



## fotpin update #21 November 2017

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Winter is supposed to be the quiet time of the year, but this winter has been anything but! There may not have been much happening up at the Reserve, but in the background things have been proceeding very quickly and some of those developments will start to impact on the Reserve and on our fotpin ParkCare volunteers quite soon, as discussed below.

### Whitlam Pipeline

We have had a series of meetings with representatives from the ACT government and Icon Water in the last three or four months, and these have yielded a number of outcomes:

- While some sections of the construction corridor for the pipeline will be 12 metres wide as we were initially told, other sections will need to be 20 metres wide to accommodate vehicle traffic while the trench for the pipe is being excavated. There will also be a number of temporary storage areas fenced off that will be used as depots for the sections of pipe and the sand and gravel that will form the bed for the pipe.

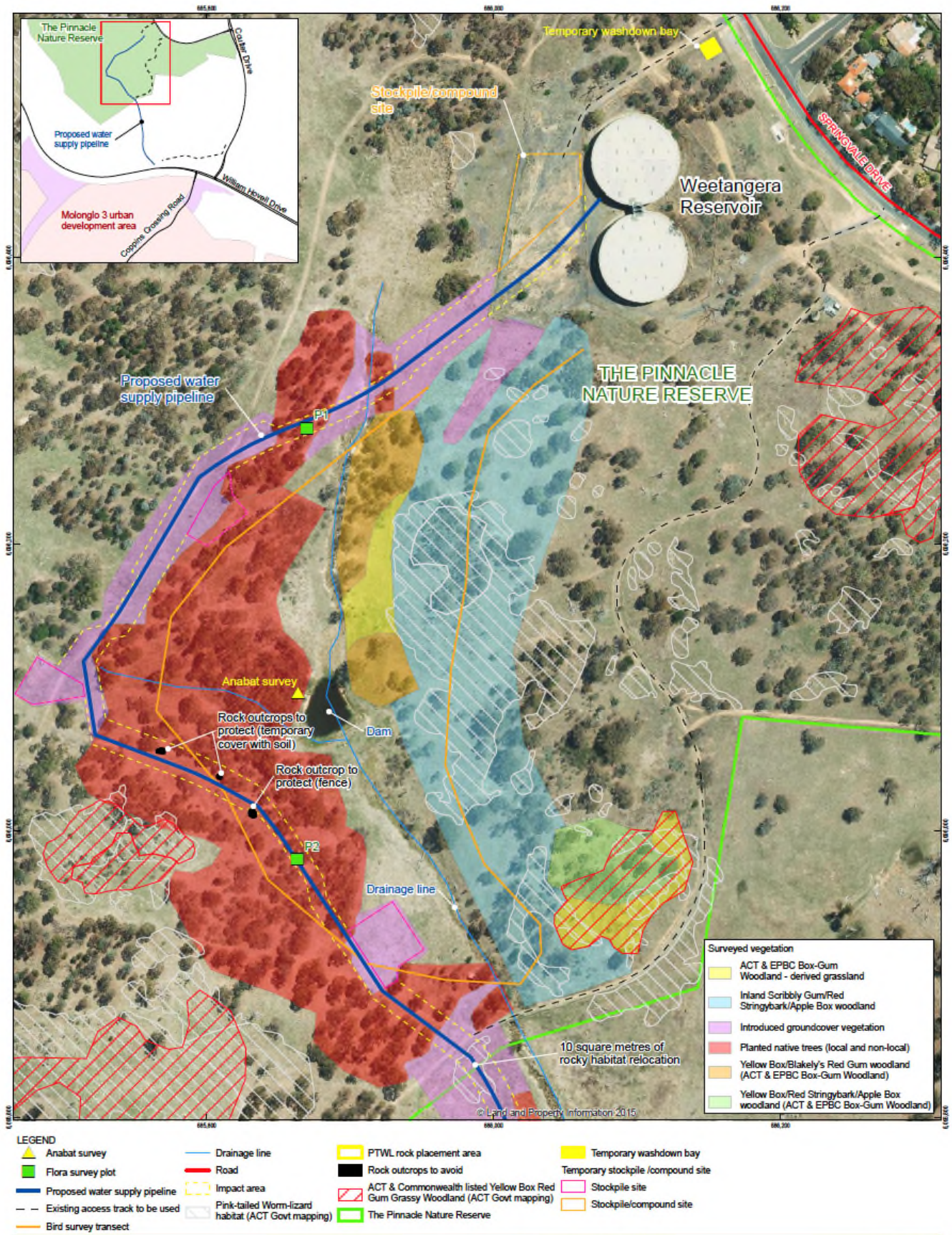
The [map below](#) shows the final alignment of the corridor and the locations of the storage areas. The blue line shows the path of the pipe itself, the corridor is indicated by the dotted yellow lines and the storage areas are the pink-outlined polygons adjacent to the corridor. One important point is that temporary fencing will be erected along the full length of the construction corridor from the outset, and it will remain in place throughout the project, which will run for 9-12 months. So gates will be provided in the temporary fencing to allow passage for Reserve users and for wildlife. Where the corridor runs along existing tracks, a detour will be provided.

- A meeting on September 12 with ACT Government representatives, including PCS\* Ecologist Richard Milner, discussed the best rehabilitation treatments for the excavated area and the adjacent areas that will be affected by the project. Richard has been supervising the restoration of Pink-tailed Worm Lizard habitat in the Molonglo Valley and has also been conducting trials of different grassland restoration methods in Kama Nature Reserve, in particular a method used by Greening Australia and Bush Heritage that involves scraping off the top few inches of topsoil and re-sowing the exposed subsoil with native grasses and forbs. The current proposal is that large phalaris patches near the creek, both up near the tanks and down at the bottom (which will be the site for a large storage area) will be planted mostly with eucalypts and shrubs, since planting groundcover species is unlikely to be successful given the density of the existing groundcover. Where the pipeline will run along the Valley track, it was proposed that we get the contractors to agree to "rehabilitate" the two planned storage areas by scraping them and planting with native shrubs, trees and ground cover species.
- On a related topic, we have also now established a good working relationship with Icon Water with respect to weed control around the Icon water tanks. On September 4th, John Fitz Gerald and I met with James Gray from Icon's Environment and Sustainability team to ensure that African Lovegrass seeds were removed from a site where excavations for new connecting pipes were planned. James, who used to work for Greening Australia, was very committed and eager to ensure that weed control within the Icon fenced area continues

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\* ACT Parks and Conservation Service

into the future. It is going to be very helpful to have James as a contact point within Icon Water.



## **Joint ParkCare Display at Jamison Centre, 8-10 September**

This year's event went extremely well. Jean Geue handed over the coordination to Linda Beveridge from the Friends of Black Mountain this year, and Linda did an excellent job of organising the different groups involved, though Jean was still closely involved throughout, as always. As usual, a number of fotpin volunteers put their hands up to help out and there was also a good turnout from the other groups involved, so all the time slots had more than enough people. The participating groups were fotpin, Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Mount Painter, Friends of Grasslands, Canberra Indian Myna Action Group and Friends of Black Mountain. My thanks to all the fotpins who volunteered their time at the display and to Elizabeth Smith for helping to organise the materials for our display.

## **Interaction with Belconnen High School**

In September, I was contacted by Trish Vanegas, a teacher at Belconnen High, to ask whether we would be willing to assist again with visits by student groups to the Pinnacle to further their nature studies. I happily agreed, as did our Secretary Keith Thomas, and he and I met two groups of students on September 12th and 13th and accompanied them on a short hike to the top of the Pinnacle. Both groups of students were delightful -- very engaged and curious and surprisingly (for me!) polite and respectful. I'd like to think that we all got something valuable from the experience, and it was nice to be able to point out some of the delights the Reserve has to offer, including nesting magpies and a migrating cuckoo that obligingly perched nearby as we were addressing the group.

Trish also asked me whether we might have a small project the students could undertake as part of the celebration of "Belconnen Day" (a new one for me!) on Friday October 20th. There would be about 60 students and Trish estimates that they would have around 45 minutes in the Reserve. It occurred to me that they could usefully be employed collecting together the tree guards and stakes in the Central and Dam paddocks, an exercise that is long overdue and would enable us to re-use the guards and stakes for a possible Autumn planting. Trish presented this idea to the school as a possible activity and it was duly approved. Our Coordinator Warren Bond assisted by providing a vehicle and trailer and on the day the exercise went extremely well, with all the guards and stakes being collected and stacked in the trailer in a remarkably short time. It's amazing what can be achieved when teenagers are pointed in the right direction!

I'd like to thank Trish and her colleagues for making this event happen and I look forward to building further on this relationship between fotpin and Belconnen High. My thanks also to Warren for providing the vehicle and for helping to stack the guards and stakes in the shed in North Kama for future re-use.

## **Vegwatch Forum**

This event was held on September 5<sup>th</sup> out at Jerrabomberra Wetlands and was aimed at bringing all the main participating groups and organisations in the Vegwatch project up to speed on where the project is currently at.

Myself and Sarah Hnatiuk from the Friends of Mount Painter were asked to give short presentations talking about our experiences of Vegwatch as it functions in our reserves. Both of us managed to wrestle PowerPoint into successfully providing us with background images for our talks. Mine drew on the historical images we have for the Reserve and discussed how the landscape has changed from pre-European times through to the clearing of the land for farming, the establishment of the Reserve, the huge tree-planting programs of the 80s and 90s, and finally our own modest revegetation efforts and the way that the Vegwatch program dovetails into our monitoring of the 2011 Spicers plantings in the northwest corner of Kama paddock.

Other topics presented at the Forum included a discussion of using the Collector smartphone app for vegwatch monitoring and a presentation of the ACT Government's new CEMP (Conservation Effectiveness Monitoring Program) as a tool for grassland monitoring. A workshop on lowland native woodland monitoring is planned for next year.

## Noticeboard

You may have noticed that the perspex on our noticeboard has been stained for some time by the glue used by animal rights protestors to stick up posters during the ACT Government's kangaroo culls. Despite the best efforts of members Elizabeth Smith and Gilbert Hughes to clean the glue off the perspex (using ever more powerful solvents), we've come to the conclusion that the panels are no longer salvageable and PCS has agreed to replace them, along with the corflute backing inside the noticeboard, which is breaking down due to age. We're optimistic that the noticeboard renovation will happen soon.

## Butterflies at the Pinnacle

I recently noticed that butterfly expert (and birdo!) Suzi Bond is planning guided butterfly walks at the ANBG, Black Mountain and Mt Painter, among others, so I arranged to meet with her and discuss the possibility of running similar walks at the Pinnacle. At the meeting, we discussed the vegetation types at the Pinnacle and Suzi was quite excited to come and take a look at what the Reserve might have to offer in terms of butterfly habitat. We'll be scouting out some possible areas in January with the aim of running a guided walk in early February. If this is an interest of yours (or you would like it to be!), mark February 11th on your calendar and keep an eye out for more information.

## Spring Walks

For the Spring bird walk on September 24<sup>th</sup>, a good-sized group of eight people were treated to a nice selection of the local residents and a few of the arriving migrants. While the morning was a bit windy, there were pockets out of the wind where we caught up with some nice birds. The migrating Grey Fantails were conspicuous throughout, as were the various thornbill species. The highlights of the walk included spotting a group of six Varied Sittellas in the treetops and finding a pair of Weebills (Australia's smallest bird) busy building their exquisite domed nest, not much bigger than a tennis ball and made mostly out of cobwebs, fine grass and feathers. We also spotted several Magpies sitting on newly finished nests and had a brief view of a Nankeen Kestrel hovering over Hawker paddock in search of prey.

The wildflower walk to the offset on October 15<sup>th</sup> attracted a total of 15 walkers, including some from the Field Naturalists Association, thanks to a bit of entrepreneurial initiative by Rosemary Blemings. While the show of wildflowers was subdued compared with last year's amazing show, there was still plenty to see, with Billy Buttons and some of the other native daisies flowering, as well as a few Early Nancys and a nice show of Creamy Candles (*Stackhousia monogyna*). My thanks to members John Fitz Gerald, Nola McKeon and Rosemary Blemings for generously agreeing to be our guides for the walk.

## Annual Planning Meeting

This year's annual planning meeting with PCS was held at the PCS Mitchell depot on October 21<sup>st</sup> with ParkCare Ranger Phil Selmes and Senior Ranger Northside Simon Stratford. The meeting covered PCS plans for weed control in the areas around the Pinnacle Nature Reserve for the coming year and the rabbit treatments due to take place in the coming months. We also discussed the Whitlam pipeline briefly. Simon has been present at a number of our meetings with the ACT Government's project design staff, so he is pretty familiar with the problems we are likely to face. Given the constant merry-go-round of local PCS rangers, it's good to have reasonably long-term contact with rangers like Phil and Simon who have many years of experience in senior positions.

## Grant for Aboriginal Heritage Walk

Back in 2014, we ran a couple of Aboriginal Heritage Walks led by local Ngunawal men Wally and Tyronne Bell and funded by the Ginninderra Catchment Group. Those walks were extremely popular at the time and many people have since asked when we are going to run more walks on the same themes.

Earlier this year, with the support of the Ginninderra Catchment Group, we submitted an application for a grant under the ACT Government's Heritage Grants process, and I'm very pleased to announce that our application was successful. This means that we will have the

funding to run two more Aboriginal Heritage walks at the Pinnacle in 2018. I have yet to finalize a date for the first of the walks, but we are aiming for a Sunday during the 2018 Heritage Festival (April 14 - 29). The second walk will be in Spring 2018. Once we have a definite date, I'll be in touch.

### **Weetangera Primary School Fete**

The fotpin stall at last weekend's fete at Weetangera Primary once again proved to be very successful, with many people stopping by to look at our display, chat to the volunteers and help themselves to the PCS promotional giveaways on offer. As a result, fifteen new people signed up to be on our mailing list. My thanks to Olivia and Melissa and all their hard-working colleagues at the school and to our stalwart volunteers who did such a terrific job of staffing the stall on the day.

John Brannan  
Convenor  
November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017