

10 March 2009

Mr Michael Harbour
Chairperson
Ocean Grove and District Community Association Inc
PO Box 78
OCEAN GROVE 3226

Dear Mr Harbour,


Thank you for your letter of 18 February 2009 regarding your concerns with the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve. This fire season has put fire management foremost in the minds of many residents, including those of Ocean Grove. Ocean Grove Nature Reserve is a significant area (144 Ha) of public land which supports one of the last remaining stands of native vegetation on the Bellarine Peninsula. Parks Victoria actively undertakes pest plant and animal programs with the aim of improving the ecological health of the Nature Reserve. This includes the appropriate ecological use of fire at this location while recognising the need to provide appropriate fuel reduction burns to address neighbours concerns. These programs are supported by the Friends of Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, contractors, Drought Relief Programs and Conservation Volunteer Australia.

The responsibility for the prevention and suppression of wildfire and prescribed burning rests with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). The recent 10 ha May 2007 prescribed burn in the Reserve was undertaken in accordance with the Department's Otway's Fire Protection Plan and Fire Operations Plan for the Otways Fire District. The Country Fire Authority (CFA) assisted with this burn, the main purpose being to create a strategic fuel reduced corridor to protect the township of Ocean Grove. Although the Burn Controller found it hard to burn, it successfully resulted in a L-Shaped 50m wide by 1.6km long firebreak along the eastern and southern boundaries. A key purpose is to serve as an asset protection measure to mitigate against any fire from the north. With the support of DSE, Parks Victoria has undertaken a program to prune trees and then subsequently reduce the amount of debris on the forest floor within the south east corner of the Reserve abutting Grubb Road and the Woodlands estate to further complement these fire management outcomes. Residents are seeing the works in progress as they drive past, not realising that much of this debris will be mulched and removed. This work has provided sound longterm ecological benefits for the Reserve and additional fire protection to the adjacent community.

Other fire operation activities undertaken in accordance with these plans include an annual slashing program and regular maintenance of fire breaks. The Fire Operations Plan is reviewed annually and is developed in consultation with local communities, local councils, Parks Victoria, CFA and any other key stakeholders and parties who express their interest.

Should you require further information, please contact Mr Paul McCoughtry, Acting Fire Management Officer for the Otway's Fire District on 5233 5565 or Mr Stuart Willsher, Ranger for the Reserve on 5215 5100.

Yours sincerely,



Siobhan Rogan
District Chief Ranger
Geelong District

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