Strange Times

COVID-19 has brought some significant changes to the way we live and work, and how we can deliver our projects as planned. Like a lot of organisations, DELWP has needed to be adaptable and creative.

The Linear Reserves Project has continued as normally as possible. Our weed control contractors have adopted increased hygiene measures, social distancing and other COVID safety protocols to be able to continue work and keep staff safe.

Other events and workshops have been postponed or cancelled. This includes a Cultural Burn that we had been planning with the Wadawurrung on a reserve in Teesdale. Many people and organisations, such as Golden Plains Shire, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and DELWP had been working with Wadawurrung to lead the Cultural Burn. We are hoping that we can reschedule later in the year, however this is a very weather dependent activity.

Grassland Burning

Several Linear Reserves sites have been successfully burnt during the 2019/20 fire season, thanks to the efforts of CFA Vegetation Management Officers and volunteer firefighters across the districts.

At the start of the fire season, our Linear Reserves working group identifies the priority sites for burning for that financial year, based on grassland values and years since previous burn. We then work with the relevant brigades to communicate the importance of grassland burning and identify any ways that the Linear Reserves Project could assist their brigade to achieve a planned burn.

An example of this working successfully was a burn at Forest Lane, near Dunkeld. Much planning and preparation was required and 22 personnel from four local brigades attended the burn in February. With funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program, we were able to contribute a small payment of recognition to the brigades involved.
We also saw a successful burn at the Cressy Flora Reserve (Trotting Track) this year, led by Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic).

The ecological burn has the dual benefit of reducing fuel loads and improving the condition of native grassland vegetation. As part of FFMVic’s program, Cressy is scheduled for a 3-year burning regime.

Figure 2: FFMVic crews conducting a planned ecological burn at the Cressy Flora Reserve.

**Grasslands on Roadsides Flyer**

Although the work we do is focussed on public land, we recently identified the need to engage with private land managers with significant grassland vegetation on their adjoining road reserves.

The 2-page flyer was developed in conjunction with the Corangamite and Glenelg Hopkins CMAs, with the intention of making landholders aware of the project – our aims and actions, and the importance of the native grasslands adjacent to their properties.

This flyer will be distributed to landholders on roads that weed control contractors are working on. The flyers also have contact details so people with further inquiries can contact us.

Figure 3: Information Flyer for landholders.
New Grassland Signage

In addition to the on-ground enhancement work we focus on, engagement and education are a large part of the work we do to conserve native grasslands. With funding through the State Government’s Biodiversity On-ground Action grants, we were fortunate enough to develop some grassland signage.

An existing sign at the Cressy Flora Reserve was badly aged and weathered, so we took the opportunity to update and replace it. The information in the new sign includes insights into an iconic and rare grassland inhabitant, the Striped Legless Lizard, and highlights the past and ongoing commitment by CFA volunteers to manage roadside grasslands through planned burning.

A significant improvement to the signage is the inclusion of traditional names in Aboriginal language, uses of the native species and the Aboriginal language boundaries map. Thank you to the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation for their information and assistance.

We also consulted with community members in Woornudo to determine the best outcome for new signage at the Woornudo Common Grasslands.

The signage project came at the perfect time, as plans had just been made to restore and relocate the existing hand-painted sign to inside the Woornudo Hall.

Visitors to Woornudo can see additional grasslands signage on the Woornudo Streatham Road. The Woondoo Land Protection Group produced the sign to provide information on the grassland restoration project.

Figure 6: Historic hand-painted sign at Woornudo Common.

Figure 7: Woornudo Common sign.

We’ve also been busy investigating the effectiveness of existing “Significant Vegetation Signage” on roadsides and locations where they currently exist. This allowed us to determine where new signage would be most beneficial.

The old signage design was adapted with current information and logos, and updated signage installed at 18 new locations across Moyne, Corangamite, Colac Otway and Golden Plains Shires.
Lismore Artwork

A fantastic new artwork has appeared on the Lismore water tower courtesy of Warrnambool artist, Jimmi Buscombe.

The painting features the iconic brolga and sheep. But if you look a bit closer at the detail, you'll see that Buscombe has gone to the extra effort of researching and including native grassland species in the foreground - Chocolate Lilies, Lemon Beauty-heads, Featherheads and Blue Devils.

Weed Control

This financial year we completed 1,354 ha of weed control over 29 linear reserve sites. The herbicide weed control is very selective and carried out by specialist contractors with a high level of grassland experience. It's a pretty difficult job to cover that much area and that many weeds while trying to fit in with seasonal conditions and funding cycles.

The work is made easier for contractors when the sites have been recently burnt and biomass is low.

We are planning and prioritising the next round of weed control sites with recently burnt sites being our top priority. Thanks to everyone involved.