



Ponderings

Summer 2012 Issue 35

Seasonal Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Coordination Committee Inc

advocate educate interpret participate rehabilitate revegetate

Earthworks at Jacana

Have you visited the Jacana Wetlands recently? Or driven across the bridge where the M80 crosses the Moonee Ponds Creek near Pascoe Vale Road? If so, you may have seen some earthworks going on next to the ponds to the north of the bridge.

This is extra flood storage to compensate for the increased footprint of the new bridge. The new bridge was needed to improve the gradient of the M80 as it went down and up across the valley. The bridge needed to be higher and longer, so its supports took up more room than the old one, taking up space in the flood storage provided by the wetlands. To compensate, three new ponds are being created to the north of the bridge.

These ponds will not have water in them permanently, and are not intended to be part of the Creek's watercourse. Only in times of flood, when the water reaches a certain level at the southern end of the new ponds, will water flow back up into them. For most of the time they will be grassed depressions alongside the existing wetlands, and won't be taking any water from the wetlands.

Frogs and excavators don't mix!



The frog fence

The Tulla Sydney Alliance, the group responsible for all of this work is being very careful of the wild life in the wetlands. They have built a 'frog fence' along the whole length of the excavation site to keep frogs away from the heavy machinery. Every morning during construction works the fence was checked for any frogs that have come up against it. Frogs found on the wrong side were carefully lifted over the fence back into the wetland. Paul Sparks, the Project Environment Manager, was thrilled if any were found. To date four Growling Grass frogs were found against the fence and rescued from a squashy end. The timing for this work was crucial. It was started in early January so that it can be completed before the start of the Growling Grass Frog breeding season. The excavation work is now complete and topsoil has been spread back over the area, in preparation for sowing grass seed.

Frogs are not the only things being protected.

All the trees growing in the excavation area have been fenced off and protected so that none is lost during this work. There is also a fence along the bike track which will remain in place until the work is complete and the grasses sown in the new ponds is well established. Then all the fences will be removed and visitors (and frogs) will once again be able to roam the area.

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A Growling Grass Frog found along the frog fence.
Photo: Paul Sparks,



A young tree fenced off to protect it and its roots from the heavy machinery



The frog fence snakes its way along the whole length of the site

Earthworks at Jacana (con't)

Protecting the Creek from sediment and run off

As part of the bridge building and flood mitigation works at Jacana, small treatment ponds are being created on the northern side of the bridges to take runoff water from the new bridge. The water will be filtered naturally through a bioswale of sand and gravel, with reeds and water plants to take up nutrients, before the water flows into the wetlands and ultimately joins the Creek. The pipes that currently hang off the existing M80 bridge, will be directed to the southern wetlands where existing stormwater and water run-off from the M80 is already being treated.

To protect the Creek during construction, there is a series of three sediment ponds in place on site to treat the construction runoff.



Site for the bioswale for the new bridge

On the other side of the Creek, earthworks have been done to improve the gradient of the side of the valley, making it less dangerous to

mow. It is proposed to hold a community-planting day on the slope, when the weather is more suitable for planting (probably in June). Friends groups members and volunteers will be welcome to help plant natives on the slope in collaboration with Hume City Council and the Tulla Sydney Alliance.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact the Community Information Section, email to: community@tullasdney.com.au or call the M80 Upgrade Inquiry Line on 1300 297 090.

FOMPC went to look

Members of the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek were taken on a tour of the site at the beginning of February. It was encouraging to see the care being taken by the staff we met, including Paul Sparks the Project Environment Manager and Matthijs Klinkert, the Design Interface Manager, and to be able to make suggestions for improving the work.

FOMPC members and Matthijs Klinkert in full safety gear inspecting the earthworks



The Friends made three recommendations:

The Tulla Alliance plan was to sow Fescue and Rye Grasses on the cleared area. We recommended that native grasses (such as Red Legged and Wallaby should be used instead. This bare site, with no weeds is a perfect opportunity to re-establish native grasses.

To improve the habitat for the frogs, reptiles and other small animals in the area, the Friends asked that some large rocks should be placed around the edges of the new ponds, which Melbourne Water has agreed to.

And the third recommendation was that, where appropriate, provenance plants, local to the area, should be used where possible.

One bit of 'wild life' we saw when visiting the works was a busy red fox, brazenly working its way across the slope of the western side of the valley, beyond the bike track, and a hare shot up the hill on the evening I went back to take more photographs.

Air Monitoring at Tullamarine Landfill

In February 2011 EPA initiated a community air monitoring program in the vicinity of the closed Tullamarine Landfill. The monitoring is being undertaken to address community concerns about potential health effects arising from exposure to pollutants coming from the landfill and was due to be reviewed at the end of February.

Monitoring is occurring at four sites within the local residential area and at one site between the airport and the landfill.

Two reports have been published: June and November 2011. The results in both reports showed that, for many substances, the substances that were monitored were below detectable levels. For all substances that were at measurable levels, they were all less than the relevant air quality standards.

Three indicator pollutants in particular are monitored:

- Benzene
- Trichloroethylene
- Vinyl Chloride

The monitoring of these substances has found that the concentrations of all three are low in the residential area. Vinyl chloride and trichloroethylene were below detectable levels in all of the samples. These monitoring results support the findings of the air modelling and risk assessment report released by EPA in February. The monitoring has detected a range of chlorinated solvents at trace amounts. These substances were measured in the bores of the landfill in late 2010 and early 2011. The source of these substances is likely to be the landfill. The concentrations are very low and well below the air quality objectives. [source: EPA Landfill Reports]

Be on the Alert for Myrtle Rust

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) would like to advise you that the exotic plant disease myrtle rust has now been identified in nine commercial nursery premises, mainly in the metropolitan region of Melbourne and one on the Mornington Peninsula. As yet, there have been no detections in the natural environment.



Myrtle Rust on a Melaleuca
Source: DPI.Vic.gov.au

Myrtle rust, which is now widespread in New South Wales and Queensland, is of significant concern because it potentially affects *all* members of the Myrtaceae plant family, including Australian native species such as lilly pillies, bottlebrushes, tea trees and eucalypts. Over 100 known myrtaceous hosts have been identified within the natural environment, but the full host range is not yet known. In collaboration with government agencies, local council and industry representatives, DPI has developed a response plan to deal with the incursion of myrtle rust into Victoria. Because myrtle rust is currently contained on commercial premises, DPI is asking everyone to simply keep an eye out for the disease and report suspected detections, particularly in the Port Phillip/Westernport region. The disease must be detected very early, before the spores have had the opportunity to disperse.

If you think you have seen it, DO NOT TOUCH it, report any suspected symptoms immediately to DPI on 1800 084 881 or email, if possible with photographs to plant.protection@dpi.vic.gov.au.

For more information go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/myrtlerust. and a self-paced training package to assist in identifying myrtle rust and minimising its spread, can be obtained by emailing plant.protection@dpi.vic.gov.au

Boeing Reserve Troopers

As we work our way south down the Creek celebrating the contribution of the different Friends groups, the next area is the slope to the south west of the railway trestle bridge that crosses the valley between Gowanbrae and Strathmore Heights.

This area boasted a fine display of boxthorn, weeds and weed grasses until the Boeing Reserve Troopers got to work. Although many of the soft plants placed there struggled to survive the dry times, there are now trees at least three metres high, promising to create a shady grove in the future.

Some planting was done in the area in 2003, leading to the formation of The Boeing Reserve Troopers by a group of enthusiastic local residents. They first sallied forth on 14 August 2003. Little is left of the plants they planted in those early days, and indeed much of the sloping bank that received their attention has gone, to be replaced by a low wooden retaining wall. However, some have flourished, creating a shady green tunnel for cyclists and pedestrians.



September planting in 2007 and what it is like in February 2012

Further up the slope, the BR Troopers have had more success, although it has taken several years, and some replanting, and most of the surviving plants are trees and shrubs.

A few of the many grasses planted there have become established, and despite the competition of the weed grasses, they are flowering and seeding.



A flourishing clump of *Themeda triandra*

The group's planting days were always very well attended, often with the Oak Park Cub Scouts lending a hand and joining in the fun.



Satisfied planters in May 2008



Audrey and her parents were enthusiastic members. In September 2008 they planted this tree, and in February 2012 this is what it looks like.



Looking north to the viaduct June 2003 and the same site in February



Looking across the valley in September 2008 and the same view in February 2012



Steph explains some techniques to some Oak Park Cub Scouts, September 2007



Looking up the hill in June 2008 and the same view in February 2012



Most of the growth shown in these photographs has occurred in the last three years. In 2007 and 2008, there was little that had grown more than 500mm high.

Thank you Ponders Packers!

Our great team of Pondering Packers has grown!

Their names are from left: Jarrod, Michael, Dean, Allyssa, Jack, Denis, Alec and Celine at the front. Hayden also helped but was not in the photo.

While we don't want to deny anyone the enjoyment of this team effort – we would prefer to send you your copy of *Ponderings* electronically. So please send us your email address to info@mpccc.org, so that we can save on paper and postage.

The environment thanks you (and so do we!)



Melbourne City Council Plans for the Creek

The City of Melbourne was a founding member of Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee alongside Moonee Valley, Moreland and Hume, but Melbourne's role has been constrained by the City's not being the land manager of any significant land within the Creek corridor.

Control of the land along the lower sections of the Creek is dominated by VicTrack, CityLink, Places Victoria (Docklands), the Port of Melbourne Corporation and Melbourne Water. However the City does have planning responsibilities, and some of its current planning documents have encouraging words for the Creek.

While the Council is nearing completion of its revised Municipal Strategic Statement and currently in consultation phases for its Open Space and Urban Forest Strategies, recommendations for better valuing the Creek can be found in the recently approved Arden-Macaulay Structure Plan, under "Public Realm".

The Plan's 30-year vision for the Creek is an enhanced open space 'parkland' connecting new developments in North Melbourne and Kensington with Docklands and the Yarra River.

At present, the Creek is a neglected environmental and open space corridor. Since Melbourne's urban settlement, it has been considerably modified for flood protection and realignment for dock, road and rail development. Biodiversity has been diminished [...]

The Arden-Macaulay Structure Plan envisages a significant opportunity to transform the Moonee Ponds Creek into a high quality social and environmental asset. Additional parkland along the Creek will provide more open space for the community and provide new opportunities for recreation. Revegetation and better storm water management practices in the drainage catchment will improve the ecological qualities of the Creek. Improving the quantity and quality of open space abutting the Creek will reconnect people with what is currently a mostly hidden waterway.

New open spaces are proposed to be added to the western side of the Creek, north of Macaulay Road. This side of the Creek is less impacted by the motorway and train line and currently has good access to sunlight.

Along the east bank, further addition of open space is proposed and enhancement of the existing shared path with pedestrian and cycling bridge connections across the Creek to better connect people to each other, to the new open spaces and the surrounding street network.

The cultural, environmental, architectural and industrial heritage of the area will be enlivened by the creation of a heritage trail.

The Devil is in the Detail

Despite these glowing words, an examination of other sections of the Structure Plan for the Creek corridor tells a different story. Under proposed Urban Structure & Built Form controls, multi-storey buildings (20-27metres, 6-9 storeys) are proposed in close proximity to the Creek; vague overshadowing restrictions (development shall not "excessively" overshadow the Creek – what is the definition of 'excessively?') and alienation of a key section of passive recreation open space along the Creek for another cycle path, suggest more of an unwelcoming canyon than a pleasant open space recreational area.

In addition, the means by which Council expects to add open space to the Creek corridor appears unrealistic. Council has resolved that it will not compulsorily acquire any privately owned land and that it will negotiate the "transfer" of public land – however, VicTrack, which has significant land abutting the Creek has a history of selling it for commercial developments, including several parcels directly abutting the Creek in Kensington. Land leased by another authority, CityLink, proposed to be acquired for 'open space', would have built facilities on it.

All is not lost, further consultation for a Moonee Ponds Creek master plan is proposed and the building heights will be subject to a Planning Scheme amendment process.

Link: <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/BuildingandPlanning/FutureGrowth/Pages/FutureGrowth.aspx>

A new floral emblem for Melbourne?

Before we built a city here, the area where the docks and the CBD now stand were grasslands and marshes, and one of the dominant plants in the area, fringing a clear blue saltwater lake in swathes of pink or magenta, was the Rounded Leaf Noon Flower, *Disphyma crassifolium*.



Because of its historic significance as an iconic plant species deeply embroiled in the life of early Melbourne, Peter Fisher, Adjunct Professor, Environment & Planning, School of Global Studies, RMIT, has put forward a proposal to make this spectacular flower Melbourne's floral emblem. He believes that a relic population exists at the southern end of Dudley Street on both banks of the Moonee Ponds Creek. The area is currently wasteland near the Bolte Bridge, and he is suggesting that a new reserve should be created there and integrated into the Port of Melbourne Corporation's *Shared Spaces* landscape plan.



Spectacular floral carpet of the Rounded Leaf Noon Flower

Are you involved in environmental sustainability, environmental education, urban planning, vegetation management or interested in the conservation of biodiversity?

If so the *Managing our Nocturnal Neighbours Forum* to be held at Melbourne University on the 11 April may be of interest and benefit to you.

In our rapidly urbanising world, how we manage both our flying-fox and microbat populations in metropolitan and surrounding areas is becoming increasingly important. The Australasian Bat Society would like to invite you to this community forum, which aims to explore the range of interactions that people have with our native bats. The forum will not only explore their incredible diversity and role in Victoria's ecosystems, but also delve into on-ground management issues and provide solutions. The forum will display a range of expert presentations on topics from urban planning, on ground management, tree pruning, use of bat boxes and community engagement. A set of comprehensive fact sheets filled with practical information for on ground managers and educators will also be available at the forum.

Date & time: 11 April, from 1.00pm to 5.30pm

Cost: \$50; (Registration closes 16 March)

Information: www.ausbats.org.au

Bat Count



Have you ever been to a Fruit Bat Count?

They are good fun, and you are contributing to the long-term monitoring and study of these fascinating animals.

The next Bat Counts are:

April 4 at 5.45pm, and

May 2 at 5.30pm.

Meet, as usual, at the Yarra Bend golf course car park (Melway 2D G7).

For more information, contact Rod van der Ree on 8344 3661, 0412 562 429 or rvdr@unimelb.edu.au