



Newsletter

Friends of Stirling Linear Park Inc.

• Winter 2006

Some Qualified Good News on Community Land Classification

Background

In May 2004, Adelaide Hills Council undertook to employ an independent external consultant to draft a Management Strategy for Stirling Linear Park. This followed perceived conflicts regarding the management and use of the Park between user interest groups and those involved in Park management.

The aims of the Management Strategy were:

- To provide a vision for the Park's management
- Determine the Park's environmental, educational, recreational and cultural values
- Acknowledge and respond to community and interest groups in accordance with the vision for the Park
- Provide clear guidelines on the type of recreational activities appropriate within the Park
- Recommend a management structure and identify roles and responsibilities for groups involved in the Park.

Urban and Regional Planning Solutions were the consultants engaged by Council to prepare

the Management Strategy. They were selected by a Council-appointed steering committee comprising two Councillors, a Council staff member and two members of Friends of Stirling Linear Park.

The consultants undertook the following:

- An ecological survey of the Park by independent scientists
- Community consultation by means of invited written submissions from key stakeholders and the wider public together with a public meeting designed to quantify community concerns and desires.

In October 2005 the draft Management Strategy was presented at a Council meeting and placed on public exhibition, inviting comment for further consideration by Council.

In March 2006 a revised Draft Management Strategy, incorporating further amendments from the community consultation, was completed. It was tabled at a Council meeting in April with the recommendation from Council staff that it be adopted. Councillors deferred a decision pending a site visit and a workshop regarding the Management Strategy. The workshop was held in

What's Inside

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Financial Support for FoSLP continues to grow | 2 |
| • Council Waters Down Dog Policy for Stirling Linear Park | 3 |
| • People Movement in the Park | 4 |
| • Incidence of Dog Attacks in Adelaide | 4 |
| • Short Courses 2006 | 5 |

Land Classification, continued

May.

In early June the Draft Management Strategy again came before Council with a staff recommendation that it be adopted. This Draft was fully supported by Friends of Stirling Linear Park. Councillors voted 7 to 4 to reclassify two of the four reserves that make up the Park. The reclassification changed the status of these two reserves away from conservation towards recreation. This was the opposite of what was recommended by the consultants' report and Council staff. (Both the report and staff recommended upgrading two reserves to higher conservation status.)

The (partly) good news

In early August 2006 Council again considered the issue of Community Land Classifications for Stirling Linear Park and voted overwhelmingly to amend its June 2006 decision. Council changed the status of all Stirling Linear Park Reserves back to what they were two years ago, before the consultants' report and the public consultation process began.

Council also voted to give the job of making recommendations about future

classification of the Park to a new advisory committee of community members which it is soon to appoint.

What does this all mean?

We are back to where we were two years ago. It seems that all the submissions, studies and public consultation over the last two years, which recommend higher conservation status for Stirling Linear Park, have been ignored by a majority of Adelaide Hills Councillors.

However, the worst case scenario of lower conservation status has been averted – at least for the time being.

What can you do?

It is expected that Council will soon call for expressions of interest from the public for appointment to a Stirling Linear Park Advisory Committee. If you are concerned about the future of the Park and have expertise which is relevant, please nominate for appointment.

Adelaide Hills Council elections are due in November. Be aware that Councillors Stan Evans and Leonne Taylor (Mount Lofty Ward Councillors) have consistently appeared to be unsympathetic to the

Financial Support for FoSLP Continues to Grow

During the last six months Friends have received over \$5000 in public donations to support our work. Since we were awarded 'Deductible Gift Recipient' status, enabling donors to gain taxation deductions, we have received a total of over \$12,000 in donations. We express our sincere thanks to these generous people for their support.

Council Waters Down Dog Policy for Stirling Linear Park

History

- In **1994**, the draft Park Management Plan prepared by the Friends at the request of Council stated, 'that dogs should be under effective control in the Park'.
- In **1995** the District Council of Stirling amended the wording to read that 'dogs must be on lead in the Park'. This was at the insistence of Councillor Stan Evans. This policy was not backed by a by-law and while some Council staff informed the public of the requirement it was not generally enforced.
- In early **2004** Council erected signs at all park entrances, 'Dogs on lead only'. Again, this requirement was not vigorously enforced by Council inspectorial staff – but some Council staff reminded people with off-lead dogs of their responsibility.
- In mid **2005** Council erected new signs following recommendations from its Animal Management Committee. These read, 'This is an area of environmental significance. It is recommended that dogs be on lead'.
- In early **2006** the new *Draft Management Strategy for Stirling Linear Park* was completed by external consultants who were contracted and funded by Council. The development of this plan took almost two years and involved extensive public consultation and review of scientific information regarding the Park. Friends Committee supported this report and its recommendations.

In respect of dogs the Draft Management Strategy recommended that dogs be on lead and that the development of a fenced dog exercise area at the southern end of Hender Reserve by investigated.

The Present Policy

In **June 2006** elected councillors surprisingly ignored the Draft Management Strategy recommendations on dogs, and, without waiting for Council's Animal Management Committee investigations and recommendations, passed a policy that

allows off-lead dogs in all of Stirling Linear Park.

The dogs are supposed to be:

- under effective control
- in close proximity to the person controlling them
- within eyesight at all times.

Previous experience in the Park indicates these instructions will generally not be observed.

Increase in Dog Numbers

Already, dog numbers and droppings have increased. As off-leash areas in other Local Government areas are restricted, locals fear an influx of dog owners seeking off-lead open space.

Community Reactions to the Relaxed Dog Policy

On one hand the dog lobby group, 'Parks for Paws' have welcomed the new freedom for their dogs.

On the other hand there is considerable concern from a wide range of members of the community. Public safety, particularly for very young and elderly park users, is a concern for many people. Many dog owners are concerned for the safety of their pets with regard to attacks by off-lead dogs. In relation to native animals and birds, we understand that staff of the Natural Resource Management Board for Adelaide and the Mt Lofty Ranges, and of the Department for Environment and Heritage, have expressed concerns to Council. We also understand that it is possible that the off-lead dog policy for the Park could be legally challenged under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The Future

It is clear that we have not yet heard the final word on this policy. Whatever transpires, it is extremely important that Council is informed of all incidents regarding dogs within the Park. Please make sure that you or anyone else who sees or is involved with any such incident

People Movement in the Park

FoSLP has undertaken a survey of people movement at key points within the Park using a people traffic counter device, which has been on loan to us from the *Be-active* initiative of the SA Government. In consultation with Adelaide Hills Council staff, the counter has been deployed since mid-February with the following results.

Counter Location	Count/Week*
Woorabinda Reserve – at entrance gate	737
Woorabinda Reserve – near notice board	709
Woorabinda Reserve – near bird hide	595
Woorabinda Reserve – on lake wall	476
Hender Reserve – at railway crossing	194
Stirling Reserve – end of Branch Rd entrance	165
Stirling Reserve – Ethel St entrance	141
Stirling Reserve – Branch Rd entrance near sign	134
Hender Reserve – Rossiter Rd entrance	110

The counter, which works on infrared body heat, does not distinguish the direction of movement, so the data provided is a simple count of passers-by. For example, someone entering and exiting by the same access point will register twice. However, taken as a whole the data provides a pattern of use and some indication of the relative intensity of use at the key points that have been surveyed so far.

Bob James and Neil Strong

Incidence of Dog Attacks in Adelaide

A study by the South Australian Health Commission published in 1997 found that about 6500 people are injured in Adelaide each year as a result of dog attacks and about 810 seek hospital treatment. Children aged 0-4 years were attacked and required hospital treatment twice as often as adults aged 21-59 years, and men aged over 76 years twice as often as men aged 36-75 years. Males were more at risk of attack than females for all age groups.

Compared with people aged 13-59 years, hospital admission rates were five times higher for the elderly and seven times higher for children 12 years and under. Of those children admitted to hospital, 90% were for head and facial bites.

The risk of attack from german shepherds, bull terriers, blue/red heelers, dobermans and rottweilers was four to five times than for other common breeds.

The study found that half of the population surveyed were concerned about being attacked by dogs. For some people, their fear was so great that it had a major impact on their behaviour, such as deciding not to leave the house to go shopping.

You can read the full article, *The public health impact of dog attacks in a major Australian city*, by Peter G Thompson, published on the Internet by *The Medical Journal of Australia*, at www.mja.com.au

Short Courses 2006

The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, in partnership with Trees for Life, is funding and presenting a number of short courses in 2006. These courses are intended to give local landholders and interested others a range of opportunities to complement and/or extend their interest in the natural environment in their area. The courses present detailed information on a range of native vegetation, land management and revegetation topics and give participants a chance to build skills in these areas.

All course presenters are highly skilled in the presentation of the course material and well versed in the course content and its practical application. All courses include field trips so participants can increase their knowledge and skills on the ground.

All courses are provided free of charge to all landholders in the Patawalonga, Torrens and Onkaparinga Watercourse Management Assistance Program and associated catchment groups, and to all Trees for Life members living in these catchments.

Since landholders come from a variety of property types and a range of land management backgrounds and knowledge bases, a range of courses has been developed. Basic Skill courses have an Advanced Skill course scheduled to follow later (often the next year). Participants are recommended to do the basic course on any topic before attempting the more advanced course, unless they already have significant skills in that area.

Understanding Your Local Vegetation - Basic Skills Course

4 evening classes & ½ day in field

- **Course SC-2**, Woorabinda, Stirling

Presenter: Janet Pedler

7.30-9.30 pm Thursday Sept 7, 14, 21, 28

Field trip Sunday am Sept 24

- **Course SC-3**, Echunga Primary School

Presenter: Sue Bradstreet

7.30-9.30 pm Wednesday Sept 6, 13, 20, 27

Field trip Sunday am Sept 24

- **Course SC-4**, Clarendon Primary School

Presenter: Jerry Smith

7.30-9.30 pm Tuesday Sept 5, 12, 19, 26

Field trip Sunday am Sept 24

This course is for beginners interested in the native vegetation on their property or in their area who want to build skills in native vegetation identification and understand how to protect and manage it.

The course will cover basic features of major plant groups and information on local vegetation associations will be provided. Features that indicate the health of native vegetation and how various land management styles affect vegetation will be briefly covered. The evening classes will be complemented by a bush ramble where participants can observe lots and try out their new skills in the field.

Knowing, Growing and Encouraging Native Grasses on your Property - Advanced Skills Course

2 evening classes and 2 x evening field trips

- **Course SC-5**, Woorabinda, Stirling

Presenter: Andrew Crompton

7.30-9.30 Thursday Nov 2

Field trips Thursday evening Nov 9 & 16

In this course participants will learn to recognise local native grasses and understand their role in natural ecosystems. Landholders will be shown how to assess the role that native grasses are currently playing on their properties, whether in remnant bushland or in open grasslands.

Participants will learn about seed collection, establishment of native grass and management of grassland in a variety of situations. The basic recognition skills learnt in the indoor sessions will be extended with two evening field trips. A variety of management options will be explored *in situ* on a long-term revegetation site.

**Friends of Stirling Linear Park Committee
2005-2006**

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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, Lorri Ragless, Merilyn Browne, Bob James and Neil Strong

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.



**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 for both individuals and family:	
1 year.....	\$5.00
5 years.....	\$20.00

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

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

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