

Scoping document

Forest Recreation

Heyfield Wetland Centre

22nd – 23rd November



Engage • Explore • Change



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Introduction

Welcome to the Heyfield recreation dialogue, the sixth event run by Gippsland Forest Dialogue over the past 3 years.

Each dialogue we conduct covers a theme of forest management relevant to Gippsland and the future of our forests.

Previous dialogues have considered themes such as plantations (Yarram), forest health (Orbost) and where to next following the cessation of native timber harvesting in our forest (Kalimna).

In 2024 a discussion on forest recreation and the Great Outdoors taskforce was undertaken at Jindivick. It was agreed to continue this conversation and we will draw on the issues raised there to lead a dialogue on the challenges and opportunities confronting public access and enjoyment of our forests.

This dialogue at Heyfield will extend and build on conversation started at Jindivick. The dialogue will look at what forest recreation means to different stakeholders and communities, and work to find actionable recommendations to achieve balanced outcomes. The starting point will be 5 key topics identified at Jindivick but will explore other content.

The 5 key topics from Jindivick were:

- Local problems, local solutions – involving community
- Transparency and evaluation of Government policy
- Education
- Value of forest recreation – who benefits, who pays
- Forest behaviour – a charter of conduct including safety

Co-chairs

Liz Clay

Liz has a long history of environmental advocacy and involvement in community. Hailing from Noojee, Liz has ridden many of the horse trails of Gippsland and has a strong connection to people across the region.

Dan Salzman

Hailing from Swifts creek Dan is an outdoor enthusiast and super keen mountain bike rider. He has worked on forest industry transition and forest management planning, bushfire and emergency response and has a strong connection to Gippsland.

Where and when

The forest recreation dialogue will take place in and around Heyfield over 2 days (22nd and 23rd November). The Heyfield wetland centre will be our base with field trips to the surrounding forest and recreation sites.

This area is part of the traditional lands of the Gunai-Kurnai people and we pay our respects to their elders past and present.

Dialogue agenda

Saturday 22nd November

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 9:30 | Meet at Heyfield Wetland Centre |
| | Morning tea on arrival |
| 10.00 | Dialogue commence |
| | Co-chairs and host introduction: Chris McEvoy, Liz Clay, Dan Salzman |
| | Acknowledgement of country: Chris McEvoy |
| | Welcome to country: GLaWAC rep Russell Dowd |
| | Gippsland Forest Dialogue Background: Rod Keenan |
| | Participant introductions – who, why and what you expect |
| 11.00 | Heyfield Wetland Centre – Forest Bathing (Tony) |
| 11:30 | The Great Outdoors (Chloe) |
| | Traditional Owner perspective (Russell Dowd) |
| | User group perspective (Nick King MTB, 4wd?) |
| 12:30 | Lunch |
| 1:00 | Plenary session |
| | Jindivick dialogue – discuss outcomes |
| | Key themes to explore |
| | Participant perceptions |
| 2:00 | Field trip (Mike Dower/Paul Brooker) |
| | Blores Hill, Cheynes Bridge, Seaton, |
| 4:00 | Return to wetlands – afternoon tea |

Sunday 23rd November

9:00	Heyfield Wetland Centre
9:15	Commence
	Review day 1 – Co chairs
	Participant reflections
10:00	Theme based tables
10:45	Morning tea
11:00	Wetland walk with committee chair
11:30	Themed workshops
12:30	Lunch
1:00	Report back / review
2:00	Reflection
	On the event
	On your participation
3:00	Dialogue close

Note: this agenda may change in lead up to the event

The dialogue process

The forest dialogue is an engagement approach developed at Yale University and practised in a number of countries around the world. It involves a process of engage, explore and change. Gippsland is the first Forest Dialogue group in Australia, formed 3 years ago and this is the 6th dialogue that has been conducted in that time.

What you can expect

The purpose of the dialogue and the group is to build trust and connection across stakeholders and community members interested in the future of our forests. Our intent is to provide a safe and respectful space where people can come and share their thoughts and importantly listen to views of others.

The group is not a decision maker or an advocate for any specific view or position. Whilst we look for opportunities for collaborative change, we do not force this.

Part of that safe place is that whilst we report on the conversation, but we do so in a way representing the various views but not specifically identifying individuals or their particular comments.

There is no guarantee of any specific outcome from a dialogue other than the building of relationships and learning you may take away for yourself or your work or interests.

What we expect of you

We expect you to approach the dialogue consistent with this in mind.

To share your knowledge and perspectives

To listen to others and show them respect and encourage their voice

To be open and curious and willing to empathise with others

To respect the privacy of participants and the confidentiality of what is shared

Background

Recreation in our forests is important to both those visiting and those living in Gippsland.

Gippsland's forests have much to offer including

State forest

- There are 300 formal recreation sites in State Forest including 68 campsites, 87-day visitor areas, 73 walking tracks and 4 formal mountain bike tracks.
- State forest promotes 5 extensive 4wd trails across the region
- Other key recreational uses are fossicking, fishing, canoeing, horse riding, trail bikes and educational programs
- High use sites include Toorong Falls, Noojee Trestle Bridge, Cooper Creek, Blue Pool, Mt Taylor MTB,
- Formal Visitor monitoring indicates over 300,000 visits per annum but the number is substantially more than this

National Parks

- Visitation to PV managed land is popular with highlights including Wilsons Prom, Gippsland Lakes, Cape Conran and Buchan Caves
- Parks Victoria doesn't keep specific figures for visitation to Gippsland but reports 80 million annual visits to national parks and reserves and estimates 1.7 million annually in Gippsland

Private forests

- "Plantations are used by groups and individuals for activities including mountain biking and four-wheel driving"

Tourism is an important industry for Gippsland. It generates an estimated \$1 Billion for our local economy (Destination Gippsland). The region attracted 7 million visitors in 2019, and after a drop during COVID has recovered and is expected to grow.

Gippsland's natural beauty is a key asset to this industry and also the reason many of its 300,000 residents live here. Over 60% of Gippsland's land base is forested public land.

The Jindivick dialogue

On Saturday 16 November, the Gippsland Forest Dialogue convened a scoping dialogue on the theme of recreation in Gippsland's forests. It was attended by 25 people, mostly West Gippslanders.

A range of views and ideas were put forward by attendees, with discussion around the following:

- Gippsland residents highly value local forests but this is not reflected in Government priorities and investment in facilities
- Some areas are being negatively impacted by overuse. Balancing equity in access, providing for a range of users and uses and managing conflicting recreation users are contentious issues
- Victorian Government panels and taskforces are consulting with community about the future of their forests, but people feel disempowered, are suffering consultation fatigue and do not trust that their views will influence decisions
- Younger people are not being provided sufficient opportunities to spend time in and learn about the bush. This increases the risk of recreation behaviours that impact negatively on forests
- New approaches to managing and funding recreation opportunities in Gippsland's forests are needed. Decentralised decision making and an increased community role will empower local knowledge, capacity and resources resulting in better outcomes for forests
- A Gippsland Forests Charter of Common Ground (an intergenerational agreement) could provide a statement of shared values and aspirations for forests and responsibilities for care and reciprocity

Some key issues noted were:

- Over utilisation of popular areas
- Minimal and seemingly cursory engagement around forest policy with no follow up
- Centralised decision making with lack of transparency and accountability, with locals left to live with the outcomes
- Lack of education and awareness of regulations
- Challenges of accommodating different user groups and understanding good practice
- Scarcity of enforcement and people on the ground to manage forest assets
- Lack of leadership from government and desire for an opportunity for greater community voice and participation in forest management
- Fewer children growing up with knowledge and experience of forests

Potential opportunities for change included:

- Increased capacity for local. On ground managers, including joint management with Traditional Owners
- A stewardship model with different groups taking on different roles
- Support for citizen science activities to monitor impact and change
- Empower local communities to advocate for their forests and appropriate use

There was concern regarding a basic loss of connection with forests, especially the younger generation. Ideas discussed included:

- Increasing local knowledge in management and policy, especially indigenous knowledge
- Broader education around appropriate uses in different areas
- More awareness of forest natural assets – shared via info centres, guided walks, websites and social media
- Creation of a forest discovery centre with info on tracks and trails, safety, guidelines, heritage etc
- Forest experiential education – outdoor ed programs
- Holiday programs for kids, to explore pathways of using forests for therapy/wellbeing programs
- Welcome new residents with community champions to build resilience and connection to towns and improve disaster preparation

Five themes, highlighting the discussion and issues explored at the dialogue, were identified and provide a starting point for this Heyfield dialogue. These themes and the discussion are detailed in the Opportunities for dialogue section.

Victorian Government processes with respect to future forest management

In late 2019, in conjunction with the announcement of the planned transition out of native forest timber harvesting by 2030, the government implemented “Immediate Protection Areas”, precluding any timber harvesting from 96,000 hectares of State Forest in Eastern Victoria.

In 2021, the government established the “Eminent Panel for Community Engagement” (EPCE), to determine future uses of the Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands, Strathbogie Ranges and Mirboo North areas, the latter two being completed in December 2022.

In early 2023, the government requested the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) to assess the values of the Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland, and in adjacent state forests. Soon after, the government brought forward the proposed 2030 native timber industry closure to Jan 1, 2024 and extended VEAC’s work to include all of the Central Highlands State forests, with VEAC releasing its desktop report titled “Assessment of the values of state forests in the Central Highlands”, late in 2023, published to help inform the now extended work of the EPCE to provide advice and recommendations to the government on the future uses of State forest in the Central Highlands.

VEACs assessment included identifying the natural, social, economic and cultural heritage values of the Central Highlands, as well as current and likely future threats to those values. In addition, and somewhat controversially, the report identified, both in narrative and spatially, what VEAC deemed the typical land use categories commensurate with the values it identified.

Public consultation following the release of VEAC’s Central Highlands report was conducted by the EPCE during Autumn 2024, with numbers attending community drop-in sessions in the 100’s, as awareness of the process and fears of potential future access restrictions grew.

The Panel was then responsible for preparing its report to the Government with recommendations for the future use and management of Central Highlands state forests. Following this, VEAC would assess the potential economic implications of proposed land use changes recommended by the Panel and produce its final report. There has been no update on the status of these last two tasks since July 2024.

Almost in parallel to the above process, the government in April 2024, launched the Great Outdoors Taskforce, whose task it is to consult with the community to provide recommendations to the government on the future management of 1.5 million hectares

of Victoria's state forests (not including the Central Highlands) that were previously available for timber harvesting, as well as approximately 590,000 hectares of relevant adjacent state forests. These areas seem to correspond to areas State Forest where commercial timber was allocated to VicForests, largely the area zoned as General Management Zone and Special Management Zone (~1.5 million ha) and other areas of State Forest set aside for conservation or other purposes, known as Special Protection Zone (~590,000ha). The function of this forest management zoning system is quite complex and beyond scope of this discussion.

Along with this, the government very recently requested VEAC to carry out an assessment of the values of the same State forests within eastern Victoria, designed to help inform the work of the Taskforce in providing advice and recommendations to the government on the future use and management of these State forests.

Interestingly, it appears the Taskforce has shifted somewhat from the initial position articulated in the government's April media release, where amongst other things it stated "The Taskforce will also explore which areas need to be protected to safeguard threatened species, areas that qualify for protection as National Parks and opportunities for Traditional Owner management. The panel will prioritise areas of state forest where some decisions can be made now and advise on where more engagement is required".

Just before the commencement of the Taskforce's public consultation period the following statement was posted on their Engage Vic site; "the Taskforce will not be making any recommendation for large-scale changes to land tenure, including not creating any new National Parks", the following text possibly explaining the rationale behind in this shift:

'We know that the greatest threats to the sustainability of our forests and the environment are the effects of climate change, bushfires (which are stronger and more frequent), as well as the challenge of pest plants and animals. These threats don't obey lines on a map and occur across all land tenures. The Taskforce understands that good conservation management to mitigate these threats must be a core function of all public land managers and will consider how this can best be achieved in the taskforce assessment area".

Through the Engage Victoria platform, the public were invited to provide their thoughts and opinions, either individually or on behalf of a group, on the future use and management of Victoria's forests via completing a written survey about their views on forest management, and/or completing a map survey about their views on specific areas of interest. The survey closed on 12 January 2025. GFD lodged a submission which was the report produced from the Jindivick dialogue. The taskforce then lodged its recommendations with Government.

On 21st October 2025, the Government released its response to the Great Outdoors taskforce recommendations.

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/our-plan-victorias-great-outdoors>

The response included the following:

As part of our plan for Victoria's great outdoors, we're investing \$30 million to unlock 1.8 million hectares of state forests in Gippsland and North East Victoria with better tracks and trails, and amenities to boost regional tourism.

We want to make sure locals have a say on the projects that matter most to them and how money is spent in their patch of the bush – that's why we're investing \$4 million to pilot Healthy Forest Plans with the Orbost and Noojee communities.

We're also investing \$14.2 million to improve tracks and trails, campgrounds and toilets as well as upgrades at key spots like Heyfield's Cheynes Bridge Recreation Area, Buckland Valley Visitor Experience Area and next stage of the Yackandandah Creek Masterplan - creating new reasons for travellers to stop, stay and spend locally.

To keep the bush in top shape, we're also putting more boots on the ground with \$7.2 million for extra rangers to guide visitors, tackle pests and weeds, and protect native wildlife.

Victorians love getting out into nature – whether it's camping, hunting, fishing, hiking or just soaking up the quiet. This investment keeps our forests open for everyone to enjoy, now and for generations ahead.

Following the end of native timber harvesting, the Government commissioned the Great Outdoors Taskforce to reimagine the future of Victoria's forests to meet community expectations.

Informed by extensive consultation and expert advice from the Eminent Panel for Community Engagement, we are releasing the Government's Response, backed by targeted investment to promote community access, support regional economies, and better manage the forest.

In 2021, the Government announced it would create three national parks, two conservation parks, and seven new and expanded regional parks in the state's central west. This legislation is now before the Victorian Parliament and there will be no further changes to our state forests.

More details are provided on the DEECA website

<http://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/futureforests>

The DEECA website notes 4 main actions to be undertaken:

1. Protecting our environment – which includes pest and weed initiatives, regeneration involving community, extension of Yarra Ranges National Park to include Yarra Tributaries Forest Reserve.
2. Resetting the management framework for state forests – which includes a new public land act, streamlining processes and approvals to make it easier to do things on public land, new recreation facilities and enabling traditional owners collaborative management of forests
3. Working together for healthy forests – piloting healthy forest plans for Orbost and Noojee, involving the community
4. Driving recreation and tourism investments in regional economies

Of note, other government process and policy imperatives around Traditional Owner self-determination and the renewal of Victoria's public land legislation (including the creation of a new Public Land Act), will greatly influence the future management of Gippsland's forests.

Forest management planning

In 2022-2023 DEECA undertook a forest management planning process including assessment of peoples use and enjoyment of forests.

Feedback from consultation processes included:

- Involving the community in decision making
- Ensuring tourism benefits local communities whilst protecting the natural landscape
- Balance economic benefits with lifestyle of locals
- Involve Traditional owners and ensure sustainable economic livelihoods for their people
- Improve educational opportunities, forest access and the collection and sharing of information

- Improve the regulation and compliance of recreational users

Overarching themes included:

- Concern about track closures
- Quality of information on Departmental systems and websites
- Overcrowded campsites
- Concerns about anti-social behaviour
- Concern regarding broader policy such as firewood collection
- Appreciation of upgraded recreational facilities and the More to Explore app

Notable issues included:

- Campfires – unattended or non-compliant with regulations
- Inappropriate visitor behaviour
- Conflict between user groups (eg trailbikes on walking tracks) and with communities
- Traffic management into and out of popular sites
- Illegal tree felling and harassment of wildlife
- Vandalism of recreation sites
- Water pollution
- Illegal camping
- Littering, disposal of faeces
- Safety – number of search and rescue callouts, deaths (drownings, mine shafts)
- Lack of tenure awareness
- Coordination of information across agencies
- Competing demands on staff, recreation/land management/emergency management and prioritisation

As part of the planning process, DEECA via social research identified 6 visitor profiles to match their recreational assets and experiences to, these were:

- Country enjoyment – older or infrequent sightseers with relatively low engagement with the outdoors
- Nature walker – enjoy nature and the escape it offers through bushwalks and outdoor activities they can enjoy with their dog
- Leisure camper – tend to be younger and full-time workers. For them nature offers the ability to relax, unwind and have fun
- Outdoor adventurer – tend to be younger, high-income males. They spend a lot of time outdoors participating in many high energy activities
- Backcountry pursuits – highly engaged with the outdoors. Motivated by a challenge, they are typically participate in a wide range of activities

- Nature learner and carer – this group likes to visit State Forest to understand formal or informal educational experiences

Parks management

PV manage a number of iconic parks and reserves in Gippsland, covering both land and water. They protect important natural and cultural values at a landscape scale. Many parks and reserves are contiguous to State forests. PV use their Visitor Experience Framework to guide the identify visitor experience areas.

Many of the recreational tracks, Trails and sites that are enjoyed today are based on tracks and sites originally created and used by First Peoples as they lived, travelled and played across the lands and waters of country for thousands of years.

The Gunaikurnai Aboriginal Land and Water Corporation (GLaWAC) and PV have created a structured approach to developing and managing recreation sites and visitation. Joint management plans have been established for 14 public land parks and reserves jointly managed by PV and GLaWAC. These include:

- Buchan Caves Reserve
- Corringale Foreshore Reserve
- Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
- Lake Tyers State Park
- Mitchell River National Park
- New Guinea Caves
- Raymond Island
- Tarra Bulga National Park
- The Knob Reserve
- The Lakes National Park
- Baw Baw National Park
- Avon Wilderness Park
- Alpine National Park

Each park has a well-developed visitor strategy. The goals and strategies aim to promote and encourage appropriate visitation, awareness and appreciation of Gunaikurnai cultural heritage, and the protection of the natural environment and culturally significant sites.

Emerging trends

Increased visitation to forests by culturally and linguistically diverse groups, some of which have little experience or history with the forest environment. The forests need to be accessible to all groups including all abilities requirements

Decreasing resources and centralisation of management and policy making, at the detriment of local knowledge or input

Diversification of forest users and growth of recreation pursuits such as mountain bike riding, forest wellbeing activities, 4wding and hunting.

Increased use and pressure on key recreational facilities and resultant vandalism and restricted capacity to maintain sites

Decline of timber and other industries in Gippsland and increasing role of tourism and forest recreation in the economy and future of Gippsland

Climate change and impacts on forests and the environment in terms of fires, floods, algal blooms and consequences to users such as safety and access

Traditional owner self-determination and joint management of public land.

Opportunities for dialogue

The scoping discussions at Jindivick identified 5 themes and provide a foundation for this dialogue. It is expected the conversation will expand in Heyfield and not be limited to these points, they provide some context and a starting point. Other themes may emerge from the discussion.

Theme 1: Local problems, local solutions

Key points from the Jindivick dialogue were:

- Change impact is not understood (example proposed changes to land tenure)
- Government hasn't done the work to understand the implications and issues of land tenure change (eg safety)
- Access to emergency services is important due to hazards around forests, especially for urban visitors who are unfamiliar with the area
- There are diminished resources to manage recreation, eg rangers, access and maintenance
- Need to seek a balance between local security and experience of the forest (example security lighting)
- Local solutions required to deal with pests and diseases
- Leadership building – future custodians of forests are needed due to diminished capacity of Govt resources
- Local board of representatives – consulting committee (similar to CMA model)
- How do you bring local expertise into the equation
- Joint management with traditional owners – capacity building
- Potential to incorporate guides, with TO opportunities in this
- Forest experiential education- previous examples / small models Noojee Outdoor Education Centre, Alpine Ed school
- Holiday programs for kids, and to explore pathways of using forests for therapy and wellbeing
- Access to forests – how to advise forest users of hazards generally, including access to emergency services / communications
- Use the local forest as an annex to local schools
- Anxiety in young people – use of forest therapy (inc for kids)
- Reach into the online world. Even locally eg Beau Miles
- Proposed programs should start small, and have working models to draw out insights and learnings for larger scale implementation
- Need to understand the implications of panel consultations (Great Outdoors taskforce model)

- Greater local presence is required which may have been lost with the centralised model – need local representation
- Opportunities for advocacy are needed and can draw from existing councils that emerged in recent years to provide these opportunities
- Concern around lost traditions and skill sets

Discussion questions

How do you bring local expertise and knowledge into forest policy decision making

What models can improve local input

How can we improve knowledge and connection to forests and realise health benefits

Theme 2: Policy – transparency and evaluation

The workshop described the problem and potential solutions

Problems:

- Government has a number of major projects or decisions, and how these are made or formulated is not transparent
- When consultation occurs, little information is available and there is the impression decisions are already made
- Policy is formulated with a lack of understanding of local communities or an appreciation of their knowledge; Government does not allocate enough funding or resources to actually develop local policies.
- Government seems selective in which stakeholders it consults, creating division between those in community who get a say and those who don't
- It is unclear what is driving Government decisions, on everything from recreation to changes in land use policy and how these decisions are reached
- Existing policies are badly out of date and do not enable new management approaches
- There has been a change from land managers doing to being bureaucrats
- There is an impression that actors or groups with access to power and funding are largely driving decisions around recreation and land use
- There is a sense that in terms of policy creation, there is a lack of trust, accountability, opportunities for input, which all lead to a broader sense of a lack of cohesive strategy for local policy in regional Victoria

Solutions

- Incorporation of different stakeholders' opinion
- Greater emphasis on the idea of accountability
- Local-scale and knowledge in local policies

- Functions to ensure evaluation and transparency
- Have in place trial-and-error systems. Create test case landscapes or trials of land management that work – something to model other approaches off.
- A need for a “whole of Gippsland plan” This plan would address issues around compliance of land use, and allow a great level of community say in planning. Ultimately this leads to more transparent government.
- Before making decisions – speak to the community, seek broad feedback.
- Focus on the metrics that matter to evaluate these – decided by local communities.
- Co-operative land management – or community land management – is a potential solution. Government role is to facilitate this.
- A “Social Contract for Local Forests”?

Discussion questions

How can Government build trust and provide meaningful engagement with locals

How can we ensure equity in access and voice for all stakeholders and communities

Theme 3: Education

Notes from the workshop:

- Education for everyone, but having targeted groups as well, particularly the schools
- Education to the people making the decisions, having strong advocacy groups for different users
- Important to have a platform or profile somewhere for people to know where to find relevant knowledge and resources
- Newer cohort using land – 4WDs more common, tracks more accessible, less knowledge, less bushcraft, more damage
- Use avenues of existing groups, cross-sharing of knowledge
- Literacy-building around the forest and bushcraft
- As there are changing demographics in the region, with linguistically diverse backgrounds, it is important to include their perspectives too
- Inclusion of Traditional Knowledge, who has the right to give the knowledge and the capacity to build that
- Welcome new residents with past local experiences through community champions. Builds resilience and connection
- Regulators are the one that can and should help educate the public about legal matters
- Creation of a space for a united leadership, enabling local voice and transparency of higherups

- User groups – specific messaging (safety and environment) and understanding of needs. Provide alternatives and make aware of consequences. Dedicated adventure areas. Rotational ‘trashing’?
- Celebration of the idea of ‘space’, what the value of a particular space is – what is special
- Change culture of entitlement – younger generation education
- Healthy partnerships and shared resources between groups
- Forest discovery centre with a range of different information on tracks and trails, safety, guidelines, biodiversity, heritage etc. to enhance visitor experiences (Noojee?)
- Website to host regional information and calendar of events (page on Destination Gippsland website?)...and photos
- Bushcraft passport for accessing areas
- Guided walks and night walks

Discussion questions

How do we make education available to everyone (culturally and linguistically diverse)

What are the key messages (safety, environmental harm)

Who can be involved

Theme 4: Value – who benefits , who pays

Notes from the workshop:

- How to put value on benefits of forests?
- How to articulate what those values are and mean?
- It is difficult to put a financial value on a lot of things in the forest, such as experiences
- Lack of understanding of what those values are in the community
- Growing demand of recreational values especially from the city
- How to reconcile competing values of various recreational users?
- Multiple uses are shifting over time – 4WD and horse riding trails
- Balancing the needs and interests of ‘external’ and local users
- Changes in land tenure restrict access and lower the value of forests to people
- Common ground found in general agreement that forests are undervalued, and not valued until the need to pay for them
- Some general willingness to pay to use forests
- Issues of how to apply fees, how to set the price, and how to deal with differences in capacity to pay (equity)

- Are there other ways of getting income? Licenses or direct access charges can be some ideas.
- Consolidated revenues and need to seek a balance
- US bond model for its natural resources and parks can be a case study
- Land managers do not recognise recreational values, especially in many official documents
- There are competing and changing values, which will be challenging to reconcile
- The concept of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, and the lack of application to forests here (including state forests)
- Conflict often arises between outsiders and locals on values

Discussion questions

How do we put a value on our forests

What are ways to embed user pays philosophy into access and use of forests

What are sustainable funding models for recreation management and maintenance

How do we manage multiple use and access

Theme 5: Forest behaviour – charter of common ground

Notes from the workshop on what are agreed principles that may be shared by different forest users:

- Love for country, respect for bush
- Sustainable, respectful, and safe access to forests
- Ideas of having an intergenerational agreement to protect resources for future generations
- Analogous to the idea of sharing the road with big trucks, there are different road users but everyone shares the road harmoniously
- Need for education, licensing, compliance, and regulations
- Decision-making by Traditional Owners
- Ideas of Ostrom's work on commons
- Set up a baseline data for monitoring and comparison of progress
- Consider different pricing for different uses
- Have agreed upon behaviour with each other (e.g. UK's idea of taught behaviour in the countryside; countryside code)
- Bush basics education
- New users often not understanding how things work, need for opportunities to educate
- Transparency of where the money goes to (for national parks and other income generating areas)

- Importance of equity in money distribution
- People have to feel safe in the forests
- Need for a periodical review of the charter

Discussion questions

What are the universal principles and what are local or specific user factors

Can we develop a charter to promote via GFD

Further reading

Forest Management Planning: values assessment (DEECA unpublished)

PV / GlaWAC Joint Management Plans

PV visitor management framework

Destination Gippsland Strategy and Annual reports

Jindivick Dialogue report: Gippsland Forest Dialogue

GFD get involved

Whats next

Register for our newsletter or become a member at

<https://gippslandforestdialogue.org.au/join-gfd/>

Our strategic plan

See our strategic plan on our website....