coastal heathlands near Anglesea are especially diverse and exhibit a number of botanical differences from those of Carlisle River and Devondale. The heathlands within the park are a stronghold for many orchids, with a number listed as rare or threatened, including the Anglesea sun-orchid. The Otways also contain key

populations in the coastal and western Victorian distribution of the wine-lipped spider-orchid and heart-lip spider-orchid.

The Otways' population of the rare Otway bush-pea is a Victorian stronghold. The inclusion of the Devondale heaths in the park encompasses the vast majority of known records for this species in the study area. This population forms an important link to the other populations in Western Victoria, found mainly around Portland.

The Otways are also a key location for the rare dwarf silver wattle. The park will include a significant proportion of the known records of this species, as well as its only coastal representations in the state.

Anglesea grevillea is one of the flowering plants found only in the heathy woodlands to the north and north-west of Anglesea. Many of the known sites for this species will be protected within the park. In contrast, white daddy long legs orchid, also found near Anglesea, is not rare or threatened, however the Otways represent the southern-most limit of its distribution. These important records are also within the park.

The Otway Ranges provide the ideal conditions for the rare Brooker's gum to flourish, resulting in a reasonably wide distribution across the main Otway Range. It is found from approximately 160 metres elevation near Chapplevale, in the west, up to 500 metres elevation near Mt Cowley on the Benwerrin–Mt Sabine Ridge. The populations of Brooker's gum in the Otway Ranges are at the edge of a more extensive distribution in Tasmania. The park includes representation of Brooker's gum, whether occurring as a pure stand, or mixed with other eucalypts.

In addition to Brooker's gum, a number of other species demonstrate close evolutionary links between the Otways and Tasmania, including the starry daisy-bush, beech finger-fern and slender tree-fern. The majority of the known sites of these species are within the park.



Tall Trees

Tall trees are one of the defining features of the Otway Ranges. The wet, relatively fertile conditions ensure that maximum growth is achieved by many of the tall forest eucalypts. They display high aesthetic values and are greatly valued by the many visitors attracted to the region, some specifically to view these giants.


The relatively undisturbed Olangolah and West Gellibrand catchments, and the forests of the southern fall of the Otway Range, contain the majority of known examples of exceptionally tall mountain ash and Otway messmate. Of particular note, the Olangolah catchment has had no significant disturbance, even from wildfire, since the 1850s. All these areas are contained within the park.

Fauna

The national park will provide permanent, high-level protection over extensive contiguous areas for the fauna of the Otway ranges and foothills. Substantial areas of contiguous habitat are essential for species such as the powerful owl and spot-tailed quoll. Individuals of these species range over large areas (up to 4500 ha in the case of the quoll) with viable populations of many individuals needing much larger areas. The Otways is a key area for the quoll, being by far the larger of the two areas in western Victoria where it survives. The recorded distribution across the Otways is contracting, with clearfelling and 1080 poisoning being documented as the main threats to survival.

At the other extreme, the park also protects some animals that do not range far at all. For example, there are four species of land snails that are thought to be endemic to the study area—although much remains to be learnt about their distributions and ecological requirements. Three of these snails are currently known from only one or two localities, while the Otway black snail is widespread in the damp environs of the cool temperate rainforests and wet forests of the park. Other endemic or threatened invertebrates known from the park include the Otway burrowing cray, Otway stonefly, Glenelg freshwater mussel, and three caddisfly species. There are likely to be many other invertebrates—including many threatened or undiscovered species—inhabiting the broad range of ecosystems protected in the park.

Two vertebrates are endemic to the study area and will be protected in the park. The Anglesea form of the mountain dragon has been found at a small number of sites in the Anglesea heath. All sites within the study area reported as containing this small lizard are included in park. The Otways subspecies of the rufous bristlebird is almost entirely confined to the study area, and is classified as vulnerable, with an estimated population of around 4000 birds. They rarely leave their preferred habitat of dense understorey vegetation (in coastal scrub, heathland, rainforest, and wet forest) and, accordingly, the population is susceptible to habitat fragmentation—further emphasising the importance of a large contiguous park.



The birdlife of the park is as diverse as the habitats represented. Australian king-parrots, powerful and masked owls, gang gang and yellow-tailed black-cockatoos breed in large tree hollows that take many decades to develop, and the high representation of old-growth forest and tall trees in the park will ensure long-term protection for these birds. On the other hand, the park's heathlands provide essential habitat for species such as the endangered ground parrot and smoky mouse. The park will substantially increase the area of ground parrot habitat within the reserve system by the inclusion of the Devondale heathlands, west of Lavers Hill.

The fauna of the Otways and of the national park in particular is also of great zoological interest due to its affinity to faunal assemblages elsewhere. For example, two of the park's carnivores, the swamp antechinus and the grey goshawk, have strong affinities to Tasmania, where they are more common. The populations of swamp antechinus may also form an important link between coastal populations to the east and west of the study area. The Otways population of broad-toothed rat represents the southwest limit of this species' east coast distribution.

Although difficult to see, the platypus is a relatively common inhabitant of waterways of the Otways. Lake Elizabeth, in the park, is a well-known and popular location to view these egg-laying mammals. Waterways of the park are also home to 14 native freshwater fish, notably the vulnerable Australian grayling and critically endangered Australian mudfish.

Cultural and Historic Features

Indigenous Heritage

Interpretation of the density of the known archaeological sites in the study area indicates a mostly mobile society seasonally using the coastal, estuarine and riverine resources of the region. The coastal strip may have been occupied year-round, with residential movements along the coast, with or without seasonal movements into the ranges. Regular movement of groups between the coast and the more densely populated, productive basalt plains in the hinterland may have also occurred. It is understood that the majority of activity occurred along the coastal strip and also along the northern-western periphery of the main Otway range, areas well represented in the park.

Currently Aboriginal communities are formally involved in identification, protection and management of cultural heritage sites and places via the cultural heritage program of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) and through consultation and negotiation obligations required under the *Commonwealth Native Title Act 1993*.

In addition to the specific management of cultural heritage sites and places, Aboriginal communities have much to contribute to overall management of the park. This can be achieved via the establishment of, and adherence to, consultation protocols, the provision of cross-cultural training for park managers, users and tourism operators, as well as the use of appropriate naming and interpretive

information that recognises and respects the traditional owners' connection to country.

European Heritage

The national park includes many historic features that recognise the 150-year presence of Europeans in the region. Many of the historic features are relics of the region's previously prominent timber and shipping industries.

The Cape Otway Light station is the second lighthouse constructed on mainland Australia—thus providing one of the earliest examples of European settlement in the region. The lighthouse was built in 1848 as a warning beacon for ships entering Bass Strait. In 1859 one of the earliest telegraph stations in Australia was added to the site.


Evidence of more than 200 sawmills and tramways are distributed throughout the Otway forests. The park encompasses a number of historic sites that were identified as highly significant and placed in historic and cultural features reserves by the LCC Historic Places Special Investigation in 1997.

One of the most significant sites is that of the Henry and Sanderson sawmill complex that was established in the early 1900s. It is one of the largest in the Otways and represents the application of innovative engineering and technological solutions to the challenging terrain and conditions. For example, the sawmill site was serviced by two tunnels which are still intact. Only three such tunnels are known in Victoria. The settlement associated with the sawmill was one of the most isolated and self-contained in the Otways.

Other significant sites identified within the park include Knott's No.3 Sawmill (also known as the "Wait-a-While" mill), the Marchbank Sawmill and Tramway Historic Area (located north-west of Ferguson) and the sites of Henry's Nettle and Carisbrook sawmills (in the forest behind Kennett River). The sawmill sites often include relics representing all of the stages of sawmilling operations, from logging and tramway transportation, through to milling. The Marchbank site includes particularly significant examples of zigzag and switchback tramlines—once common tramway systems needed across the hilly Otways to create a workable gradient for timber haulage. Some, such as the Henry's Nettle and Carisbrook sawmill site, contain evidence of substantial associated sawmill settlement.

The inclusion of 'The Redwoods'—a towering and impressive stand of Californian redwoods—in the park represents the period of planting of exotic conifers on reclaimed farmland in the Otways. Of special interest are some of the early plantings where different species were trialed. Some such pilot plantings were unsuccessful, others flourished and most have now been cleared or are being harvested. 'The Redwoods' also exemplifies early government policy of plantation development using sustenance labour and is both historically and botanically significant.

The Otway Ranges have been a source of gravity-fed water for Colac since the Olangolah Weir and Pipeline were built between 1909 and 1911. The rugged conditions and the



basic construction method make this pipeline quite an engineering feat and historic feature. Arkins Creek weirs and pipeline, also within the park, were built in the 1930s to supply Warrnambool, Cobden, Camperdown and Terang with a reliable water supply. The workers, mainly sustenance labour, endured wet and difficult conditions to construct the first long welded steel pipeline in Victoria, and possibly Australia.

All these sites are important features for historical reference and education and provide us with an essential link to days, not so long ago, when life in the Otway Ranges was very different.

Activities and Uses

Recreational Opportunities

Without doubt the diversity of landscapes and vegetation encompassed by the Otway Ranges National Park provide a multitude of activities that visitors can enjoy. Opportunities for short walks and, to a lesser extent, multi-day walks are features of the park. The Great Ocean Walk, passing around Cape Otway, is currently under construction and will provide an exhilarating experience for the independent walker. Sheer cliff tops, sandy open beaches, wild winds and pounding oceans all contribute to this multi-day trek. The western section of the Surf Coast Walk also extends into the park linking Jan Juc with Aireys Inlet.

The large size of the park, combined with the diversity of attractions across the landscape, contributes to further opportunities for multi-day walks. A proposed Trans-Otway Walk linking Lorne and Apollo Bay is of great interest to walkers and would expand the range of experiences available. The need to minimise development in remote areas, as well as the need to protect fragile environments is vital when considering routes for such multi-day walks.

Short rainforest and waterfall walks such as Melba Gully and Erskine Falls give visitors the chance to immerse themselves in the magnificent Otways experience, without the need for navigation skills and extended exertion. Visitor interpretation signage and facilities help walkers to learn about and appreciate this unique environment.

Many of the walks also feature information on the cultural and historic values of the area. Sabine Falls walking track is an example of one of several walking tracks located on old timber tramway routes. The opportunity to see historical relics in-situ, as at Kalimna Falls walking track, is another feature of the park.

Opportunities for nature study are plentiful. The heathlands of Anglesea and Carlisle have exceptional wildflower displays, as well as being very popular for bird watching. Bird hides, such as at Distillery Creek, and nature trails assist interested people to interpret their natural environment.

Existing nature trails in the park are mostly associated with the picnic facilities. Such sites include Melba Gully, Lake Elizabeth, the Sheoak Picnic area and Blanket Bay. Of course, the more sheltered beaches are always popular as

informal picnic sites. Many other formal and informal picnic areas occur throughout the national park, including at the Redwoods on a picturesque section of the Aire River upstream of Hopetoun Falls.

Scenic drives include excursions to popular waterfalls like Triplet and Erskine Falls, as well as forest touring routes such as the winding Turttons Track. The world-renowned coastal scenery along with scenic routes through the park to hinterland towns are essential elements of any scenic drive in the Otways.

For those wanting a different view, the park is well traversed by four wheel drive roads. Generally only tackled in the drier months, these roads provide opportunities for alternative access to the top of the range from the coastal and inland towns. Four wheel drive and trail bike visitors to the park can use formed vehicular tracks and roads to explore the natural features of less visited forest areas and to discover relics of past sawmilling.

From the dark, shady forest, to the stunted heaths and woodlands, the park visitor can quickly achieve a sense of isolation in the park. Aire Crossing, located south west of Lavers Hill, is a popular destination on its own and an entry point for the more isolated southern forests. Nestled amongst the cool temperate rainforest of the Aire River, the crossing is an excellent location to experience the rushing river, its cascades and potholes.

For many, camping in national parks completes the nature appreciation experience. The park includes the coastal campsites of Blanket Bay and Parker Hill, as well as the popular riverside camps of the lower Aire River. The sheltered Lake Elizabeth and Big Hill camping areas are surrounded by the tall trees of the Otways, where observant campers might spot a koala or hear the call of the Australian king-parrot.

Licensed marine, estuary and freshwater recreational fishing, in accordance with fishing regulations, is permitted in national parks for both native and introduced fish. There are a number of areas suitable for fishing included within the park. The winding Gellibrand River is popular with anglers seeking river blackfish and brown trout in the freshwater upper reaches, as well as black bream near the river mouth at Princetown. The coastline around Cape Otway offers opportunities for the keen fisher to take a variety of species including snapper or King George whiting when the conditions are favourable.

Experiencing the forest on horseback is a popular pursuit for some locals and visitors. Meandering vehicular tracks and roads of the park are used by horse and rider for exercise as well as to access and appreciate their natural surroundings. Guided horseriding tours provide visitors with an alternative way to experience the forests. Popular areas currently used for horseriding and horse trail rides, such as at Cape Otway, Barwon Downs, Wensleydale and Aireys Inlet, would continue. However horse-based camping would not be appropriate in the national park. The use of a free permit system for horse riders in the existing Otway



National Park sector of the park enables park managers to record usage and disseminate information on best practice and park management.

In recent years, mountain bike riding has established itself as an alternative nature-based pursuit in forested areas. The steep, winding vehicular tracks on the coastal fall of the Otways provide an opportunity to ride from the top of the range to the coast. A purpose-built riding and walking track extending from the township of Forrest to the camping ground at Lake Elizabeth is also popular with bike riders, with more remote bike riding opportunities available in the west of the park. For others, the roads that traverse the park are regarded highly for cycle touring.

Other activities involve fewer participants, but are nonetheless eagerly sought by those involved. A number of designated hang glider launching sites occur and offer an exhilarating view of the park to suitably qualified enthusiasts. Gemstone seeking using non-mechanical hand tools is permitted at designated beaches within the park at Moonlight Head.

Dog walking will not be provided for, other than on a limited number of tracks or beaches in close proximity to urban areas as defined through management planning processes. Such possible exceptions where dog walking could be permitted include Johanna Beach, Urquharts Bluff Beach, Sunnymede Beach at Aireys Inlet and tracks in the vicinity of Moggs Creek and Fairhaven. Community expectations call for dog walkers in all such areas to clean up their dogs' excrement.

Intrinsic Values

The Otways are not only appreciated for their important scientific or activity-based attributes; their natural features are of high intrinsic value. The ancient rainforests are often special places of reverence and spiritual revitalisation. The cathedral-like myrtle beech or blackwood canopy over the damp, mossy and quiet interior creates the ideal surrounds for personal reflection and appreciation of the wonder of nature.

The Otway Ranges are synonymous with picturesque waterfalls cascading amidst lush vegetation. The many waterfalls of the park are a key feature, attracting tens of thousands of visitors every year. Triplet Falls are popular due to their great beauty, easy access, heritage interest and the surrounding cool temperate rainforest.

Without doubt, scenic beauty is a key feature of the Otway Ranges. Along with the Great Ocean Road, there are grand vistas available within the park from the top of the Otway range and along some of the strongly defined ridges. The beauty of forested landscapes can be seen from roads such as Turttons Track, as well as those through the Cumberland Catchment and Wild Dog Ridge.

Tourism

The proximity of the park to the large population centres of Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool, as well as its location adjacent to the Great Ocean Road, are major factors when considering the contribution the park will make to tourism in the immediate region. The park complements the existing tourist attractions while also offering seasonal and recreational alternatives to the main coastal activities currently undertaken. The rainforests, waterfalls and scenic coastline are attractions in their own right. The independent tourist can discover them or visitors may be assisted by tourist operators to access the area.

Commercial tour operators offer the opportunity for alternative and adventurous methods of enjoying the magnificent natural surrounds of the park. These include mountain biking from the top of the range into Apollo Bay, or discovering platypuses by canoe at Lake Elizabeth. Commercial operators also undertake horse trail rides through some areas of the park.

Research

Research is an essential part of ensuring good management practices in any park. It provides useful feedback on management techniques and monitoring can alert the manager to potential problems. National parks offer a vital source of information on relatively undisturbed natural environments for research institutions. The ability of these groups to conduct research in the park contributes to a greater knowledge of the natural values of the park, and the environment as a whole. It is important to ensure that any research undertaken does not compromise the protection of natural values.

Water Resource Use

A number of key water storages lie on the edges of the national park. The West Barwon Reservoir supplies a large proportion of Geelong's water supply. The West Gellibrand Reservoir (with a capacity of 2000 megalitres) is the principal storage for the Colac region. The Olangolah Reservoir also supplies the Colac region, however it has a significantly smaller capacity. Three small weirs on the Arkins Creek catchment supply approximately one third of the Warrnambool region's water requirements, with the Allen Reservoir, a 220 megalitre storage on St Georges River

providing the entire water supply for Lorne, and the 514 megalitre Painkalac Reservoir; supplying the entire water supply for Aireys Inlet and Fairhaven.

The catchments of all of these reservoirs are entirely, or mostly, within the park. Given the importance of these water supplies to the region, it is vital that their catchments are managed in a manner that ensures high quality reliable water supplies. Three of the catchments have 'closed catchment' status that effectively precludes timber-harvesting and public access. Warrnambool relies on the Arkins Creek catchments, which has no significant water storage capacity, for a substantial part of its water supply. The closed catchment policy reduces the level of risk of fire and contamination and the need for, and level of, water treatment.

Council recommends that the catchments of the Allen and Painkalac reservoirs, respectively 2700 ha and 3400 ha, be managed in a similar manner. Both the catchments are little disturbed and have minimal existing public access. The communities supplied by these two reservoirs are entirely reliant on these catchments for continuing good quality water and have a steadily increasing permanent population.

The domestic water supply catchment of the West Barham River that supplies the townships of Apollo Bay and Skenes Creek is also contained in the park. However, augmentation proposals of the water authority involve relocating the offtake to access waters from the East Barham River; which draws water from a largely cleared catchment. Consequently, a higher level of water treatment will be required.

Approximately half of the catchment supplying the Pennyroyal Creek diversion, which contributes to the water supply for Geelong, Bellarine Peninsula, Torquay and Anglesea, is within the park. The remaining area is largely freehold land. The capacity of the diversion is around 100 megalitres per day.



Management Issues

Active Management for Conservation

For many natural features the protection from large-scale disturbance provided by national park status will be adequate, while other values will require active management. For example, populations of spot-tailed quoll within the park are vulnerable to predation and competition from foxes. However, traditional methods of fox control, such as the use of 1080 poison in baits, have been implicated in quoll mortality. The distribution of ground parrots and the smoky mouse are highly correlated to certain age-classes of heathland, thus requiring ecological fire regimes to ensure that adequate areas of suitable aged heath are provided. Some of the rare and threatened plant species are susceptible to minor levels of modification such as trampling. Similarly, the nests of hooded plovers are vulnerable to disturbance by domestic dogs, walkers and horse riders while bats hibernating and breeding in caves are also vulnerable to disturbance.

Monitoring of biodiversity values is required, particularly of threatened flora and fauna and of species such as koalas that have limited optimal habitat within the park.

Pest Plants and Animals and Diseases

In recent years, considerable works have been undertaken in the control of a number of weeds, most notably ragwort and blackberry. Foxes and rabbits are known to occur in areas of the park and feral cats are also a concern. The presence of such species poses a direct hazard to some threatened fauna species and significantly reduces the quality of the park's vegetation communities and habitat. Weed plants are mostly associated with disturbed areas such as roadsides, former logging coupes and gravel pits and, on the park boundary, with farmland. Ongoing weed control programs should continue to be a major management priority to protect park values and promote good neighbour practices.

While the spread of the pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi* is currently localised, extensive areas of the park are particularly vulnerable to invasion by this destructive fungus. Active management programs such as the restriction of vehicular and pedestrian access and/or the introduction of disinfectant procedures will be required, especially in heathland areas.

A small number of plantations of exotic tree species occur. Other than where retained for their historic interest, such as the plantation of redwoods on the Aire River, such non-indigenous trees should be removed, especially where they are likely to be a source of weed invasion, and revegetated with local provenance plants.

Fire Management

The Otway Ranges and, in particular, the surrounding foothill forests and heathlands, have always been subject to bushfires and will continue to be susceptible. However, the option of letting nature take its course is not open to park

management as the vegetation and fire regimes have been modified since European settlement and, more particularly as there is now more assets at risk. Deliberately lit fires are more prevalent and now all fires are suppressed as a matter of policy. Prescriptive burning has focussed on protecting assets such as the merchantable mountain ash forests, pine plantations and townships. In recent years, ecological burning has also been undertaken. All such fire management is complicated by dense settlement in and around the park.

Revegetation and Soil Conservation

The national park includes relatively undisturbed areas, but also includes many areas that have been disturbed in the past by a range of uses that directly modified the natural features of the land. Past uses include agriculture, timber harvesting, and quarrying. While such activities have been well regulated in recent times, rehabilitation and restoration have not always been attempted or been successful in the past. Park managers will have to respond actively to the impact of such past land use. Soil erosion programs, revegetation and removal of inappropriate species may all be required.

Visitor Use and Tourism

Strategically located, well-designed and soundly constructed visitor facilities are required not only to enhance the visitor experience, but also to ensure protection of natural values. Basic interpretation and visitor facilities will be required to meet current as well as likely future visitor levels. The provision of support facilities and interpretation programs by others, including commercial operators, may be appropriate although arrangements for public access and maintenance of park values must remain paramount. Tourism opportunities in the park need to complement, rather than compete with, tourism development on freehold lands.

Resource allocation will also need to respond to illegal activities such as off-road vehicle use, firewood collection and encroachment by abutting landowners.

Community Involvement

Park managers need to work with local communities and provide opportunities for community involvement in park planning and management. Aboriginal groups in the area have expressed a desire to be more involved in park management and the identification and protection of Aboriginal cultural sites and places. Such consultation with traditional owners and participation in public land and water management is to be encouraged.

Community groups such as the Friends of Angahook-Lorne State Park have greatly assisted management of the existing State Park. Recreational groups have also assisted in activities such as the development and maintenance of tracks. Such groups should be encouraged and supported to continue their conservation activities in the park. In addition, opportunities for involvement should be provided

for any interested individual. All such involvement should complement, not replace, professional management by parks staff.

VEAC has also recommended the establishment of advisory committees to further enhance opportunities for community involvement in public land planning and management across the study area. Such involvement should occur as part of the implementation of the national park, during the development of its management plan and as part of the ongoing operation of the park.



Water Catchments

The park encompasses extensive areas of water supply catchment, with the water supply catchments serving Colac, Apollo Bay, Lorne, Fairhaven and Aireys Inlet, entirely dependent on water harvested from the park. As detailed earlier, water harvested from the park is also critical to the supply requirements of Warrnambool and Geelong.

Council has recommended that the water supply catchments above the Arkins Creek weirs, and the West Gellibrand, Olangolah, West Barwon, Allen and Painkalac Reservoirs be included in the park and managed cooperatively by the park manager and the relevant water authority.

VEAC considers that the management of such lands is best placed under the jurisdiction of a land manager, not the water authority, but nonetheless firmly believes that an overriding function of these sectors of the park is to ensure reliable, high quality water.

Council has recommended that the actual water storages, associated reservoir infrastructure and surrounding buffer areas be excluded from the park and be managed by the respective water authority.

The short, steep water supply catchments serving the coastal towns, and the small high yielding water supply catchments serving Warrnambool and Colac are vulnerable to disturbance. It is important that the park management plan ensure the protection of the catchments of these reservoirs and indeed all water supply catchments within the park. Sound hydrological research and ongoing monitoring is required to ensure that land management practices indeed meet water supply objectives.

VEAC has recommended that a cooperative agreement for the management of those water supply catchments entirely within the park be drawn up between the respective water authorities and the park manager to recognise on-ground operational requirements and define the working relationship between the bodies.

Council has developed a series of principles to guide the cooperative management of these water supply catchments that are entirely within the national park:

- Management priorities include the protection of water quality and yield, together with continued protection of the very high conservation values of the park.
- Continued high priority be given to fire prevention and control to protect water quality and yield.
- Field staff of the water authorities and the park manager should have reciprocal enforcement powers.
- Priority be given to developing a comprehensive program to control exotic flora and fauna.
- Other than for the West Barwon water supply catchment, restriction of public entry to the water supply catchments should continue to apply to reduce the risks of contamination of water supplies and fire. Provision of a limited number of strategically located walking tracks within the St Georges River and Painkalac Creek water supply catchments of the park may be consistent with these requirements. Public vehicular access and camping would not be provided.
- Catchment hydrology research should continue, with other bona fide research permitted where the activities do not conflict with the protection of water quality or yield or the protection of conservation values.
- Should minor upgrading or additional facilities be required, this may be permitted subject to environmental assessment and adequate safeguards to protect conservation values.
- Should any dispute arise in relation to the management of the park, a final determination should be made jointly by the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Water.

Boundaries

The park incorporates the existing Otway National Park, Angahook-Lorne State Park (other than the Aireys Inlet reservoir), Carlisle State Park (other than the Gellibrand transfer station site), Melba Gully State Park and the following reserves and state forests:

- Eumeralla Flora Reserve
- Forest Road Flora Reserve
- Mount Ingoldsby Flora Reserve
- Mt McKenzie/Crinoline Creek Flora and Fauna Reserve
- Olangolah Flora and Fauna Reserve
- Princetown Nature Conservation Reserve
- Redwater Creek Flora and Fauna Reserve
- Smythes Creek Flora Reserve
- West Barham Big Trees Flora Reserve
- Yaugher Flora and Fauna Reserve
- Hayden's Sawmills Historic Features Reserve (part)
- Henry's Nettle and Carisbrook Sawmills Historic Features Reserve
- Henry and Sanderson Sawmill Complex Historic Features Reserve
- Knott's No.3 Sawmill Historic Features Reserve
- Marchbank Sawmill and Tramway Historic Features Reserve
- St George Sawmills Historic Features Reserve
- Aire Bushland Reserve
- Johanna Bushland Reserve
- Wiridjil Bushland Reserve (part)
- Beauty Spot Scenic Reserve
- Carisbrook Creek Scenic Reserve
- Glasgow Falls Scenic Reserve
- Hopetoun Falls Scenic Reserve
- Sabine Falls Scenic Reserve
- Wyelangta Scenic Reserve
- Wangerrip Streamside Reserve
- Apollo Bay Coastal Reserve (part)
- Lorne Coastal Reserve (parts)
- Big Hill Coastal Reserve
- Fairhaven/Aireys Inlet/Anglesea-Point Addis Coastal Reserve (parts)
- Various abutting water frontage reserves (small sectors)
- Aire State Forest (part)
- Arkins Creek Catchment

- Barongarook State Forest (part)
- Kennedys Creek State Forest (part)
- Otway Forest—Barham sector
- Otway Forest—Barwon sector (part)
- Otway Forest—Boonah sector (part)
- Otway Forest—South-eastern sector
- Sheeppark Creek State Forest
- West Gellibrand Catchment
- Western Otways State Forest (part)
- Wonga State Forest (part)
- Cape Horn Stone Reserve
- Chapplevale Gravel Reserve
- Cape Otway Cemetery Reserve
- Cape Otway Lightstation Reserve
- Various unreserved Crown lands and public authority freehold land

Statutory Land-use Overlays

Existing statutory instruments or provisions for reference areas, heritage rivers and water supply catchments continue to apply over parts of the park. The park also encompasses a proclaimed optional dress (nudist) area.



RECOMMENDATIONS

A1: OTWAY RANGES NATIONAL PARK

That the area of 102,470 ha indicated on Map A as the Otway Ranges National Park

- (a) be used to:
 - (i) conserve and protect biodiversity, natural landscapes and natural processes;
 - (ii) protect significant cultural and historic sites and places, including Aboriginal cultural sites and places;
 - (iii) provide opportunities for recreation and education associated with the enjoyment and understanding of natural environments and cultural heritage; and
 - (iv) supply water and protect domestic water supply catchments;
- (b) be managed to provide for, in particular, the following activities:
 - (i) bushwalking, including the development and maintenance of walker-only tracks suitable for short and longer walks and walk-in campsites;
 - (ii) car and motor bike touring, including the maintenance of formed vehicular tracks, roads and travel routes at four wheel drive standard as well as all-weather access for all vehicles;
 - (iii) picnicking and camping, including designated areas with facilities and, at the manager's discretion, dispersed camping in appropriate locations where this will not adversely affect biodiversity values or water quality;
 - (iv) the continuation of horseriding on formed vehicular tracks and roads and associated firebreaks, and designated beaches, subject to any necessary restrictions to avoid damage to tracks (including seasonal closures), the introduction of weeds and conflict with other users and natural values;
 - (v) existing accommodation and associated facilities at the Cape Otway lighthouse precinct, with specific provision being made for their ongoing operation by way of long-term commercial leases under the provisions of the *National Parks Act 1975*;
 - (vi) existing pipelines, aqueducts, cables, communication towers, navigation aids, weirs, dams and other minor service and utility infrastructure that are necessarily within the park, subject to the creation of formal agreements with the land manager, as well as additional service and utility infrastructure if alternative sites are unavailable and subject to environmental assessment and minimal impact; and

- (vii) the artificial opening of the mouths of the Aire and Gellibrand Rivers in consultation with Indigenous traditional owners and other relevant groups to take into account primarily the needs of wildlife, as well as fisheries and landowners affected by inundation;
- (c) be regulated to **exclude** the following activities:
 - (i) exploration and extraction of earth resources and minerals, other than the continuation of entitlements under existing licences or authorities, as approved;
 - (ii) grazing by domestic stock, with existing grazing licences terminated as soon as possible, but no later than 2008;
 - (iii) walking dogs, other than the walking of dogs on leads along a limited number of designated tracks and beaches, to be designated in management plans;
 - (iv) apiculture;
 - (v) hunting and the use or carrying of firearms;
 - (vi) prospecting under miners right, other than for gemstone seeking along designated beaches at Moonlight Head using non-mechanical hand tools only; and
 - (vii) commercial fishing, other than commercial eel fishing under existing entitlements which shall be subject to phase out within ten years and subject to continuing reductions in bycatch in accordance with the findings of current research;
- (d) be managed in a manner that, amongst other things, gives particular emphasis to:
 - (i) programs to conserve and enhance populations of spot-tailed quoll, ground parrot and other threatened species requiring active management;
 - (ii) revegetation of previously harvested areas where the restoration of a natural mix of overstorey and understorey species has been unsuccessful;
 - (iii) ensuring the quality and yield of the domestic water supply catchments especially in the Arkins Creek, West Gellibrand, Olangolah, St Georges River, and Painkalac Creek and water supply catchments where 'closed catchment' policies should continue or be applied other than for pedestrian access on designated tracks in the latter two catchments;
 - (iv) fire protection especially for nearby towns and settlements;
 - (v) joint programs with adjoining landowners for the control of declared pest species along the park boundary interface; and
 - (vi) strategies to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of the dieback fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, including the restriction of vehicular or pedestrian access and/or the introduction of disinfectant procedures, especially in heathland areas;
- (e) be created by inclusion on a schedule to the *National Parks Act 1975*; with
 - (i) unused road reserves within or adjoining the park that are not required for legal or practical access to existing freehold allotments added to the park;
 - (ii) licensed or leased Crown land abutting or surrounded by the park be rehabilitated and added to the park when no longer required for their existing purposes; and
 - (iii) the seaward boundary of the park being low-water mark, other than to the extent that there is overlap with a proclaimed marine national park; and
- (f) be managed in consultation with the relevant water authorities within declared water supply catchments with respect to ensuring quality and yield of water supply.

A2: JOINT MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

That within two years of the acceptance of this recommendation, agreements be entered into by the park manager and the relevant water authority or road authority:

- (a) to ensure coordinated management in line with the principles outlined in the accompanying text above (for the water supply catchments listed above within the park);
- (b) the buffer areas of the Arkins Creek weirs, West Gellibrand Reservoir, Olangolah Reservoir, West Barwon Reservoir, Painkalac Reservoir and, when defined, of the Allen Reservoir, adjoining the park, together with the land exposed at any time below full supply level, to ensure coordinated consistent management that provides for both the protection of water quality and appropriate use of the adjoining areas of national park; and
- (c) for the management of the road reserves of declared arterial roads (formerly known as main roads), including the Great Ocean Road and Turtons Track, and municipal roads where they pass through the park, to ensure that they are managed in a coordinated manner that provides for the safety, trafficability and scenic amenity of the road and roadside and the appropriate use and protection of the adjoining areas of national park.

- Notes:
- 1. The park encompasses nine existing and proposed reference areas. Reference areas must be managed in accordance with the *Reference Areas Act 1978*.
 - 2. The Bambra Road quarry has pre-existing rights of operation that precede the creation of the Angahook-Lorne State Park. Its occupation has not, to date, been formalised under the *National Parks Act 1975*. It is subject to a current work authority application under the *Extractive Industries Development Act 1995*.
 - 3. Practical access should continue to be provided to existing private land holdings surrounded by the park.
 - 4. Inclusion of the Arkins Creek, West Gellibrand, Olangolah and West Barwon water supply catchments in the park will involve transfer of land from South West Water and Barwon Water to the Crown.
 - 5. The buffer areas of the Arkins Creek weirs, West Gellibrand Reservoir, Olangolah Reservoir, West Barwon Reservoir and Painkalac Reservoir are defined and subject to special area plans (previously known as land use determinations or LUDs) made under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. Where the boundaries of a buffer area are amended arising from the gazettal of a revised or new plan, the boundaries of the national park, and abutting water production area, should be amended accordingly.
 - 6. The Council supports the continuance of land-acquisition programs by opportunistic purchase to consolidate park boundaries. Boundary rationalisation, perhaps by way of land exchange, could also be explored. Implementation of the park is intended to allow flexibility for minor boundary adjustments.
 - 7. Where appropriate, the land manager may enter into formal agreements with private operators to build and/or operate facilities in accordance with approved management plans. Similar arrangements may apply for relevant park activity programs.
 - 8. Council supports negotiations between DSE and the Surf Coast Shire Council with a view to ensuring the complementary management of the municipal land known as the Ironbark Basin and possible transfer of the land for inclusion into the park.
 - 9. Council has included areas to the east of the Alcoa leasehold within the park on the presumption that the significant vegetation of the Anglesea heath lying within the Alcoa leasehold continues to be subject to a cooperative management agreement between the State government and Alcoa of Australia Limited. When the current lease comes up for renewal in 2011, consideration should be given to amending the boundaries of the lease to enable areas of high conservation value to be added to the park.
 - 10. Licensed or leased Crown land suitable for inclusion in the park when no longer required for the existing purposes, include the Tallawalla Guide Camp at Moggs Creek and the Belmont High School camp at Tanybryn (an unused part of the current licensed area is included in the park).
 - 11. The Cape Otway cemetery is closed for further burials.
 - 12. A number of small parcels of cleared Crown land adjacent to the park between Castle Cove and Aire River have not been included in the park, but allocated to uncategorised public land. It is intended that they be available for exchange with neighbouring freehold land with higher conservation values, at which time the latter areas should be added to the park.
 - 13. Restrictions on the carrying in of pets or firearms in the national park do not apply to those passing through the park on declared arterial, municipal or other roads excluded from the park.
 - 14. Council is aware that the cessation of commercial fishing in the national park may require amendment to the *Fisheries Act 1995* and/or *Fisheries Regulations 1998* and/or relevant fishery plan.
 - 15. The artificial opening of river mouth entrances is to be also consistent with estuary management guidelines defined in relevant coastal action plans as adopted under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*.
 - 16. The 102,470 ha recommended national park does not include two immediately adjacent areas (37 ha south of Aireys Inlet Sewage Treatment Plant and 15 ha of the existing Forest Road Flora Reserve near Anglesea) that are outside the study area and are suggested as logical Government additions to the national park.

CHAPTER 4 FOREST PARKS

Forest parks—a new land-use category for extensive areas of land supporting native forests and bushland, with a range of recreation, nature conservation and resource utilisation values.

One of the primary attributes of much of Victoria's state forest is the provision for timber harvesting. In the Otway forests, the native forest-based timber industry is to be phased out by 2008, providing an opportunity for former state forest land, and other forested areas, to be reassigned to a new land-use category that better reflects community expectations and needs for forest conservation and recreation.

VEAC proposes that a new land-use category be created to provide for the protection of extensive areas of forest for recreation, conservation and minor resource utilisation where timber harvesting is to be prohibited. Council envisages that the new land-use category could also be applied outside the Angahook-Otway study area.

The three management objectives of the new land-use category are:

- (a) recreation;
- (b) nature conservation; and
- (c) compatible minor resource utilisation.

Flowing from these management objectives, appropriate uses would include a wide range of recreational activities reliant on extensive areas of land, a limited range of utilisation (in a manner consistent with recreation and conservation), with timber production (specifically, sawlogs and pulpwood) not being permitted once phased out in the Otways by 2008.

While national parks provide the core area of nature conservation protection across the State, forest park in the Otways will provide complementary protection for plants, animals and natural landscapes, as well as for those rare and threatened species outside national park boundaries.

Access for a broad range of recreational activities, particularly those already established in the former state forests, is an important part of the forest park concept. Such activities will require on-ground management supervision and the maintenance of infrastructure, including roads. Development nodes to facilitate recreational use may be desirable within areas of forest park.

Appropriate resource utilisation could include apiculture and low-intensity harvesting of timber and other vegetative material (such as seeds and foliage)—for firewood, posts and poles, woodchop blocks, stakes, revegetation and decorative products. Any such use should be demonstrably sustainable.

Unlike state forest, forest parks are recommended to be 'restricted Crown land', where the consent of the Minister for the Environment is required for the exploration and extraction of minerals. Such uses would only be permitted where consistent with the maintenance of overall recreation and conservation values.

As the forest park category has three very different management objectives, it will be necessary for the land manager to identify and apply management zones to reduce conflict between uses. For example, management may need to identify firewood collection zones, areas unsuited for utilisation, special feature zones and so forth.

Council has recommended that forest parks be created under the existing *Forests Act 1958*; and that the three management objectives for forest parks be explicitly included in this Act. Council is recommending the creation of one forest park within the study area—the Otway Forest Park—to unify the areas across the Otways which provide opportunities for a wide range of activities and also to complement the values and uses of the Otway Ranges National Park.



BI OTWAY FOREST PARK

The recommended Otway Forest Park encompasses extensive areas of mountain and foothill forests extending from the main ridge of the Otway Ranges to the undulating plains and plateaus further inland. The park can be explored from a network of vehicular tracks and roads and offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities that complement those available in the adjoining recommended Otway Ranges National Park.

The recommended park extends over 39,265 ha across public lands both in and around the Otway Ranges, and across the dissected inland plains to the north and west of the Otways. The park brings together nine main blocks of public land:

- Ferguson Hill
- Western Otways
- Ford River
- Head of Aire
- Tomahawk Creek–Wonga Forest
- Kawarren–Barongarook Block
- Upper Gellibrand Forests, including Charlies Creek and Lardners Creek Forests
- Yaugher Forest
- Barwon Downs
- Boonah–Wormbete Forest

Recreational Opportunities

The recommended forest park provides opportunities, facilities and enjoyable natural settings for active recreation pursuits that may not always be well suited to the protection of national park values. Prudent management and responsible use will ensure that sustainable recreation experiences are achieved and that conservation values are not compromised.

The range of landscapes and vegetation in the forest park ensures forest recreation experiences that are diverse and stimulating. From walking to the cascading Aire River at Beauchamp Falls to trail biking on the roads in the heathy woodlands of the Wormbete Forest, many visitor expectations can be realised.

The breadth of the recommended forest park will also ensure that many communities have good access for forest recreation activities. The Barongarook block is an example of forest park that is close to the major town of Colac. The recreation opportunities available in this area include horseriding, cycling, walking, picnicking and nature drives.

Camping

The forest park provides excellent camping opportunities. All groups are provided for, from families and retirees with caravans, to those who just want some peace and quiet under the stars.

Dandos campground on the Gellibrand River is an ideal base for those wanting a formal campsite amongst the tall Otway forests. The open space at this campsite also appeals to groups and families needing some room to move. Stevensons Falls provides another formal campsite, amongst exotic conifers just downstream from a picturesque waterfall.

A number of submissions stressed the importance of having the opportunity to undertake dispersed camping in natural settings. Opportunities for dispersed camping are an important element of multi-day walking, horseriding, driving and trail biking treks. The forest park will provide for dispersed camping across extensive areas of forest.

Car Touring

The well-formed roads of the forest park provide for car touring. While some of the roads in the forest park are unsuitable for all-weather two wheel drive access, there are still many opportunities to access the forest.

Delaneys Road, near Barwon Downs provides access to the top of the main range of the Otways. It passes through a range of vegetation types and allows the visitor to experience some of the wet Otway forests. Some of the roads through the Wonga block, while unsealed, also allow two wheel drive vehicles good access.

Picnicking

The forest park has a number of formal picnicking locations, including those at Birnum Station, near Kawarren, Loves Creek, Dandos and Stevensons Falls. These sites provide good access, parking, and tables in natural settings. Usually basic toilet facilities are also provided. Shelters are important to protect picnickers from the characteristically inclement Otways weather.

Informal picnicking is also encouraged in the forest park. Extensive options for impromptu picnicking occur throughout the forest and especially beside waterways.

Four Wheel Driving

Four wheel driving is a recreational pursuit in its own right, but may also provide essential transport to undertake other activities such as camping, hunting and fishing. Formed vehicular tracks and roads provide access across a range of environments and offer alternative routes through the Otways.

In the drier months the forest park roads offer the opportunity to venture into the wet forests. Many historic sites and relics of past timber harvesting found in the forest park are of interest to the keen explorer and accessible only to four wheel drive vehicles.

Ready access into the forested environments helps people to appreciate and learn about natural values, potential impacts on fragile systems and the need for their careful management.

Local four wheel drive groups of the Otways actively contribute to public land management by assisting with development of road maintenance priorities, track clearing, reporting of track hazards, removal of dumped vehicles and more recently through the development of a track classification and rating system. Such cooperative relationships should continue.



Trail biking

The formed vehicular tracks and roads of the forest park also provide extensive opportunities for trail biking. The roads of the Wormbete forest are popular for trail biking due to proximity to population centres situated along the coast, including Geelong. The diversity of vegetation and the undulating nature of the country in this part of the forest park contributes to the experience.

Careful monitoring and enforcement will be required to prevent damage to fragile natural systems. Local trail bike groups are currently involved on committees and programs that will assist in ensuring that this popular recreational pursuit is conducted in a sustainable manner.

Hunting and Fishing

Provision is made for hunting in areas of the forest park. Four wheel drive access, combined with a range of camping options, further enhances this experience. In the past there have been unauthorised introductions of deer (red, fallow and sambar) which are now increasing in range and number, especially in the western Otways. Declared pest animals, especially on the margins of farmlands, are also targeted by hunters.

A number of the watercourses which flow through the forest park provide opportunities for fishing.

Walking

Walking is a popular activity in the forest park. Many people limit themselves to short walks around picnic grounds and camping areas or to specific attractions such as Beauchamp and Stevensons Falls.

Others however appreciate the extensive landscapes found in the forest park to extend and test their abilities. Fire trails and seldom-used vehicle tracks assist walkers gain access; others seek off-track routes. Dispersed camping opportunities cater to these multi-day bushwalk endeavours.

Part of the Old Beechy Line rail trail passes through the park and will provide an excellent walking experience from Colac, through hinterland towns and communities, to the top of the Beech Forest ridge, whilst also informing visitors about the history of the Otways. Walking groups assist in the establishment, promotion, and maintenance of walking trails and the reporting of hazards and inappropriate activities.

Horseriding

The proximity of the forest park to many Otway communities ensures opportunities for local horseriding individuals and groups. The ability to exercise in and experience the natural environment on horseback is highly valued. The Wonga and Barongarook blocks, in particular, provide a safe environment to ride due to a number of wide, slashed roadsides that easily accommodate horse and rider and their network of forest roads on gentle slopes also are well suited to carriage-driving.

Opportunities for more remote and challenging treks are provided on the formed roads of the western Otways and inland fall sections of the forest park.

The forest park at Ferguson Hill includes a designated short, cross-country course that is well utilised and maintained by the local pony club.

Bicycle Riding

In recent years mountain bike riding in particular has become a popular pursuit in natural environments. The formed roads and tracks of the forest park provide ideal trails for this active endeavour.

The development of the Old Beechy line rail trail that passes through the forest park at Kewarren, and also runs adjacent to the park north of Beech Forest, will greatly enhance cycling opportunities in the Otways. This rail trail is envisaged to provide a riding route from Colac to the top of the ridge at Beech Forest.

Dog walking

People are able to walk dogs through the forest park. The proximity of the forest park to many Otway towns and localities ensures that community members can exercise their dogs (and themselves) in a natural setting. In keeping with the conservation objectives of the forest park, it is expected that dogs will be kept under the control of their owner at all times.



Nature Study

The forest park makes provision for independent nature study where visitors are encouraged to seek natural experiences largely without the assistance of formed nature trails and interpretation facilities. Good access and a range of camping options assist in undertaking both informal and formal nature study. Observing natural features in their settings is an essential feature of environmental education and future conservation of natural resources. Schools and organisations can utilise the forest park to stimulate and extend participants' interest and knowledge of natural systems.

Gold Prospecting and Gem Fossicking

The forest park is not particularly prospective for precious metals and gemstones, however provision is made for recreational fossickers and prospectors to pursue their interest.

Tourism

There is increasing demand for high quality nature-based tourism opportunities in the study area. The proximity of the Otways to large population centres and the excellent conservation values and recreation opportunities available greatly contribute to this demand.

The forest park enhances tourism opportunities in the study area due to the large range of recreational activities that can be undertaken, both by the independent visitor and those who prefer commercial tours. Some natural features of the forest park, such as Beauchamp Falls, are also easily accessible attractions in their own right. Opportunities for assisted tours include those involving commercial mountain biking, horseriding and gypsy wagons. These services provide visitors with an alternative way of experiencing the Otways.

Constructed support facilities for bush-based recreational and tourist activities occur in a number of areas, and can assist to make the bush accessible. Such facilities may include shelters, field ranges, staging posts, toilets and water supply. It is important that such facilities are located and maintained in a manner that is safe, environmentally sound, accessible to all and, where no longer required, removable. The primary conservation objectives of national parks, the other major public land category in the study area, do not provide the flexibility for such developments to be undertaken.

Natural Features

Conservation of natural values is one of the objectives of the forest park. There is a wide range of landscape and vegetation types represented. It therefore contains a wide range of natural values that are a key attraction for many visitors. In some localities, the forested blocks of forest park supports remnant vegetation and natural landscape where cleared farmland is the dominant land use. Management of the forest park must ensure that these important values are not compromised.

Physiography, Geology and Geomorphology

The forest park extends across the undulating country of the South Victorian Coastal Plains (Dissected Plains) from the coast near Princetown and around to the north of the main Otway Range. Most of the park is, however, within the South Victorian Uplands dominated by high ranges and dissected valleys.

A number of geological and geomorphological sites of scientific interest are found in the forest park. All are of local significance. They include gravel pits and road cuttings, such as the Jacobsons Road gravel pit, which provide good access to rock exposures. These exposures may be typical of a particular formation or exhibit notable features not generally seen in the formation.

Waterfalls that have been listed as local significance, such as the Beauchamp and Stevensons Falls, demonstrate the relationship between the underlying geology and stream development.

Vegetation


The plant communities found in the park encompass the botanical diversity of the Otways. There are examples of cool temperate rainforest, tall mountain forests, drier foothill forests and woodlands, as well as the heathlands and riparian zones.

Two of the main ecological vegetation classes in the forest park are lowland forest and shrubby foothill forest. These two vegetation types often occur close to each other, with elevation and soil type being contributing factors in determining their respective distributions. Both vegetation types are characterised by the diversity of their understorey layers. Another well-represented vegetation type is the shrubby wet forest—a major component of the tall, wet eucalypt forests for which the Otways are well known. It occurs generally on northern and westerly aspects with rainfall greater than 1200 mm.

There are a number of localities, such as Beauchamp Falls, where examples of cool temperate rainforest are easily accessible. Other rainforest examples are found deeper in the forest park such as in Ford River valley, east of Lavers Hill. Pockets of old-growth forest are distributed across a variety of vegetation types. Not only do the large, hollow trees provide habitat in these areas, but the forest floor debris including hollow logs provides nest and den sites for some less conspicuous species such as bandicoots and possums.

Threatened Flora

While most records of threatened species have been included in the recommended national park, a number of threatened and near threatened species occur in the forest park. The heathy and wetter forest vegetation types within the forest park often contain threatened flora. For example, skirted and slender tree ferns, along with the smaller beech finger-fern and long club-moss are generally found in cool temperate rainforest or wet forest. Angelsea grevillea and wrinkled buttons are found further east.



Near-threatened species occur throughout the forest park. They range from the tall Brooker's gum to the small ground spleenwort. Showy lobelia and currant wood are two near-threatened species that only exist in one area other than the Otways. Currant wood and Brooker's gum are species that exemplify strong Tasmanian links. Brooker's gum flourishes in the Otways, with a wide distribution across the main range. It particularly favours high-rainfall, northerly aspects. Otway bush-pea, ground spleenwort, satinwood, dwarf silver wattle and netted daisy-bush are all found in the forest park. The Otway populations for all of these species provide a stronghold in Victoria.

Fauna

The diversity of landscapes and vegetation communities in the forest park provides habitat for a wide range of animal species. The Otways provides habitat for species that are found nowhere else, such as the Otway black snail. The eastern subspecies of the rufous bristlebird is confined almost entirely to the study area. This species is primarily found in the dense coastal heaths and wet forests of the recommended Otway Ranges National Park, although forest gullies and heaths of the forest park also make an important contribution to its survival.

While the main strongholds of most threatened fauna are in the national park, these species also occur in the forest park. Of special interest is the grey goshawk, which has strong affinities to Tasmania where it is more common. Populations of a number of other species in the forest park are also potentially important links, including the long-nosed potoroo, southern brown bandicoot, swamp skink, yellow-bellied glider and eastern false pipistrelle (a small forest bat). The broad-toothed rat is primarily found in the high rainfall forests, heathlands and grasslands of eastern Victoria, however the Otways population represents the southwest limit of this species' east coast distribution.

Cultural and Historic Features

Indigenous Heritage

The forest park includes a large area on the north-western periphery of the main Otway range. Interpretation of the known archaeological sites in the study area has identified a high level of past Aboriginal activity. This reflects a mostly mobile society that seasonally utilised the natural resources of the rivers, wetlands and oceans of the region. Elements of such activity survived the post-contact period and the forest park continues to be of cultural significance to local Aboriginal communities.

Archaeological survey of the forest park has been reasonably limited and a more thorough survey is required. Land managers and tourism operators need to be aware of the importance of such sites and monitoring should be undertaken of known sites to ensure that any indigenous heritage values are not compromised. The local Aboriginal communities need to be involved in such education and monitoring programs.

European Heritage

The timber and transport industries provide the majority of historic features in the forest park. The park allows visitors to explore the forest and discover some of the heritage of the Otways. Numerous sawmills and their associated features are also found in the forest park. They are valuable historic assets and contribute greatly to our knowledge of the Otways.

Notable features in the Lardners Creek forest include the McDonald tramway and associated water race, the well-preserved tramway of the Hitt No.4 mill and the incline and winch site of the Devitt sawmill. Other northern fall historic features are the comparatively intact tramway and relics of the Royle sawmill, south of Pennyroyal. Nearby are the turn-of-the-century Hayden's sawmills with their noteworthy log lines and snig tracks.

The western Otways portion of the forest park also has sawmill and tramway remains, as well as the associated access, winch and log lines for a number of mills including Kincaid and Northern Timber Co.

The Kawarren block is the site of Birnum station, one of the numerous railway stations and sidings that once existed on the Colac–Beech Forest–Crowes railway line, also known as the Old Beechy. This narrow gauge railway, curving in and out of the forest park, has captivated rail enthusiasts since its inception in 1901. It played a key role in opening up the Otways to settlement and timber. At various times it operated as a mixed train carrying passengers, however its primary function was carrying timber and general supplies for communities.

Resource and Other Uses

Timber Extraction

The forest park excludes timber harvesting for the production of sawlogs and pulpwood, other than for harvesting in accordance with approved Wood Utilisation Plans to meet existing timber licence obligations to 2008. That is, logging will occur within the recommended forest park only until 2008.

Non-licensed Plantations

Pine plantations that are subject to commercial licences were specifically excluded from the investigation study area. There are, however, areas of non-licensed plantations in the forest park. These are generally low-yielding softwood plantations that are of low economic value. The removal of trees and revegetation of these areas would be an appropriate part of management.

Firewood

The foothill forests of the Otways are the main source of firewood for commercial and domestic firewood collectors. Most such firewood is consumed locally.

The forest park includes large sections of suitable foothill forest to cater for this use and its proximity to many Otway communities facilitates collection of firewood by local residents—at Barwon Downs, for instance. Firewood collection from public land provides both an economic and

cultural need in rural areas. Firewood is a relatively inexpensive heating and cooking resource, particularly in areas that are not connected to the main gas network. The collection of firewood is also often one of the regular traditional activities conducted in rural communities by many families.

It is anticipated that as hardwood logging is phased out and the value of senescing forest for ground dwelling fauna is recognised, that the level of available resources on public land resources will reduce. However, all of the major inland townships in and around the study area now have piped natural gas available and firewood is increasingly accessible from woodlots. Currently the extent of firewood harvesting in the forest park appears to be sustainable and would provide for existing and foreseeable future local requirements.

Other Harvesting

The harvesting of minor forest produce, other than firewood, in the study area is not a major forest use. The main products currently sourced from the Otway forests are grass-tree fronds, tea tree stakes and woodchop logs. Other products include craftwood, posts and poles, and the selective harvesting of trees to supply specialist timber markets. Currently these activities are undertaken by a few small operations.

Tea tree stakes, for example, are selectively harvested by a small local family business, from mostly lowland forests. A machete is used to cut individual tea tree stems that are greater than 2.5 cm diameter. Sites are revisited as the tea tree grows to meet specification. The stakes are then sold



to markets including Geelong, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney. Another operator spot-fells trees and carries sawn timber out of the forest to supply musical instrument makers with high grade tone wood and figured timber.

Prudent management of these resources at low intensity levels should ensure that harvesting of such produce does not impact negatively on recreation and conservation values, while providing local employment and supplying market needs.

Grazing

The environments of the forest park mostly have low capability for grazing. Some existing grazing licences are held over land in the forest park and used for grazing and VEAC has recommended that such use may continue.

Water Production

The majority of the forest park is within declared water catchments supplying the Geelong or Warrnambool schemes. Some of the water supply catchments occur predominantly in the forest park.


Extensive parts of Matthews, Dewings and Callahans Creek catchments are within the forest park and supplement the flows for Geelong via concrete-lined diversions. Recently, commitments have been made to improve natural conditions for aquatic life in the Barwon River. This has been partly achieved by Barwon Water forgoing its right to harvest water from Gosling Creek. As Geelong's water supply is sourced from a variety of catchments, there is reasonable security for the water resource as any impact on a single catchment need not excessively affect the overall quality or quantity of water supplied.

Water for Gellibrand is pumped from Lardner Creek, which flows for most of its length through the proposed forest park. The Gellibrand and Carlisle Rivers contribute a significant portion of Warrnambool's domestic water supplies. These domestic supplies also provide for some agricultural uses, such as dairy farming. An extensive area of forest park covering the Western Otways, Tomahawk Creek–Wonga Forest, part of the Kwarren–Barongarook Block and Upper Gellibrand Forests falls within these water supply catchments.

Mining and Extractives

There are no existing mining licences or leases in the forest park, however a petroleum exploration permit covers the majority of the forest park area, with extensive areas also subject to current mineral exploration licences for coal bed methane. There are also a number of gravel pits. None of these pits are currently operating, however some are considered to have a useful gravel resource.

Mining and exploration may be allowed subject to the approval of the Minister for the Environment and where consistent with recreation and conservation management objectives.



Apiculture

The recommendations provide for apiculture where consistent with recreation and conservation management objectives. Currently, there are no licensed apiculture sites in the forest park.

Defence Force Exercises

Defence force exercises are regularly carried out on public land in the study area. The most common exercises are navigation and camping skills training for local cadet groups. The forest park provides for defence force exercises to continue, subject to the land manager's discretion and conditions.

Research

Research and monitoring is an essential tool of all land managers as it assists in the development of effective management practices. The forest park will be an ideal location for research on recreation management techniques and road drainage, as well as for research on specific natural values. This research may be undertaken by the land manager or other approved researchers or research institutions. Research activities must ensure that recreation and conservation values of the forest park are not diminished.

Environmental Education

The forest park includes two former education areas located at Barongarook and Bamba. These areas will continue to offer schools, tertiary institutes and other educational bodies the opportunity to undertake active hands-on field studies, including physical trials and long term plots, that would not normally be permitted in parks. These two areas, in mountain ash forest and foothill forest respectively, complement the resource offered by the Eumeralla Education Area in the coastal scrub east of Anglesea and an additional area at Bamba.

Management Issues

Visitor Use and Tourism

For both locals and visitors from further afield, the forest park is likely to be a focus for vehicle-based recreation and horseriding, which are less well-suited to many national park areas. Increased levels of four wheel driving, trail bike riding and horseriding will place greater pressure on track surfaces, especially at creek crossings and on steep slopes. Active management will be required to ensure that such pressures do not adversely affect the natural environment. Monitoring of road conditions in the forest park, such as the current Stream Crossing Project, should continue. Such monitoring of the stream/road interfaces assists in identifying required improvements.

The narrowness and undulating nature of many forest tracks means that safety of park users will be an important issue to address. Provision for dispersed camping will require a strong management presence to ensure that regulations dealing with fires, latrines, set backs from water courses and rubbish disposal are all met. Designated campsites and popular visitor localities, such as at

Stevensons Falls, will require a high level of management and well-designed, soundly constructed, regularly maintained visitor facilities. Guided tours and professionally supported recreation, such as mountain bike and four wheel driving trips, should be encouraged to assist visitors to experience the Otway forests in a safe manner.

The land manager must also apply resources to respond to illegal activities such as unlicensed, unregistered and off-road trail bike riding, off-road driving, and unauthorised firewood collection.

Community Involvement

It will be important for the land managers to work with local communities and recreation groups and provide opportunities for involvement in the preparation of park management plans and in management activities. Such involvement could be through advisory committees or through informal working relationships and specific programs. Detailed track maps are required and the full range of recreational groups closely involved in any changes to the track network, including the classification of tracks.

Conservation and Protection

Many of the environmental and cultural features of significance found in the forest park, particularly the habitat of threatened species, will require active management. Pest plant and animal control must be continued, with ragwort, blackberries, foxes and cats of particular concern. Control programs in disturbed areas, such as roadsides, former logging coupes, gravel pits and park/farmland boundaries should continue to be a major management priority. Rehabilitation of areas disturbed by past uses such as agriculture, timber harvesting, and quarrying, will require active responses, including soil erosion control and revegetation.

The forests of the Otway Ranges have always been and will continue to be subject to wild fires. Prescriptive burning programs and fire suppression will remain an overriding task of the land manager, in consultation with other fire management bodies.

Water Catchments

As previously noted, much of the forest park is within declared water supply catchments that supply water to the Geelong and Warrnambool systems. Management must ensure the protection of all such water supply catchments within the forest park. In particular, high level fire protection and track maintenance will be required. Should future augmentation of domestic water supplies require the upgrading or construction of facilities within the forest park, this should be permitted provided adequate safeguards are implemented to protect significant conservation values and water quality.

Timber Production

Government policy dictates the phase-out of timber production by 2008. Consequently the forest park manager will need to oversee timber harvesting during the next four years. It is important that wood utilisation plans be prepared in accordance with the code of forest practices and management prescriptions—and that harvesting be distributed across the forest park, including the northern fall catchments. Special protection zones (for rare and threatened species) and special management zones (to protect quoll habitat), designated under the Regional Forest Management Agreement, should continue to be applied until new zones are identified in the management planning phase of the implementation of these recommendations. All harvested areas and associated operational areas require active revegetation to ensure the restoration of the forest.

The land manager will also need to work closely with licensed operators to identify appropriate areas for minor forest production such as firewood, posts and poles, woodchop blocks and other plant products and ensure that harvesting is sustainable and conducted with minimal impact on other users and values. Management zones will need to be assigned to ensure that firewood collection does not compromise conservation values or impair recreational experiences in the forest. Demonstrating sustainability will also require mechanisms to be put in place to ensure that the level and location of harvest is accurately recorded, that the price of public land sourced firewood reflects competition policy requirements and its extraction meets occupational health and safety requirements. A continuous review process, involving monitoring and auditing, is also required to ensure that sustainable outcomes are met.

Services and Utilities

A number of transmission lines, communication towers, water supply tanks, pumps and pipelines occur in the forest park. Where such facilities are required for ongoing use, they should be permitted under licence. Environmental assessment is required for proposed additional facilities, including consideration of alternatives outside the forest park, to avoid or mitigate possible adverse impacts.

Boundaries

The recommended forest park area incorporates areas of uncategorised public land and the following existing parks, reserves and state forests:

- Kawarren Regional Park
- Haydens Sawmills Historic and Cultural Features Reserve (part)
- Tomahawk Creek Bushland Reserve (part)
- Beauchamp Falls Scenic Reserve
- Stevensons Falls Scenic Reserve
- Aire State Forest (part)
- Anglesea River headwaters
- Barongarook State Forest (part)
- Kennedys Creek State Forest (part)
- Lardner Creek State Forest
- Otway Forest—Boonah sector (part)
- Otway Forest—Barwon sector (part)
- Pennyroyal forest
- Tomahawk Creek State Forest
- Western Otways State Forest (part)
- Wonga State Forest (part)
- Wormbete State Forest
- Yaugher Forest
- Bambra Education Area
- Barramunga Education Area
- Forrest Recreation Reserve (part)
- Kawarren Recreation Reserve (part)
- Kawarren Camping and Water Reserve (Loves Creek Picnic Area)
- Yan Yan Gurt Sanitary Depot Reserve

Statutory Land-use Overlays

Existing statutory controls for water supply catchments apply over parts of the forest park. These should remain in place.



RECOMMENDATIONS

BI: OTWAY FOREST PARK

That the area of 39,265 ha indicated on Map A as the Otway Forest Park

- (a) be used to:
 - (i) provide opportunities for informal recreation associated with the enjoyment of natural surroundings;
 - (ii) protect and conserve biodiversity, natural and cultural features and water supply catchments; and
 - (iii) supply a limited range of natural resource products;
- (b) be managed sustainably to provide for, in particular, the following activities:
 - (i) horseriding, trail bike riding and four wheel driving on formed vehicular tracks and roads;
 - (ii) camping at designated sites and dispersed camping, including overnight camps for horse riders;
 - (iii) hunting of deer, with an emphasis on controlling animal numbers;
 - (iv) low-intensity grazing of domestic stock where pre-existing and consistent with recreation and conservation management objectives;
 - (v) apiculture;
 - (vi) low-intensity harvesting of selected trees for firewood up to current levels, posts and poles, woodchop blocks, stakes, hobby wood or specialty applications and the low intensity harvesting of other vegetative material (such as seeds for revegetation and foliage for decorative products), where such harvesting is demonstrably sustainable; and
 - (vii) exploration and extraction of earth resources and minerals where consistent with recreation and conservation management objectives, and subject to the approval of the Minister for the Environment;
- (c) be regulated to exclude the following activities:
 - (i) timber harvesting for sawlog and pulpwood production, other than for harvesting in accordance with approved Wood Utilisation Plans to meet existing timber licence obligations up to 2008;
- (d) be managed in a manner that gives particular emphasis to:
 - (i) strategies to reduce the risk of soil erosion from vehicular use, especially on steep forest vehicular tracks;
 - (ii) providing for the safety of riders and drivers, especially on narrow, undulating vehicular tracks—including the development of a track classification system;
 - (iii) providing for the quality and yield of the domestic water supply catchments;
 - (iv) fire protection in water supply catchments and in the vicinity of rural settlements;
 - (v) pest plant and animal control, especially on public land margins ;
 - (vi) revegetation of previously harvested areas where the restoration of a natural mix of overstorey and understorey species has been unsuccessful;
 - (vii) maintaining opportunities for environmental education and research in mountain ash forest and foothill forest at, respectively, Barramunga and Bamba; and
 - (viii) protecting the special features listed in the schedule below;
- (e) be permanently protected as a forest park under the *Forests Act 1958* with explicit legislative recognition given to the three management objectives for forest parks listed in Recommendation BI (a) above.

- Notes:
- 1. VEAC is aware that there is an existing provision for forest parks under the *Forests Act 1958*. VEAC understands that all areas so designated are subject to a Government approved Land Conservation Council recommendation for allocation to another land use category. VEAC is recommending that the Act be amended to create a new category of forest park. The new forest park should be subject to specific regulations made under the *Forests Act* that will reflect the uses and activities outlined in above chapter.
 - 2. Council is aware that the requirement for the consent of the Minister for the Environment for the exploration and extraction of minerals may require amendment to the *Mineral Resources Development Act 1990*.
 - 3. The buffer areas to the northern catchment weirs are defined and subject to special area plans (previously known as land use determinations or LUDs) made under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. These arrangements should continue.

4. The above recommendations do not list all permitted uses—they only highlight activities requiring particular management attention. A much wider range of activities from nature study and bushwalking to dog exercising and fishing are considered appropriate in the forest park. Areas licensed or leased to facilitate the provision of recreational facilities, including the Colac Field and Game Association's shooting ground, the Colac-Otway Archers' Field Range, the Patonga Scout Camp and the Colac Moto-Cross Track at Barongarook and the Geelong Archers' field range at Wensleydale, may continue.
5. Where appropriate, the land manager may enter into formal agreements with private operators to build and/or operate facilities in accordance with approved management plans. Similar arrangements may apply for relevant activity programs.
6. Existing practical access should continue to be provided to existing private land holdings surrounded by the forest park.
7. Council supports the continuation of land-acquisition programs by opportunistic purchase to consolidate public land boundaries. Boundary rationalisation, perhaps by way of land exchange, could also be explored. Implementation of the forest park is intended to allow flexibility for minor boundary adjustments.

Schedule Of Special Features To Be Protected

These have been grouped by geographic regions to assist managers and others to locate the sites.

Ferguson Hill

Recreation Sites and Landscape

- horseriding trails.

Nature Conservation

- Stands of senescent forest.

Western Otways

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest.
- Threatened fauna including the spot-tailed quoll and the Otway black snail.

Historical Sites

- Features and relics of two early 20th century sawmills: Northern Timber Co sawmill (and associated snig tracks, winch sites and tramline) and the Robins and Kincaid sawmills and tramways.

Ford River

Recreation Sites and Landscape

- Network of four wheel drive tracks.

Nature Conservation

- Threatened fauna, including the powerful owl, masked owl, grey goshawk, and Otway black snail.
- Threatened plants, including slender tree fern, skirted tree fern, and slender fork-fern.

Head of Aire

Recreation Sites and Landscape

- Beauchamp Falls and associated picnic area, camping ground, walking tracks and forest environs.
- Natural values of Eberwalddt Falls

Tomahawk Creek–Wonga Forest

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest.
- Threatened fauna including the swamp skink.
- Habitat of ground-dwelling mammals such as the long-nosed bandicoot.

Kawarren–Barongarook Block

Recreation Sites and Landscape

- Birnum Station Ground picnic area and associated rail trail walking and cycling path.
- Loves Creek picnic ground and associated forest environs.

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest.
- Threatened fauna including the long-nosed potoroo and southern toadlet.
- Habitat for ground-dwelling mammals such as the swamp antechinus.

Historical Sites

- Site of the Birnum Station and associated track formation of the former narrow gauge Colac to Beach Forest railway line.

Upper Gellibrand Forests

Recreation Sites and Landscape

- Stevensons Falls picnic area, camping ground and walking tracks, together with associated historic tree plantings and waterfall.
- Dandos picnic and camping ground and associated forest environs.
- Network of four wheel drive tracks.

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest.
- Threatened fauna including the white-footed dunnart, long-nosed potoroo, grey goshawk, powerful owl, Otway black snail.
- The habitat of the spot-tailed quoll, especially in the vicinity of recent records near the Charlies Creek forest.
- Geomorphological features of Stevensons falls.

Historical Sites

- Historic sawmill sites and associated log lines, tramways and water races including Hitt No 4, Seebeck/Henry, Henry, Kincaid and Devitt sawmills and the historic (1920s) tramway known as McDonald's tramway.

Yaugher Forest

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest.
- Habitat for ground dwelling mammals such as the long-nosed potoroo and southern brown bandicoot.

Barwon Downs

Recreation Sites and Landscape

- Network of four wheel drive tracks.

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest, especially in Dewings Creek catchment.
- Threatened fauna including the grey goshawk.
- Habitat for ground dwelling mammals such as the long-nosed potoroo, broad-toothed rat and southern brown bandicoot as well as the yellow-bellied glider.

Historical Sites

- Historic sawmill sites and associated landings, log lines, snig tracks, cuttings, dams and tramways including Haydens No 2 and No 3, Mackie No 4, No 5 and No 6, Hayden No 4 and No 5 and Royle sawmills.

Boonah–Wormbete Forest

Nature Conservation

- Stands of old growth and senescent forest.
- Threatened fauna including the grey goshawk.
- Threatened flora including the Anglesea grevillea.
- Habitat for ground-dwelling mammals such as the swamp antechinus and southern brown bandicoot.
- The large untracked area of the Anglesea River headwaters block.

Forest Park-wide Features

- Archaeological sites and other sites and places of Aboriginal cultural significance.

CHAPTER 5 OTHER PUBLIC LAND

Other public land in the Otways includes small reserves protecting natural features and areas providing for community uses or services and utilities.

In addition to the main large blocks of public land in the Otways, there are many smaller, more isolated, blocks that contribute to the protection of natural landscapes and biodiversity and provide a base for services and utilities required by the community. VEAC's investigation has focused on larger blocks of public land and it has made a deliberate effort to reduce the number of land-use categories. In responding to the Terms of Reference, however, VEAC has taken a comprehensive approach and assessed the values of all areas—both large and small—prior to the consideration of new parks and reserves. Council has recommended that a number of the smaller existing parks and reserves be included within the larger national park or forest park. Other small, more isolated reserves have been allocated to distinct land-use categories in order to clearly identify their roles and uses.

VEAC's recommendations for such areas of public land are based on the broad land-use categories which form the basis of existing legislation and management arrangements. Most of the land-use categories have been used in the past for public land in the Otways. Most recently, marine national parks have been proclaimed at the western and eastern extremities of the Otways respectively, at Princetown (the Twelve Apostles Marine National Park) and at Anglesea (Point Addis Marine National Park). Such marine parks complement the protection of the Otways terrestrial environment now being recommended by Council in the Otway Ranges National Park. No changes to these marine national parks are proposed.

The national and forest parks have been discussed in the preceding chapters 3 and 4, under recommendations A and B respectively. All existing reserves lying outside the recommended national park and forest park are listed below, together with Council's recommendations for a number of new or amended nature conservation and other reserves.

These land-use categories appear as follows:

C: Nature conservation reserves

D: Natural feature reserves, including water frontage, streamside, scenic, wildlife and bushland reserves

E: Water production areas

F: Coastal reserves

G: Community use areas, including education areas, parklands and gardens, recreation reserves and buildings in public use

H: Other land-use categories

- Historic and cultural features reserves
- State forest
- Plantations
- Earth resources, including stone areas
- Services and utilities

A small portion of public land in the study area is listed as uncategorised public land (section I).

C NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVES

Nature conservation reserves are set aside to conserve rare or threatened species and significant plant associations or communities. The primary land-use objective is nature conservation, although education, scientific study and passive recreation are permitted subject to the maintenance of the conservation values of the particular reserve.

The majority of existing nature conservation reserves - previously designated flora reserves or flora & fauna reserves - are recommended for inclusion in the Otway Ranges National Park. Other existing nature conservation reserves lie within township areas or occur as distinct public land blocks remote from the Otway Ranges. The land-use classifications of these blocks have been reviewed on the basis of their values and proximity to other existing reserves. VEAC recommends creating two new nature conservation reserves, adding to two existing reserves and retaining one existing reserve.



CI JANCOURT NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

The Jancourt Nature Conservation Reserve encompasses the largest remnant of the once extensive Heytesbury Forest. This land lies on the western edge of the study area surrounded by open pastures, much of which was cleared in the 1950s and 60s. The reserve significantly improves the protection of a number of vegetation types that are currently poorly represented within the permanent reserve system.

Nature Conservation Features

The recommended reserve is high in species richness and a number of threatened flora and fauna have been recorded within its boundaries, including the powerful owl and the forest bitter-creep, both of which are vulnerable in Victoria. The reserve has the only record of forest bitter-creep within the study area and is one of only four sites in Victoria where the plant has been recorded. Near-threatened species recorded include the tufted club-sedge and the parsley xanthosia, both of which are rare in Victoria.

The recommended reserve makes a significant contribution to the representation of a number of ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) classed as vulnerable within the Warrnambool Plain bioregion: herb-rich foothill forest (1476 ha), lowland forest (455 ha), and damp heath scrub (39 ha). The reserve encompasses the largest consolidated block of herb-rich foothill forest remaining in the Warrnambool Plain Bioregion as well as in the study area.

Sedgy riparian woodland is considered endangered within the bioregion and is well represented in the reserve. This EVC extends across 157 ha of which two blocks, with a combined area of about 50 ha, are mapped as old-growth forest.



Recreation

The well-maintained network of vehicular tracks in the western portion of this reserve, allied to the open forests, undulating terrain and bisecting watercourses, all contribute to the appeal of this area for a variety of recreational activities. Horseriding, carriage driving, picnicking, and vehicle-based sightseeing are all undertaken. While such active recreation is not ordinarily compatible with the objectives of a nature conservation reserve, given the size of this particular reserve and the established nature of its track network, an exception is appropriate in this instance. VEAC has recommended that provision be made for such uses to continue in the western portion of the reserve.

Management Issues

Parts of the reserve (mostly along the network of vehicular tracks) were logged in the 1990s and 2000s for firewood and have been subject to an active program of silvicultural improvement. Weed control within the understorey will continue to be required. While the existing track network provides good access for visitors, there is scope to rationalise the number of tracks and, where possible, divert through traffic to other routes.

The western portion of the recommended reserve is used as a source of firewood for residents of nearby towns. This use is not compatible with the on-going protection of the area's nature conservation values, and alternative energy and firewood sources exist. VEAC is recommending that the collection of firewood be phased out over 5 years.

Boundaries

The recommended new reserve includes the existing Carpenteit Flora and Fauna Reserve and the Jancourt State Forest. The existing Carpenteit Reference Area remains as an overlay to the reserve.

C2 CORADJIL NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

The Coradjil Nature Conservation Reserve lies beyond the Otway Ranges on the western edge of the study area and is surrounded by farmland. It complements the protection offered by the Jancourt Nature Conservation Reserve for the remnant vegetation of the Warrnambool Plain Bioregion. In particular, the reserve improves the protection of a number of vegetation types that are currently poorly represented within the permanent reserve system.

Nature Conservation Features

The recommended reserve contributes to the representation of a number of ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) that are vulnerable within the Warrnambool Plain bioregion: herb-rich foothill forest, lowland forest and, notably, riparian forest. Much of the vegetation is little-disturbed and areas of old-growth and senescent forest have been identified.

The reserve provides habitat for the threatened white-footed dunnart and the rare tufted club-sedge has been recorded on the edge of the reserve along Kennedys Creek.

Management Issues

The reserve is little disturbed other than for two long-disused gravel pits and associated access tracks, which will require rehabilitation.

Boundaries

The recommended reserve is largely coincident with the existing Tomahawk Creek Bushland Reserve. The existing Tomahawk Creek Reference Area remains as an overlay to the reserve.



C3 BUNGADOR STONY RISES NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

There is virtually no public land remaining within the stony rises region of the western district. It is recommended that two small blocks of this land type containing remnant vegetation be added to the existing Stony Rises Flora and Fauna Reserve.

Nature Conservation Features

The enlarged reserve consists of three separate blocks representative of the distinctive stony rises landform and associated vegetation community. The vegetation of the reserve consists of stony rises woodland—an open grassy woodland with an overstorey dominated by manna gum and swamp gum. This ecological vegetation class is considered vulnerable in Victoria. The recommended reserve is one of only two public land reserves where the EVC is found in the study area.

The fauna of the stony rises has been greatly depleted and once common species such as the eastern quoll and common wombat no longer occur there. The open woodlands are, however, important for bird species otherwise only found in northern Victoria and the rocky terrain provides habitat for ground dwelling fauna, especially reptiles.

Management Issues

A number of pest plant species have been recorded in the understorey of these blocks, with the understorey vegetation of the smallest block severely modified. Such pest species require control and the native ground cover restored. Fencing and signage will assist in raising awareness of the status of the land and reduce pressure from wandering stock.

Boundaries

The recommended reserve includes the existing Stony Rises (Bungador) Flora and Fauna Reserve (also known as the Stony Rises Wildlife Reserve), and two small unreserved blocks of Crown land.

C4 MARENGO NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

The recommended Marengo Nature Conservation Reserve will extend and consolidate protection of the remnant coastal heathlands at Marengo.

Nature Conservation Features

Three EVCs are found in this small reserve: wet sands thicket, damp heath scrub and swamp scrub. These vegetation types have limited distribution within the study area and have been greatly modified elsewhere in Victoria. At Marengo, the three vegetation types merge into each other and form an impenetrable block of highly diverse flora.

Management Issues

Parts of the reserve have been disturbed in the past by drainage works and a mini bike track, and may require rehabilitation, with pest plants on the reserve margins needing control. Monitoring will be required to determine whether there is any leaching of contaminants from the adjoining former Marengo rubbish tip.

Boundaries

The recommended reserve includes the existing Marengo Flora Reserve, together with adjoining blocks of currently unreserved Crown land, the three intersecting unused road reserves, and the nearby Marengo Bushland Reserve.

C5 EDNA BOWMAN NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

This small existing reserve protects a high value block of remnant vegetation at Anglesea.

Nature Conservation Features

The remnant vegetation understorey of this small block is significant with at least one threatened species recorded.

Management Issues

As the reserve is on the edge of the Anglesea township, the reserve and its biota are subject to a variety of pressures including weed invasion, roaming pets and litter. The maintenance of its values will rely on continued active management, and strategies such as fencing may assist.

Boundaries

The existing boundaries of the reserve are recommended to remain without change.

NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These areas are used to:

- (a) conserve and protect species, communities or habitats of indigenous animals and plants;
- (b) provide for educational and scientific study if consistent with (a) above, and in ways that minimally affect the area; and
- (c) provide for passive recreation such as nature study and picnicking by small numbers of people, where consistent with (a) above or as otherwise provided;

and:

- (d) grazing, harvesting of forest products, hunting and the use of firearms is not permitted;
- (e) apiculture is not be permitted except on traditionally licensed sites subject to conditions; and
- (f) low impact exploration and mining for minerals may be permitted subject to consent of the Minister for the Environment.

Note: The above management objectives and summary land-use recommendations are those that generally apply for the land-use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances..

RECOMMENDATIONS

C1-C5 NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVES

That the following existing, enlarged or new nature conservation reserves as indicated on Map A and described above and listed below be used as nature conservation reserves:

- C1 Jancourt Nature Conservation Reserve (3385 ha)—new reserve
- C2 Coradjil Nature Conservation Reserve (1612 ha)—new reserve
- C3 Bungador Stony Rises Nature Conservation Reserve (16.2 ha)—existing reserve with additions
- C4 Marengo Nature Conservation Reserve (26.7 ha)—existing reserve with additions
- C5 Edna Bowman Nature Conservation Reserve (0.8 ha)—existing reserve

- Notes:
- 1. The Jancourt Nature Conservation Reserve includes the existing Carpendeit Flora and Fauna Reserve.
 - 2. The following existing reserves have been included in the new Otway Ranges National Park:
 - Eumeralla Flora Reserve (286 ha)
 - Anglesea (Forest Road) Flora Reserve (569 ha)
 - Mount Ingoldsby Flora Reserve (48 ha)
 - Mt McKenzie/ Crinoline Creek Flora & Fauna Reserve (2159 ha)
 - Olangolah Flora & Fauna Reserve (1694 ha)
 - Prinetown Nature Conservation Reserve (68.5 ha)
 - Redwater Creek Flora & Fauna Reserve (370 ha)
 - Smythes Creek Flora Reserve (78 ha)
 - West Barham Big Trees Flora Reserve (220 ha)
 - Yaugher Flora & Fauna Reserve (121.5 ha)
 - 3. The Barongarook West Flora and Fauna Reserve (0.7 ha) is recommended to be a natural features reserve, as this category better reflects the values of the land—see Recommendation D5.
 - 4. The Yan Yan Gurt Flora & Fauna Reserve (16 ha), which for many years has been managed as part of the adjoining school camp, is recommended for addition to the adjoining Bambra Education Area—see Recommendation G1.

C6 SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR JANCOURT NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

That, in the western portion of the recommended Jancourt Nature Conservation Reserve, a range of recreational use, including horseriding, be provided for, and firewood collection be permitted subject to phase out of collection within 5 years of the acceptance of this recommendation.

D NATURAL FEATURES RESERVES

Natural features reserve is a general public land-use grouping that includes land with natural features (such as a river, stream, lake, scenic area, bushland, geological or geomorphological feature) worthy of protection. These reserves are protected (especially in land types that have been largely cleared) for conservation of habitat, maintenance of landscapes and prevention of land degradation, while providing opportunities for passive recreation and, in designated reserves, recreational duck-hunting.

VEAC has reviewed all existing natural feature reserves and other small blocks of public land with a view to assessing the appropriateness of including such land in the recommended Otway Ranges National Park, upgrading them to nature conservation reserve, or recommending another category.

Most natural features reserves previously set aside to protect waterfall areas have been included in the Otway Ranges National Park, with the Tomahawk Creek and Wiridjil Bushland Reserves (by far the largest bushland reserves in the study area) included, respectively in a nature conservation reserve and partly within national park and forest park.

Most existing reserves on water frontages have been retained as separate reserves. The remaining existing natural features reserves are mainly small relatively isolated blocks. VEAC is recommending that these remain as natural features reserves. A number of other smaller blocks of public land assessed as not appropriate for addition to national park or as stand-alone nature conservation reserves, were nonetheless considered to contain features that should be recognised and they have been proposed for inclusion in new natural features reserves.

The Aire River Wildlife Reserve is the only natural features reserve in the study area where recreational duck-hunting is currently permitted.

Water Frontage Reserves

In 1881, Crown land consisting of the bed and banks of a defined list of watercourses, together with adjoining lands (generally of a width of 20 metres on both sides of the watercourse) that had not previously been alienated, were permanently reserved for public purposes. They were established for the benefit of the public and to prevent exclusive occupation. For many years water frontage licences have been issued to adjoining land-owners over parts of these reserves—mostly to enable the watering of stock and to enable the landholder to avoid the costs of fencing. Such licences provide for the protection of timber; ensure access for recreation and require licensees to control pest plants and animals.

In those parts of the study area alienated prior to 1881 there are few water frontage reserves. However, under provisions of the *Water Act 1905*, the beds and banks of all

watercourses (that formed the boundaries of freehold allotments) were deemed to be Crown land.

The natural features of the water frontage reserves are of special value, although their condition varies widely. They may be the only area of public land in agricultural regions, with remnant vegetation of landscape, habitat, and erosion-prevention value. Those in at least reasonable condition contribute to the maintenance of water quality and in-stream habitat. Water frontage reserves offer opportunities for recreational activities, such as angling, picnicking, swimming, walking, canoeing and (in unlicensed areas) camping. Many water frontage reserves in the study area have, however, been severely degraded—with greatly modified understoreys, poorly controlled weeds, reduced tree cover, and extensive soil pugging and erosion evident. Substantial parts of the public water frontage reserves have been (illegally) cleared—some of which have been sown to improved pasture and even cropped. They have, in effect, been incorporated into the adjoining landholding. Indeed a number of these public reserves are signed as 'private property'. Public access to such water frontages should be restored, although vehicular recreational use and utilisation of forest products are not appropriate in these narrow reserves.

Such management issues are not restricted to the Otways. Catchment Management Authorities across the State are being given increased responsibility for the management of water frontages. Their water frontage management programs are undertaken with local Landcare groups and DSE and aim to enhance biodiversity and control erosion. One of the principal causes of river degradation is uncontrolled stock access to rivers. Consequently the restriction of stock access and the restoration of indigenous riparian vegetation (as opposed to pest species such as willows) are key management strategies. In recent years, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority has led major programs to implement such strategies, notably along the Gellibrand River near Gellibrand.

Council believes that many water frontage reserves will be best managed as distinct reserves in accordance with catchment-wide policies and priorities, rather than as part of the recommended forest park. It also believes that the water frontage reserves should be clearly defined, with a substantially higher level of resources applied to their management—by both licensees and the responsible agencies. Where licensed, licence conditions must be enforced.



NATURAL FEATURES RESERVE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These areas, according to the specific characteristics of the individual reserve, are used to:

- (a) protect natural features and values;
- (b) provide opportunities for:
 - (i) education and passive recreation such as picnicking, walking and, where relevant, fishing;
 - (ii) hunting on wetlands, where specified and subject to other relevant limitations; and
 - (iii) more intensive recreation such as camping where specified;
- (c) protect areas with remnant vegetation or habitat value and conserve indigenous flora and fauna;
- (d) maintain scenic features and the character and quality of the local landscapes; and
- (e) preserve features of geological or geomorphological interest;

and:

- (f) commercial timber harvesting is not permitted;
- (g) exploration of minerals and mining may be permitted, subject to consent of the Minister of Environment;
- (h) prospecting and apiculture generally is permitted; and
- (i) grazing generally is not permitted (unless required for management purposes) other than on water frontage reserves where currently licensed.

Note: The above management objectives and summary land-use recommendations are those that generally apply for the land-use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

DI-D26 NATURAL FEATURES RESERVES

That the following existing, enlarged or new natural features reserves as indicated on Map A and listed below be used as natural features reserves:

- D1 Latrobe Bushland Reserve (299 ha)—existing reserve
- D2 Coradji Bushland Reserve (166.2 ha)—existing reserve with addition
- D3 Carpendeit Bushland Reserve (11.2 ha)—new reserve
- D4 Irrewillipe Bushland Reserve (26.1 ha)—new reserve
Note: Part of this reserve has been cleared and requires revegetation.
- D5 Barongarook West Bushland Reserve (0.7 ha)—new reserve
Note: This reserve was previously classified as a flora and fauna reserve.
- D6 Six Mile Dam Lake Reserve (5.4 ha)—existing reserve
- D7 Gellibrand Bushland Reserve (114.9 ha) - existing reserve with addition
- D8 Yaugher Bushland Reserve (5.6 ha) - existing reserve with additions
- D9 Johanna Falls Scenic Reserve (14.6 ha) - existing reserve
- D10 Aire River Wildlife Reserve (279.2 ha)—existing reserve with additions
Note: Fencing will be required to exclude grazing from the wetland areas and connecting watercourses.
- D11 Barham Paradise Scenic Reserve (118 ha)—part existing reserve and addition
- D12 Wild Dog Bushland Reserve (26 ha)—new reserve
- D13 Wild Dog Creek Streamside Reserve (22.5 ha)—existing reserve
Note: There has been encroachment over this reserve; its boundaries need defining and restoration works undertaken.
- D14 Wongarra Bushland Reserve (1.3 ha)—existing reserve
- D15 Barwon Downs Bushland Reserve (23.8 ha)—existing reserve with additions
Note: Part of the addition includes the site of the former Barwon Downs tip; this requires revegetation.

D16 Yeo Streamside Reserve (5.8 ha)—existing reserve

Note: As a readily accessible and only block of public land on the Barwon River between Birregurra and the Otway Ranges, this reserve may be a suitable site to commemorate the final ill-fated journey of the explorer Gellibrand.

D17 Murroon Bushland Reserve (2.1 ha)—existing reserve

D18 Pennyroyal Creek Bushland Reserve (11.1 ha)—existing reserve

D19 Lily Pond Bushland Reserve (2.6 ha)—new reserve

D20 Parkers Road (Bambra) Bushland Reserve (2 ha)—existing reserve

D21 Retreat Creek Streamside Reserve (8 ha)—new reserve

D22 Bambra Bushland Reserve (37.1 ha)—existing reserve with additions

D23 Wensleydale Bushland Reserve (11.2 ha)—existing reserve

D24 Gherang Gherang Bushland Reserve (108.7 ha)—existing reserve

D25 Aireys Inlet Bushland Reserve (2.4 ha)—existing reserve

Note: As this is an existing reserve with high quality remnant vegetation on a hillside, and of small size, VEAC does not believe that this is an appropriate location for a sports ground.

D26 Anglesea Bushland Reserve (10.5 ha)—new reserve

Note: This reserve consists of two currently unreserved blocks of land; the western block is known locally as the Elizabeth Street Flora Reserve, the eastern block has no current name.

D27 NATURAL FEATURES RESERVES - WATER FRONTAGES AND STREAM BEDS AND BANKS

That:

- (a) The following water frontages as indicated on Map A and listed below, and stream beds and banks other than where included in another reserve or park, be used as natural features reserves:

Lake Corangamite Catchment

- Pirron Yallock Creek Water Frontage Reserve

Gellibrand River Catchment

- Gellibrand River Water Frontage Reserve
- Kennedy Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Chapple Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Carlisle River Water Frontage Reserve
- Love Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Lardner Creek Water Frontage Reserve

Johanna Catchment

- Johanna River Water Frontage Reserve

Aire River Catchment

- Ford River Water Frontage Reserve

Apollo Bay Catchments

- Barham River Water Frontage Reserve
- Milford Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Wild Dog Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Skenes Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Sugarloaf Creek Water Frontage Reserve

Barwon River Catchment

- Barwon River (West Branch) Water Frontage Reserve

Note: Includes lower reaches of Roadknight Creek

- Barwon River (East Branch) Water Frontage Reserve
- Matthews Creek Water Frontage Reserve

- Pennyroyal Creek Water Frontage Reserve
- Wormbete Creek (West Branch) Water Frontage Reserve

Lorne to Anglesea Catchments

- Painkalac Creek Water Frontage Reserve

Note: Includes a tributary. Complementary management with the adjoining municipal council freehold land is desirable.

- (b) the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, in cooperation with adjoining landowners, implement programs, including fencing, in accordance with priorities set down in the regional catchment strategy to restore frontages, protect remnant vegetation and encourage regeneration—in particular where there is uncontrolled stock access to streams and where stream-bank or frontage vegetation is degraded, frontage vegetation not regenerating, stream banks eroding or salt-affected, or to protect natural, cultural, recreational and scenic values or water quality; and
- (c) where a water frontage or grazing licence has been issued, recreation use and access by the public for activities such as walking, nature observation or fishing be facilitated.

Notes:

1. VEAC notes that a water frontage licence is not necessary to gain access to water (as a licence under the *Water Act 1989* allows the taking of water for domestic and stock use) and that where a frontage is not licensed fencing is not necessarily required unless the adjoining land is grazed by stock.
2. Most of these water frontage reserves require revegetation works and a number require extensive restoration and revegetation works.
3. Stream beds and banks are as defined in section 385 of the *Land Act 1958*.



E WATER PRODUCTION AREAS

Water production areas encompass water storage areas, diversion weirs, pump intakes and associated buffer areas used primarily for the collection of water for water supply purposes.

The Otways are a vital source of water for Warrnambool, Colac, Geelong and a number of other towns and settlements in south-western Victoria. Consequentially it is important that the reservoirs, weirs and offtakes located on

Otway watercourses be clearly designated and managed primarily for water production. An operational area around each facility has been included within the designated water production areas.

Much of the catchment from which the water is harvested has been included within national or forest parks, with special provision made to ensure the continued supply of high quality water. Public lands used for the distribution of water, including off-stream reservoirs, storage tanks and pipelines have been classified as service and utility areas.

WATER PRODUCTION AREA MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Water storage areas, diversion works and associated facilities and protective buffer zones around diversion works and storages where defined in a special area plan or land-use determination; and any other public land considered necessary for water production are used for:

- (a) water supply purposes;

and:

- (b) other activities may be permitted by the water supply authority after consultation with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Environment Protection Authority, as appropriate; and
- (c) biodiversity and historic values as specified are protected.

Note: The above management objectives and summary land-use recommendations are those that generally apply for the land-use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

E1-E15 WATER PRODUCTION AREAS

That the following water production areas as indicated on Map A and listed below be, or continue to be, used for water supply purposes:

- E1 South Otway Offtake (and pumping stations)
- E2 Gellibrand River Offtake (and pumping stations)
- E3 Arkins Creek diversion weirs and buffer
- E4 Lardner Creek Offtake (and pumping station)
- E5 West Barham Weir
Note: VEAC is aware that Barwon Water proposes to relocate this weir to a downstream offtake, at which time the existing weir should be removed and a new water production area defined.
- E6 West Gellibrand Reservoir and buffer
- E7 Olangolah Reservoir and buffer
- E8 West Barwon Reservoir and buffer
- E9 East Barwon River Diversion Weir
- E10 Callahan Creek Diversion Weir and buffer
- E11 Barwon Downs Groundwater Bore
- E12 Matthews Creek Diversion Weir
- E13 Pennyroyal Creek Diversion Weir
- E14 Allen Reservoir and buffer
- E15 Painkalac Reservoir and buffer

F COASTAL RESERVES

Coastal reserve is a multi-use land-use category set aside primarily to provide informal recreation for large numbers of people, including fishing and boating, in a natural coastal environment, as well as protection of natural coastal landscapes, ecosystems and flora and fauna.



Coastal reserves are a focal point of recreational activity in the Otways, with ocean beaches and sheltered sandy bays of the foreshores at Apollo Bay, Kennett River, Loutit Bay (Lorne), Fairhaven and Anglesea especially popular. The waters beyond high water mark are best considered a transition zone between terrestrial and marine processes and are used for swimming, sailing and fishing. Jetties and harbours also extend beyond the low water mark. The Apollo Bay harbour and Lorne Jetty are managed as local ports, which are important for the local fishing industry as well as for visitors. The Apollo Bay harbour is especially important as a safe haven for recreational boats and inshore and offshore fishing fleets.

Coastal reserves are currently managed by various committees of management. In recent times the committees have been consolidated, with two main committees formed—one encompassing most of the coastal reserves in Colac Otway Shire and the other covering most coastal reserves in Surf Coast Shire. VEAC has recommended that some sections of the existing coastal reserve outside townships be included in the Otway Ranges National Park—to consolidate boundaries and encompass high value areas, with the remainder retained as coastal reserve.

COASTAL RESERVE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These areas are used to:

- (a) provide opportunities for informal recreation for large numbers of people, and also for recreation related to enjoying and understanding nature;
- (b) protect and conserve natural coastal landscapes, ecosystems and significant geomorphological, archaeological and historical features for public enjoyment and inspiration and for education and scientific study;
- (c) ensure the protection and conservation of important aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora; and
- (d) provide opportunities for fishing and facilities for boating, together with the necessary navigation aids;

Note: The above management objectives and summary land-use recommendations are those that generally apply for the land-use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

F1-F2 COASTAL RESERVES

That the following coastal reserves as indicated on Map A and listed below be, or continue to be, used as coastal reserves.

F1 Apollo Bay Coastal Reserve

Note: This reserve includes existing coastal reserves, foreshore reserves and unreserved lands between Marengo and Carisbrook Creek and at Kennett River and Wye River.

F2 Lorne-Anglesea Coastal Reserve

Note: This reserve includes the existing coastal reserves, foreshore reserves and unreserved land at Cumberland River, Lorne, between Eastern View and Aireys Inlet and at Anglesea.

G COMMUNITY USE AREAS

Community use areas are primarily used for education, recreation or other specific community purposes.

All public land is utilised either directly or indirectly for the benefit of the community. Designated community use areas are those where education, recreation or other specified community use is the primary land-use goal. They include land used for environmental education, recreation reserves such as sports grounds, local parks and formal gardens, and buildings such as schools, public halls, kindergartens, or libraries. Most of these reserves are currently managed by committees of management.

VEAC is aware of proposals to develop the former Beech Forest narrow gauge railway line and the former Birregurra-Forrest railway as rail trails for informal recreation, such as walking, cycling and horseriding, and to protect remnant features of the former railway, such as the track formation and embankments. Council supports such proposals and notes that rail trails may form desirable links between the larger blocks of public land. Sectors of these former railways still in public ownership have been designated as community use areas. Other sectors are included within larger blocks of Otway Forest Park, with a section purchased by Barwon Water for a future water pipeline now recommended as a service and utilities reserve but with specific reference made to retaining the opportunity for a rail trail—see Recommendation H2. Other sectors of these former railways have been sold.

Other community use areas that offer additional recreational opportunities include shooting ranges, speedways, moto-cross complexes and youth camps.

Should a building or site no longer be required for its primary designated use, it should be assessed for its cultural and natural heritage values and capability for other public uses before, in consultation with the community, being either added to an adjoining public land-use category, re-categorised, exchanged or disposed of.



COMMUNITY USE AREA MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These areas are used for:

- (a) education, recreation or other community purposes;

and:

- (b) appropriate facilities are provided;
- (c) where relevant, and where compatible with (a) above, features of cultural significance, natural surroundings, and the local character and quality of the landscape are maintained or restored; and
- (d) harvesting of forest products, hunting, and extraction of 'stone' is not permitted.

Note: The above management objectives and summary land-use recommendations are those that generally apply for the land-use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

G1-G7 COMMUNITY USE AREAS

That the following community use areas as listed below, and mostly indicated on Map A, be used as community use areas:

- G1 Bambra Education Area (22 ha)— additional area
- G2 Eumeralla Education Area (139.3 ha)—part of existing area
- G3 Recreation reserves—existing areas in use
- G4 Parklands and gardens—existing areas and additions

Note: Two new reserves have been recommended at Lorne. In the south lies Queens Park which is recommended for enlargement, and a separate North Lorne parkland. The following special features are to be protected in these reserves: the natural environs of Teddys Lookout and its 1920s picnic shelter/pavilion, the 'sanctuary' amphitheatre used as a church and later a scenic picnic spot from the 1850s to the 1900s, the network of walking tracks, habitat of the threatened Australian grayling, chestnut-rumped heathwren and long-nosed potoroo, and populations of the threatened wrinkled buttons and the near threatened netted daisy-bush, dwarf silver wattle, Madeira moss and wiry bossiaea. Management of these two reserves will also require careful attention to their important fire protection role.

- G5 Buildings in public use—existing areas in use
- G6 Rail trails—existing areas and additions
Note: Where remnant native vegetation occurs, this should be protected, as should remnant structures of the railway line operation.
- G7 Shooting ranges, golf courses, speedways, moto-cross complexes, and youth camps—existing areas

Notes:

1. Council has proposed that the existing Barramunga Creek Education Area and the pre-existing Bambra Education Area be part of the Otway Forest Park and that part of the existing Eumeralla Education Area be included in the Otway Ranges National Park. The recategorised areas are currently not in active use and retain little-disturbed vegetation.
2. Council considers that the values of the existing Marengo Tramway Historic Area are more commensurate with designation as a parkland and garden. Remnants of the former tramway embankment should be maintained.
3. Some of these areas were formerly used for refuse disposal. Potential environmental hazards need to be assessed and, where necessary, mitigated.



H OTHER LAND-USE CATEGORIES

Historic and Cultural Feature Reserves

Most of the existing historic and cultural features reserves have been included in the Otway Ranges National Park, which will provide a similar to current level of protection for their historical values. Part of one existing reserve has been included in the Otway Forest Park and another, the Marengo Tramway Reserve, reclassified as a community use reserve (parklands and garden). In each case their historical values have been listed as a value to be protected. VEAC is not recommending any stand-alone historic and cultural features reserves.

State Forest

All existing state forest areas are included in the Otway Ranges National Park, Otway Forest Park or other land-use categories.

Plantations

There are a number of public land plantations throughout the Otways. The majority of these areas have been vested in the Victorian Plantations Corporation which in turn has leased the plantations. These leased plantations, together with other public land plantations held under various licences, were excluded, under the terms of reference, from the investigation study area.

Earth Resources and Stone Areas

Provision has been made for the continued extraction of earth resources within the forest park (see Recommendation B1), pre-existing operations within the Otway Ranges National Park (see Recommendation A1) and within a stand-alone existing stone reserve (see below).

Services and Utilities

VEAC recommendations provide for the continued use of existing service and utility facilities within the Otway Forest Park, the Otway Ranges National Park, existing stand-alone sites in township areas and on isolated blocks. Examples of service and utility areas include water and sewerage services, waste disposal facilities, train lines, cemeteries and government offices.

VEAC's consideration of the Great Ocean Road and other arterial and municipal roads is described in Chapter 2, which also includes a number of recommendations about these particular roads.

Should a facility no longer be required for its primary designated use, the land and facility should be assessed for its cultural and natural heritage values and capability for other public uses before, in consultation with the community, being either added to an adjoining public land-use category, re-categorised, exchanged or disposed of.

STONE AREA MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These areas are used for:

- (a) the extraction of stone resources;
- and:
- (b) extraction sites are preferably located on already cleared land; and
 - (c) where no longer required for extraction, each site is considered uncategorised land and assessed for public land values and uses, and where appropriate assigned to another public land use category or made surplus.

SERVICES AND UTILITIES AREA MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

These reserves and easements are used for:

- (a) public services and utilities such as transport, electricity and gas, communications, cemeteries, water and sewerage;
- and:
- (b) new services or utility sites and easements or lines not be sited in or across reference or wilderness areas, and wherever possible not be sited in or across national, state, regional or marine parks, marine reserves or nature conservation reserves;
 - (c) railway lines and other service and utility sites be managed to protect remnant vegetation and habitat, as far as practicable; and
 - (d) should a public land area or building and site used for service or utility purposes no longer be required for its primary designated use, it be assessed for its natural, recreational and cultural heritage values, and capability for other public uses, and where appropriate assigned to another public land use category or made surplus.

Note: The above management objectives and summary land-use recommendations are those that generally apply for these land-use categories. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

H1 STONE AREAS

That the following area as indicated on Map A and listed below be used as a stone reserve:

H1 Gherang Gherang Stone Area (110.2 ha)—existing reserve

- Notes:
1. The existing Rochford Road Stone Reserve (3.4 ha) in the Parish of Gherang Gherang has not been developed and is currently subject to a grazing licence. VEAC has assigned it as uncategorised public land. The existing Gellibrand Stone Reserve (2.1 ha) has been worked out and has been included with the adjoining community use area.
 2. Gherang Gherang is used for the extraction of sand and gravel.

H2 SERVICE AND UTILITY AREAS

H2 That existing service and utility sites as indicated on Map A be used as service and utility areas.

- Note:
- The service and utility area extending between Forrest and Deans Marsh was acquired by Barwon Water to facilitate the construction of a water main. The land was formerly part of the Birregurra-Forrest railway line and is a vital section of a proposed rail trail. The plans for the water main should provide for the operation of this rail trail. See also Recommendation G6.

I UNCATEGORISED PUBLIC LAND

Uncategorised public land, includes public land, often in small rural parcels or in townships, for which no other land-use category is recommended.

Where no specific recommendation for a public land block has been made, existing legal use and tenure should continue, and those areas not currently used for any particular purpose should be used in a way that will not reduce future options.

Some such areas have not been assigned to a long-term land-use category as they may have potential for a number

of alternative land uses or may be suitable for land exchange. A substantial area of public land on Dewings Creek owned by Barwon Water may be required in the long term for water storage. Accordingly, this area is recommended as uncategorised public land until such time as a decision is made regarding the use of this land for water production.

Should any such land no longer be required for its existing use or the designated possible use, it should be assessed for its cultural and natural heritage values and capability for other public uses before, in consultation with the community, being added to an adjoining public land-use category, re-categorised, exchanged or disposed of.

RECOMMENDATIONS

II-5 UNCATEGORISED PUBLIC LAND

That public land as generally indicated on Map A and listed below:

- (a) be uncategorised public land and continue to be used in accordance with existing legal use and tenure; or
 - (b) subject to assessment and consultation:
 - (i) be assigned to a specific public land-use category; or
 - (ii) subject to the protection of any identified cultural or natural heritage values, be exchanged or disposed of.
- 11 Aire River Valley lands—designated for possible land exchange to consolidate the boundaries of the adjoining national park and nearby natural feature reserve.
 - 12 Little Aire block—designated for possible development to facilitate the tourist and/or educational use of the adjoining national park.
 - 13 Dewings Creek—Barwon Water land designated as a possible water production area.
 - 14 West Lorne—designated to allow for a detailed planning process to consider possible land exchange to consolidate the boundaries of the national park and/or creation of bushland areas and/or for township development.
 - 15 Various other minor reserves, unreserved public lands or township land not otherwise recommended for specific uses elsewhere in this report.