

FROM THE COMMITTEE

A very successful meeting took place at the Braidwood RSL on the 29th March. Attendance numbers were encouraging and attendees provided the meeting with constructive suggestions which will assist the committee in their role to work for AFA members.

Representatives from the NPWS Advisory Committee were on hand to explain their roles & responsibilities. Both were keen to participate positively in discussion. They encouraged AFA to continue with their present working relationship & communications with NPWS.

WILD DOGS – Our local committee members have been working tirelessly & patiently with ongoing negotiations with PP Boards, Rural Forestry, NPWS, South Coast, Monaro Bemboka, Bombala and Braidwood representatives. They are presently attempting to consolidate evidence so they can lobby for maintaining an extra trapper through areas identified as “hot spots” of dog activity.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD YOU KNOW?

AFA committee would like to make members aware of the steady increases in wilderness areas. These are under the disguise of NATURE RESERVES.

They are on a sharp increase and have similar restrictions to declared wilderness areas. They are classified by the Conservation Foundation as “small undisturbed areas of ecological importance” and of course everything that has been a threat to wilderness e.g. horses, 4WD etc, is being used as a threat to Nature Reserves along with a “new” threat, wait for it....climate change!

It is the same story as the declaration of Wilderness Areas & according to the Conservation Foundation website \$180 million over 5 years will be allocated to

obtaining more Nature Reserves...this does not include maintaining them of course as with wilderness maintenance is not necessary!

After a browse over the Department of Environment & Climate Change website there are some 18 **new** Nature Reserve Management Plans out there for all of you that have the spare time to have a look at. Then write a submission on it only for it not to be acknowledged or even read, after you have, with goodwill, commented on it as requested.

These Nature Reserve Management Plans do not include the ones that have already been allocated in 2007. Some 150,262 hectares were gazetted as either National Park or Nature Reserve or both in 2007.

Nature Reserves are not all small areas. Whilst some can be only 1 hectare others, like the Pilliga Nature Reserve in Central NSW, can be 80,000 hectares.

On a more local area level there are plans of management out there for the Araluen Nature Reserve for comment and the Badga Swamp Nature Reserve was included in the draft plan of Management of the South East Escarpment Management Plan. It is not too far fetched to imagine present diminishing areas for recreation will soon become “heritage areas” where we will take our children & say “we were once allowed camp here.” That is if we can get into them after they have been locked up & maintained like our present wilderness areas.

Where and when will the persons elected by the voting public take a stand & halt the radical element of madness surrounding the process of acknowledging & managing our areas of ecological importance. Bring back some common sense into managing our National Parks and other recreational land. Closing areas is not the answer for long term management.

Members are reminded that they should all be asking our local members, NPWS representatives and politicians - Where is everyone going to go when they want to have a week-end in the bush?

While on the subject of where to go.... Local areas such as Bendethra are being stretched beyond what is an acceptable number of campers on any one week-end. AFA has been advocating for Bendethra and other camping areas on the South East Escarpment at their NPWS meetings. Easter just gone provided evidence that Bendethra is not coping with the strain of the ever increasing numbers of campers coming from other places because their own areas have been closed. Camping trailers, increased traffic & access are causing safety issues & are becoming dangerous. Limited toilet facilities are a health concern.

AFA committee will be putting forward their comments & thoughts on how these camping sites should be managed to the NPWS Advisory committee & at their meetings with NPWS representatives. Comments from our members would be appreciated.

Membership- AFA now have some 475 newsletters are distributed. This does not include individual family members or individual group or association members. Memberships will be needed to be renewed in July 2008. Reminder: Please let us know if your address or e-mail address changes before your renewal is due.

Calendars - Last meeting it was decided to laminate photos of old calendars. These can then be sold as a fundraiser for AFA. Cost etc to be announced soon. There are still 2008 calendars available at the reduced cost of \$5.00.
