

Cardinia Environment Coalition Inc.



Connecting Environment and Community

AUTUMN 2009 NEWSLETTER



THE CARDINIA ENVIRONMENT COALITION INC (CEC) is an umbrella group comprising 30 local Friends, Landcare and conservation groups. The CEC Newsletter presents information about our work and our local groups.

The CEC works across the Central Western Port and part of the Southern Yarra Ranges catchments.

OUR VISION

By 2020 our catchment is an area where people live ecologically sustainably, aware that they are connected to their environment which is protected and enhanced by their action.

OUR MISSION

Leading significant positive environmental change through community based awareness and action

OUR STRUCTURE

The CEC is best reflected by the six portfolio areas shown in the above diagram.

Update from the President

Joan Szalman

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our newsletter. The past months have been very hectic and marred by the tragedy of the disastrous Bush fires and their aftermath which have revealed the best and worst of human nature. That the fires were deliberately lit on a day of such devastating



weather conditions is incomprehensible and the resulting loss of life and destruction testament to the actions of heartless, callous people. But the way in which the public rallied to assist the fire affected victims and the bravery, generosity and courage of those involved highlights the best that people are capable of. Now begins the difficult task of rebuilding lives, livelihoods and the environment.

In our area the bushfires which started at Tonimbuk raged through Labertouche, Jindivick and parts of Bunyip. As well as destroying homes, stock, fences, sheds, hay, silage and pasture, many Landcare plantings have also been lost. Practically all the landcare projects completed over the past ten years in

the Labertouche area have been either partially or totally destroyed. But as mentioned before people have rallied and are refencing and planning on replanting.

The CEC committee and staff went on a bus tour of the fire effected area in late February ending at Jim Armstrong's place in Labertouche for a debriefing meeting to decide what we could do to help. Jim lost some sheds, fences, feed and pasture in the fires but managed to save his house and stock.

Our staff have been assisting by liaising with those directing the recovery efforts and communicating with and supporting our members. Peter Ronalds has been tireless in his work for those in the fire effected area and together with Bridgette McCallum, our Landcare Coordinator are revisiting all the affected Landcare properties and re-assessing what needs to be done. We are also using some of our existing funding and accessing any available grants from the government for fencing and replanting. Offers from other Landcare groups in our network to come and help in any way possible have been grate-

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CEC & WPCLN Events Calendar

MAY

30 MAY BANDICOOT CORNER COMMUNITY PLANTING DAY

31 MAY CARDINIA PLANTING DAY

JUNE

11 JUN CEC GENERAL MEETING

13 JUN WILDLIFE DETECTIVE TOUR & WORKSHOP

13 JUN DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF ELECTRIC AND CONVENTIONAL FENCE CONSTRUCTION

14 JUN CARDINIA PLANTING DAY

21 JUN CANNIBAL CREEK PLANTING DAY

28 JUN CARDINIA PLANTING DAY

JULY

5 JUL NATURE WALK & TALK HARBURY

7 JUL WPCLN MEETING

9 JUL CEC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

11 JUL TREES, SHELTER BELTS AND NATIVE VEGETATION

12 JUL CARDINIA PLANTING DAY

19 JUL CANNIBAL CREEK PLANTING DAY

26 JUL CARDINIA PLANTING DAY

PLEASE NOTE: MANY OF THESE EVENTS ARE MENTIONED WITHIN THE NEWSLETTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER YOUR EVENT IN THE CALENDAR PLEASE CONTACT THE CEC OFFICE.

We thank this edition's Sponsors: Port Phillip & Western Port Catchment Management Authority



PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT

Public Land Report

The CEC now has management responsibilities for five areas of public land owned by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

1. Beaconsfield Nature Conservation Reserve, Upper Beaconsfield, which is a decommissioned reservoir and a significant area of bushland now protected for its habitat values. There is a Management Plan for this Reserve which can be seen on the CEC website. Public comment is invited. We currently have funding for ongoing weeding; for the erection of a toilet; and for work on the outlet tower which will allow it to be used as a viewing platform.
2. Guys Hill Reserve, Guys Hill. A Management Plan is being developed for this Reserve. It follows Cardinia Creek and is a significant area of bushland which needs weeding and has other management issues which have never been addressed. It is an important link in what we hope will become a habitat corridor along Cardinia Creek to Westernport.
3. Bandicoot Corner, Bayles. A Management Plan exists for this area which can be seen on the CEC website. A report on this Reserve

can be seen in this Newsletter. Another area of land adjacent to Bandicoot Corner is to be included in CEC management – it is currently being grazed and will be a future off-set planting site.

4. Toomuc Creek, Browns Rd, Officer. A very small area on the creek which is to be weeded and planted with riparian plants this season.
5. Five Mile Rd, Kooweerup. This land is currently being grazed and will be used for off-set planting in the future.



Bandicoot Corner Events

BANDICOOT CORNER COMMUNITY PLANTING DAY

SATURDAY 30 MAY

We will be planting native groundcovers on top of the newly constructed bandicoot palaces. Event will go ahead rain, hail or shine, so please come appropriately dressed. 10am – 12pm followed by BBQ lunch. Bandicoot Corner, No. Four Drain Road, Bayles.

WILDLIFE DETECTIVE COMMUNITY WORKSHOP & BUS TOUR

SATURDAY 13 JUNE

Learn how to detect wildlife by looking for scats, tracks and other traces, as well as using more sophisticated techniques such as infra-red cameras and hair-tube traps. Hair-tube making workshop followed by bus tour of Landcare sites under the guidance of seasoned wildlife detectives. 9:30am – 1:30pm including BBQ lunch. Meet at the Toomuc Valley Hall, 15 Leppitt Road, Pakenham Upper. Please wear sensible outdoor clothing and bring drinks, snacks and binoculars.

Please RSVP for catering purposes to the CEC office on 5941 8446 or email cec@dcsi.net.au

Bandicoot Corner - Palaces for Bandicoots

Bandicoot Corner was buzzing with activity on Sunday 1st March when over 30 volunteers gathered to construct 'palaces' for the resident bandicoots. Children and adults worked side-by-side to complete a total of six specialized shelters, each consisting of a hollow earth-covered dome with numerous entrance tunnels poking out the bottom.

The palaces are intended to provide extra shelter and breeding sites as blackberries and other weeds that currently provide bandicoot habitat are gradually removed and replaced with native species. It was taken as a very good sign when a curious bandicoot was spotted close to one of the new palaces later in the morning.

The palaces were constructed from donated recycled materials including pine posts, pallets, corrugated iron and terracotta pipes, then covered over with soil and mulch ready for planting out with native grasses and groundcovers. A community planting day will be held from 10am on Saturday



30th May, with sausage sizzle lunch to follow – all welcome to attend.

Although only 3.5ha in size, Bandicoot Corner offers crucial habitat for the endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot. The 1.8m predator-proof fence is perforated

by a number of special bandicoot tunnels to allow bandicoots – but not foxes – to move freely in and out. The CEC hopes it will be used as a safe stop-over or breeding point for bandicoots moving up and down the adjacent drains and across the broader landscape.

Funding for these field days has been provided by Envirofund, WWF Threatened Species Network, and the Port Philip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

To find out more about Bandicoot Corner or what you can do to help bandicoots on your own property, please go to the CEC website: www.cecinc.net.au



CEC President's Report from page 1

fully received. We are planning on having a Community Planting day in Labertouche in the near future when it is suitable to replant again. Meanwhile we will continue to offer any support we can to all those affected by this tragedy.

As well as coping with the bush fires and its aftermath the usual business of our growing dynamic network is ongoing. The Biolinks Action Plan has been well received by the Landcare groups and other organisations such as Melbourne Water, Cardinia Shire and the Port Philip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority. The first local area plans are being written up. Unfortunately we are

losing Sarah MacLagan, our Biodiversity Officer to the traveling bug. Sarah is leaving when her contract is up in August to travel overseas. We will miss her intelligence, friendship, commitment and her outgoing personality and smiling face. We wish Sarah all the best in her travels.

Advocacy issues and Caring for our Country grants submission have taken up a lot of our time and effort as has the search for a new site for the Nursery. We now have a new site for the Nursery beside the Recreation Reserve



in Tynong and would like to thank Ian Chisholm and the Mayor, Councilor Bill Pearson, for all their efforts in acquiring this site for the nursery. We hope to move in after the construction of the fence and other structures in the next few months.

So even though the bush fire tragedy and its ongoing issues will be with us for some time we at the CEC will continue to help each other and get on with the task of improving our environment through the combined efforts of all our members.

MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

Pearcedale Landcare Network

Pearcedale Landcare Network conducted a bird and habitat expo, at the Pearcedale Farmers market in March. The event allowed the community to discuss with experts a variety of wildlife and habitat topics, with participating organisations such as the Peninsula & Westernport Bird Observation and Conservation Australia branches, City of Casey, Pearcedale Farmers Market, Balla Balla Enviro group, Pearcedale Landcare, D.S.E Land for Wildlife, Trust for Nature, Westernport Seagrass Partnership, Birds Australia, Pearcedale Landcare.

We have also received a grant from the City of Casey which we plan to use to enable a rabbit control program in conjunction with



adjoining landowners to be implemented along the lower reaches of the Langwarrin Creek.

During March, we presented to Casey Council Conservation and Heritage Advisory group a request for their support for a Conservation Reserve alongside Langwarrin Creek (20 metres wide by 1.5 kilometres long) which is currently unreserved crown land. The land does contain endangered swamp scrub and riparian vegetation and provides habitat for local indigenous wildlife. It would connect both the north and south of the proposed reserve with other areas of Swamp Scrub. DSE records show that Dwarf Galaxias has been recorded along this portion of the creek in the past. The Swamp Rat, sugar gliders, an unidentified species of antechinus as well as native fish, freshwater crabs and eels are current inhabitants.

For further information contact Sharon Berry 5978 6628

Cannibal Creek Landcare Group

The Cannibal Creek Landcare group is getting ready for some much needed rain for this year's planting season to begin in May. Our last meeting saw all plantings for this year finalised with dates and properties. We are currently in the process of modifying our newly purchased water cart from OPS tanks in Pakenham that we were able to buy with the success of a \$5000 grant from the Victorian Volunteer Small Grant application that was made last year. We also received a \$500 grant from the Bendigo Community Bank in Bunyip simply by banking with them and applying – added bonuses we get great service and an awesome interest rate on our account. This money will be used to modify our water cart to house planters, mallets and buckets for ease of storage and transportation with a spot for our trees on the day of planting. We look forward to involving the community more with our plantings and letting others know what we do and how they too can get involved.

For further information contact Linda Byrne 5629 1172

SUSTAINABILITY, PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY



The Sustainability, Planning & Environmental Advocacy Portfolio (Advocacy) of the CEC has been busy - after the state government's Biodiversity at a Time of Climate Change call for submissions, it has had a raft of relevant reviews, inquiries and investigations. The CEC's advocacy role has been largely to inform government or question it, on matters related to, impacted by or impacting on the CEC and its objectives to enhance and protect the environment, its vision to lead positive environmental change and its motto connecting environment and community.

Submissions include to the Victorian Environment Assessment Council (VEAC) Inquiry into Sustainable Agribusiness in Outer Metropolitan Melbourne and appearing with the Green Wedges Coalition before the Council at Parliament House; on the initial consultation stage of the Smart Growth Areas Authority Urban Investigation Area with a further submission to be done once state and federal environment investigations are released some late May; and on the VEAC investigation into Public Land Management in Metropolitan Melbourne. Collaboration on these matters has occurred with other external community groups and NGOs wanting to understand or share information. Discussions on these related matters have occurred with other groups with the Minister for Planning Justin Madden; the Shadow Minister Matthew Guy, and with Greens MP Greg Barber.

Locally, the CEC has supported locals and the Green Wedges Coalition: - with the assistance of the Environment Defenders Office (EDO) in

arguing that the Beacon Hills Country Golf Club planned subdivision is not compatible with the Planning Scheme and local environment; presenting earlier this year to the panel hearing in relation to the desalination plant. The first stage of the Beacon Hills GC VCAT hearing was successful with a short legal argument which disallowed the maximum desired lot numbers and required proper surveying of all associated private and public land and considerable further thought into any subdivision proposition. Thanks to all groups and individuals who have made important submissions or other local contributions this year.

Community education sessions have been held at Pakenham in conjunction with the Environment Defenders Office for Vegetation Law, and VCAT. A further Vegetation Law and a Biodiversity Law session will be organised. Please register your early interest via the CEC office.

Some other issues CEC group members and individuals are involved with, include platypus education to prevent deaths via yabby traps; a green fields quarry with significant fauna habitat; aspects of the infrastructure needs for the desalination plant; more illegal clearing by another property owner and contractor. The list is goes on.

The CEC Biolinks Strategy and Action Plan is also a fantastic advocacy tool. Whilst the ideas for Biolinks have been around for decades, various groups and organisations have really only been planning and beginning implementation in recent years. I believe Sarah and the CEC's work is part of a growing momentum

with other organisations, leading to bigger and better things in educating the whole of our community in the importance of valuing our precious ecosystems and fauna. Special thanks go to Sarah in furthering advocacy for the CEC.

The CEC was not able to speak to the bushfire royal commission because it was for agencies playing a role in the fires but a submission was invited and we will ask that certain matters be questioned and investigated in relation to environmental management. Jim Armstrong and Bridgette McCallum consulted the Landcare Network for a brief submission. A consultation email was sent to each member group of the CEC.

To formalise this CEC portfolio area, an informal meeting will be organised for June, to build a network of those amongst us who are already battling on the advocacy front, or want to get involved, so that we can further support, mentor, learn from and educate each other. Two meetings per year would be great. Should you wish to be a part of this Network, please register your interest to Kelly on gbro1102@bigpond.net.au A small subcommittee will also be formed.

Advocacy crosses over all the CEC's portfolio areas; as such it is a vital ongoing part of all the CEC committee and employees' roles. Without community groups advocating for what they are all about and all that may impact them, the governments of the day will have a very narrow view of priorities, and govern with poorer outcomes.

For more information Kelly Brooks-MacMillan gbro1102@bigpond.net.au



PRIVATE LAND MANAGEMENT

Western Port Catchment Landcare Network - Central Region

Landcare Chairperson's Report

During the last three months, several Landcare members properties were burnt by the February 7th Bunyip Ridge Fire. The support for these large and small landholders has been fantastic with many groups and individuals giving money, fencing materials, hay and labour to help with the recovery.

During the next month or two, Landcare members will be starting to replant and the support from the groups to help this process will be much appreciated, please contact the CEC to offer your support.

Other programs for the next 3 months include the Green House Emissions project meetings, with second year farmers. Soil Health trials are continuing across the network, E-Farmer training will commence in the near future also.

A mid year dinner is being discussed for later on, your ideas for a speaker are welcomed.

Many thanks for all who have given time and helped out on the Landcare stall at the recent Lardner Park Field day (Farm World).

It is important that more representation from Landcare Groups are present at these network meetings, as this your chance to participate in the networks direction. These meetings are scheduled each Tuesday of every second month – the next one is the 5th May, followed by 7th July (usually held at the CEC offices).

For further information contact Jim Armstrong 5628 7777



Biolinks Update

The first of the seven Local Biolinks Plans has been developed during a community workshop held on Saturday 28th March. Community members from at least five local environment groups attended the day to help

clusters is to encourage neighbours to link up property-level biolinks to create a network of cross-property biolinks. Along waterways, which are the natural biolinks of the landscape, the aim is to target all private properties with frontage and establish a continuous strip of vegetation along the bank, as well as smaller biolinks branching off into the surrounding land which will be beneficial for both biodiversity and water filtration.



plan biolinks for the 'Deep/Ararat' local area, which covers parts of Pakenham, Pakenham Upper, Maryknoll and Nar Nar Goon.



Deep/Ararat biolinks planning workshop

The plan, which is now available in draft form on the CEC website, identifies five 'clusters' and 'major waterway links' that are priority areas for the development of biolinks. Clusters are areas where there are already aggregations of Landcare, Stream Frontage (Melbourne Water) or Trust for Nature projects. The aim within

Funding for the biolinks planning workshop was provided by the Port Philip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.

Biolinks planning workshops for the Cardinia/Gum Scrub/Toomuc and Lower Bunyip local areas are currently being planned for June/July – details to be announced.

For more about biolinks, or to see the CEC's Biolinks Project Action Plan, please visit www.cebionlinks.net.au or contact Sarah MacLaglan via the CEC office.

Landcare Facilitator - Property Management Workshops

Over the past several months I have been asking many of you what topics you would like training sessions about. I have had some very welcome feedback and some great ideas - thanks! One of those ideas was whole farm planning. I have been working with Baw Baw Shire and the Department of Primary Industries to develop a series of workshops that landholders can attend as a whole or as just a one off session.

The workshops will be free of charge; however places will be limited for some of the workshops. If we receive a good response to this we will look at running similar workshops in the future.

See list of topics, times and dates. If you are interested in attending any of these sessions or you have questions regarding these sessions please call Bridgette on 5941 8446 or 0403 195 879 or email bmccallum_cec@dcsi.net.au

PROPERTY PLANNING FOR HORSE OWNERS

16 MAY 9.30 – 4.00
LABERTOUCHE HALL

Presented by Pam Brookman. Topics include – property visioning, understanding soils on your property, stocking rates, house keeping systems, pasture establishment and management, weed identification, control and management. Aerial photo of participant's property supplied. Lunch included. Places are limited. Fire affected properties will get preference. Contact – Carolyn Ferguson - 5624 2409

FENCING

13 JUNE – FULL DAY
PROPERTY TO BE ANNOUNCED

David Stewart (DPI) will explain the design principles of fence construction for both conventional and electric fencing. Following practical demonstrations and using a local property as a venue, participants will be able to practise the necessary hands on skills of tying fence knots and straining wires. Lunch included.

Property Management Workshops

TREES, SHELTER BELTS AND NATIVE VEGETATION

11 JULY 9.30 – 12.30
LABERTOUCHE HALL

Bridgette McCallum – Western Port Catchment Landcare Network, Rob Waddell - Lake Wellington Landcare and Grand Ridge Propagation. Planning of shelter-belts, funding available, sourcing plants, planting and management. All welcome.

EROSION CONTROL AND WEED MANAGEMENT

16 AUGUST 9.30 – 12.30
LABERTOUCHE HALL

Nicole Driessen – erosion – Do you have areas on your property at risk of eroding? Ideas to manage.

Tyson Dennis - weed control – what are the noxious weeds in the area, responsibilities and methods of control. A practical introduction to the use of farm chemicals will be included in this session to be presented by David Stewart (DPI) who will explain how chemicals including herbicides can be used responsibly, effectively and safely on farms in Victoria. Lunch included. All welcome.

PASTURES AND GRAZING MANAGEMENT

13 SEPTEMBER 9.30 – 12.30
LABERTOUCHE HALL OR PROPERTY TBA

Fiona Baker (DPI) will provide practical advice on how to establish and manage productive pastures to meet the grazing and fodder needs of livestock. This will include such topics as soil testing, selection of pasture species, fertilisers, sowing techniques and rotational grazing systems.

The session will include pasture inspections of various paddocks re-sown since the fires.