

Update from the Convenor 30 August 2010

Hello fellow FOTPINs

In this update I will outline some current issues and activities. This is not a newsletter for distribution beyond our membership, but rather a note to keep FOTPINs 'in touch' and informed.

In this update I'll cover:

- 1) Committee meetings and outcomes;**
- 2) the weed plan;**
- 3) land and water conservation;**
- 4) rabbits;**
- 5) membership and OH&S issues;**
- 6) review of our management rules and our future first AGM;**
- 7) our field activities; and**
- 8) FOTPIN priorities for spring, and how you would like to be involved?**

1) Committee meetings and outcomes.

The Coordinating Committee has met on three occasions, on 28 July, 31 July at the CPS Credit Union (to resolve to adopt the CPS Credit Union as our financial institution) and 23 August. It is a very active Coordinating Committee with some outcomes already, including:

- to develop a discussion paper on fire management at the reserve;
- to continue to monitor rabbit activity, and with this support PCL's rabbit control programs;
- adoption of the draft weed plan, and to further circulate it for comment;
- to develop a land and water conservation strategy for the reserve; and
- to stay abreast of all FOTPIN activities and to better coordinate them.

If you wish to read Committee minutes or documents, please contact Heather Burness our Secretary (mburness@bigpond.com).

2) The Weed Plan. A reminder that the Committee seeks comments on the draft Community Weed Management Plan (CWMP) released in May. The CWMP is available at <http://www.ginninderralandcare.org.au/category.php?id=54> or from me fotpin@optusnet.com.au.

We plan to finalise the CWMP early 2011, and release it with the first six monthly implementation report. This brief report will be along the lines of Appendix 1(e) of the draft plan, attached to a newsletter.

Would everyone that is weeding at The Pinnacle Nature Reserve please record the weed species you treat, and how many hours you worked on each weed in each paddock. Any queries please contact Warren Bond, Bob Hodgson or myself. If your weeding is not part of an organised weeding party then please contact me so I can let you know the current weeding priorities according to the Plan.

3) Land and water conservation. A team of FOTPINs are surveying and assessing soil condition and erosion in the reserve, the "Bottom Pinnacle" and the Kama property. This is primary input to developing a land and water conservation plan across that 275ha area.

We are using the CSIRO's Landscape Function Analysis methodology, developed by fellow FOTPIN David Tongway, to assess the condition of our tracks, ephemeral drainage lines (waterways) and soil surface condition. Warren Bond and Geoff McAlpine have surveyed a portion of the tracks, Heather Burness and

Andrew Yates the same for drainage lines, and Alan Thomas and I are leading the work on surface assessment.

If you are interested in learning more about the survey and assessment process - especially with a view to helping out - please contact Warren, Heather or myself. More help is always needed.

4) Rabbits. There are various ways of monitoring rabbit numbers. Several jurisdictions including NSW, Qld and the Commonwealth point to monitoring active burrow entrances, where the conversion factor (during the non-breeding season) is for every 1.6 active burrows there is 1 adult rabbit.

Following FOTPIN warren mapping Bob, Warren and I returned to a sample of the warrens and counted the active burrow entrances to estimate rabbit population and density. From this I've estimated 1066 active burrows over 275ha. This equates to some 670 rabbits, and an average density of 2.4 rabbits/ha. In several areas, especially 'rabbit central', the estimated density is around 40 rabbits/ha.

I have received expert advice that ideally we need to monitor rabbits pre-treatment, late winter and late spring. I recently repeated the active burrow count of the same sample of warrens surveyed in April. This and a late spring survey will inform a Community Rabbit Control Program that the Coordinating Committee is looking to develop with PCL (our role is warren monitoring). PCL conducts spotlight monitoring and have committed to giving us their data to see if we can correlate their values with ours.

Some of you may know the ACT Government's 2010-11 budget does not include funding for rabbit control, which is disappointing. I will be following this issue up with our MLAs, in part to gain more information.

5) Membership and OH&S issues.

We presently have 23 signed up members, but there are many more of you that have not had an opportunity to formally join FOTPIN. The larger our membership, especially active membership, potentially the greater the say we have over management of the reserve by the ACT Government, and the better placed we are to secure grant monies for our projects.

I have attached the FOTPIN membership form for you to print, complete and forward to Warren Bond (Treasurer) if you wish.

Also, may I encourage everyone to complete volunteer record sheets, whether you are working or doing survey work. Any activity at the reserve needs to be covered by PCL's third party liability insurance and to this end everyone needs to complete the form provided by PCL. This information also gives an excellent overview of the number of volunteer hours of work expended in caring for the Pinnacle Nature Reserve. I have attached the individual volunteer sign-on form, which, once completed, can be forwarded to Heather through any means that is easiest for you. You could hand them to a Committee member or, alternatively, hand deliver or post to Heather's mail box (61 Ambalindum St Hawker 2614).

6) The rules and first AGM.

At our Special Meeting on 25 July FOTPIN Management Rules were agreed on the proviso that the Committee would review and make recommendations on the rules, and bring those recommendations back to FOTPINs at our first AGM. At that meeting we will also elect a Committee.

The next Coordinating Committee meeting is on the 25 October, at which we'll give detailed consideration to the draft rules and any comments on this matter received from FOTPINs since the Special Meeting. If you would like to review the rules and possibly provide input please contact Heather for a copy of the rules and to let us know you are interested. Please send your comments to Heather. (fotpin@optusnet.com.au)

7) Field activities.

Rosemary Blemings (our immediate past convener) leads guided walks the morning of every third Saturday. Bob leads weeding teams every Thursday morning (weather permitting) and I have been leading weeding teams every other Sunday morning. However, the weather has not been obliging. Also, I have needed to focus on erosion and rabbit survey work - if anyone is interested in leading the Sunday weeding events please let me know.

As the weather warms up we'll need well attended weekday and weekend working groups. If you haven't already, please register your interest in joining these field activities by contacting Rosemary, Bob or myself (can supply email addresses).

8) FOTPIN priorities for spring: how would you like to be involved?

There is much to do in spring, and we need volunteers for the following activities:

- **weeding.** Those of us certified to use herbicides will be spraying St John's Wort, African Lovegrass, Patersons Curse and Blackberry. We need volunteers to hoe Thistles and Verbascum species, and assist with cutting and dabbing Cootamundra Wattle, and re-shooting Briar Rose and woody weeds (Bob grubbed most of these last season!). We will also need people capable of using a brushcutter to slash Saffron Thistles late spring;
- **rabbit surveys.** We need a rabbit monitoring team! Could one or two people join me to learn to use a GPS for active burrow entrance mapping, and take up this task? I expect we'll do comprehensive surveying each autumn (like we did this year) and sample warrens on a consistent route late winter and late spring. This will give us time series information on the rabbit population and effectiveness of rabbit control, important data needed to support rabbit control activities;
- **kangaroo survey.** I've had early conversations with PCL to undertake a survey of the roo population across The Pinnacle Nature Reserve area. If you're interested in either helping to design/organize the survey and/or be part of the survey team please let me know;
- **native grass project.** This project is outlined in Appendix 3 of the Weed Plan. Don Driscoll will need volunteers to do the field work. Please let me know if you are interested in being involved in this project, should we be successful in our grant application;
- **erosion survey.** See above in Item (3). Please let us know if you are interested in helping; and
- **conducting spring surveys.** Don is designing and leading a spring survey of lizards and flora. If you are interested in helping with this - an important input to our biodiversity plan - please advise Don or myself.

Volunteering for our field work is a great way of being "out there", being part of a network, connecting with people, and learning more about the Reserve itself. It's also a great opportunity to enjoy the warming spring sun and escape the winter hibernation..

If you have any queries on the above or wish to contact the Committee on any issues to do with the reserve please email or phone myself on fotpin@optusnet.com.au (6255 1095) or Heather Burness (secretary) on fotpin@optusnet.com.au.

Best wishes

Pax
Convener