

Vale Marc Moerkerk

This week we sadly farewelled a long-time *Friend of The Prom*, Marc Moerkerk, who died on Wednesday morning 21st April.

Our love and sympathy go to Elizabeth, Michael and Joanne and all the families.

Following a stroke, Marc had been cared for in the Prom Aged Care facility in Foster for a couple of years, where he was very comfortable and well looked after. Elizabeth and son Michael were with him when he died.

Marc was one of the original “Nursery Mob” when in 1995 he and Elizabeth and other local FOTPs answered a call from The Prom to help set up a propagation nursery at Tidal River. This was a success so that many of the trees and plants at the Prom are now flourishing with Marc’s assistance.

We will miss his loyalty, friendship and sense of humour very much.

Rest peacefully, Marc.

Below: Marc with the ‘Nursery Mob’ (Bert Fabel)

Friends of the Prom

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Walking track plan for the Prom

Regional Development Victoria is funding *Parks Victoria* to develop a plan to improve walking tracks at the Prom with the aim to improve the visitor experience and attract more visitors, particularly during the off-peak season. *Parks Victoria* senior managers invited the *Friends of the Prom* Committee to a Zoom meeting on Monday 12 April to discuss preliminary concepts. They wanted our reaction to a range of potential concepts, none of which are firm proposals:

- Upgrading and connecting existing walking trails — including northern circuit walk; re-align Sealers Cove track to avoid water crossing; developing more short and medium length all-ability access tracks; improved signage.
- Upgrading existing campsites and expanding the capacity of some e.g. tent platforms at some overnight hike camp sites; 3-sided shelters (for cooking).
- New tracks — e.g. Windy saddle to Mt Wilson; Oberon Bay to South Cape via Mt Norgate; 5-Mile Beach to Sealers Cove. The Tidal River to Oberon

track and the Whisky Bay to Darby River link are already part of the \$23mill Prom Revitalisation Project.

- Provision of new accommodation — e.g. upgrading accommodation at the lighthouse.
- Increased use of water transport for hikers to get to start or finish of walks and use of helicopters to both service remote campsites and ferry visitors.
- Allowing mountain bikers on specific tracks.

Some of the more ambitious concepts outlined above are constrained by the Prom's existing 2002 Management Plan, and would be subject to complex statutory processes, e.g. act of parliament.

The Committee indicated its in-principle support for some of the concepts raised and its opposition to others and followed up with a written statement.

We expect greater opportunities to have our voice heard as preliminary concepts are turned into concrete proposals.

Flood damage on the Oberon Bay track



Photo: Water damage to Oberon Bay track after the heavy rains of 24th March (Parks Victoria)

Fires and floods at the Prom

We had both fires and floods within the space of a few weeks. Park managers conducted a planned burn on 11 March in the Millers Landing area near the 5-Mile Road. Planned ecological burns are critical for the restoration and ongoing health of fire adapted plant communities. These burns help to create a mosaic pattern of burnt vegetation across the landscape which creates habitat niches for plants and animals.

Two weeks later, heavy rain caused flooding which closed the park for only one day, but the damage to tracks will cost many thousands of dollars to repair and some of the southern Prom's well-used tracks will be closed for some time.



Main photo: Ecological control burn on 11th March (Ryan Broeren)

Right: The main Prom road under water after heavy rain on Wednesday 24th March (Parks Victoria)

Below inset: One month after the planned burn (Karin Ruff)



Sea Spurge at Picnic Bay 26-27 March

We had planned a 3-day activity to kick off our new Sea Spurge removal project at Picnic Bay. But planning ahead at the Prom is always a game of chance. As usual, the weather obeyed its own rules. Our Friday 26th activity was cancelled when very heavy rain on Wednesday 24th March closed the Prom for a few days while the damage was assessed.

The weather was (mostly) kinder to us that weekend. 30 volunteers helped out on Saturday 27th and 29 on Sunday 29th March. This was our first experience of weeding Sea Spurge at Picnic Bay. The contractors had sprayed most of the Sea Spurge during February and the large expanse of Sea Spurge was browning off nicely. We focussed our attention around the edges where there was plenty of Sea Spurge growing in and around the native scrub. There are a couple of no-go areas which are subject to cultural heritage sites.

We had an excellent turn-out for the BBQ on the Saturday evening at the Stockyards campsite. Sharing a communal meal is a good way to relax and get to know your fellow volunteers better – including some of the *Gippsland Intrepid Landcare* volunteers who were arriving on Saturday evening to help us weed Sea Spurge on the Sunday. Brita Jobling, the Secretary of *Gippsland Intrepid Landcare*, explains – “We often get asked, “So what is *Intrepid Landcare*?”. The short answer is that we are a Landcare group, the twist being that we formed to support the next generation of landcarers. We are a group of passionate, creative and energetic volunteers (mostly aged 18 to 35) who want to protect and explore Gippsland’s environment. We regularly undertake environmental projects mixed with epic adventure across Gippsland.

Below: Volunteers weeding Sea Spurge around the edge of native scrub at Picnic Bay (Bill Hansen)

Our group formed in 2017 and are run by a volunteer committee. Currently we have over 70 financial members and have run over 20 events attended by over 500 young people.

The appeal of *Intrepid*, is that it brings together like-minded young people who want to take a lead on stuff that matters. It is part social movement, part environmental organisation, helping to provide a common space to inspire, connect and empower young people.

2020 was a tough year for Landcare. Our group had to cancel a string of events which we were really looking forward to running. We were thrilled when we got in contact with *Friends of the Prom* who allowed us to join them in their sea spurge removal. Finally, we could get back to what we do best— lending our hand to the environment.

Despite the unpredictable weather, both *Gippsland Intrepid* and *Friends of the Prom* were incredibly pleased by the volunteer turnout (27) and are looking forward to future collaborations together.”

The *Intrepid* Landcarers made up the bulk of our Sunday volunteers and because of their efforts, we were able to weed about halfway down the beach. We were impressed by their enthusiasm and vigour and they’re welcome back any time.

Find out more information on this dynamic group at <https://gippslandintrepid.com>.

This project was made possible by a Victorian Government Coastcare grant which paid for the spray contractors and the BBQ food. We also want to thank Parks Victoria’s Ryan and Gabby who made sure that we understood the Sea Spurge weeding safety risks and had all the equipment we needed, also for transporting the gas BBQ from Tidal River.





Top Left to right: Gerry and Deb manning the BBQ at Stockyards; Mary ceremoniously lights the first fire in the Stockyard shelter this season; Michelina determined to get that last Sea Spurge (Olga Wilkinson); Below: Volunteers at Picnic Bay on Sunday 28th March – mostly Gippsland Intrepid Landcarers (Bill Hansen)

Scanning historical photos

We have been talking about this project for some years and now work has started in earnest. With his typical ingenuity, Ranger Jim Whelan has set us up with professional equipment on loan — a scanning machine, a camera for photographing Kodachrome slides (complete with home-made gadget for holding the slides with back lighting), and a laptop.

Karin has now mastered the equipment and developed an efficient system for copying and recording photographs and slides. She recently tutored a small team of new volunteer helpers – Lynne, Heather and Bill. They were a bit overwhelmed by the size of the project, but as with weeding Sea Spurge, a number of helping hands and doggedness will soon break the back of a seemingly endless task.

Right: l to r - Lynne, Karin and Heather archiving old slides 21st April



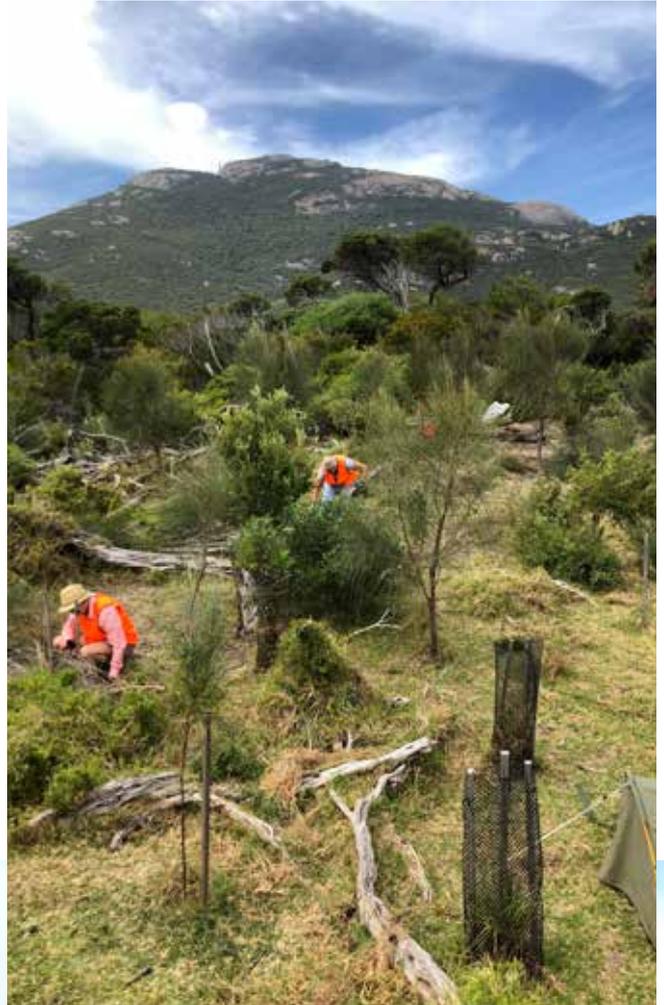
The Nursery

The nursery team has been busy propagating seedlings (Banksia, She-oak, Manna Gum). Recently we have had enough willing volunteers to get out into the Tidal River campground to do some maintenance of plantings. We visited the site on 34th Avenue which was planted up during National Tree Day in July 2017. We removed the tree-guards for the surviving She-oaks that were now about 2m high. A number of these trees had been toppled by strong winds.

The display garden outside the store needs continual weeding and pruning to keep it in shape. We were given access to an electric hedge trimmer and were converted immediately. No more hand shears.

Right: Planting She-oaks for National Tree Day July 2017 on 34th Avenue Tidal River (Bill Hansen)

Below: Removing tree guards March 2021 (Bill Hansen)



Herbivore monitoring

The dung flingers have had two visits to the Yanakie isthmus to count animal pellets. The first visit on 9th March was the first for the season, and the 12 volunteers and 2 rangers cleared all the sampling plots accrued animal pellets ready for the first count, six weeks later. That count on 20th April went ahead despite wet, cold and windy weather. Luckily for us, Megan was well prepared, providing us with waterproof paper for recording the counts. With 11 volunteers and 5 rangers helping, we raced through the work, finishing before (a late) lunch and before the heavy rain.

Below: Dungflingers 9th March (Megan Underwood)

Right: Dungflingers Michelle, Andrew and Karin at work 9th March (Michelle Darling)



MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Your membership helps us enormously. It covers our basic running costs – most importantly, public liability insurance.

To renew your membership, please contact

Treasurer Charlie:

membership@friendsoftheprom.org.au

You can pay via Direct Deposit to our Westpac account:

Account Name: Friends of the Prom Inc.

BSB: 033 152

Account Number: 188795

Important: Please provide your full name so we can identify you from the bank statement.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Weekend activities in 2021 – please add these events to your diaries, and don't forget to pre-register online in *ParkConnect* for any activity you want to take part in.

SATURDAY 22 MAY

Tree planting for koalas at Yanakie Isthmus (also track clearing)

SATURDAY 3 JULY

Tree planting at Tidal River

SUNDAY 4 JULY

AGM at Tidal River

SUNDAY 1 AUGUST

National tree planting day at Tidal River - public event.

SATURDAY 25 SEPTEMBER

Tree planting and maintaining plantings at Tidal River and Stockyard Cemetery

FRIDAY 5 TO SUNDAY 7 NOVEMBER

3-day sea spurge removal at Picnic Bay

We will send out details of these activities before the above dates.

You will need to register with *ParkConnect*. See next column. ➔

WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES CONTINUE IN 2021

- ➔ Tidal River nursery – every second Thursday (Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Mary Walker or the Secretary).
- ➔ Grazer monitoring project – next visit Tuesday 1st June 2021. Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Bill Hansen.

Photo at right: Banksia renewal one month after the burn (Thomas Gengenbach)

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to Darren Kent, Robert Marioli and Kathryn Gomersall as new financial members of Friends of the Prom.



CONTACTS

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