

FRIENDS OF THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK INCORPORATED

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

Held on Thursday 22nd October 2020 at 4.00pm via Zoom

Meeting opened: at 4.06 pm

Chairperson – Ian Hill.

Minutes – Dave Robson

Committee Members present

Ian Hill (IH), John Arney(JA), Ralph Cartwright(RC), Neville Bethe(NB), Peter Donley(PD), Dave Robson(DR), Diane Townley (DT), Adrian Johnson (AJ - NPWS Liaison)

General Members present

Basil Ellis

Acknowledgement of Country

Ian gave the Acknowledgement of Country.

Apologies and Correspondence

Ann Young, Josie Piper gave apologies

There was no correspondence.

Treasurer's Report

- \$8312.88 in bank and paypal accounts
- 46 financial members

Other Business

- John (JA) described the guided plant walk that occurred on 21st September. 10 people attended. One new member Lisa Godden. The walk was a couple of weeks after the peak flowering period and we can reschedule next year.
- It was agreed that we will finalise the 2021 activities calendar in the November committee meeting. The best dates for guided plant walks are the last week in June and the first week in September
- Ian (IH) described the 19th October Port Hacking Prickly Pear removal
 - We made use of the 1.9 meter high tide. One boat coming from Grays Point boat ramp with 4 people and another boat coming from Bundeena with two people. Two more were picked up from Wallys Wharf and another walked in. So 9 volunteers in total.
 - We knocked over the remainder of the prickly pear by mid morning and started on other weeds: Aloe Vera, Pampas Grass, Senna, Asparagus Fern, Mother of Millions, Cotton and others
 - There was an incredible amount of litter including a multitude of beer bottles left by boat campers. The grave of the lady who lived there in years gone past

had been used as a firepit. Ralph (RC) has loaded a facebook post showing the grave desecration, the bottle hoard and rubbish. The post had been viewed 3000 times.

- Four boatloads of weeds and rubbish were taken to Bonnie Vale and dumped in the bins. All agreed it was a successful and enjoyable day.
- 9th October a group helped Patsy at Kellys Falls. Starting with track trimming the Princes Maria walk and then some bush regen removing blackberry etc.
- Koala Report
 - The Koala is being regularly tracked by our volunteers. He is healthy and covers large distances. Our tracking was stopped for a week while the bushfire was burning.
- Future Events
 - Guided birding walks to be held at BonnieVale at 8am and 4pm on Friday 23rd October. Seven people booked on each.
 - Removing Pampas Grass from Middle Rill on Monday 2nd November at 9am
 - Litter Collection at Wattamolla on Saturday 14th November at 8am
 - Guided birding walk at Wattle Forest and Lady Carrington Drive on Friday 4th December.

Park Report (AJ)

- The track trimming at Kellys Falls had been requested by Police and Ambulance so they had access to the base of the falls. Patsy is following through on getting a walking bridge put in.
- Covid group sizes have been adjusted, now 500 for sports etc but still 20 for schools.
- Plans and rostering for summer are being put in place.
 - Precinct plans may require the closure of Wattamolla before the carpark is full so that covid restrictions can be met
- The recent Kangaroo Ridge bushfire in the park was caused by a spotfire from the Aberoo hazard reduction
 - It first spotted to a point in between the Princes Highway and the railway line then spotted again into the park
 - The hazard reduction met the prescription but the wind strength was higher than forecast which caused the spotfire. The other planned hazard reduction north of Wattamolla didn't meet prescription so did not proceed.
 - Due to the terrain with little access the firefighting was mostly conducted by RAFT (remote area fire teams). These are 4 people crews who are winched in by helicopter and they build a containment line of approximately 1 meter using rake hoes. They work as a team to get this containment line down to bare earth.
 - Aerial support was provided from helicopters with buckets filling from creeks and there were 4 runs from the 737 aerial tanker dropping retardant. Three on the northern boundary and one on the southern boundary.
 - This retardant has a pink dye so it can be seen where it has been dropped. It is deemed to be safe
 - The ground fire trucks could get some access next to the train line and ran 200 metre hoses on the northern and southern edge of the fire

- The fire was managed as a level 1 by the NPWS. They brought in staff from the south coast and other places who were classified as capable of arduous work and could be part of the RAFTs.
- Hazard reduction comes from the local budget but incidents are funded centrally
- This fire may change near term hazard reduction plans for the west side of the Hacking. That needs to be assessed
- Other hazard reductions that have been completed: Artillery Hill (May), Woodfield Ave stage 1 (Sep), Beauty Pt, Alford's Pt North, Illawong
- Immediate future hazard reductions waiting for suitable weather conditions: Goarra Ridge, strip between the tram line and Farnell Ave
- Office roof has been replaced
- Office carpark public toilet has been opened
- Garie Surfclub has been upgraded
- Office refurbishment is planned for February which will allow some Hurstville staff to be relocated
- Garrawarra Farm public toilet installation to begin soon
- Burgh Track upgrade going well. Expected to be opened by December 1st
- Bonnie Vale
 - Money has been made available for the asbestos remediation. This was announced by the local member
 - The strategy is cap and contain (i.e. topsoil then turf). It will begin in February 2021 and be completed in October before summer 2021/22
 - The campground and the day use area near the boat ramp are the areas for cap and contain
 - Aboriginal Land Council approved cap and contain strategy but archaeological work needed to precede it.
 - There is regular air testing and consultants are employed to measure the asbestos pollution
 - The new fencing to separate the public from the asbestos was ordered by government
 - Concern raised by the committee that there were a large number of mangroves with dieback at Bonnievale and that number was increasing greatly. Adrian to get the consultant ecologist to reexamine
- Telstra tower has been built in the Loftus area of the park which should give coverage to Audley
 - John (JA) expressed concern that the 3 meter firebreak being proposed was not enough. A bushfire could cause comms to fail, which is the last thing that should happen in an emergency
- Discussion re website and facebook sites promoting activities in the Royal. Operators must sign up for an Ecopass.
- Concern raised by Green Cestrum outbreak in the Artillery Hill tip. This has been sprayed and then a hazard reduction burn has proceeded. But the weed has not died. It will be sprayed again in February/March when the spraying will be more effective. The tip site is bad (old asbestos roofs etc.) and needs clearing
- Plan of Management for the park
 - The draft is being finalised

- Public exhibition in the next few months
- Artillery Hill tip site is not specifically covered in the plan
- The boatshed is to be upgraded in the next few months, it will be closed in November and reopened in February/March

Other Business (part 2)

- Bushies Report
 - Neville has made a sharpened spade for tackling Pampas Grass
 - Steve Johnson has been standing in for Neville and doing a great job
 - Over 1300 volunteer hours have been accumulated by Bushies this year despite the Covid hiatus
 - Once per month the team work at the Sutherland Council nursery for three hours on a Thursday afternoon. Seed has been collected from the parks and then the plants grown from the seed are replanted into Heathcote or the Royal
 - Planting of 100s of new plants in Heathcote National park occurring.
- Wednesday Lady Carrington bushcare report
 - Tackled cestrum in the northern end of Lady Carrington yesterday...more work to do there
 - Removal of cotton and prickly pear at Middle Rill was started...plenty more days work there
 - The tree of heaven could not be started next week because of the rain forecast. Vigilant cannot be used when there is rain forecast within 12 hours

General Business

- George Cotis had expressed concern on the proposed dredging of Port Hacking which could stir up heavy metals
- The newsletters sent out by Ralph are not being received by certain people...some Bigpond users but may also be others. More investigations needed.

Meeting closed: at 6.08 p.m.

Next General Meeting

- Thursday 25 February, 2020 at 4 pm - venue to be confirmed

Next Committee Meeting

- Thursday 26 November, 2020 at 4pm via Zoom
- Thursday 28 January, 2021 at 4pm via Zoom