

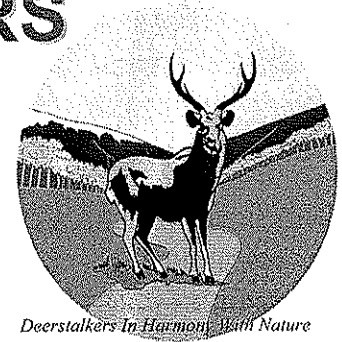
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5 MAY 2007

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES COMMITTEE

NO. 026
**GIPPSLAND DEERSTALKERS
ASSOCIATION INC.**



ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO: PO BOX 611 Bentleigh East 3165
Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Chairman :Hon John Pandazopoulos MP
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**Inquiry into the Impact of Public land management practices on
bushfires in Victoria**

The Gippsland Deer Stalkers has a membership network ranging from suburban Fawkner to Eden in southern New South Wales.

Some members live within the Alpine area, others at its fringes, most having spent a huge slice of their lives watching, studying and understanding the game species, alpine botany and the indigenous animals of the region.

Over the years our members have slept in the gullies, sat on the ridges, hiked the tops, drank from, traversed and no doubt fallen in the creeks and rivers gaining a rare insight, knowledge and understanding of the Alpine region bio diversity.

We have been shocked at the land management practices of Parks/DSE. Prescribed burning has been poorly targeted, badly planned and inadequate in the Alpine region.

Pursuing a policy of "cool burning" almost to the point of an ideological bent has encouraged extreme fuel build up all through the Alps. Pre fires we identified numerous areas choked with debris and understorey material so thick that not even deer or wombats could push their way through, let alone humans. Sadly now these areas have suffered extremely hot fire burn, destroying the trees at the base, cooking the earth and rendering the whole area sterile, stifling any re growth for years.

These areas have recently suffered landslip, rill and gully erosion as the last remains of topsoil have been washed off and into clog the creeks and rivers. The Moroka river area behind Licola is a classic example of this situation.

Recognising the effect of climate change on prescribed burning starts now from "ground zero" as most of the Alps has been burnt which must encourage and motivate Parks/DSE to seize every opportunity to control burn in all Alpine and suburban fringe areas.

The Victorian climate has altered in the past 5 years to an increased incidence of orographic rainfall (heavy localised showers) which can assist planning for prescribed burning events.

Parks/DSE must be more motivated and realistic in their approach to prescribed burning, using the cause and effect of the recent fires as a yardstick of their failure.

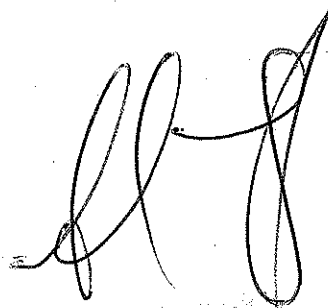
Attending fires around GlenMaggie, Bruthen and Toongabbie at friends properties ,we were left to our own devices and labours as helicopter and outside CFA support just wasn't available, being re directed to other areas, one occasion being told by a CFA official that 'Mt Buller ski resort was more important than houses". This highlights a consistent complaint from all Alpine communities that the CFA is too city centric, not listening to local advice and bullying local residents and members to get their own way----a case of fragile city egos prevailing against local wishes and advice.

Our members have long since recognised the benefit of alpine grazing on maintaining fuel reduction, the Wonnangatta Valley is a striking example, since cattle were moved out the river flats and ridges have become choked with grass, weeds and blackberry. In most areas alpine grazing can be environmentally sustainable, they can be part of the mix.

The "Science "advice has been selective and narrow in this case.

Finally I would strongly recommend this Committee establish a conduit to communicate with alpine communities and recreational user groups free of Parks/DSE spin and information filter.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Taylor
President
Gippsland Deer Stalkers Association.

