



# 2024-25 ParkCare Annual Planning Information Session

## Minutes

**Date:** Tuesday 30 July 2024

**Time:** 10am – 1pm

**Location:** Online via Microsoft Webinar

**Attendees:** Volunteer representation from: Cooleman Ridge ParkCare, Friends of Aranda Bushland, Friends of Black Mountain, Friends of Gossan Hill, Friends of Mount Majura, Friends of Mount Painter, Friends of the Pinnacle, Friends of Tuggeranong Hill, Friends of Wanniasa Hills, Gudgenby Bush Regenerators, Isaacs Ridge/Mount Mugga Mugga ParkCare, Mount Ainslie Weeders, National Parks Association, Oakey Hill ParkCare, Red Hill Bush Regenerators and Urambi Hills ParkCare

### Introduction

*By Lauren McQueen (Volunteer Programs Manager)*

#### **Celebrating 2023-24:**

- Great reporting this year (hours, activities), something we are working to improve on to best understand the breadth of ParkCare involvement across PCS.
- Field map reporting was down, but we know that's not the case! Reminder to keep mapping! We presented on this data at the Invasive Plants Working Group (IPWG) meeting yesterday, hugely helpful in understanding ParkCarers work and impact.
- Launch of walks, anniversary celebrations, enviro grants, community events, schools
  - Ian Loiterton Walk
  - FoMM 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Grants: PTWL photo habitat monitoring project
  - Events: Planting, wildflower walks, other guided walks
  - Campbell Primary w/ Mt Ainslie, Macquarie Primary w/ Mt Painter, Canberra Grammar w/ Red Hill
- Recognition of Volunteers:
  - Landcare ACT – Vera Kurz (Individual), Sarah Sharpe & Jenny Andrews (Women in Landcare), ParkCare program highly commended (Community Partnership Award)
  - ACT Volunteering – Majura Pines Trails Alliance
- First ACT Environmental Volunteers Conference
- ACT Weeds Manual launched



- Improved cross directorate collaboration between PCS, NRM and TCCS (including conference, regular meetings, power tools review, etc).

## ParkCare Program Update

*By Lauren McQueen (Volunteer Programs Manager)*

- Annual Planning:
  - There will be a revised annual plan template for 2024/25.
  - Survey will be sent to Convenors to get feedback on how we can improve individual group annual planning meetings.
  - Will look to work mapping into annual plans moving forward.
- Training (General):
  - Stock training calendar for July-December is up, including First Aid, ChemCert as core sessions.
  - Looking into whether we can offer a ChemCert course on weekends.
  - Currently working with providers for training on snake awareness, plant ID, erosion control, rehabilitation projects, butterflies and moths, and will announce when these sessions are available via the Hub.
  - Working internally to develop a session on practical chemical use and application.
- Field Maps and Hub Training:
  - Field Maps will now be mainly delivered in the field on an on-request basis.
  - Please let your ParkCare Ranger know if you would like a Field Maps session for your ParkCare group.
  - The preference is to use Field Maps over Canberra Nature Mapr for weed sightings, as this allows for more accurate data, particularly for non high-profile weeds.
  - If you need any support in navigating the ParkCare hub, please let us know. We can do 1:1 sessions, either in person, or online.
- Uniforms and Corflutes:
  - New shirts were announced yesterday afternoon.
  - We are asking that you please pool your orders for your group.
  - Limited supply in first order run, with preference to go to most active volunteers first.
  - Ordering available via the online form.
  - When we supply the volunteer shirt order to your group, we will also provide the refreshed corflute signs (w/ cable ties & UV resistant markers).
- Power Tools:
  - Continuing to progress.
  - ParkCare have purchased the power tool stock, WHS meetings have been held, working on induction for volunteers as next step.
- Sign in Sheets & Hours:
  - To reduce admin burden for volunteers, please text a photo of your sign-in sheets after your working parties to your relevant ParkCare Ranger, and we will upload the hours for you.
  - Individual hours (when volunteering not as part of a group activity) should still be logged individually.



- **Hub Refresh & Recruitment:**
  - As part of branding, and in response to feedback, the Hub will be getting a refresh.
  - We will be reaching out for a blurb from each group, and will move to consistent formatting/presentation of information on each ParkCare group page on the Hub.
  - Focus this year on improving recruitment and induction processes.
- **Rangers on the Ground:**
  - Priority is to get Marty/Tenzin (ParkCare Rangers) on the ground with groups as much as possible.
  - We know some group Convenors are happy to not have Ranger attendance, however ParkCare Survey data is showing a desire for more Ranger attendance at activities.
  - Recognises that some weekends there are several activities on one day and Rangers cannot be all places at once.

## Q&A:

**How do the maps you've just described (Annual Planning) match up with work that Lori has been doing?**

Lori is creating Landscape Implementation Improvement Plans (LIIPs) for nature reserves, the maps will show clear areas of where they propose to plant, rehabilitate, for approval. ParkCare activity mapping will look to identify where volunteers are working on reserves, and will be 'manual' hard copy maps until a platform can be established – this will likely take some time.

**Did we get any recommendations from the consultation we participated in on annual planning? I think it was last year?**

ParkCare looking into.

**What about off-site volunteer hours?**

Keeping track of all volunteer hours is important to maintaining resourcing of the program, and in recognising the efforts of volunteers. These should be logged individually.

**There is a brief description of the reserve and its key points in the CNP Management Plan, could this be used? (Hub Refresh)**

Yes, we are hoping to have a paragraph we draft on the values of the reserve, taken from the Parks website and the management plan, and then a paragraph on 'About the Group', that talks about the history of the group.

## Invasive Plants Control Program Update

*By Harley Baker (Biosecurity Team Leader)*

- Appreciate effort of volunteers in protection, prevention and control of invasive species.
- Upcoming seasonal outlook:
  - La Nina predicted again: wet spring and summer until at least December



- Significant grass growth – African lovegrass (ALD), Chilean needlegrass (CND), serrated tussock (ST) and other exotic grasses (including paspaulum and phalaris)
  - Recommend becoming aquatinted with highest risk grasses in reserve, and giving focus to those species, particularly around high value areas. These grasses are drivers of change and can create rapid change.
  - Wet weather = St John's Wort (StJW) season. Raised at recent Invasive Plants Working Group (IPWG), by Sarah on behalf of ParkCare. Looked at amount of work being done. One promising outcome would be introduction of brush cutting for ParkCare Volunteers
  - We have done some trials, preliminary evidence shows we can reduce density by using mechanical methods (slashing). Won't eliminate entirely, but reduction is achievable.
- Canberra Nature Map (CNM) Project:
  - Dr Paul Downey & Michael Mulvaney working together on aligning the Paul Downey risks ([link to excel](#)).
  - New column on the 'Species Information' on CNM that identifies the risk rating.
  - StJW has also moved up to a higher risk. Keep an eye on this.
  - Having on CNM avoids need to trawl through excel for risk ratings – and will also give expert certified ID photos
- 2023-24 Weeds Dashboard:
  - Red diamonds are the CNM records of invasive species. These are supplementary to mapping on Field Maps.
  - Mapping on Field Maps is still preferred way for our data collection, but we can now supplement with IDs from CNM
  - Showed example of viewing a CNM logging on the dashboard – shows the invasiveness risk rating, where it was found, who found it, the date, and the ID photo, with link to CNM for that observation.
  - Polygon over top shows where treated
  - Demonstrated how to turn off/hide the CNM layer if too busy, to just see where control work has been done.
  - Demonstrated current dashboard.
    - Tool to see what is happening on your reserve, what species are being targeted, and can also choose to view the not-treated layer.
- Working on updating our own internal eradication targets. Current list of species we believe we can eradicate. Working to realign species with densities found across ACT, and deciding whether or not they are still targets for eradication.
  - In terms of what vols can provide – a lot of the new/emerging plants, are being observed through citizen science/CNM. Very valuable to identify things that look out of the ordinary.
  - The earlier we detect, the earlier we can move on eradication, rather than costly control work.
- Photo monitoring
  - For anyone currently doing it, very valuable over time.
  - To consider if this can be added to Field Maps training and annual planning.



- Really helpful for volunteers and also new Parks staff to see reduction in species over the years. Can be overwhelming to see seas of StJW, but what we see now could actually be far better than 5 years prior.
- Remote Mowing Machines
  - Rolling these out on blackberry specifically.
  - Did StJW control also as part of trial of mechanical removal of StJW.
  - Particularly helpful in Blackberry.
  - Contributes to herbicide reduction.
  - Leave for one calendar year, then significant regrowth for herbicide application treatment.

### Q&A:

#### **We need advice on bridal creeper treatment and the problem with Southern Blue Gum invading grassy woodland?**

Herbicide (brushoff) is good if you have large infestations/density. Bio team run yearly program across the sites we know. Some input so far is that many infestations are quite small, and careful manual removal is a valuable tool (fragmentation). Blue gum is listed as a minor weed and does not have a risk rating currently. I would be careful about removing it as we found under the new tree Act that we may be committing an offence removing or poisoning trees over a certain size. I would suggest having the area Ranger attend the blue gum site in question for an assessment.

#### **For the CNM red diamond layer, is it possible to just upload the higher risk exotics as in some areas there's just too much red and hard to locate the high risk weed locations?**

At the moment, importing the whole layer each night. Do understand it makes the map quite busy, but if you zoom in to your individual reserve it becomes much more manageable. Alternative option could also be to go to the CNM homepage and look for specific species to spot locations.

#### **Questions on Remote Mowing Machines & Blackberry:**

- **How are the blackberry roots dealt with after the machine?**
- **Is there a strategy for habitat replacement when large blackberry infestations are removed?**
- **It has been found that erosion is a problem after blackberry removal on slopes etc. Could plans be done to replace blackberry with other plants for habitat and erosion management which needs to be fairly prompt.**

We currently wait about a year for the plants to regrow and come through with follow-up herbicide. Machine does not remove the roots. Purpose is to remove density/heights to make it manageable.

Habitat replacement is on a case-by-case basis. Have discussed with Canberra Birds. Tend to fragment/take a piecemeal approach if there is a risk of erosion/species displacement due to removal.



### **If mapped on not treated, does it automatically fall of mapping once treated?**

Currently no. At the moment the system is reliant on people going back to check to ensure that they are not overlapping in treatment works (checking untreated versus treated polygons).

**Comment: It'd be good to have a chart on using Field Maps vs CNM. I'd only use CNM if I didn't know an ID.**

## **Invasive Animals Update**

*By Mark Sweaney (Manager, Invasive Animals and Overabundant Wildlife)*

- Four people now managing invasive animals (including rabbits, feral deer, pigs, wild dog mitigation and kangaroo management).
- Exciting time for the team with additional funding for aerial shooting and urban rabbit control.
- Rabbit Control:
  - Contractors working on sites where traditional control methods have struggled.
  - Moved to program where we fumigate as many warrens/burrows as possible. And then compliment that with thermal assisted shooting.
  - The shooting is working really well as replacement for the poisoning component. More effective in urban reserves where using poisons is quite limited, and much more humane. Big benefit is we can implement it any time of year.
  - Working across a number of sites, including Ainslie/Majura, Pleasant, Percival, Offsets parts, Red Hill, and more.
  - Rabbit spotlight monitoring for these sites, have been above acceptable threshold for a number of years, and have been able to reduce most areas to now within threshold. Can depend on type of habitat, how well we can access burrows, and how well we can shoot the area.
  - We can now do all the work without closing reserves. Flexibility to operate how and when we need to. Can react to seasonal/smaller increases. Treat smaller areas as they arise.
  - Comes at a time when rabbits are doing really well. So well timed.
  - Working with TCCS – City Hill and Grevillea Park. Have formed a working group with Defence, NCA, War Memorial, Parliament House and meeting with them – they are coming on board with the same methods. Using urban funds to treat areas adjacent to conservation areas.
  - Can't treat all areas (e.g. Ainslie Village). Some pockets we just have to tolerate a higher density and do what we can to keep on top.
  - Now at stage of determining how often to revisit sites to maintain density levels. And when knockdown recurrence are needed.
- Aerial Program:
  - Using thermal technology
  - Like rabbits, feral deer/pigs are doing very well.



- Concentrate on areas close to town, where populations are increasing in some areas (Bullen, Molonglo etc).
  - ACT still has quite low densities (particularly in Namadgi), so we are maintaining low densities. In some areas, river corridors/Googong, density has built, but not comparable to other jurisdictions, but still want to manage.
  - City like Canberra with good connectivity and large adjacent protected areas, can end up with high levels of peri-urban densities.
  - This control is to prevent the build up to prevent control needing to happen in town.
- Kangaroo Management:
    - Northern Grasslands have all been at target density for quite a few years now.
    - Allowed us to take on new sites, and more sites that are challenging operationally (e.g. Red Hill, which is hilly with not many open areas).
    - When we go in dryer times it's certainly when notice it the most.
    - The only reserve that is now counted where we don't do control is Mt Taylor – another reserve where abundance is quite high, the nature of this reserve would make it another challenging site. We haven't taken on just due to number of other sites taken on. There is a limit to resources we can put towards control every year.
    - Great to see the program being successful.

## Q&A:

**When rabbits from the Reserve are dealt with but have become established in the suburb, what can be done?**

Often we find they have a preferred habitat, and the population will centre around it. If they extend into other areas, they are likely to move back (if suburbs are preferred habitat we don't have a lot of ways to treat that). Trialling it in places like Nicholls.

**Is there a reason why no rabbit control has happened on Tuggeranong Hill?**

CNP South do undertake spotlighting. And so far numbers haven't jumped up compared with other reserves. Undertaken triage process for CNP South. All reserves are spotlighted quarterly.

**Where can we map rabbit warrens? There used to be a CNP north warren layer but not currently on Field Maps (with the ParkCare logon)**

Will need to review – tried to fix it. The mapping is relatively new, so need to decide on format moving forward. Once sorted we will notify.

**Have you done work on area near CSIRO and work with CSIRO on this area? (near Black Mountain)**

Control is done by same contractor that we use. Have been getting them to map the work they do, but might not have done it in this area yet.

**What is the target density for kangaroo numbers?**





This is captured in the conservation cull advise on the website, provided by Office of Nature Conservation and the monitoring completed by that team.

**Any update on wild dog control in NNP in relation to Dingo management in places like the Gudgenby Valley?**

Wild dog program has been in place for about/at least 15 years. Full time trapper along edge of the park. As a jurisdiction we do least amount of trapping, considered successful in sense that we meet objective (maintaining population)

**Update on the Kangaroo Fertility Control Program?**

Going really well, run by Office of Nature Conservation who can provide more advice.

**Any plans to monitor sambar deer on Mt Majura?**

Won't monitor when density that low, rely on sightings/reports. If you notice deer sign in reserves it's worth reporting to your Ranger. And getting familiar with 'Deer Sign' – Pest Smart is a good ([link](#)).

## **Fire Management Unit Update**

*By Tony Scherl (Director, Fire Planning Unit), Grantley Butterfield (Director, Urban Interface Planning), Kirsty Babington (Fire Management Officer)*

- Bushfire is a fundamental part of our landscape.
- Intervals between major bushfires down from 70 years to 18 years (impact on fire behaviour, ecology, changes to environment/reserve system).
- We spend time on fuel as this is the one opportunity to leverage against natural elements.
- Whether through arson or other ignite sources, we will get fire in our reserves.
- More finessed in how we deliver prescribed burns – including to deliver ecological and cultural outcomes.
- Intense/high severity fires that are the concern across the landscape.
- We can't leave fuels to reach stages of maturity in some instances, as it's unlikely they will reach these stages without the impact of bushfire, with the smaller intervals between major fires.
- Consistently keeping up to date with the science to ensure approaches are on par with what we are seeing around the world.
- Strategic Bushfire Management Plan (SBMP), Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP):
  - SBMP is a requirement of the Emergencies Act. It is reviewed every 5 years by Emergency Services Australia (ESA) and the Minister for Emergency Services. It is an overarching plan that sets the policies, procedures and overall intent for bushfire management.
  - RFMP is a 5 year plan with a 10 year outlook. Bridges the gap between SBMP and our Bushfire Operations Planning (BOP).
  - BOP is currently completed annually and includes hazard reduction activities including burning, spraying, removal, grazing, etc.





- RFMP public consultation will happen after the election, likely by March next year.
  - The RFMP is moving to tenure blind analysis, and incorporates climate-change adaptation and impacts. It also incorporates assets, including ecological.
- Phoenix modelling is a benchmark in ACT modelling for bushfires. Can map in assets (including ecological, water, etc), and help identify how we approach our bushfire management.
- Residual risk is measuring the affect of fuel plan treatment.
- When planning burns, we select areas where we can use containment edges, such as roads, boundaries, creeks. We also take advice from ONC to mitigate ecological impacts.
- Urban Interface Planning:
  - Recognise within ACT Gov that we need to look at risks/opportunities with changing urban interface.
  - Zoning changes are often required with major developments. As a new estate is established, the zoning around the site changes and has a direct impact on the management requirements.
  - One of the things we have learnt within PCS is to take a partnership approach. Trying to work early with the planners/consultations/developers, our best opportunity to have impact/effect is at that early stage.
  - Balancing act to work closely, as we have different expectations to manage, as well as facilitating between different Gov areas (ONC, Conservator, ESA, TCCS, etc).
- Prescribed Burning
  - All eco burns go through practitioners.
  - Cultural Burns involve working with Ngunnawal community.
  - Hazard reduction burns involve reducing fuel hazards to meet requirements of zoning in RFMP
  - ACTMAPI Bushfire map provides a visual for the zoning of your areas. The type of zone will impact the level of fuel hazard reduction required. This can provide context on why we do this work. ([link](#))
  - Burn plan process:
    - Burns must be approved in the BOP.
    - Burning involves a lot of communication with stakeholders and districts, including site visits to look at the area with the Ranger/District manager (subject matter experts).
    - Once info is collected, the burn plan is written (essential and required for each burn implemented) which includes asset protection, vegetation/fuel, constraints, ecological considerations, weather prescriptions.
    - Depending on the type of burn may need to adjust weather prescriptions to ensure we are protecting ecological/cultural assets.
    - All plans are reviewed and approved (by the districts and provided to ParkCare groups).
    - All information by ParkCarers is considered and captured as part of the process – your comments are important and valued as part of the process.
  - Notifications are given to community as part of the burn. The Bushfire Management Page identifies upcoming prescribed burns ([link](#)), as well as provides additional



information on what's coming up, what is happening (objective) and what has just been completed.

- New BOP not on the map yet, as not yet approved.
- Every burn has a values officer who there to provide advice to the Commander on what areas to protect (ecological & cultural assets) as part of the burn area.

### Q&A:

**A question to Grantly Butterfield: Are you also responsible for on-going conservation issues at the Urban Interface of established suburbs, such as extended gardens, dumping of garden waste, invasive garden plants etc?**

Not me I'm sorry. I know Tony's team deal with many matters in relation to fuel management on the urban edge, however, most of the matters you mention would be TCCS or PCS districts. If you could provide more detail about where you're referring to and the issues we can defer to who can provide more information and advice (via [ParkCare@act.gov.au](mailto:ParkCare@act.gov.au))

**One of your Phoenix maps shows a fire running to the North West! Driven by a SE wind? What time of day was this?**

Yes – that is correct on some of the modelled fire behaviour runs and it's a good pick-up! We use a weather stream that incorporates strong NW winds which push the modelled fires in a SE direction (generally). We have incorporated a south-westerly to southerly change after 6:30pm to mimic the effects of a 'Southerly Buster' which is a common weather phenomenon associated with bushfire weather in summer. This means the fire path changes direction from moving in a SE-E direction back to a NE-N direction. There are some local terrain and topographic influences as well.

We model fire runs for a single day only and not multi-day fires. Unfortunately we are limited to this extent of modelling at the moment, however the next review of the upcoming Regional Fire Management Plan (RFMP) will incorporate multiple weather streams at different levels of maximum Fire Dangers Indices, rather than the single model 'worst-case' scenario. Some incorporate the southerly change and others will not. We are hoping this further refines our ability to focus on bushfire risk reduction across the landscape and reserve system.

## Office of Nature Conservation Projects Update

*By Brett Howland (Senior Vegetation Ecologist) and Kristy Gould (Restoration Manager, Flora)*

- Received money to do habitat restoration over 2 years.
- Ngunnawal partnership underway, focused on embedding cultural practices into restoration works, including through cultural advisor roles.
- Project looking at a spatial restoration tool and monitoring work.
- Habitat Restoration:
  - Picked three sites (Ainslie/Majura, Urambi, Namadgi)
  - Aim to focus wholly on these sites to demonstrate that with investment what outcomes can be met.
- Restoration Prioritisation:
  - Map being created to guide restoration actions.



- Meredith Cosgrove (writer of Molonglo Field Guide) is working on problem statements – how do we prioritise, how do we track delivery, what do we do where?
- There is a vast amount of spatial layers in the ACT that we can draw on to guide our works, e.g. where to plant trees?
- Understanding how we are achieving recovery and what elements are missing (via the Recovery Wheel - [link](#))
- Small Purple Pea:
  - Translocating the small purple pea (endangered in NSW/ACT)
  - Have cracked the code in germinating (Botanical Gardens is working on germination as part of the project).
  - Put 400 into 4 sites since 2023, there are another 600 to go.
  - Every plant is being tagged and survival is being tracked.
- Small Mammals:
  - There has been thoughts of decline/loss over the past years of small mammals, but this has never been proofed, e.g. Common Dunnart, Agile/Yellow-Footed Antechinus.
  - Surveyed 7 sites using camera and footprint tunnels.
  - Small mammals were detected in some sites, appear to be persisting on the urban edge and away from urbanisation.
- Pest Animals:
  - Researching methods to control foxes, including trial of Canid Pest Ejectors over 18 months.
  - Cats are complex in the ACT, we don't have many records across reserves and Namadgi, but we recognise the impact on wildlife. Trial of safe pet tag technology.
- Urban Team:
  - Processing the Urban Biodiversity Surveys.
  - Working on Ecological Network Dashboard to help guide biodiversity hotspots for protection.
- Weeds Dashboard:
  - Bringing together all datasets (via weeds team), looking at density and control and other elements, to also include historical data.
  - Coloured by treatment rating. Will be a good tool to guide where to focus control. Still needs road testing.

## Q&A:

### Update on the Kangaroo Fertility Control Program?

3 reserves where we are trialling the fertility control. 300 female kangaroos darted to affect fertility. No results just yet. Met target of 70% of females in that population and we know it's an effective method.

