

Northern Grampians Shire Council

Walkers Lake Advisory Group Meeting held at 6pm on Wednesday 27 March 2019 at Banyena Hall

Minutes

1. **Present** - Cr Tony Driscoll, Cr Kevin Erwin, Prue McAllister, Chad Frost, Austin Freeman, Tony Dark.

Absent: Wayne Robbins, Trevor Baldock, Racquel Kerr, Steve Jesse
2. **Apologies** – Tony Hand, Rob Loats, Michelle Clark, Colin Coates
Apologies accepted: Moved Chad Frost and Seconded Prue McAllister
3. **Disclosures of Interest & Declarations of Conflict of Interest.** Nil
4. **Confirmation of Minutes from the previous meeting.** 24 October 2018
Minutes accepted: Moved Austin Freeman and Seconded Chad Frost
5. **Matters Arising from the Minutes.**
6. **General Business**
 - Boat ramp incidents - Due to a build up of algae/weed the ramp became very slippery. Thanks to Trevor Baldock for taking action and cleaned the ramp. Chad mentioned that they use a heavy broom at his work that may be suitable for a regular clean. 2 “warning” signs have been installed at the boat ramp. **Action:** All agreed that a regular pressure wash before the Christmas period would be advisable. Tony Dark to organise.
 - Top up water supply status - Supply commenced 1st March. GWMWater have delivered 82ML and the current level is 2.15M and the remaining 18ML will go in before Easter.
 - March long weekend was very busy with over 60 camps at the lake. There was one camp that was unruly however the majority were there in the spirit of good camping. Police visited and did a lap of the reserve.
 - Easter holidays - Preparations required for the peak period will be as follows:
 1. 2 portable toilets to be booked by Cr Driscoll. It will depend on demand if one or two toilets are installed.
 2. Prue to enquire about opportunity to employ someone for the 5 days of easter to clean the toilets. Prue to let Tony Dark know.
 3. Flyers to be restocked
 - Management Plan update - Endorsed by Council at its March Council meeting for this 10 Year Management Plan. Top 10 priorities requested from the Advisory Group to understand what was seen as important now. Members individually submitted their thoughts and a final list attached to agenda for circulation based on each individual response received so a methodology of points was established for the purpose of this task: No 1 priority allocated 10 points, No 2 priority 9 points etc as follows:

Priority No	Issue	Total Votes
1	Ensuring water security for supply to the lake	48
2	Poor recreational visitor experience	33
3	Managing vermin, pests and weeds	27
4	Illegal and unauthorised removal and use of wood for fires and other uses	27
5	Maintaining levels for recreation and biodiversity management	26
6	Fire management - unattended, near trees, on tree roots, rubbish	18
7	Shallow pits for toilets used rather than existing toilet facilities on site	17
8	Long term sustainability of water supply and infrastructure	17
9	Improving visitors experience, camping options and maintaining relative infrastructure for users	16
10	Managing native flora and fauna	15
11	Continued fish stocking and suitable sustainable environment for aquatic life/fish	14
12	Damage caused by camping and vehicle access	13
13	Effectively managing increased visitors	13
14	Providing environment for the maximum health and wellbeing of the visitors	7
15	Visitors not aware of the values of the reserve	7
16	Undergrowth destroyed and foreshore erosion	4
17	Managing long term camping	3
18	High impact activities on site	3
19	Inability for council to sustain financial support and resourcing for management of the reserve	2
20	Providing adequate infrastructure for recreational fishing	2
21	Covering the cost of supply	1

From this Tony Dark grouped similar or compatible issues into 6 priorities/categories that concentrate on the following general areas:

1. Water Supply security (includes priority 1, 5, 8, 11)
2. Managing increased visitors and improving visitor experience (2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20)
3. Managing vermin, pests, weeds and flora and fauna impacts (3, 10, 16)
4. Cultural heritage impacts (7, 18)
5. Financial impacts - maintenance and water (19,21)
6. Visitor awareness - education, communication and marketing (15)

Full list to be circulated to the entire group for information and feedback as required. We must be mindful that whilst the above priorities are categorised and seen as the higher priorities the management plan contains other issues and strategies that will remain open and actioned over the period of the plan.

Discussions progressed to establishing a list of draft actions to start the process to deliver the outcomes as follows:

1. **Audit of the reserve** - We need to walk the site and this is scheduled for Sunday 5th May 2pm where we can have a look at the impacts of increased visitors, our needs and the next steps. The idea is to see where fireplaces should be installed, fishing pontoon options, toilet options, swimming area location, rabbit problem, front fencing, signage locations and content, old school site potential for school camping, tree planting options etc etc. Chad mentioned he will go down there at Easter and do a bit of his own list and summary as such and everyone is invited to do the same if they feel the need. **Action:** Audit results to be completed by 30/6/2019
2. **Toilet facilities** - Discussed the existing toilet and the need for ventilation improvements so that people will more likely use the facility. Discussed a system that Parks Vic use that we can look at. Also, Austin mentioned the investigation of a septic type system. Discussed location of further toilets and recommendations to look at a second toilet beside existing location and any further locations for toilets for peak times to be portable as preferred option. **Action:** Tony Dark to organise options and costings by 31/7/2019 and aim to install by 31/12/2019 (subject to plans, permits and funding)
3. **Camp fires** - Walkers Lake reserve has a primary purpose for Public Recreation and dispersed camping is a strongly supported activity. To assist the management of camping and fires there needs to be a strategy to help manage the location of fires and where the camps are co-located. An example case is Lake Lonsdale which is managed by GWMWater and there are designated constructed fireplaces that appear effective (see attachment) and Tony Dark will get costings of prefab units and own installation. Based on an assessment done by Tony Dark and Wayne Robbins in July last year about 20 campfire locations were evident. **Action:** Tony Dark to organise quotes and locations of campfires to be mapped 5/5/19.
4. **Long Term Camping** - Discussed the meaning of long term camping for Walkers Lake and considered 4 weeks is the recommended period for consideration and the group is mindful that this will be a rule but enforcement may be hard to manage. **Action:** Agreeance by the group to 4 weeks as a general rule so that it can go to council for approval in the rules.
5. **Swimming area and boating rules** - Agreed that we need to revisit the rules and if and where a swimming area may be located. **Action:** Discuss further 5/5/19
6. **Roster** - All agreed that this would be good to implement **Action:** As per original example roster it will start in May and will be circulated to group.
7. **Launching ramp pontoons** - A recommendation of VRFish and other boaters to assist in launching and retrieving vessels. These can be fully funded through Victorian Fisheries and requires support from the group and council for applications generally annually in February. **Action:** For further discussion 5/5/19
8. **Visitors not aware of the values of the reserve** - Covers a wide range of areas including recreation, cultural, natural etc and we need to establish clear guidelines as well as educational information for Walkers Lake reserve. Suggestions to include this accurate information on websites, wikicamps, social media, newspapers and onsite as well as other opportunities available. **Action:** Rules to be reviewed by 31/7/2019. Guidance required from NGSC, Dja Dja Wurrung in relation to what we can and cannot do as well as how we can create wider awareness of the reserve values and rules by 31/7/2019. Implement a strategy by 30/9/2019.
9. **Managing flora/fauna, pests and undergrowth protection** - Whilst Walkers Lake is council managed and designated for public recreation, Council cannot manage all aspects of the reserve alone therefore requires proactive and healthy partnerships to achieve projects. Discussed impacts of more people using the reserve and opportunities for planting projects, managing pests/weeds and conservation work. Discussed an opportunity for school groups

to be involved if they wish to. All agreed that this could be a positive outcome. **Action:** Tony Dark to attend a Landcare meeting to discuss a potential partnership for resourcing and funding for projects to be brought to the group and council for consideration.

10. **Old School Site** - Discussed overflow or group/school camping and considered that this is the best fit to relieve the impacts of dispersed camping around the shore of the lake and schools could use this area as it would more likely meet their risk assessment requirements. This area is close to amenities and we need to consider what types of infrastructure, if any, could be a minimum for their needs and whether this fits the purpose of the reserve. **Action:** For further discussion 5/5/19
11. **Shallow pit toileting and high impact activities affecting cultural heritage values** - Some solutions mentioned above however we require more feedback from Dja Dja Wurrung to ensure we align with their requirements. **Action:** Tony Dark to organise Racquel Kerr to attend a meeting or visit in Bendigo by 31/5/2019.
12. **Covering the cost of water supply and infrastructure** - Discussed that it is councils responsibility at the moment and we require to engage the new recreation group that has shown interest to support in some form. **Action:** Austin will chase up the group.
13. **Illegal and unauthorised use of wood from the reserve** - This is a hot topic from all members and it was discussed that we need a clear and manageable strategy including signage, advertising, awareness and monitoring. Discussed difficulties to manage and catching people in the act and that whilst campers may have chainsaws in their possession they may not be using them on site. There is signage in place including within the reserve rules and penalty notices but we need to look at what more can be done. **Action:** For further discussion 5/5/19
 - Landscape Architect design update

Looked over the map from Dennis Williamson and changes to be made and reflected in the new map as well as outcomes of the walk on 5/5.

8. **Next Meeting** – Sunday 5th May 2019, 2pm at Walkers Lake
9. **Meeting Closed 8.10pm**