



Newsletter

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Summer 2009-10

SLP Advisory Committee Management Plan

The inaugural Stirling Linear Park Advisory Committee submitted a management plan for the Park to Council in mid 2009, concentrating on dog control and to a lesser extent, fire management.

The Committee set out from the start to prepare a compromise report on the contentious issue of dog control. In summary, the Committee recommended that dogs should be on leash throughout the park except for a designated off-leash area in Madurta Reserve.

Before the report was tabled at a Council meeting, Council “workshopped” it and prepared amended recommendations adding additional dog off-leash areas so that the amended recommendations differed significantly from those presented in the Advisory Committee’s report.

FSLP and other interest groups were asked by Mayor Cooksley to present deputations to Council at a public forum before the Council meeting on 3 November 2009 at which the amended report was considered. At the Council meeting, additional amendments to the Committee’s recommendations were proposed without notice so that FSLP was not able to address them in its presentation.

The 3 November meeting and a subsequent Council meeting on 15 December at which this matter was considered further resulted in the amendments to the original Advisory Committee’s report being accepted with the exception of a proposal to allow dogs off leash on the path around the Woorabinda Lake. The outcome has been well documented in maps in *The Courier* and can be summarised as - dogs on leash apart from in the following paths or areas:

- Madurta – an open area as recommended by the Advisory Committee
- Hender – the Hender Trail between Hender Road and the railway crossing
- Woorabinda – the path from the railway crossing to the path around the lake and the Keroma Trail from the path around the lake to the point where it leaves the park
- Stirling Park – the Ethel Trail, the area to the Branch Road side of the Stirling Park Track.

The decision to make the Hender Trail off leash highlights the lack of adequate consideration by Council of the amendments to the original Advisory Committee report. In proposing the Hender Trail as off leash, Councillor Leone Taylor stated that the majority of the length of the Trail passes through open grassed areas, whereas the majority of the Hender Trail as mapped actually passes through good bush. Observation of regular walking patterns in this area of Hender indicates that Councillor Taylor was referring to nearby tracks that are not designated as the Hender Trail and which pass at one point outside the park boundary.

A new SLP Advisory Committee has been appointed by Council and met for the first time in late 2009. Its members are Simon Bradley (from the previous committee) Mark Fagan, Sarah Fenton, John Kallin, Adam Miller, Isabel Paton and two councillors.

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008-09

Presented by Philip Hicks on 20 October 2009

Advisory Committee

After meeting for two years, the Stirling Linear Park Advisory Committee has completed a management plan which is to be tabled at a Council meeting on Tuesday, 3 November at Stirling. Unfortunately, in terms of the timing of this report, the management plan has not been released as a public document so that I am not able to comment on it. At this stage, Council staff have said that they are unable to tell me whether the management plan will become a public document before or after the Council meeting. There is a view that it can not be made public until it has been tabled. This seems to be at odds with what Mayor Cooksley informally told me at a chance meeting a couple of weeks ago when he said that FSLP and other interest groups would be asked to speak about the plan at the Council meeting.

I plan to send an information letter to members as soon as possible after the management plan does become a public document. In the meantime, I encourage you to keep the evening of 3 November free.

Council is currently in the process of appointing a new Advisory Committee. Our work with the old committee in the last year has been limited compared with the previous year as they have been in the reporting phase. In the previous year the committee was in more of an information gathering phase so that we were able to provide them with copies of reports and other information about the park.

Working with AHC

FSLP has continued to work closely with AHC staff who have roles relating to SLP, building on relationships established over the last few years. We have worked closely with the Natural Resources Officer, Steve Brooks and with Rod McBeath, the AHC person mainly responsible for "on the ground work" in SLP and who provides and maintains the equipment used for our working bees. Our thanks to these two and other AHC staff.

In my last report, I noted that "it is clear that additional AHC resources are needed in SLP and as well as in other similar parks and reserves". Early in the year I wrote to Council (with a copy to the SLPAC) highlighting the effect of lack of Council resources on the condition of the park and documenting the responsibility for weeding work of FSLP and Council. I also noted the work of Council staff involved in the park and recognised Council's budgetary constraints. Since then there has been some progress in getting additional AHC resources

in SLP, mainly through council staff using NRM funding to work on spraying weeds such as blackberries. I understand that more of this work is in the pipeline but there is still a long way to go.

Contributions by Green Corps

A Green Corps team commenced working in SLP in April and finished in September. The team of twelve, based at Mylor and lead by Rachel Milaret from Greening Australia, spent an average of almost one day a week in SLP as part of its work program in the district. The team's main activities in SLP were:

- planting seedlings in the revegetation areas in Stirling Park and Madurta
- cutting and swabbing gorse in Stirling Park, blackberries in Woorabinda and Stirling Park and cutting *Acacia longifolia* in Woorabinda
- weeding and planting the garden area below the Woorabinda buildings
- re-fencing and bridge renovation work ably supervised by Rod McBeath of AHC.

Our thanks to Joslyn van der Moolen, Secretary of the Friends of Mylor Parklands, for her efforts in obtaining the team and arranging its program. At this stage, the Central Hills Green Web has had preliminary discussions about involvement in the National Green Jobs Corps program for 2010-2011.

Bushcare and Weed Control

Turning to our normal bush care and weed control work: weed control in the park has continued to be a major focus. Over the last year we have continued our monthly bushcare working bees in Woorabinda, Stirling Park and Madurta. They have been attended by from five to twelve people, with the main reason for numbers on the lower side on a few occasions being members away on holidays.

I would like to thank Bob James for continuing his role organising our monthly working bees and also for his ongoing daily work in Hender. As in the last few years, we have not been scheduling working bees in Hender as a result of the progress made over a long period by Bob in clearing a large proportion of the good bush of major weed threats. While there are still significant areas of weeds to be cleared from Hender, these are mainly large infestations of weeds that need to be worked on by dedicated teams or under Council supervision.

Over the last two or three years we have modified our approach to working bees to focus on specific weeds at particular times of the year such as *Watsonia* in Woorabinda and Madurta during the period from August to October and blackberries in Woorabinda in Autumn. We are making good

progress using this weed targeting approach but recognise that a potential downside is a reduced focus on broader weeding in given areas of good bush. For this reason we are trying to balance weed targeting with a broader approach as we make progress with problem areas of *Watsonia* and blackberries.

Contractors employed by the Central Hills Green Web (of which FSLP is a member) and working under the supervision of Mark Fagan are undertaking work on swabbing *Watsonia* infestations in and around the margins of the good bush in parts of Woorabinda. This includes follow-up work and work in new areas and is funded through the NRM.

In June FSLP received a Community Grant for Land Care, Coast Care and Water Care of \$5,000 for removal of *Watsonia* on the western side of the lake in Woorabinda Reserve. The grant is being supplemented by an amount of \$1,000 from the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Public Fund and is being used to employ specialist contractors to work in the large *Watsonia* infestation in the area of good bush to the south west of the bird hide on the western side of the lake.

FSLP volunteers have made good progress in working in from the edges of this area of *Watsonia* in the last four years but do not have the resources to eradicate it. The grant funded work will complement work on other large areas of *Watsonia* in Woorabinda already referred to being undertaken by Green Web contractors and is enabling FSLP working bees to concentrate on targeting other smaller areas of *Watsonia* in Woorabinda.

The Green Corps team have removed a very large area of dense gorse from the western side of Stirling Park. About half of this has been piled in a cleared area awaiting burning. The area will require an additional follow-up effort for at least the next few years.

Once again, it is fair to say that while we have continued to make good progress, in some areas particular weed species continue to spread into the margins of good bush with *Watsonia* continuing to be a major threat.

In last year's report I mentioned that we were working on a bushcare/weeding operational plan setting out weeding and revegetation priorities for the park. The purpose of this plan is, starting from existing management/revegetation plans, to provide a framework for working with the Natural Resources Officer and a basis for working towards formalising an overall process for coordination of bushcare/weeding and planting work done by all those involved – AHC, FSLP, Green Web and other volunteer groups. From FSLP's perspective, this

effectively documents priorities that we already follow in working out our annual bushcare program including monthly working bees, Green Web, contractor and grant funded work. We have made some progress on this plan but have more work to do.

Revegetation

About 800 seedlings have been planted in the revegetation areas in Stirling Park and Madurta over the last few months. This year the emphasis has been on backfilling existing plantings and for this reason the majority of the plantings have been of smaller sized plants such as *Acacia myrtifolia* and *pycnantha*, various *Leptospermums* and *Dodonaeas*. Smaller numbers of larger plants such as *A. melanoxylon* and *retinodes* were also planted. We have also replanted part of the area from which gorse has just been removed.

Of the seedlings, about 700 were grown by Anne Hicks and most of these were planted by the Green Corps team. A further 100 were grown by Emma Howard from the Mount Lofty Venturers group as part of her work towards her Queen's Scout award and planted by Emma and other Venturers group members. The total number of seedlings planted was less than in previous years as our grant funded seedling grower has had to hold over to next year the seedlings scheduled for this year.

In the coming year we plan to continue our revegetation efforts along similar lines. If we receive the seedlings held over from this year I expect that we will either plant them using a Green Jobs Corps team, or participate in Planet Ark – National Tree Planting day next year as it is a means of encouraging community involvement in the park.

Environmental Monitoring

We continued our previous range of programs which included:

- annual photo monitoring from sites in each of the four reserves (a change still in progress is from one person doing the lot to one or two people responsible for each of the four reserves to spread the work load)
- bi monthly water sampling and testing from the lake and creek
- bushcheck bird observations from 16 sites eight times per year.

Publicity

During the last year FSLP continued its participation in local events with displays and members on hand to publicise the park and highlight our activities. The main objective was to raise community awareness of our role and increase involvement in our activities, ultimately

leading to increased membership and participation in our core roles of bushcare, revegetation and monitoring.

One event at which we had a stall and display was the Autumn Garden Festival in Druids Avenue Stirling for which Marilyn Forward put together a very impressive photographic display and samples and information on garden plants that become invasive in parks. This attracted a lot of interest from passers-by.

Marilyn also organised our display at the Stirling Library featuring wildlife in the park, an ongoing display at the Organic Market and a new display for the two display boards in SLP.

A new shelter to protect stalls and displays, organised by David and Lorri Ragless, was used for the first time at the Autumn Garden Festival.

We have continued our seasonal newsletter to members. So far this year we have issued a Summer newsletter in January and a Spring newsletter in August, again expertly edited by Merilyn Browne.

Woorabinda Buildings

Early this year FSLP was advised that Council would proceed with plans to demolish the cottage adjoining the Woorabinda Environment Centre. Consequently, we sought assurance that there were no plans to sell the land and that the cottage site would remain part of SLP.

This matter was raised as members of FSLP had concerns about the future of the cottage land, having taken action in the past to help prevent it being sold. Although we had not heard anything to indicate that Council had plans to sell the land, we sought this assurance as we considered that the cottage land should remain an integral part of Woorabinda and Stirling Linear Park.

We were also aware of a proposal to make the Woorabinda buildings a 'state of the art' environmental demonstration site and to build a new Environment Centre building at Woorabinda, presumably on the cottage site. At the same time, we thought that a constraint on such a proposal would be Council's ability to fund a building, even if grant or other external funding is sought.

Council's Director Corporate Services, Howard Lacey replied, in summary, that he was not aware of any plans to sell the Woorabinda Cottage site, that Council had decided to demolish the cottage to avoid vandalism and safety concerns and that the cottage was unfortunately past the point of economic restoration and there was no real use for it as a residence.

Meetings

Over the last year, the Committee has met on a monthly basis.

Volunteer Resources Used

During 2008-09 about 2,200 volunteer hours were donated to the Park.

Contributions

Jane Schoettgen recently resigned from the committee, mainly because she expects to be traveling more extensively in the future. In her two years as a committee member, Jane made a valuable contribution with her ideas and enthusiasm to FSLP activities. Jane plans to remain actively involved in FSLP and to continue her weeding work at the southern end of Woorabinda.

We were very sorry to hear of the recent passing of local resident and frequent visitor to SLP, Harry Gill. Although not a member of FSLP, Harry was dedicated to SLP. He also attended working bees and Green Corps weeding activities in the park. Harry battled on through ill health as a member of the SLPAC. I know that he made a significant input and was highly respected by other AC members. All those who visit SLP regularly will miss Harry and we pass on our condolences to Margot and Harry's family.

Thank you also to all of those who contributed to FSLP during the year. This includes all of the Committee and other members, particularly:

- Bob James for his support as Deputy Chairman, convening working bees and work in Hender.
- Brian Donaghy for his high quality minutes and work on fire planning.
- Ian Perrin for his work as Treasurer.
- Merilyn Browne for editing and compiling our newsletter.
- Lorrie Ragless, Marilyn Forward and Jane Schoettgen for their Waterwatch work and also for their proactive roles in working to attract community involvement.
- Kath Bowman for maintaining our membership list and website.
- David Ragless, for his contribution as a Green Web committee member and ongoing advice.
- Rob Tanner for his work on analysing the SLP Bushcheck bird survey information .
- Mark Fagan of the Green Web for his work on the Green Web's contributions to SLP.
- All others who contributed to our activities such working bees and stalls and who carried out individual bushcare/weeding work.

Recent working bees

Since our last working bee report in the Spring 2009 Newsletter, our working bees have concentrated on:

- Woorabinda – continuation of our series of three working bees from July to September concentrating on smaller patches of *Watsonia* during its active growth phase in areas of good bush together with other weeds, complementing work by contractors on larger areas of *Watsonia*. In December we weeded around the small area of plantings between the boardwalk and Woorabinda Drive and made very good progress.
- Madurta - one working bee following-up our and contractors' work on *Watsonia* in the good bush in the south-west corner in

previous years.

- Stirling Park – our November working bee was cancelled due to the hot weather.

All working bees were well attended and continued our overall long term strategy of working outwards from areas of good bush.

At our next working bee in February we plan to continue cutting and swabbing gorse regrowth in Stirling Park.

The Working Bee reminder notices are now being sent out by email to the 'regulars'. If you are considering joining us on the third Sunday in the month at 10:00am, send your email to Bob James at bobjames@chariot.net.au and he will include you on the list of working bee reminder notices. We could certainly do with more hands on the job.

FUTURE WORKING BEES		
Date	Location	Meeting Place
2010		
February 21	Stirling Park	Branch Road
March 21	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
April 18	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
May 16	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
June 20	Stirling Park	Branch Road
July 18	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
August 15	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
September 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
October 17	Madurta	Madurta Avenue
November 21	Stirling Park	Branch Road
December 19	Woorabinda	Woorabinda Drive
Time: 10.00 am – 12 noon		

Park Revegetation

Council resolved at its 15 December meeting that: “No further revegetation occur in Stirling Park without prior approval by resolution of Council and that existing grassed areas be maintained as such, or until a vegetation management plan is presented to and approved by Council”.

Council then resolved:

“That a Vegetation Management Plan be prepared by the Stirling Linear Park Advisory Group and that upon completion, it be reported to Council for adoption.”

It is understood that Councillors were concerned about increased fire risk arising from plantings in the park. Following this decision, about which FSLP was not consulted, our Trees for Life supported growers will have to reallocate their seedlings elsewhere.

FSLP supports a vegetation management plan for the park and has plans, documentation and knowledge which should be used in developing such a plan. Our plantings have been in accordance with revegetation plans for Madurta

and Stirling Park approved by Council which allow for open grassed areas around each planting. Our plantings in the last two years have backfilled existing areas rather than open up new areas.

FSLP recognizes the need for fire management measures in the park as evidenced by our input to fire management planning processes. We also consider that there has been a lack of recognition of FSLP’s ongoing work on removal of woody weeds over at least the last 15 years and the consequent reduction of the fuel load. A significant example in 2009 was use of a Green Corps team to cut and swab large areas of dense gorse on the western slopes of Stirling Park, blackberries in the Stirling Park revegetation areas and other weed infestations in the areas surrounding the Woorabinda buildings.

The build up of weeds in parts of SLP resulting from reductions over time of Council resources available for weed control in SLP, including grass cutting in revegetation areas, has been well documented in previous FSLP Newsletters.

Recent Fauna Sightings in Stirling Linear Park

Over the last two years Purple Swamphens have become permanent residents of the lake and surrounding areas and have again bred successfully. Recently, at least two adults and three juveniles have been present. The Coots have also raised chicks this year.

While Black Ducks, Coots and Dusky Moorhens are still in residence, in recent months there have been few, if any, other water bird species such as Hardheads and cormorants which have been seen in recent years. This may be related to the amount of water in dams around the State following the good winter rains.

Sacred Kingfishers have been seen over the last few years in Woorabinda, Hender and Madurta. In 2009 one was seen during spring in Woorabinda and two others appeared to be nesting in a stringybark hollow in Hender but nothing was seen on later visits to the site.

The large male Kangaroo reported in Woorabinda and Hender in the previous five Newsletters has not been seen in the park in recent months.

Any other observations are welcome for inclusion in future editions.

Community Grant

The contractors undertaking the community grant work on of *Watsonia* on the western side of the lake in Woorabinda Reserve (referred to in the AGM report) finished their work in November after their work schedule was delayed by the wet winter and spring. As they finished

just before the *Watsonia* started to die off naturally, the full impact of their work will not be readily apparent until the *Watsonia* starts to regrow in July this year.

Weed Control Funding

Steve Brooks, the Adelaide Hills Council's Natural Resources Officer, recently advised that \$5,000 is being allocated to FSLP for weed control in SLP. This is part of an amount received by Council from the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board which "has been equitably allocated across the region amongst the NRM groups".

The funding is welcome following FSLP's letter to Council early in 2009 which highlighted the

serious weed problems in SLP and the need for additional resources to be allocated by Council for weed control and fuel load reduction in SLP and other similar parks in the region. It is expected that the funding will be used to employ contractors to work on removal of weeds such as the large blackberry infestations near the lake that were referred to in our letter to Council.

2009 Annual General Meeting

The FSLP Annual General Meeting for 2009, held on Tuesday 20 October, was well attended as usual. After the formal part of the meeting and a barbeque, Merilyn Browne gave a talk about birds of Stirling Linear Park with coordinated pictures and sounds of the birds commonly seen in the park as well as many of those more rarely seen.

Merilyn's talk was without doubt the highlight

of the evening and one person was heard to say that he found it so interesting that he would like it repeated at the next AGM. Although Merilyn might have other ideas, she has been busy recording more bird sounds in the park to go with her extensive bird picture library. Merilyn plans to add the coordinated pictures and sounds to the FSLP web site.

Meadow Argus photographed in the park in March 2009

Merilyn Browne



**Friends of Stirling Linear Park Committee
2009-10**

Kathy Bowman	8370 9177
Merilyn Browne	8339 6839
Brian Donaghy	8339 2033
Marilyn Forward	8339 3162
Phillip Hicks	8339 3156
Bob James	8339 1903
Ian Perrin	8339 3262
David Ragless	8339 1038
Lorri Ragless	8339 1038
Alistair McHenry (Advisor)	8339 5114
Russell Seaman (Advisor)	8398 0626

Web address: <http://esc.net.au/~slp/>

Affiliations

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. is a member of Friends of Parks Inc. We are also a registered Landcare Group and a member of both Greening Australia and Trees for Life.



Disclaimer: Contributors' views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the editor, the committee or the general membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

Contributors to this issue include Philip Hicks and Merilyn Browne.



Friends of Stirling Linear Park Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. (strike out words not applicable)

\$.....membership fee is enclosed.

\$.....donation is included. (Donations of \$2.00 or more are tax-deductible. A separate receipt will be issued.)

Membership fee for both individuals and family:	
1 year.....	\$10.00
5 years.....	\$40.00

Name.....

Address.....

.....**Phone**.....

Email address for sending Newsletter.....

Please return to: Kathy Bowman, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc., 2 Bogaduck Road, Aldgate 5154