

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



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To:

1 May 2009

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6, 8 Nicholson St,
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Re. Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation

WEECURRA STATE FOREST

The area in question is area shown in the attached DSE map *SW Vic Public lands*. This map shows the connection of the Weecurra forest areas to Wilkin, Corndale and Drajurk SF (in the NW) and Hotspur and Cobboboonee NP (in the south).

The attached DSE map *Weecurra FM Zones* gives a closer picture of the Weecurra situation. The largest area is the block nearest Digby; the DSE-designated SPZ area is coloured pink in the map.

The value of Weecurra and other areas as vital future secure linkage for the *Habitat 141* project cannot be underestimated. HFNC supports the provision of permanent links between coast and far inland as a corridor to accommodate movement of flora and fauna species as the climate changes. To make the existing blocks more effective, these 'stepping stones' will have to be more closely linked with revegetation on farms, rail reserves and unused road reserves. In many cases land will need to be acquired by the State to allow critical gaps to be bridged.

As stated in our other submissions, we would like to see SPZ areas such as this become **Flora and Fauna Reserves** or, where large enough, **State Parks**. In this case, we would also like to see the Reserve also include adjacent areas currently designated simply as State Forest. Small pink areas within the green 'State Forest' areas on the map appear to represent drainage lines or swamps.

The Weecurra area has the only western record of the orchid Brown Beaks, *Lyperanthus suaveolens*. The known area for this species was burned in 2008 and will be interesting to see how the small population fared. Weecurra is largely North Kanawinka Sandplain with a wide range of heath species and other flora. Some areas appear rather depauperate, probably a result of rather savage history of fire, the most recent hot autumn burn in 2008 being no exception. The stands of *E. baxteri* (the major tree species) ought to be a significant source of seed for Red-tailed Black-cockatoo but the severity of burning appears to have affected the ability of the trees to set sufficient seed. The reserve needs more sympathetic environmental management.

Another current problem with management of the Weecurra SPZ is the continued off-road activities of trail bikes. DSE has not, to our knowledge, attempted to stop those activities. On each weekend occasion that we have visited the area there have been bikes cutting through the bush on long trails off-road.

Yours faithfully

Dr PR Bird
Secretary,
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club