



Issue: 05

March 2015

Autumn Edition

Mornington Environment Association Inc.

M.E.A. News

Locals caring for our local environment

Welcome to 2015 News

we had a peaceful summer with no dramas in the harbour!

On behalf of MEA, we say a very special thank you to two new members who made generous donations including an A3 printer to enable printing of large size documents and maps.

Remember that all members are welcome to attend any general meetings which are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7.30 pm in the Mornington Library meeting

FARMERS' MARKET STALL FOR MEA SATURDAY 11 APRIL



After approaching the coordinator of the monthly Farmers' Market in Mornington, we have been offered a stall space as a community group on

SATURDAY 11th APRIL. We can distribute membership forms, handouts on environmental issues and Shire leaflets (e.g. on weeds, plants), newsletters and so on. We can have plant and photographic displays, our banner and signs. It will provide much needed awareness of our organization and the work we do in order to attract new community commitment. We will of course need to get organised for this!

We need your help to:

- Gather or prepare hand outs and display materials.
- Setup at 7 am (opens at 8.30 am)
- Man the stall till 1 pm. 2 people for two hours each
- Borrow a small marquee or shelter – do you have one that MEA can borrow?

ROSTER: If you are able to help please ring or message Jan on 0417986077. We will put a mix of more experienced environment members with others – so please contact (Jan 0417986077 or 03 59770131 or email morningtonea@gmail.com) if you can give even an hour. There are lots of nice food, coffee and produce stalls around you – dogs are welcome too! We need your help so please respond!



SPECIAL MEETING THURSDAY 11TH JUNE 2015

Guest speaker **Jeff Yuogovich** (Mt Eliza ecologist) will talk on “**Predator Ecology and Mornington Peninsula Tree Decline**”, with practical implications for the protection of trees and ecosystems in Mornington.

Jeff's research was published in the *Victorian Naturalist* Feb 2015 edition. He has been working on the Peninsula for years and is hoping for a big audience to help all of us to better protect our trees. Why are so many trees turning up their toes? Why have many got dead branches which then drop off and cause damage? Are we the predators? Come and find out! We will defer most business that night and you will be able to ask questions.

FAUNA RESEARCH PROJECT ALONG FORESHORE

Well known ecologist Mal Legg is undertaking a special project through MEA and the Shire to assess the numbers and species of animals from Belgrave Hill to Linley Point along the foreshore. This will match the areas he surveyed nearly ten years ago, and will show if all our working bees, weeding, restoration of indigenous species and preservation of habitat has had any result! We know our wrens, swamp rats and the sea birds have increased but don't see many other species – we need to know if our echidnas have returned, if feral animals have increased (are you keeping your cats at home and inside as required?) and if our nest boxes along Mills Beach, Tanti Creek and Red Bluff are being used by birds, gliders or bats.

Mal will be using cameras, traps and observations. He has agreed to present his findings at our AGM later in the year (possibly September or October) when he will have completed his work covering summer, autumn, winter and finally spring. He started immediately the funds became available in November 2014!



Birds Surveys: One of Birdlife Australia members is regularly counting birds along the foreshore around Mills Beach and Red Bluff. We hope to hear from him soon too!

YARINGA BOAT HARBOUR RE-ZONING AMENDMENT

Many of you have already been contacted about the consultation underway regarding the re-zoning application at Yaringa Boat Harbour, in the northern end of Westernport. MEA does occasionally make submissions on planning issues outside our immediate area, and this Amendment Proposal, being put through Council, has a most distressing ring about it to those of us involved in the long drawn out Mornington Harbour marina ('Safe Harbour') campaign.

No images are available at publication

Once again, the Shire is being asked to rezone public land and water to enable private use to build 150 accommodation units, extend the existing harbour, expand the canal into a new canal estate and increase the boat maintenance and storage areas. Both the Federal and State governments have abrogated their responsibilities and thrown the proposal back at the Shire. The new Coastal Strategy does not permit canal estates - this will be one. The Westernport and Yaringa areas are Ramsar listed: **Ramsar** is an international agreement, which Australia has signed, to preserve habitat for migratory birds and associated sea life. We have international agreements specifically with China, Japan and Korea to protect bird habitat, but this proposal will allow interruptions and infrastructure in a relatively pristine swamp and scrubland area. Potentially toxic acid soil discharges can occur if the soils are dredged or disturbed and thus pollution of the northern Westernport could occur. The hydrology report (June 2012 and not amended since!) is minimal and merely states that the water circulation is through a dyke system used at high and low tides. There is no explanation of how water quality in the canal moorings inland will be preserved. The re-zoning is required to allow the building of accommodation units – supposedly to increase employment and provide tourists (from overseas?) to stay in a swamp with their boat.

Apparently quite a few submissions from environment groups and individuals have been supportive. To us, however, it smacks of the Mornington marina proposal, with public land and water as well as birds and threatened animals, handed over to a developer. Submissions to the Shire were extended from 16th Feb to 4th March.

MEA submission is available on the MEA webpage.



Orange-bellied parrot s used to be seen at the site

Mills Beach Precinct Vegetation Removal Permit

Many of you made comments in 2012 about the proposed upgrading of Mills Beach car park, estuary car park and the front of the Life Saving Clubhouse. Now the Shire has put out the Permit Application to cut down five large trees (mostly banksias), and undergrowth of indigenous species to improve parking, allow better access down the ramp to the beach and move the BBQ. Many of the local walkers and dog walkers are up in arms as the character of the area will be changed, vegetation planted by our MEA Friends of Mills Beach and Tanti Creek Friends under grants from Coastcare will be removed (especially banksias under 5m.) The arborist apparently doesn't consider young immature trees important – all of

these are our plantings and replace the older banksias which have not been producing young seedlings for the past decade or so. So our work would be undone all for a few cars and a BBQ. Comments can still be made to Colin Charman planning.submission@mornpen.vic.gov.au

MEA submission from the working bees is available on the MEA website.

Dog walkers and users prefer this site (left) for the BBQ rather than that shown on the planning permit at the top of the ramp.



One of the banksia trees listed for removal



Friends of the Foreshore Report

Tanti Creek Friends

Working Bees have resumed. February saw a lot of hand weeding near the estuary. Melbourne Water has again provided over \$10,000 for ongoing maintenance, weeding and planting to extend from the estuary to Stones Crossing. Some of these funds will also be spent on education and publicity. A separate Shire grant is funding interpretive signs along the whole creek.



Volunteers clearing overgrown plantings at the estuary in February.

Mills Beach Friends



Working bees have resumed following the summer break. Work continues on Red Bluff, and Friends are back on Mills Beach near the boat sheds to repair damage from uses during summer. New members seen here on Mills Beach planting female spinifex seeds in the hope they will sprout, ready for planting in Autumn on Scouts Beach.



Fisherman's Beach Friends Working Bees

This small group continues to work along the clifftop between the bowls club (Esplanade) and Fishies Beach - generally looking good, but we do need more recruits. A few more hands would allow us to move beyond the restricted area we now maintain. The Shire is discussing future planning and funds with Peter Deerson, the working bee co-ordinator. Day and time is by arrangement. Peter's email is pdeerson@aim.com, so if you live locally, what about helping?

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 1ST MARCH



William aged five
was a great worker

Thanks to all those who helped the Australia Day clean up on 1st March – especially our local co-ordinators, Brian Burrows for the Mills Beach area and Judy Seager, Secretary of Tanti Creek who organized Hunter's Crossing.

The Friends of Mills Beach once again fronted up to clean up Mills Beach and its surrounds. In all eighteen adults oldest 81, three children youngest 5 and two dogs, all pitched in to assist in the clean up. This included three members of a Dandenong Bushwalking club and a university research student. We focused on the bush areas along the various tracks that lead from the beach up to the esplanade, the areas around the car parks and along the side of the esplanade, and all round and through Red Bluff.

We collected five full bags of recyclables and six very full bags of rubbish.

I look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Coordinator Brian Burrows



Some of the debris, including a shopping trolley from the creek at Hunter's Crossing in Pентecost St. off the Nepean Highway

VOLUNTEERING — Have your say to the Shire

Currently the Shire is seeking community input to volunteering on the Peninsula.

You can complete a survey available at the local libraries or you can attend a community workshop to provide feedback. Go to the website below for more details.

www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/YOUR_SAY

MEA is entirely run and operated by volunteers and the survey provides a good opportunity to assist shire to develop a volunteering strategy which will help the shire guide and support volunteering.

We note here that MEA has recently been informed that we did not get a Shire community grant this year. We keep working and we keep hoping!

PLANNING ISSUES

MEA members are paying attention to the progress of developments in and around the district. The sites of interest include

- Old petrol station site on corner of Main St opposite DOCS
- Herbert St Units
- Barkly St – Street vegetation is being cleared and road works undertaken at the start of the major unit development behind the primary school
- Bays Hospital extensions into tennis court site
- Renovations at Andrew Kerr Aged Facility

HARBOUR AND PIER ISSUES

Did you see the cruise ship on Tuesday 24th Feb moored outside the pier? Some 2000 tourists enjoyed Main Street activities, or were bussed around the Peninsula and then queued patiently for the loaf boats to take them back. The ship visited Sydney, Eden, Mornington, Portland and around to Kangaroo Island (SA) and is one of five such visits this year.



The pier continues to be restored and should be finished by Easter. Then the work on the immediate precinct commences - the area will be levelled, more formal parking organised, lighting and interpretative signage and seats installed. The pedestrian crossings we have pushed for are still being considered. A Sewage pump out for boats is also under consideration though most boats using the Mornington Harbour do not have toilets on board and don't need the pump out facility. The old bluestone toilets at the base of Schnapper Point are to be rebuilt in the next year (or so!) and the Mothers Beach toilets are supposed to be finished by mid 2015. The temporary ones there have no disabled access. Landscaping will have to be done again (possibly by MEA).

Coastal Projects for 2015

MEA has organised with the Shire to do several coastal projects before the end of June 2015. Contractors have started clearing the weeds, including that prickly thornbush, polygala and other weeds from the top of Schnapper Point, prior to planting (with our help, during a weekday working bee) in autumn. Scouts Beach, near the boatsheds, is also being replanted especially with sand and salt tolerant species to stop the further loss of the sand dunes and to upgrade the area at the bottom of the path from the esplanade. The Briars nursery is growing our specific plant order for this project.



Schnapper Point woody weed-ing is being undertaken by contractors

BELEURA CLIFF PATH COLLAPSE

Many of you are involved and concerned about the collapse in this well-known and used track. Despite being closed, many walkers still use the track. Stormwater and pool water has been allowed to flow down over the cliff, despite years of warnings, and the whole area is very unstable. local residents have formed a steering group (with a Facebook page) chaired by well known cartoonist, Peter Nicholson. This group is endeavouring to keep the Shire moving on fixing up the track – consultants are still coming up with options: some of which included putting in a wooden pathway to be lowered by helicopter, or dropping sandbags onto the base of the cliffs! Water from broken pipes and uncontrolled watering have wet the sub-strata of the rocks. The Shire has no plans of the stormwater drains and has not paved Kalimna Drive or provided proper gutters. The Shire engineer states he is continuing to work with locals, but already the steering committee has got one resident to repair her pipes (she didn't know about it). The three Briars councillors are also involved and we are pushing for action now!

OTHER MEA ACTION IN 2015

MEA has other projects for this year.:

1. **Increase awareness** of MEA by the general public through a promotional table at the growers market - see page 1
2. **Increase native plantings** by:
 - encouraging locals to plant more indigenous trees, not agapanthus!
 - advocating for roadside verges and footpaths to be used for public gardens – e.g. for herbs and fruit trees to use this wasted space! If Frankston City can plant decorative cabbages and lettuces along the middle of Nepean Highway, why can't we in Mornington area – especially in cul de sacs and dead end roads where traffic is lighter. What do you think?

OTHER MEA ACTION IN 2015 Contin-

3. **Continue Water Watch:** Two volunteers continue to monitor water quality on Tanti Creek. The data goes to Melbourne water and can assist ongoing research into water quality in the Bay. You may have seen EPA (Environment Protection Agency) representatives collecting samples at Mills Beach, Mothers Beach and near the storm water drain on Shire Hall Beach.
4. **Devil Bend** MEA is a paid up member of the Devilbend Foundation and has two **members on the committee. The Foundation works with Parks Vic in planning** for the Reserve at Tuerong. We also assist with waterwatch at four sites there.

Everyone is encouraged to bring your ideas to our monthly meetings so that we can consider them and organise our program.



Kevin Street sampling water quality

Contact Us:

- www.morningtonenviro.org.au
- morningtonea@gmail.com
- PO Box 580 Mornington 3931
- **Monthly meetings**

7:30PM 2nd Thursdays Feb. – Dec.

Mornington Library Meeting Room.

President: Jan Oliver

0417986077

Vice Pres.: Christine Stewart
59756687

Secretary: Franz Bjerkhamn
0407572089

Tanti Creek Friends: Sec. Judy Seager
seager2@bigpond.com

Mills Beach Friends: Jan 0417986077,
morningtonea@gmail.com

Fisherman's Beach: Peter Deerson:
pdeerson@netscape.net

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

- www.cleanupourwater.com.au
- [www.info@peninsulaspeaks.org.au](mailto:info@peninsulaspeaks.org.au)
- www.marineconservation.org.au
- www.pwcmca.org.au
- www.landcareonline.com.au
- www.nattrust.com.au

WORKING BEES

Volunteers meet to work and care for the following areas: see page 1 for contacts

Mills Beach - 3rd Sunday of the month
9:30—11:30

Tanti Creek - Last Sunday of the month
9:30—11:30
We need you!



You can be involved

If you would like to join in, membership forms are available on the web site.

Fees are: Family \$15; Single \$10; Concession \$7
You can write to Mornington Environment Association Inc. P.O.Box 580 Mornington 3931 or

email morningtonea@gmail.com

Please include name, address, phone and email address.

Working bee volunteers are contacted by email or phone.