

NEWSLETTER of the BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The N.S.W. Federation of Bushwalking Clubs
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WEEKEND SEMINAR 6-7 MAY

COULOUL RANGE

50 Bushies and Conservationists attended and all felt the weekend was very rewarding. The road into the camp site (7 miles in, at the Blue Gums) was much improved thanks to the Electricity Commission and all drivers were able to bring their own cars in. Speakers included Peter Hitchcock, Chief Resources Officer N.P. & W.S., Dick Mason, Convenor of Reserves Committee N.P.A., Haydn Washington & Rodney Falconer of the Colo Committee and myself. Peter Hitchcock emphasised the seriousness with which the service was pursuing dedication of the Colo-Hunter area but did stress the conflict with coal. However he mentioned the work being done to resolve this conflict without going into detail. Dick Mason covered the long history of involvement of the N.P.A. in park proposals over the area and promised their continuing support. Haydn & Rodney from the Colo Committee gave details of plans of the Electricity Commission and other threats.

The workshop session chose four topics as follows:

Recreational Use - Peter Tuft
Political Action - Keith Maxwell
Data Collection - Rodney Falconer
Is Cooling Water Necessary?
Is the Power Necessary? - Haydn Washington

The recommendations of the groups were:

Recreational Use - More walking in the area by club members through newsletter articles and exchange of programmes. By non club walkers through SMH getaway, Orienteering Association, Canoe clubs & Fisherman.

More tourist use of the area provided it conformed with future management plans e.g. car camping in Newnes, Glen Davis, Olinda and near non sensitive lookout points.

Political Action - Counter the 4 wheel drive clubs activity with petitions, letters to politicians and newspapers. Clubs to establish policies on conservation issues so that secretaries can act quickly as issues arise.

Data Collection - Scientific information, plants, animals, geology is essential to case for park - Colo Committee to prepare kits for bushwalkers for data collection. Fast feedback on illegal activity to conservation secretary also essential.

Is Water or Power Necessary? - This is a complex issue that requires greater study. However, the suspicion is that the E.C. works on an inappropriate growth rate, the proposed 6,000 megawatt power station at Newnes which would need Colo water is a political decision and that use of the Hunter coal would be more economic.

The formal session was over by nightfall, dinner followed with the group reassembling at 7 p.m. for a slide show and campfire. Sunday morning five parties left on various daywalks to Bourai Creek, Bourai Ridge, the Cliff Tops, Wollemi Creek, and a through walk down Wollemi Ck, and up Boorai Ridge, the last party arriving back at 5 p.m. A great weekend with many people saying lets do it again.

B. VOTE.

SWIM IN IT, BUT DON'T DRINK IT!

Did you know that Govetts Leap Creek carries the discharge from 2 sewerage treatment works into the Grose? A further 2 outlets drain into the lower Grose via Wentworth Ck and Woodford Ck. The E. coli counts in Govetts Leap Ck., after wet weather would make your billy boil, without the fire!

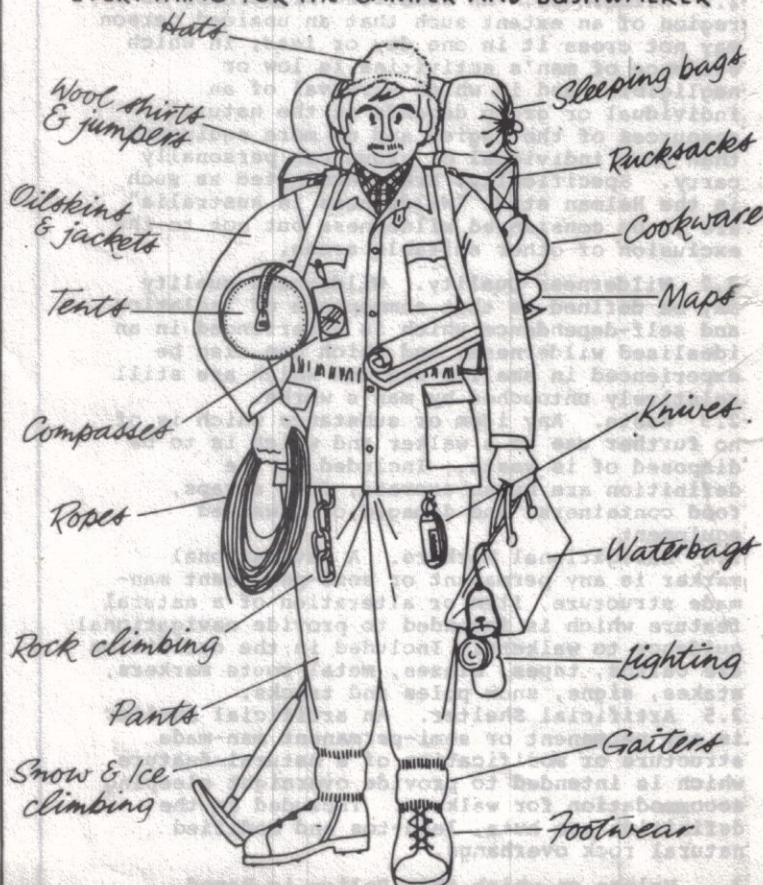
Seriously though, the Grose is standing up to the drainage of a growing urban population reasonably well. It is safe for swimming and almost acceptable for drinking during dry weather, however boiling is recommended at all times.

These fascinating details and more are to be found in State Pollution Control Commission: Report on a water-quality survey of the Grose River, Feb-March 1977.

This book plus a wide range of environmental publications is available for reading, from the LIBRARY AT THE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE, upstairs at 399 Pitt Street. Hours are usually 9-5 week days, plus occasional evenings - please phone 233 5388 for details.

May's Choice has a report on framed rucksacks and 16 packs are compared.

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Paddy Pallin

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To remove some or all of these markers in the name of pure wilderness would be to deprive many people dependent on them of any wilderness experience at all.

On the other hand there are strong arguments for a complete moratorium of indefinite duration on construction of new navigational markers in all areas. In this way existing true wilderness will be preserved, and existing popular walking areas will not become a maze of well marked and well worn routes.

Thus the general policy statement is that no navigational markers should be either removed or built. Application of this policy will maintain the present good balance between true wilderness and popular, well-tracked walking areas.

There are three minor exceptions to the general policy statement:

6.1 Navigational markers should be removed if they exist in an area of nearly pure wilderness, if very few people would be dependent on them, or if they are of relatively recent construction and little known.

6.2 Navigational markers may be built if such construction can be considered repair or maintenance of a well known and well used marker system in a well used area containing a significant number of other markers or marker systems. In such cases marker system maintenance should be not only accepted but encouraged, within the strict limitations of this policy.

6.3 Entirely new marker systems may be built in only one circumstance: where an area is so sensitive that significant damage can be caused by small numbers of walkers, and is so heavily used that consequent extensive damage is likely, there may be justification for the marking of a single route on which all damage will be concentrated, leaving the remainder of the area untouched.

On the same grounds, individual walkers should keep to existing paths and avoid creating multiple parallel tracks.

7. Artificial Shelters

(This section does not apply to huts in the Kosciusko National Park, for which there is a separate policy).

Huts are clearly incompatible with true wilderness. Further, they are incompatible with the wilderness experience except in environments of a harshness rarely found in Australia. In this context, management, survival and training value (as defined in the Policy on Huts in the Kosciusko National Park) are not significant in non-alpine areas. Thus the only justification for the existence of artificial shelters in wilderness or near-wilderness is historical value. Otherwise, climatic and other conditions (alpine areas excluded) do not justify huts for use by walkers in areas of significant wilderness quality.

Clearly, on this basis, no new huts or shelters of any sort should be built for use by walkers. Similarly, it should be the Federation's policy to advocate the removal of huts from wilderness areas, unless they have some historical value.

In alpine areas of relatively low wilderness quality a few, well separated, very basic survival huts may be tolerated. However high quality alpine wilderness areas require special competence and self-reliance on the part of the wilderness user.

The hut used by the Catholic Bushwalking Club on Scotts Main Range will be tolerated for the sake of unity within the Federation, despite the fact that other walkers may find the existence of an exclusive hut in a near-wilderness area objectionable.

8. Mapping

Much of Australia is already, or shortly will be, mapped topographically. Such mapping does little harm to wilderness areas. However it is an established fact that ready availability of specialist bushwalking maps or guide books can cause enormous growth in tracks and campsites simply through greatly increased usage of an area; this impact is greatest if a map shows or recommends specific routes and camps. Clearly, publication of detailed specialist maps and guide books to wilderness areas is inimical to the preservation of the highest quality wilderness, and cannot be endorsed by this policy.

However there is justification for the publication of simple small scale maps, unsuitable for actual navigation, which suggest features and locations which may be of interest to bushwalkers,

and which are not apparent on the standard topographical maps. Such simple maps should not show specific routes and campsites, nor should they include any other information likely to lead to localised wear if it can be avoided.

Care should be taken to ensure that even these most basic maps do not cover all wilderness areas. Considerable scope must be left, as far as it is possible with the existence of topographical maps, for truly exploratory trips.

9. Motor Vehicles and Roads

(The scope of this section is limited to the use of motor vehicles by bushwalkers while travelling to and from bushwalking areas. It is not a comprehensive policy on off-road vehicles).

Ideally, no vehicles should be able to enter a wilderness, and to this end the Federation strongly advocates the permanent closure and regeneration of all roads in wilderness areas. However in general there is little point in closing a road if it is to be maintained for some specific purpose. From a walker's point of view such an action only converts an easy drive along a wilderness intrusion into an unpleasant walk along the same intrusion. Thus wilderness roads should by preference be revegetated, but if they are to be maintained they should be open to all.

The fact that roads within wilderness areas often provide useful access to these areas for bushwalkers raises the issue of walkers' use of such roads. Firstly, it must be said that no vehicle should ever leave a formed road or well-worn vehicular track. Secondly, if a road within a wilderness area is open to and used by the public, if it can be negotiated without damaging it, and if it is not regenerating to natural bush, then there is no reason why bushwalkers too should not take advantage of it. However vehicles should not be driven along a road or track if to do so would damage regenerating vegetation, steep grades or creek crossings, or if fallen trees or rocks would require a detour off the formed track into the bush. Nor should vehicles ever be driven through wilderness areas simply for the sake of doing so.

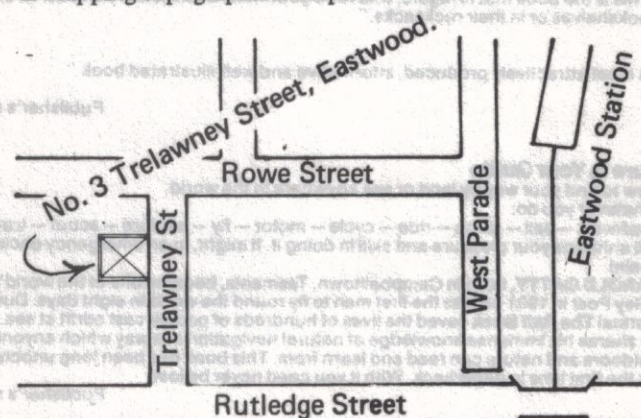
PETER TUFT

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Agents for Lands Department and Division of National Mapping topographical maps.



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Rumour has it that the latest edition of George Elliott's (C.M.W.) Budawang Sketch Map will be available by the June Long Weekend. The map is basically the same however some details have been clarified and the measurements have gone metric.