

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc. Winter-Spring 2004

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The Future of Stirling Linear Park

In the Autumn 2004 newsletter we reported in some detail the emerging policy of Adelaide Hills Council to allow active recreational activities in Stirling Linear Park, such as mountain bike riding. We pointed out the adverse effects these activities would likely have on the Park's present peaceful atmosphere, visual amenity, catchment care and biodiversity conservation.

Since then, Council called a May meeting at Woorabinda to discuss the future use of the Park, at which it was agreed that a four-member **Stirling Linear Park Management Strategy Working Group** be formed. The new Group is charged with the task of developing a draft policy for managing the Park. This will be eventually placed before the Council for consideration.

Council has nominated councillors Ron Nelson and Wayne Gibbings as its representatives on the Group committee, and the Friends have nominated Andrew Murray and Rob Tanner as our representatives.

The new committee is currently considering its terms of reference and *modus operandi*. It will employ the assistance of an external consultant to assist with the processes of determining the Park's value, the various stakeholder and user expectations and the development of management strategies.

The Friends are fully supporting this committee process in the hope that it will set in place clear unambiguous recommendations which Council will adopt — and in future, abide by.

What we do not want is just another costly review exercise that is overlooked almost as soon as it is adopted. Over the last ten years we have participated in six Council-convened committees, each of which was formed to decide upon the Park's management. Their recommendations have often been ignored by Council. Thousands of hours of councillors', AHC staff and community's time has been wasted, as well as the considerable fees paid to consultants hired for their professional expertise.

We will be working hard with Council to try and make sure this does not happen again.

Woorabinda cottage to be sold Council backs out of previous agreements

Adelaide Hills Council now intends to sell the cottage at Woorabinda and has approved the revocation of its Community Land Classification to allow this to happen.

This is despite previous agreements with the Friends that the cottage would be retained and refurbished and used as part of the Woorabinda Environment Education Centre. It also ignores a number of offers to rent the cottage, including by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) who will soon be working full time at the Education Centre and who could have also acted as the Centre's caretaker.

- At a public meeting in May 2000, Council reported on the Woorabinda Review. The meeting attended by over 100 people unanimously voted that *'no part of Stirling Linear Park should ever be sold for any purpose.'*

This vote occurred after specific discussion about selling the cottage.

- Council commissioned the 2001 Bechervais report and accepted its findings. This report recommended that the cottage be retained and included concepts and costings for its renovation and future use.
- Subsequently, a Woorabinda Working Group was set up by the Council to implement the Bechervais report. The Group met during 2002 and 2003 and included councillors, senior Council staff and community members. After commissioning a carefully costed report on the cottage repairs and funding considerations the Group concluded that the renovation process would be cost neutral over a five or six year period.
- At the invitation of Council, representatives of the Friends met with the CEO and the Director of

Engineering in September 2003 to discuss the future of the cottage. We were led to believe that the cottage would never be sold, and would remain Council property to accommodate a use that could support and enhance the environmental values of Woorabinda and the Education Centre.

- With the sale of the cottage, the future of the Demonstration Native Garden that was to be developed in the immediate cottage surrounds is doubtful. Grants had been approved for this work and plans for the revegetation program are well in hand.

Council's inactivity has resulted in a loss of income and has increased the costs of renovation

Until late 2000 Council leased the cottage to staff on the basis of \$60 per week plus a tenant contribution of 6 hours per week of maintenance work around the Woorabinda buildings.

The rental agreement was revoked by the Council on the grounds that the cottage was sub-standard and needed repairs, even though at the time the lessee considered that its condition met reasonable requirements.

From the time the property was abandoned in January 2001 until the end of September this year the total revenue lost by Council (rent plus labour in lieu) amounts to over \$35,000.

The cost of renovating the cottage has also increased from the original 2002 estimate of \$60,000 (including a 10% contingency). The AHC Property Management Officer now estimates the cost at \$100,000. This increase is partly due to the unoccupied cottage's accelerated decay and partly to increased building costs.

Hot Spots action

A coalition of local conservation groups is to commence a \$430,000 project consolidating and rehabilitating areas of public and private land connecting the larger areas of remnant vegetation and wildlife habitats within the central Mt Lofty Ranges.

The program is to be known as *The Central Hills Biodiversity Hot-Spot Conservation Project* and involves a partnership between the Urban Forest Biodiversity Program, Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board and the Adelaide Hills Council.

Initially, some \$131,000 will complement the volunteer resources of seven conservation groups in the AHC area:

- Friends of Stirling Linear Park
- Aldgate Valley Landcare Group

- Deanery Community Landcare Group
- Friends of Mt George Conservation Park
- Mylor Parklands Bushcare Group
- National Trust
- Trees For Life/Bush For Life.

The project will address biodiversity and water quality programs within National Parks, Adelaide Hills Council, National Trust reserves and other private and off-park conservation reserves.

The project region is roughly bounded by Mark Oliphant CP, Mt George CP and Mylor CP, and contains the following areas that are managed for biodiversity conservation:

- 309 ha of State land.
- 157 ha of Adelaide Hills Council Open Space Network.

- 118 ha of private land managed for conservation, including 65 ha under Heritage Agreement.

The project aims to increase the area of remnant native vegetation being actively managed for biodiversity conservation and catchment health by at least 150 hectares – even if only half of the potential landholders participate in the program.

Priority will be given to:

- threatened vegetation associations;
- links to existing catchment protection & rehabilitation works (such as OCWMB watercourse management assistance program);
- greatest likely impact on water quality and

aquatic ecosystem health;

- species of conservation significance;
- land management agreements;
- greatest educational value;

The on-ground works will involve invasive weed removal and habitat reconstruction in significant riparian and terrestrial sites. The works will be carried out primarily by volunteers, with assistance from appropriate contractors where necessary.

Detailed planning and coordination of the work throughout the region will be undertaken with assistance from a part-time project officer, who will be accommodated at the Woorabinda Environmental Education Centre.

Source: Central Hills Conservation Project Newsletter

Woorabinda and Hender land Classification Council discounts community concerns

Despite widespread public concern, the AHC at its September 7 meeting adopted Community Land Classification for Woorabinda and Hender Reserve which many individuals and organisations regard as inappropriate.

The Council now classifies Woorabinda for use as 'Community use' and Hender for 'Passive Recreation'. Previously Council proposed a classification of 'Sport and recreation' for Hender Reserve.

While 'Passive recreation' is an improved classification for Hender Reserve it will still allow a number of inappropriate activities such as playgrounds. 'Community use' use also includes a range of activities that are available elsewhere in the district, including tennis clubs, scout halls, kindergartens and health centres etc.

The Council's published invitation for community comment to the proposed changes generated many written submissions. Readers of this newsletter will be interested to know that your committee was advised by the Council that letters it saw as coming from the Friends group were disregarded as being based on 'inaccurate information'. Presumably this refers to our mail-out — distributed in good faith — in which we detailed our considered response to the Council.

We totally reject the Council's opinion that it contained inaccuracies.

- The Council received over ninety letters from the community, including 35 from Friends. Some of them had multiple signatures — such as walking groups. Over 275 individuals signed these letters. All of the submissions opposed the proposed classifications, and all requested that the whole of the Park be classified as Conservation (Category 1).
- Letters were sent from Onkaparinga Catchment Water Management Board, the National Trust, Conservation Council of SA and the Aldgate Valley Landcare Group — all asking that the areas be classified 'Conservation'.
- **The SA Minister for Environment & Heritage wrote to the AHC strongly recommending that the Friends documented arguments about classification should be considered by Council.**

Your committee will continue to oppose the new classifications. They carry the potential to spoil the community's peaceful enjoyment of the Park and degrade the environment. We will also continue to lobby for classification that gives maximum protection of the Park for posterity.

More hard work by Youth Volunteers

The combined efforts of Mt. Lofty Queen Scouts and International Baccalaureate students has upgraded the link from the Ethel trail to Stirling Park track. Work included trail surfacing with dolomite rubble, making drainage diversions to prevent path erosion and setting concrete pipes to take the creek.

Adelaide Hills Council provided the pipes and dolomite.

During construction work the team worked hard often in cold and wet weather. They reported however that the worst experience was almost being knocked down by a team of mountain bike riders careering through the park at breakneck speed.

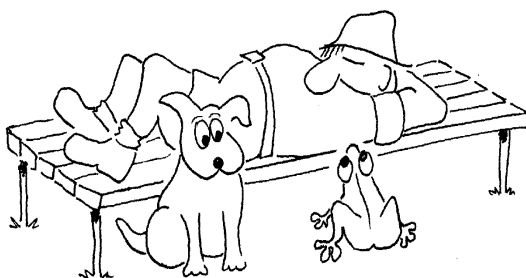
Future youth work

A second Youth Conservation Corps team will soon start work in the Park. They will undertake a number of projects including finishing the restoration of the bunkhouse building for CVA's use.

They will also be engaged in painting the toilet block, revegetation work, weed control and path and boardwalk repair and construction.

The new team will work to plans approved by AHC and will be managed by Conservation Volunteers Australia.

From the Park bench



Woorabinda plantings vanish

Recently a number of plants were removed next to a memorial seat by a person or persons unknown. This was a hurtful act because they were planted by a public spirited volunteer who had donated the seat in memory of his late wife.

We share the donor's disappointment, and have offered to help him plant some new plants, or to do so on his behalf.

Our enquiries to Friends members and Council staff have failed to trace any details about this act of vandalism.

Should any reader have any relevant information we would be pleased to receive it.

Wildlife sightings

- Southern Brown Bandicoots have been sighted twice. One sighting made by a visiting zoologist was made in the car park at the Hender Road entrance. Fresh bandicoot diggings have also been authenticated in an area previously not thought to contain bandicoots.
- Koalas continue to be seen (and heard!) in several areas.
- An Echidna was seen going about its business.
- A red fox has been seen several times in Stirling Park, and seems unconcerned about people nearby.
- Several snakes have been seen emerging from hibernation. Most were thought to be black snakes, but one of them was a Pygmy Copperhead.
- In the third week of September, walkers around the lake reported seeing two new families of ducklings. Two Pacific Black mothers each had ten new hatchlings in tow. Sadly it is unlikely that all of these ducklings will survive to adulthood. But we can hope.

Frog pond completed at Woorabinda

A demonstration frog-friendly pond to encourage frogs has now been completed at Woorabinda Environmental Education Centre.

It will be used as a resource to show schoolchildren the best way to make a frog pond.

Construction was done by Youth Conservation Corps volunteers and staff of Onkaparinga Waterwatch Network with assistance from Council's Landcare Officer and a Friends member.

A bridge too far

It seems we were overly optimistic in the last newsletter when we forecast that a footbridge across the Stirling Park creek would be in place before the winter rains.

As you know, it just didn't happen, and once again periods of heavy downpour in July and August made the crossing virtually impassable, except to those walkers with Olympic jumping ability or others who didn't mind getting their feet wet.

It has almost become the rule that any forecast of imminent bridge building will be proved wrong.

Now the news is that despite Council agreeing to our proposed design and the Friends money being available for materials with volunteer construction labour standing by, Council has asked us not to proceed until the new Park Management Strategy Working Group has reported. We understand the reason for this request is that if the Strategy Working Group decides that **mountain bikes** should be allowed in the Park, a bigger and stronger bridge will be required..!

Trail a disgrace

Several walkers have commented on the condition of the trail leading from the creek up to the lake. The past winter has been particularly unkind to it. Loose soil and gravel has eroded away, and large stones are protruding though. The trail's condition has become even worse than that of the dam wall trail earlier in the year, when an elderly walker slipped on it, sustaining a broken arm.

After that event, The Adelaide Hills Council acted with uncharacteristic urgency, and within a few weeks the trail had been repaired and surfaced with dolomite.

Since the heavy winter rains, the creek trail has worsened and erosion has increased. Run-off undermined the surface, making it a slippery hazard for walkers when wet.

The Friends have arranged for volunteers from the Mt. Lofty Scout Group and Pembroke School to resurface this trail with dolomite. Work will commence on October 17 and will be completed over the following several weekends. Council will supply the dolomite and has given approval for this work.

Monadenia alert

The South African Weed Orchid *Monadenia bracteata* continues to invade our district. The weed orchid has the potential to spread very rapidly and poses a threat to both agricultural land and natural bushland. An eradication program was commenced several years ago, coordinated through the Friends of Scott Creek Conservation Park and the Adelaide Hills Council.

You can help by:

- disseminating this information to members of your group/local community;
- alerting neighbours/bushwalkers who could also help;
- checking your property and road verge for the weed orchid;
- removing the weed orchid if found.

Monadenia is characterised by a blue-green colour with maroon tinges to the leaves. It takes three years to mature and flower. It can self-pollinate to produce vast quantities of seed, which remain viable in the soil for many years. The seed is spread by wind and also on clothes, tools, equipment and in displaced soil. It is therefore very important to bag the plants carefully and to clean equipment.

Guidelines for eradication:

- Check known sites regularly from September to December.

- Dig out Monadenia plants (with tubers) before seed set. Old kitchen knives and screwdrivers are effective tools. A careful spot-spray application of glyphosate herbicide can also be effective during late September to mid October, in areas where the risk of off-target damage is minimal.
- Seal the dug-up plants securely in plastic bags for disposal by landfill or incineration. **Do not attempt to compost.** The filled plastic bags can also be placed inside regular heavy-duty garbage bags (black) and exposed to sunlight for some time. This will encourage decomposition of plant material prior to disposal.
- If you discover plants already shedding their fine seed (during December) avoid digging and do not attempt to bag plants to prevent contamination and spread elsewhere.
- Discretely mark the site, (perhaps with a small painted dowel/stake) to help you relocate the site next season.
- Carefully clean all digging implements, clothes and shoes, to prevent the spread of seed with contaminated soil.

For more information contact: Glenn Williams,
Natural Resources Officer
(Ph: 8408 0547; Mobile: 0417 832 405; Email:
gwilliam@ahc.sa.gov.au).

source: AHC Information sheet

Recent Working Bees

Date	No. of volunteers	Area	Work done
25-26 May 04	10	Stirling Park	National Bank volunteers. Newly planted area and areas south weeded.
20 June 04	10	Hender Reserve	Longifolia removed in southern area and in area adjoining Heathfield HS.
18 July 04	10	Woorabinda	Longifolia removed between lake and railway line
25 July 04	34	Stirling Park Planet Ark Tree Day	2500 trees planted
15 August 04	8	Stirling Park	Removed gorse etc from the area above the recent plantings near the Ethel trail.
19 September 04	7	Madurta Reserve	Perfect day. Removed broom, watsonia, cotoneaster in the western area.

Forthcoming Working Bees

(Volunteers meet at 10am, 2nd Sunday of each month)

- 17 October **Hender Reserve**..... Meet at Hender Road park entrance
 21 November....**Woorabinda Reserve**...Meet at Woorabinda Drive park entrance
 19 December ...**Stirling Park**.....Meet at Branch Road park entrance



AGM

The 2004 Annual General Meeting will be held in the Woorbinda main building on Saturday 23 October 2004 at 2.00 pm

Call for committee nominations

The FoSLP committee is looking for new members. The committee meets every month (except January) in the Woorabinda Environmental Education Centre. Members discuss the latest business concerning the Park, set working bee schedules, respond to correspondence and put recommendations to Council.

The work is not onerous, and you will have the satisfaction of playing a part in the future management of the Park.

The only requirement is a genuine commitment to the environmental goals that the Friends have set for the Park from the beginning or our organisation, ie:

- To conserve and protect the Park's indigenous vegetation and to help restore the degraded areas to natural bushland.
- To ensure a protective wildlife corridor.
- To maintain best practice water catchment management.
- To provide an educational focus for water, wildlife and vegetation studies.
- To advocate and promote the Park as an area for passive recreational activities for the community.

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 David Ragless, Meryllyn Browne and Jack Benlow.



Patron Anita Aspinall

Committee 2003/2004:

David Ragless (<i>Chair, Grants Officer</i>).....	8339 1038
Bob James (<i>Dep. Chair, Working bees</i>).....	8339 1903
Shirley Benlow (<i>Secretary</i>).....	8339 2218
John Allison (<i>Treasurer</i>).....	8339 1577
Kathy Bowman (<i>Public Officer, Membership Secretary, Webmaster</i>).....	8370 9177
Jack Benlow (<i>Newsletter editor</i>).....	8339 2218
Lorri Ragless (<i>OWN representative</i>)	8339 1038
Philip Hicks.....	8339 3156
Alistair McHenry.....	8339 5114
Russell Seaman.....	8398 0626
Neil Strong.....	8339 4085
Merilyn Browne.....	
Janet Bryan.....	
Glenn Williams (<i>Natural Resources AHC</i>).....	8408 0400

Affiliations

The Friends of Stirling Linear Park 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.



Friends of Stirling Linear Park — Membership application/renewal

I/we would like to join/renew membership of the Friends of Stirling Linear Park (strike out word 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.....	\$5.00
5 years.....	\$20.00

Name:.....

Address.....

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

Please return to: David Ragless, Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc., 6 Branch Rd, STIRLING SA 5152.