

HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



To:

1 May 2009

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

Level 6, 8 Nicholson St,
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Re. Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation

FULHAM STREAMSIDE RESERVE – our submission relates to this 860-ha reserve that adjoins the Glenelg River and disused Hamilton-Natimuk Railway Reserve, 10 km north of Balmoral, in SW Victoria.

In 1982 the Land Conservation Council recommended the area be reserved as the Kanagulk Streamside Reserve. HFNC submits that the status of Streamside Reserve was inappropriate then, and now, and does not confer the status nor protection that the area deserves. AC Beaglehole and HFNC has listed 110 species of bird in and 325 native species of flora in the reserve, with some outstanding rarities and isolates, such as *Melaleuca neglecta*, *Callitris gracillis* and *Triodia bunicola* (see attached report by HFNC Oct 2008).

The reserve could be a prime high-value conservation linkage for Habitat 141 between Mt Arapiles-Little Youngs Forest-Grampians by way of the railway reserves that pass through to Wannon River and beyond. It provides a repository of flora and fauna species of considerable consequence for connectivity.

This reserve (Dundas Tableland bordering on Wimmera Plains) is a fantastic place with varied habitats from river flats, wetlands, plains woodlands to heathy woodlands (see attached DSE Ecological Vegetation Class map), with a high proportion of the reserve covered by EVCs classes rated as “*endangered*”, “*vulnerable*” or “*depleted*” (see attached DSE Bioregional Conservation Status map).

The reserve desperately needs more money spent on tracks, vehicle control, people control and weed control. Details of problems and threats in the reserve are given in the HFNC Oct 2008 report). In brief:

- the weeds *Sparaxis bulbifera* and Cape Tulip, in particular, pose an enormous threat, aggravated by past indiscriminate broad-scale spraying of Cape Tulip that denuded large areas while not being very effective in controlling the target species
- off-road vehicles scar the land, damage the flora and transfer weeds into the botanically rich heathland
- there is inadequate supervision of users and signage to indicate values and appropriate usage.
- funds are not available to provide an all-weather track along the river for fishermen, sight-seers and 4WD enthusiasts. This results in off-road detours that degrade the surrounds and carries *Sparaxis* into new areas, rendering past efforts at weed control futile (this weed has the potential to dominate the entire reserve, as occurs in much of the roadsides in this region of SW Victoria – the infestation along the river is extensive and now beginning to advance away into the botanically-rich heathland adjoining).
- the lowly status of the reserve does not encourage anyone to enjoy without spoiling. This criticism extends to DPI personnel who monitor the bores in the area. They insist on driving along tracks signed-posted as being closed in winter, and then off the tracks to the bores, instead of walking the few metres required. Bores were also permitted to be installed in a pristine part of the heathland by Iluka (Mineral Sands), despite the certainty that continued traffic thereafter (by staff and curious visitors) would allow *Sparaxis* and Cape Tulip ingress to the heart of the reserve.

HFNC proposes that the reserve be upgraded to **Flora & Fauna Reserve** or **State Park**, to give it better protection from recreational enthusiasts, to provide better environmental management, and to ensure that it can exist as a valuable flora reserve and contribute substantially to ecological connectivity in the future.

Yours faithfully

Dr PR Bird
Secretary,
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club