

NEWSLETTER

of the

BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalking Clubs
G.P.O. Box 2090, Sydney, 2001.

EDITORIAL

An issue that is a continuing topic of discussion among many walkers is the question of whether bushwalking should be promoted among non-walkers. Before continuing, I should point out that when I say bushwalking, I mean walking with a club. This excludes from discussion the prospect of the general public shouldering packs and tramping off into the wilderness with no idea of the appropriate equipment, skills or ethics. The topic is really whether or not clubs and Federation should actively campaign for ever larger membership.

There seem to be two distinct schools of thought: those who firmly believe that more and more walkers will lead to destruction of the peace and isolation of the bush, and those who are equally firmly convinced that more and more walkers are needed to give strength to the conservation movement and thus help to preserve the bush.

There are, of course, numerous minor variations among the adherents of each view. Some of those holding the first opinion object to more walkers on the grounds that they will only cause trouble by getting lost or injured, or that they will deposit a trail of litter as they pass. These objections should not be real problems if new walkers are given a proper club upbringing.

Proponents of the second view can point to additional benefits such as better health and greater consciousness of the environment among the community generally. Nevertheless these are sidelines to the main issue: will additional walkers tend to destroy or preserve the bush environment?

A recent survey in my own club showed that supporters of the two views numbered equally, which is a very inconclusive result. As the question is really one of some importance, perhaps some effort should be put into finding which of the two schools of thought is really correct.

It seems reasonable to suppose that mere opinion surveys are not going to give a reliable answer, even if they appear to be conclusive. The only sensible basis for any policy decision is research into facts, not

opinions. But how can the impact, direct and indirect, of walkers on the environment be assessed? "With great difficulty" is one answer. Nevertheless, I repeat: some effort should be made, as this seems to be an issue fundamental to the preservation of both well-known and not-so-well-known walking areas.

My own opinion, for what an opinion is worth, is that walking should be promoted, and that the benefits will outweigh the disadvantages for a long time to come. I feel that there is plenty of room in the bush of N.S.W. for many more walkers. I do not think that large numbers of new walkers who have had instilled in them the ideals of today's walkers will have a serious effect on the bushland environment. And finally, because environmental conservation is essentially a political game in which the ballot box is a strong weapon, I think that many additional walkers will do far more to preserve the bush than they will do to destroy it.

FROM THE MARCH MEETING

* In Newsletter No. 2 it was announced that the Tasmanian Government was to grant \$30,000 for the construction of an airstrip at Bond Bay on Port Davey in Tasmania's Southwest. It now appears that the airstrip is not to go ahead, for the time being anyway, for economic reasons. Those who appreciate the wilderness value of the Southwest may breathe a sigh of relief.

* Newsletter No. 3 reported the blocking by the landholder of the road to Tomah South, which provides access to Claustral Canyon. No action was to be taken as the walk beyond the gate was short and easy. However it is now reported that "Trespassers Prosecuted" signs have appeared. As it is believed that the road is a public road, and that it is thus illegal to close it, action will now be begun to have it reopened.

* It seems likely that the closure date for comments on the Myall Lakes Plan will be postponed for a month, i.e. to the beginning of May. If it occurs, this postponement will be the result of pressure on the Minister for Lands and Forests by local residents and landholder, who are understandably strongly opposed to the freeze on development of the area. In order that there should be an equally strong body of opinion in favour of the plan, it is imperative that as many people as possible voice their approval of it. Comments forms are available from the NSW Environment Centre, 263b Broadway, and the offices of the Planning and Environment Commission, 302 Castlereagh St.

The attitude of most conservationist bodies, including Federation, the National Parks Association and the Myall Lakes Committee, is that the Plan in general is a good thing, but it is a pity that it does not also include Yacaaba Headland, Smiths Lake, Seal Rocks Village, and the area north of Seal Rocks Road. It is also unfortunate that sand mining could be allowed within the National Park if both the Planning and Environment Commission and the Great Lakes Shire Council gave permission.

The involvement of the Planning and Environment Commission and the use of a regional plan in the development of a national park represents an important precedent. If the plan can be successfully upheld the precedent thus set could be a valuable aid to conservationists in the future. However the plan will not be upheld if there is a disproportionate number of adverse comments. Do your bit to maintain the balance.

* It now seems that Windy Creek Hut will not be rebuilt, due to the wilderness policy of the Kosciusko National Park. This follows the Kosciusko Huts Association's decision in favour of rebuilding and Federation's opposition. No clubs objected to Federation's attitude on this, despite K.H.A.'s doubts on whether our attitude was truly representative of NSW bushwalkers.

* Present at the meeting as Napsac delegate was Geoff Armstrong, who is a senior officer in the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The meeting took advantage of his attendance to ask a number of questions about NPWS policies. Two issues were of particular interest:

Firstly, the Service is in favour of issuing annual permits for camping in national parks. Such permits would not apply to a specific time and place, but would be valid for a whole national park for a whole year. This policy of issuing permits provides the NPWS with a means of both recording park usage and formally notifying park users of their obligations.

Secondly, Geoff was able to assure the meeting that unfortunate incidents such as the over-enthusiastic clearing of Burra Korain Flat would not occur in future. The Service is undergoing a reorganisation of its planning procedures so that a central coordinator will be able to give detailed attention to all future projects. This closer examination will sieve out the more objectionable proposals.

* Moves are being made to begin the organisation of the 24 Hour Walk. An informal steering committee has been appointed to decide on the exact style of event and to formulate a set of rules. This committee will be supplanted by an organising committee in a couple of months time. The event will probably be held in the autumn of each year, beginning in 1977. i.e. the first 24 Hour Walk will be 12 months hence.

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO AERIAL CONTROL BURNING

by Charles Morris.

This submission considers the implications of aerial control burning in relation to different land systems in the State of NSW. Several reasons have prompted the NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs to take this action. Bushwalkers are users of natural bushland for recreation purposes as a matter of course; such an intimate association with these areas leads to a desire to see them managed responsibly. However, bushwalkers see other values in natural land systems besides the recreation use. There is the important ecological value in retaining areas of natural ecosystems intact, not to be interfered with by man. As citizens of this State, we see this principle as important, and ask that those charged with land management at the State level pay due regard to it.

Before turning to aerial control burning, there are some preliminary considerations. It should be recognised that at the State level, there are many land management aims to be met. The cities, agriculture, forestry and the mining industry all use land in different ways. This difference of land management aims means that the policies to be adopted by the land managers will differ from area to area.

It should also be recognised that fire is an integral part of many Australian ecosystems. Generally, a policy of total fire exclusion is unrealistic for the management of these ecosystems.

In this context, the use of control burning as a management tool can be considered. The NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs recognises that in some areas of land management, control burning may have a place. Thus in areas in which fire control measures are important, controlled burning to reduce the fuel accumulation in leaf litter can be useful. And in this regard, aerial control burning can be a quick and efficient means of doing this. However, several points concerning control burning should be borne in mind.

Control burning, whether ground or aerial, is still manipulation of the environment. It is a manipulation the long term effects of which are not clear. Part of the problem here is ascertaining what was the "natural" fire regime of the various ecosystems concerned. The incidence and intensity of fires in the pre-human and pre-European eras respectively are not known with certainty. It is pertinent to note that in evolutionary terms, man has been present on the earth a very short time. The fire regime in the pre-human, pre-European eras of the country are likely to have differed e.g. in fire intensity, frequency, seasons in which the fire occurs, the area burnt. That the fire regime prevalent in an area will affect the composition and abundance of both flora and fauna has been demonstrated in this country and overseas.

Thus in terms of land management, the fire regime employed in an area should be recognised as having a directional effect on that area. If the aim of the land management of the area is conservation of natural ecosystems free from man's intervention, then a man-controlled fire regime would militate against this aim.

In areas where conservation is not the primary aim of land management, controlled burning, whether ground or aerial, should not be applied indiscriminately. In view of the fact that the policy of total fire exclusion proved to be ecologically unsound, the controlled burning policy should be treated with caution. Alternatives should be considered, such as leaving wide cleared strips around areas needing to be protected.

The NSW Federation of Bushwalking Clubs supports any moves to further research into the effects of a controlled burning regime on the various ecosystems in which this technique is used. The Federation also suggests that warning of areas to be burnt be given to officers of the Federation, as a means of disseminating this information throughout the bushwalking movement. This could help prevent loss of life, particularly in the case of aerial controlled burning.

"FUNDS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT" CAMPAIGN

The Australian Conservation Foundation is organising a campaign to ensure that the Federal Government honours its election promises on the environment. The campaign originates from concern at Government actions such as cutting \$60,000 from this year's allocation to citizens' conservation organisations, and drastically reducing staffing of the Australian Heritage Commission (to nil), the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (to 5) and the Great Barrier Reef Authority (to nil).

The first Campaign Bulletin recommends several ways in which groups and individuals can contribute to the campaign:

- * Contact your local Federal Liberal or National Country Party member.
- * Contact your local Liberal or National Country Party branches, with the aim of obtaining resolutions of support. (Suggested wording: "That the Federal Government should give high priority to its promise to increase substantially financial support to voluntary conservation organisations, and appoint the Australian Heritage Commission with adequate staff to implement its program.")
- * Letters and telegrams to the Prime Minister, Treasurer, and Minister for Environment, Housing and Community Development.
- * Petitions to both the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- * Letters to "The Editor" of local and metropolitan newspapers.
- * Financial contributions to the campaign.

For further information contact:

Milo Dunphy— 27 4714 (w) 579 5543 (h)
Leigh Holloway 660 0960 (w) 31 4986 (h)

Federation is doing what it can to assist the campaign, and recommends that clubs and club members do likewise.

From the Liberal/National Country Party Environment and Conservation Policy, November, 1975:

"To preserve areas and buildings of historical, social, cultural, ecological or environmental significance, the Liberal and National Country Parties will:

- * Support the Australian Heritage Commission
- * Provide funds to States to assist in the preservation of areas and buildings of historical, social, cultural, ecological, and environmental significance."

Mr. Andrew Peacock, November, 1975:

"A Liberal and National Country Party Government would seek to increase substantially financial support to approved non-government conservation organisations to compensate for inflationary pressures and to cover increased activity by these organisations."

INFORMATION REPORT

(Compiled from information supplied by Wilf Hilder, Information Officer, 622 3353).

Wilf Hilder was elected as NSW representative on the Kosciusko Huts Association Committee at their recent annual general meeting. He hopes to be able to present truly representative opinions to the K.H.A. committee, and will welcome any comments or enquiries on the Snowy Mountains generally and huts in particular. Wilf also hopes to be able to organise reliable snow reports for each weekend during the winter. The reports will come from contacts in Canberra. Details later.

It is rumoured that the Kosciusko National Park will dismantle the old Crackenback Valley — Charlotte's Pass chairlift, including all associated buildings. This means the Mt Stilwell Restaurant as well. The rumour has it that labour from the Department of Corrective Services will be used. It is to be hoped that the job will be done carefully, and with minimum damage to the area.

Gregory's have published a new tourist map of the Snowy Mountains, which in many ways is superior to the Lands Department tourist map. It includes detailed maps of Smiggins and Perisher, showing all lodges and lifts, and also a useful topographical map of the area around Lake Eucumbene.

The Blue Mountains National Park Advisory Committee has recently been active in several matters. Firstly, they have held discussions with the Park management on campsites in the upper Grose Valley, including Burra Korain Flat. In connection with this new, more accurate sketch map showing permitted campsites in the Grose is now available from the usual bushwalking shops in Sydney.

The Committee has also been inspecting pollution in the Grose River and its tributaries, and has tested several samples of water. Many creeks in the area are in fact quite badly polluted, and thus the Grose is too. The Grose itself receives effluent from the toilets at the Hartley Vale coal mine at the head of its valley; Hat Hill Creek is very badly polluted from a sewage works upstream; Victoria Falls Creek contains effluent from a large garbage tip; and Govetts Creek carries general runoff and septic effluent from North Katoomba. It seems that very little water in the area is safe to drink.

Finally the Committee has taken up the Clarence Colliery coal washery issue with Coalex Pty. Ltd., who are now preparing an environmental impact statement for a washery at an alternative site closer to Newnes Junction. Any effluent which escapes from a washery at this site will flow to the Cox River via the Lett River and Kangaroo Creek. Because the Cox River supplies much of Sydney's water, several authorities are likely to keep a vigilant eye on the washery's operations. This would not be the case if escaping effluent was to flow into Wollangambe Creek.

The Sydney Speleological Society's book on Bungonia Caves is apparently going out of print, and finances for a second edition seem to be very doubtful. This is perhaps the last chance to buy this book.

The price of maps published by the Department of National Development has risen to \$1.50. It is believed that the NSW Lands Department has withdrawn many of the maps it recently published for the Wollangambe-Colo area. They will reappear on the market in a few months when clifflines have been included. Meanwhile, only the stocks currently held by retailers will be available. The details of which maps have been withdrawn are uncertain — the six southmost maps are almost certainly affected, but the fate of the remaining two dozen is not so certain.

VICTORIAN FEDERATION NEWS

A couple of items of interest cropped up in a recent newsletter from the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs.

Firstly, the Management Committee of the Mt Hotham Alpine Resort have without explanation banned camping within their area unless prior permission is obtained. The area is very roughly rectangular, with Mt Jim in the NE corner, Mt Feathertop on the north edge, and Mt St Bernard in the SW corner. It includes Mt Feathertop, Mt Loch, the West Kiewa River and the Cobungra River. If you plan a walking or skiing trip which involves camping in the area, requests for permission must be sent to the Area Manager, Mt Hotham Alpine Resort, P.O. Box 28, Bright, Victoria, 3741, at least 14 days in advance.

Secondly, the Victorian newsletter reproduced an article from "Victoria's Resources", September, 1975, which discusses the ecological effects of recreation in wilderness-type areas. "Ecological effects" include, among other things, tramping by walkers. The article is much too long to even summarise meaningfully, but both it and the accompanying references would make interesting reading for bushwalker/conservationists.

One of the more interesting facts is worth quoting: Most soil erosion and compaction around campsites and tracks occurs within the first 1 to 2 years. However, without assistance it takes from 4 to 6 years for soil porosity to be restored (i.e. for the soil to return to a state in which it can support vegetation).

NEWSLETTER NEWS

Federation has decided that its Newsletter should be made available to walkers directly, and not only through clubs. Accordingly, for a subscription of \$3.00 p.a. (the cost of envelopes and postage) you can have your Newsletter mailed to you directly. It is thought that this service may be useful to club members who find it difficult to attend their club meetings, to people who no longer walk, perhaps due to age or family commitments, but who retain their interest, and to walkers who are not members of a club (the last group are strongly urged to join a club anyway). A subtle advantage of the subscription system is that those who subscribe will receive their Newsletter within a few days of publication, rather than up to four weeks later.

Cheques should be payable to the N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, and sent to the Publications Officer,

Peter Tuft,
3/27 Tramway St.,
Rosebery, NSW, 2018

Alternatively, a number of stamped, self-addressed envelopes (as many as you like) will be accepted instead of \$3.00.

The next Newsletter will be available at the council meeting on Tuesday, May 18. The last day on which contributions can be accepted will be Monday, May 10.

TWO COMPETITIONS

Reminders of two competitions:

Firstly, Federation's "Why I Go Walking" essay contest, details of which were announced in the February Newsletter (No. 3). Entries close on June 1st, which is approaching rapidly. Writing a short anecdote about why you go bushwalking should be an easy way to win \$20.00.

Secondly, Georges Camera Store has announced a "Great Outdoors Photographic Competition" (or something like that). Entries will be accepted until 29th May, at a maximum rate of 2 entries per section per week. The sections are:

- a) Outdoors Colour Slides
 - i) Human interest
 - ii) Landscape, animal, underwater, etc.
- b) "The Great Outdoors", black and white prints, sizes 8"x10" to 16"x20"
- c) "The Great Outdoors", colour prints, sizes 8"x10" to 16"x20"

Prizes will be awarded each week, as well as at the conclusion of the competition. Weekly prizes will include enlarging lenses, pocket cameras, films, processing chemicals, darkroom equipment, and major prizes include single lens reflex cameras, enlargers, projectors and lenses. In addition, Paddy Pallin Pty Ltd will award an open order of \$50 for each of the best bushwalking, rock or ice climbing and canoeing photographs entered.

FOR
AUSTRALIA'S
FINEST
LIGHTWEIGHT
BUSHWALKING
EQUIPMENT

Paddy Pallin

CANBERRA
Paddy Pallin, 46 Northbourne Ave.
47 8949

MELBOURNE
Paddy Pallin, 55 Hardware St.
67 4845

SYDNEY
Paddy Pallin, 67-69 Liverpool St.
26 2685