



Minutes of Connecting Country Reference Group meeting July 10 2008

Present: Maurie Dynon, Jan Hall, Bernard Slattery, Deirdre Slattery, Virginia Adrian, Elvyne Hogan, Julie Hurley, Geoff Park, Tim Read, Beth Mellick, Christine Kilmartin, Chris Morris, Nicole Bullen, David Major, Marie Jones

Apologies: Peter Johnson, Chris Pollock, Patrick Kavanagh, Deb Worland

Agenda:

1 Biodiversity Blueprint

Geoff tabled and screened a draft document for discussion. Comments raised the following matters:

- the audience: who is the document for? [possible answer: it's for all who have contributed to it]
- is the language too 'official'? Would a synopsis be useful? Could it be made more 'user friendly'?
- the draft is proactive, as it should be.
- the draft is an adjunct to community action, not the other way around.

Written responses were invited.

The following suggested components of the vision, goals and objectives of the project were offered:

Vision

- A healthy landscape for nature and people in Mount Alexander Shire
- Connecting people and landscapes - creating a healthy, resilient natural environment
- People and biodiversity: focusing on restoring landscapes for resilience
- Connecting landscapes - creating a healthy, resilient, natural environment and community now and in the future
- A co-ordinated approach to a sustainable future focusing on biodiversity conservation of the natural environment
- A sustainable future for biodiversity
- Valued sustainable biodiversity
- Connecting community to connect country

Goals

- Educate and facilitate small group actions around planting of indigenous species
- The blueprint will be applicable across a broad spectrum of rural and urban properties
- Ensure that core remnant vegetation patches are adequately buffered
- enhance and protect (target %age) of remnant vegetation

- Restore populations of native fish
- Proceed with iconic restoration e.g. Mount Alexander or Sutton Grange redgum woodlands
- Zero new weed introductions
- The biodiversity blueprint will inform the Mount Alexander Shire strategic planning process and documents
- Increased community appreciation of biodiversity
- Increased community knowledge of flora and fauna
- Better landholder participation rates in conservation works
- Better understanding of the role of fire in bushland
- Better co-operation between public and private landholders
- Better appreciation of the importance of biodiversity in supporting agriculture
- Enhance the quality and connectivity of high value native vegetation
- To achieve a healthy, self sustaining, living landscape with a committed and engaged community
- Educate to ensure all indigenous flora and fauna are valued for biodiversity
- Re-connect remnant woodland across public and private land
- Preserve urban green wedges
- Reverse the trend: govt agencies and authorities respond to community instead of the community being led by govt
- Provide for the continuation of ecological processes, e.g. soil cycling, across boundaries

Objectives

- Improved soil health on and adjacent to waterways
- Improve landholders awareness of conservation issues via education
- To achieve a healthy environmental water flow in our rivers

A new version of the draft will be posted on the website when responses come in. The vision will be consolidated into a single statement, as decisive and positive as possible. We'll have a workshop/check in meeting on August 14 from 1-3.

2 Connecting Country Project Officer Report

Julie tabled a report, which is attached to these minutes. Discussion included 'ground truthing' and date stamping of maps, monitoring of on ground facts...

3 A new questionnaire

The tabled version was discussed. It will be modified and posted on the website.

Property information sheets/maps session: August 14, 1.30 -3.30pm Chewton Town Hall

Next reference group meeting: September 18 - details to follow.