

NEWSLETTER of the BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalking Clubs
G.P.O. Box 2090, Sydney, 2001.

DRAFT POLICY ON MAN MADE STRUCTURES IN BUSHWALKING AREAS

(Otherwise known as the Policy on Tracks, Cairns, etc.)

This Policy has been drawn up by a Federation committee chaired by Ross Bradstock. It is presented for consideration and discussion by all walkers and clubs. It is not in its final form. Any comments or suggested amendments should be sent to the next Council meeting through your club delegate.

Although it is lengthy, the whole Draft is printed here so that every member of every club will have the opportunity to consider the background as well as the policy statements themselves.

SUMMARY

This Policy entails the formulation of an ethic, the derivation of a code of behaviour from this ethic, and a documentation and illustration of walking areas in the light of the ethical consideration. The walking areas looked at do not constitute a complete list of those in the state, but are a sample drawn chiefly from the Greater Blue Mountains Region.

INTRODUCTION

Much of the areas in which we walk are regarded by ourselves as wilderness in a broad sense. That these areas are undergoing reduction in size and quality because of outside pressure is well known to all in the bushwalking movement. Many battles have been, and continue to be fought against forestry and mining interests, and in this light we regard ourselves as conservationists. However, our walking areas are also succumbing in a more subtle way because of the behaviour and attitudes of ourselves.

The formulators of this Policy can see generally two conflicting attitudes amongst bushwalkers. The first attitude (or philosophy) condones the use of tracks, cairns and other navigational aids in networks which enable its subscribers to walk with a minimum of effort (physical and mental) and a maximum of enjoyment. This is in no way meant to be derogatory—all walkers use tracks, etc. to a greater or lesser extent, and all seek maximum enjoyment.

A second attitude is held by walkers who enjoy walking in areas with an absence or minimum of route marking. Obviously there would be a conflict if walkers from the first group were to cut a track in a previously virgin area, or if members of the second group were to demolish marking cairns in another region. It should be pointed out that the two groups are not mutually exclusive. A person who does much walking in untracked regions may still frequently enjoy trips in another area with many tracks and well marked routes.

What we would like to emphasise is that unthinking action on behalf of one group by, say, building a track, may be robbing others of their maximum pleasure in walking.

Historically, the area of land that is free of tracks and other walking aids has decreased steadily. Once a track is built it is usually some time before it will grow over if it is not a popular and well frequented route. If a track is at all popular, this fact will usually ensure its continued existence.

Consequently, over the years the building by walkers of more and more "man made structures" for use by walkers has led to a decline in the amount of virgin country. Thus one group is suffering at the hands of the others.

We think that a balance must be struck between the two interests. We think the balance must be achieved now by urging all walkers to leave every area in the condition in which it now exists. This state of affairs can be established by the use of an ethic and derived code of behaviour

which are simple in make-up and, we believe, in their implementation.

We hope that walkers can see our viewpoint and accept the ethic. The code of behaviour really requires no conscious effort or action to apply.

DEFINITION

Before outlining our ethic we would like to broadly define the term "man made structures" in the way it is relevant to this set of ideas.

Firstly, we are referring to structures built by bushwalkers for the use of bushwalkers. Anything not strictly complying with this definition will be outside the scope of this Policy.

Secondly, we would like to illustrate with some specific examples. The structures are usually of such purpose as to make walking "easier". (In no way should it be construed that we think this is linked with a decrease in walking quality. This is not so.) Many of the structures are for navigational use, eg. tracks and cairns, which were mentioned earlier. Others in the navigational category include blazes, aluminium markers, snowpoles, signposts and arrows.

Other structures such as carved campsites in scrub, earthworks on creek and river banks, huts and shelters, fireplaces and graffiti of any sort are also included. There are quite a few items of which walkers will be aware, and which therefore do not require listing. The items just listed by no means exhaust the possibilities.

THE ETHIC

"When a walker embarks on a bushwalking trip he should enter the country with the intention of in no way changing it for his own benefit or reasons. He should leave the places he walks through exactly as he finds them."

A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

From the ethic a number of points surface. These constitute the basis of our code of behaviour.

(a) Walkers who find certain terrain too difficult to negotiate safely in certain conditions should not endeavour to change it by the use of man made structures, either at the time they encounter it or at any time afterward. People who find that something is too difficult for them in its present conditions should raise their own standards to comply with the challenge, rather than use artificial means which destroy the challenge for others. Walkers should not attempt to enter areas beyond their ability, not only in the interest of their own safety, but also in the interest of the area's preservation.

(b) Pure wilderness areas have a right to exist, people have a right to visit and appreciate them, in the state in which are are now found.

(c) We consider that at present there is adequate scope for people who wish to walk in areas containing tracks or other marked routes. In no way should these areas be altered by walkers who disagree with the presence of man made structures. Others who expect such features and are dependent on them could have their safety endangered if, for example, route markers were removed.

The behaviour code can be summarised thus:

1. Where there are no man made structures none should be built.
2. Where man made structures exist they should not be removed.
3. Walkers must adapt their standards to the conditions prevailing.

ILLUSTRATIVE CLASSIFICATION

As a guide we wish to classify some familiar walking areas into three categories. This will illustrate the differences between areas which most walkers know well. It should also be a guide to the condition in which these areas will be found in the future if the ethic is adopted.

Type Z Areas

An area of this classification is wilderness in the true and finest sense of the word. It has negligible man made intrusions. (Man made intrusions in this context includes anything made by man, not only by walkers.) These areas are also remote in the sense of being vast in size, so that they are far from roads and civilization.

Examples: : Colo — Wollangambe Wilderness
Far northern Blue Mountains
(Corricudgy area, etc)
Parts of Southwest Tasmania

We believe that these areas must be maintained in untouched form as part of the National Heritage. They are shrinking rapidly and are irreplaceable. In addition to building no structures of their own, walkers should also be protective of natural features such as alpine vegetation and delicate rock formations.

Such wilderness areas also present formidable challenges and walkers must be responsible for their own safety when attempting journeys within them.

Type Y Areas

These are outstanding areas of the same quality as the former classification. However they are smaller in size and hence closer to the effects and presence of civilisation. In this respect the "pure" wilderness experience may be lessened, although the standard remains high.

Examples: Baal Bone — Red Rocks area
Plateaux around the Capertee Valley
Devils Wilderness and Kolonga Labyrinth
Carmarthen Labyrinth (canyons)

Of course the same care should be taken in these areas as in the preceding category.

Type X Areas.

These are areas which have a profusion of man made structures for use by walkers. These areas may not be highly challenging in either physical or navigational difficulty, but may still be of exceptional scenic quality.

Examples: Boyd Plateau
Megalong Valley
Parts of the Budawangs
Grose Valley
Yerranderie — Bindook area
Royal National Park, etc, etc.

CONCLUSION

We would like to point out explicitly a few things which we see as inherent in the standards put forward. We feel that walkers who want to walk on tracks and use navigational aids have adequate areas presently existing. These areas are well endowed with man made structures which people use and expect to find. We wish to see this continue unchanged.

On the other hand walkers who want to explore untouched wilderness will also have the opportunity to pursue their interest. In addition they will have the responsibility of the maintenance of its wilderness quality.

One point cannot be overemphasised. Walkers in both categories must accept the relative merits and states of the respective areas, together with each others' interests. Consequently they must strive to maintain the balance.

Essentially the ethic and derived behaviour will mean that everyone has the right to pursue their own level of challenge and enjoyment in walking. This right will be preserved intact by ensuring that areas of different characters are preserved.

Naturally, different walkers will have different goals. For some, the ultimate challenge may be, say, a trip from Kanagra to Katoomba. To others it may consist of 14 days spent in virgin scrub. We would like to see that each of these goals will still exist to be sought after in the future.

A BLIND BUSHWALKER — ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Federation has been contacted by a blind person who wants to go bushwalking. He's a fairly independent type who is keen for some healthy outdoor exercise and an opportunity to meet other young people. His chances of enjoying bushwalking are not quite as remote as you may first think, given carefully selected trips, the right leaders and parties willing to help. Any clubs or individuals who can assist please contact Joy Scott, 520 0750.

ANNOUNCING.

THE "WHY I GO WALKING" CONTEST

For all you stinky bushwalkers here's the ideal opportunity to win yourselves \$20.00. All you have to do is enter Federation's great literary contest with a masterpiece of your own writing. We want entries to be short stories or anecdotes based around or illustrating the theme "Why I Go Walking".

The winner will be judged by the Publications Officer and two sponsors, and will be awarded \$20.00. The winning story will be published in the Newsletter. The runners up will also have their stories published in subsequent Newsletters.

So, all you dedicated bush-bums, get those pens moving. Entries close on June 1st.

PADDY PALLIN FOUNDATION

Paddy Pallin Pty Ltd has recently announced the creation of the Paddy Pallin Foundation, with the object of assisting and promoting the "rucksack sports" in NSW. An initial grant of \$5000 has been made for 1975-76, and future grants will be related to the profits of Paddy Pallin Pty Ltd. A committee formed of one representative from each of Federation, National Parks Association, Kosciusko Huts Association and one independent member will administer the allocation of funds.

Applications for grants are invited from all groups concerned with the rucksack sports — bushwalking, rockclimbing, ski-touring, canoeing, caving etc. Further details will be available in the next Newsletter. In the meantime information can be obtained by writing to Federation. Applications will close in mid-April.

SEARCH AND RESCUE REPORT

During November last year Search and Rescue was asked by the Police to help search for Elizabeth Dunn, a baby girl missing in the Rookwood area. About 80 Federation members took part in shoulder-to-shoulder straight-line sweeps across the old Rookwood cemetery. The search began about 8am and continued until mid-afternoon, when the baby's body was found by police in a nearby backyard.

Despite the tragic ending the search was a success in that it indicated improving relations with the Police. The fact that S&R was called in initially, the cooperation during the search, and the use of S&R's field radios (which provided the only communication along the line) all point towards a brighter future.

IMPORTANT NOTE. Warwick Daniels (S&R Field Officer) has changed his home phone number to 92 1598. His business number remains 29 8331.

FROM RECENT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Bungonia State Recreation Area.

In December Federation was invited to a joint discussion on this Recreation Area, together with speliologists' and rockclimbers' groups. Federation's suggestions, such as keeping campsites away from the scenic rim, were accepted favourably. Wilf Hilder (Information Officer) is acting as consultant on walking routes for an official brochure.

* Warragamba Catchment Area.

Federation has received a letter from the Metropolitan Water, Sewage and Drainage Board concerning a walker who drowned in the Wollondilly River well within the 2 mile prohibited area. From this the Water Board infers that the 2 mile limit is violated fairly regularly. They have asked that Federation repeat their request that members of affiliated clubs should not enter within 2 miles of Lake Burragorang.

However Bruce Vote is currently negotiating for access through specific sections of the prohibited area, as noted last Newsletter. In particular, access to Beloon Pass, the Wollondilly River at Jooriland, and the Nattai River near Little River appears likely to be granted.

* Windy Creek Hut.

This little hut north of Guthega was demolished by snow creep last winter. Federation has written to the Kosciusko Huts Association in support of those who believe that the hut should not be rebuilt.

* Mt Tomah Road.

It is reported that the road to Tomah South has again been blocked to vehicles by the landholder. Federation is not taking any action due to the easy nature of the walk along the road anyway.

* New Clubhouse.

The River Canoe Club has announced that the opening of their new clubhouse will be held on 28th February. The Federation President has been invited as an official guest, and all walkers are welcome to attend the celebrations. The old clubhouse was burnt down, and the new one has been built from donations and fundraising activities.

* A Lot of Potential.

A recent survey on leisure activities has revealed that bushwalking ranks third (behind surfing and skindiving) among activities that people "have never done but would most like to do".

* Kosciusko Road.

During the summer the Kosciusko Road has been closed to private cars at Charlottes Pass, and free shuttle buses have been used to carry visitors to Rawsons Pass. Federation has written to congratulate the National Parks and Wildlife Service on this move, and to express hope that the road will remain permanently closed.

* Tri State Track.

As the Tri State Track was originated principally by Mr. Lewis, the project may now lapse as he is no longer Premier. No-one has yet suggested a better alternative name than "East Coast Track" or "Great Divide Track", neither of which is particularly apt for the proposed route anyway.

* Mt Budawang.

The Minister for Lands has for reasons best known to himself insisted that an existing four wheel drive road to the top of Mt Budawang be upgraded to a sealed two wheel drive road. Federation has sent a letter of protest.

* Twynam Soil Conservation.

There have been reports that the Soil Conservation Service has been pushing a road north along the Main Range from Mt Twynam. Apparently, however, the "road" is the bare minimum necessary to allow essential soil conservation work in the area. Federation has decided not to protest, as the benefits of the work probably outweigh any damage due to the road.

UNUSUAL TRIPS DEPARTMENT

NIGHT CANYONING

On Friday 12th December a group of five from Sydney University Bushwalkers did Claustal Canyon at night, leaving Mt Tomah at 11.00pm and returning at 6.30am. We believe we have a "first" in this.

It was an unbelievable experience, the canyon being totally different to what it is during the day. The glow-worms were mind-blowing in their display, and there were literally thousands upon thousands of them. Progress was slower than normal but was satisfactory. We used waterproof "Dolphin" torches which float during the swims.

In our club the trip has given birth to a new sport: night canyoning. Soon after the Claustal trip, its leader, Chris Cosgrove, did a solo trip down Mt Hay Canyon at night. Grand Canyon has also now been done at night. It seems that the night canyoners' only fear is getting bedayed!

Ross Bradstock

TRACKS AND ACCESS

The Tracks and Access Convenor, John Berry, would like information on anything relevant to tracks and access. For instance, new tracks, damaged tracks, blocked roads, etc, etc. Let him know on 799 3216 if you notice anything worth reporting.