

Joint Management Plan for the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks

Initial Stakeholder Engagement Summary



The Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board (DDLMB) is developing the Joint Management Plan (JMP) for six parks and reserves:

- Greater Bendigo National Park
- Kara Kara National Park
- Paddys Ranges State Park
- Hepburn Regional Park
- Kooyoorra State Park
- Wehla Nature Conservation Reserve.

These lands are held as Aboriginal Title by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) to be jointly managed. To develop the JMP, DDLMB has contracted a consortium including CSIRO (leader), DDWCAC, Djandak and Conservation Management. This group is working closely with Parks Victoria (PV) and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

The purpose of this leaflet is to feed back a summary of what we heard from Dja Dja Wurrung (DDW) People, and a broad range of stakeholders, during our initial engagement, which occurred between June and November 2017. All this information will be considered fully in the development of the Draft JMP, regardless of whether it appears in this Summary. The Draft JMP will go on display for 2 months public consultation in April 2018. For further information about ongoing JMP development see: <http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/hepburn-r.p/plans-and-projects/dja-dja-wurrung-joint-management-plan>.

The Summary is grouped into nine themes consistent with the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan¹:

1. People of the Parks and Surrounding Landscapes
2. Recreation, Cultural Practices and Customs
3. Cultural Heritage
4. Plants and Animals
5. Rivers and Waterways
6. Land and Climate
7. Self-determination of the Dja Dja Wurrung People
8. Enterprises
9. Joint Management

¹ DDWCAC. 2017. Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan (Revised). Bendigo, Australia: Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC).



WHO DID WE LISTEN TO?

Our Engagement team listened to many different voices through face-to-face meetings, telephone discussions, Information Sharing Workshops, DDW Focus Groups, meetings with the DDWCAC at their Board and Annual General Meeting, and through an online survey and interactive map.

Nineteen key stakeholder face-to-face meetings. We met with clubs and organisations at their regular meetings, and/or met with their Chief Executives, General Managers or other relevant staff.

- St Arnaud's Field Naturalists Club Inc. (1²)
- Bendigo Four Wheel Drive Club (~20)
- Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc. (~25)
- Bendigo Mountain Bike Club Inc. (2)
- Bendigo Orienteers Inc. (~15)
- Central Goldfields Shire Council (1)
- City of Greater Bendigo (Reconciliation Action Plan Committee (9)
- Daylesford and District Historical Society and Museum Volunteers (7)
- Daylesford & Macedon Ranges Regional Tourism Board (1)
- DELWP Loddon Mallee Region (4) and Grampian Region (1)
- Four Wheel Drive Victoria (2)
- Hepburn Shire Council (3)
- Kara Kara Conservation Management Network (1)
- Loddon Shire Council (4)
- North Central Catchment Management Authority (2)
- Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria (1)
- Trust for Nature (3)
- Victorian Farmers Federation (1)
- Victorian National Parks Association (2)

Five key stakeholder telephone discussions:

- Bush Heritage Australia (1)
- Loddon-Campaspe Regional Partnership (1)
- Victorian Apiarists' Association (1)
- Victorian Apiarists' Association (Bendigo)(1)
- Hepburn Shire Council (2)

Four information Sharing Workshops:

- Bendigo 16 September (3)
- Inglewood 17 September (12)
- Maryborough 7 October (10)
- Daylesford 21 October (14)

Four DDW Focus Groups:

- Bendigo Town Meeting 20 May (22)
- Hepburn Regional Park 18 June (28)
- Kooyoora State Park 13 August (32)
- Paddys Ranges State Park 8 October (42)

Two DDWCAC meetings:

- Bendigo: meeting with Board 28 October (7)
- Bendigo: presentation at the Annual General Meeting 2 December (~40)

Online survey and interactive map:

Twenty five local residents and one Victorian visitor completed the online survey. Six people recorded their special places on the online interactive map.

WHAT DID WE HEAR?

Stakeholders identified values, opportunities, what is working well, the challenges and suggested actions, as summarised in the tables, figures and quotations below.

1. People of the Parks and Surrounding Landscapes – *what we heard*

About values	Positive partnerships offer good opportunities for DDW People and the community to work together.
About opportunities and what is working	Many different groups contribute voluntary effort to the parks, increasing their feeling of community ownership.
About challenges	People have some competing interests – some people would like more access to the parks and others seek greater protection. People would like to interact more to understand different views, and to learn about DDW culture.
About suggested actions	Establish Stakeholder Advisory Committees for each of the parks and promote their unique values to the public. Provide opportunities for DDW People to be in the parks.

More positive partnerships. We're always talking about partnerships but we do need to have positive partnerships. DDW Focus Group 13 August 2017.

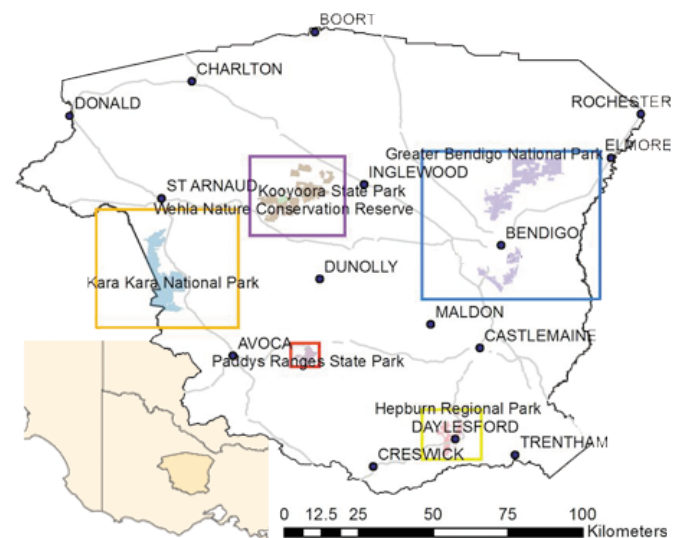


Figure 1: The DDW parks and their Recognition and Settlement Agreement area.

2. Recreation, Cultural Practices and Customs – *what we heard*

About values	DDW People prioritise connecting, visiting, knowing and practicing their culture on their Country. Stakeholders value a wide range of recreational activities (Figure 2).
About opportunities what is working	Educational and interpretive materials and activities, for example clean-up rubbish days, orienteers' maps, walking tracks, bike trails, picnic areas, ceremony grounds, and DDW signage could be increased. Some campgrounds are well maintained.
About challenges	Tourists in large numbers pressure facilities, and poorly controlled recreational activities can impact negatively on environmental and cultural values.

² The number of attendees at each meetings is provided in brackets.



2. Recreation, Cultural Practices and Customs – what we heard (continued)

About suggested actions Conduct DDW cleansing and smoking ceremonies, invest in interpretation and education, using DDW language. Maintain recreational facilities and tracks. Develop Joint Codes of Practice for potentially harmful activities. Maintain access for recreational activities - for example prospecting, mountain bike riding, four wheel driving, orienteering and for people seeking peace and quiet.

The enjoyment one gets from walking in the forests and also hearing and seeing the birdlife and wildlife is exhilarating. Survey Respondent, October 2017.

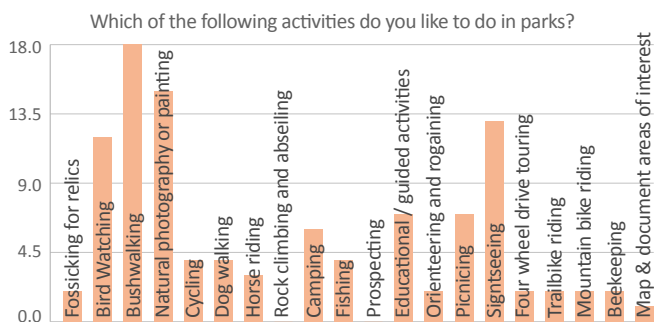


Figure 2. Online survey results

Despite a relatively small number of respondents, the survey indicated that the community and visitors value and enjoy a wide range of activities within parks. While no prospectors or rock climbers completed the survey, stakeholders informed us that these are important activities in the parks.

3. Cultural Heritage – what we heard

About values Protection and management of cultural sites and stories is vital for both DDW People and community stakeholders. Goldfields historical heritage is key for connecting people to parks.

About opportunities and what is working PV staff are acknowledged for their commitment to management with limited resources. Cultural heritage art and craft workshops can be held in the parks. Some recreational users, e.g. orienteers, have protocols with DDW People to ensure all cultural heritage sites are avoided.

About challenges Many DDW cultural heritage sites are not properly recorded and are at risk from erosion, feral animals and suffer lack of respect. Goldfield heritage is not well known.

About suggested actions Undertake DDW cultural heritage surveys to register and manage sites. Collaborate on shared goals to present the heritage of the parks and rename parks in DDW language. Develop Memorandum of Understanding between DDW People and user groups about responding to artefact finds.

4. Plants and animals – what we heard

About values Thriving, healthy, balanced ecosystems and a variety of native plants and animals, including totems and plants for food and fibre, are valued by all. Threatened species, such as the brush-tailed phascogale, are a key focus for park management.

4. Plants and animals – what we heard (continued)

About opportunities and what is working Brush-tailed phascogales are using the artificial nestingboxes and many volunteers assist with weed and feral animal control. DDW cultural burning is a key opportunity.

About challenges Feral animals, particularly foxes and cats, invasive weeds like wheel cactus and inappropriate fire regimes remain a challenge. Balancing access to firewood with maintaining woody debris for animal habitat is important.

About suggested actions Bring traditional burning back, remove pest plants and animals in collaboration with other organisations, promote native plant revegetation. Gradually replace exotic plants over time at Mt Franklin. Prioritise monitoring and improvement.

We want to put fire in the landscape up there - the right fires ... we can have our mob out like we've got today and do a burn. DDW Focus Group 13 August 2017.

5. Rivers and Waterways – what we heard

About values The springs and soaks at Kooyoora, mineral waters at Hepburn and DDW rock wells scattered across the parks, beautiful clear creeks with animals like platypus and frogs, are highly valued by all.

About opportunities and what is working Fencing off water sources from damage by feral animals is both an opportunity and a problem. Regular testing of mineral waters is critical.

About challenges Algal blooms can make mineral water toxic for people. Changes to land forms has disturbed water flows. Managing access to water among competing interests can be challenging.

About suggested actions Create natural contours and restore more natural water flows. Increase the focus on the unique value of the mineral springs in pristine natural environments.

6. Land and Climate – what we heard

About values The landscape diversity, including volcanoes, granite outcrops, caves, cliffs and sandstone reaches, with attractive forested vistas, is highly valued. The "upside down country" (land damaged by mining) needs to be healed.

About opportunities and what is working Access to these landscapes through a network of tracks is appreciated, as is people using the bush sensitively. Seasonal track closures are necessary. Land restoration to create connectivity between habitat remnants is a key opportunity.

About challenges The parks are relatively understaffed for their size, and to address issues like rubbish dumping, rehabilitating upside down country, and preventing inappropriate encroachment on the parks from the extensive edges.

About suggested actions Involve Traditional Owners and partners, such as prospectors, 4WD, field naturalists and recreational users, in an extensive effort to rehabilitate upside down country. Liaise with councils to better control rubbish dumping. Coordinate law enforcement and ensure compliance with existing Codes of Conduct.

7. Self-determination of Dja Dja Wurrung People – what we heard

About values	Public awareness of the DDW People's roles, rights and responsibilities and their opportunity to return to country is highly valued.
About opportunities and what is working	The profile of DDW People in the wider community is growing. DDW people have gained recognition of their rights over the parks and have established their own organisations and enterprises.
About challenges	DDW People are called on to be involved in a huge number of processes and need to be adequately resourced by those seeking their input.
About suggested actions	Have field days, walks and talks with DDW People and locals in the parks. Establish clear signage with DDW place names, language and acknowledgements of self-determination of DDW People.

It is important to me that Aboriginal people get the opportunity to develop a strong culture and strong bond again with country after many years of being separated from it, or not being allowed a say in the way the parks are managed. There would be more centuries of wisdom about country and how to care for it compared to the few centuries of white devastation. I've always appreciated too that Aboriginal people care for country as a living thing for future generations. Survey Respondent, October 2017.

8. Enterprises – what we heard

About values	Jobs in natural and cultural resource management are a key priority for DDW. Tourism, bee-keeping, and mineral water enjoyment in these parks add value to local economies and have potential as DDW enterprises.
About opportunities and what is working	Tourism, particularly nature-based tourism, is successful with opportunities for growing markets e.g. from Asia. PV employment of DDW People is working well.
About challenges	There are insufficient funds to employ the number of people needed to manage the parks to fully meet community aspirations. Training and education are important to enable DDW People to step up.
About suggested actions	Additional funds from government to employ staff is vital, and could be supplemented through licence, visitation and other fees. Each park could have its own team of DDW Rangers. A joint partnership between DDW People and existing tourism ventures could be useful.

It's amazing how many different tourists are in there when we go in for a spa, when we go in for a soak. From all over the country - all over the world. DDW Focus Group 18 June 2017.



Word cloud from stakeholder input



Word cloud from DDW input

9. Joint Management – what we heard

About values	Joint Management is valued by all as an opportunity to improve the management of the parks, build partnerships and show the 'Caring for Country' of DDW People.
About opportunities and what is working	Getting the Joint Management is a big step forward and raises curiosity and increased interest in participation from the community.
About challenges	Many different pieces of legislation and policy have to be coordinated.
About suggested actions	Joint Management of the parks can occur through a mixture of delegation, contracting and cooperation. Powers and functions of government can be delegated to the DDLMB who can contract PV and/or DDWCAC to manage activities and parks.

Under our recognition settlement agreement we've got, between Dja Dja Wurrung and the state government, we have rights as traditional owners of this Country. It's important that we all acknowledge that and we work with our elders, we talk, we yarn, we communicate, that way it better helps. DDW Focus Group 13 August 2017.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DDLMB	Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board
	Dja Dja Wurrung
DDWCAC	Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
e.g.	for example
JMP	Joint Management Plan
PV	Parks Victoria



Environment, Land, Water and Planning



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