



Newsletter - April 2020

Hello everyone,

Each year at Easter, at the time of the AGM we put out the Harmers Haven Residents and Ratepayers newsletter. It is a little late this year as sadly due to Covid 19 we were unable to hold our AGM but want to keep everyone in touch and up to date with the year's activities and plans for the future.

We hope that you are all well and surviving the lockdown and isolation and maybe even enjoying the quieter pace of life. If you are bunkered down here at Harmers at least we have our beautiful coastline to enjoy, mostly without the crowds.

Friends of Harmers Haven Activities 2019 -2020

1. *Triangle at western end of Viminaria Road (funded by a Bass Coast Shire Council & Bass Coast Landcare Network Biolinks grant)*

The Bass Coast Shire Council which manages this piece of land decided to revegetate as part of their biolinks plan. Many groups and people were involved in getting this project completed. Bass Coast Landcare Network, Wonthaggi Seedbank & Nursery and Frank Smolders down at Fish Creek grew more than 2000 plants for us. Dave Sutton & John Old put in the fence line (and solar run electrification) to keep cattle out and Alison Oates, Botanist, carried out a comprehensive mapping plan as the area, despite being relatively small, had a number of different soil types. Dave Sutton also did some spot spraying to allow the plants the best opportunity to get established.

The planting was completed at one of our wonderful working bees with more than 40 people digging holes, planting and guarding the plants — followed by a delicious lunch at Jes & Bib's place. If you couldn't make the day check out this time-lapse recording of the working bee taken by HH resident drone pilot, Jesse Sago: <https://youtu.be/IOIsxhO4Rn0>

If you think the site looks a bit messy with the weed growth over summer, this was a planned approach with the weeds providing some shelter to the small plants.

The preparation was well worth it as the plants are growing well and have mostly survived the heat, wind and rain (and the resident wombat).

Although we can't hold any working bees due to Covid 19 restrictions, some individuals have continued to care for the foreshore by spot weeding and letting us know when they notice weed problems. If you have any ideas or comments please get in touch with one of the Committee listed at the end of this newsletter.

2. *Polygala Valley (funded by a DELWP biodiversity grant)*

We have been successful in controlling a serious weed infestation of Polygala in a valley to the west of the Area 21 sign. Weed contractors removed the main incursion of Polygala bushes in 2018/19 (using no chemical spraying) followed by a successful working bee with more than 30 participants who planted more than 500 plants (thanks to Wonthaggi Seedbank & Nursery). Pleasing to note, around 70% of those plants have survived. What is exciting too are the new plants growing up through piles of the dead Polygala.

Here are some photos from that community event & some outcomes.



We are continuing to pull up new shoots of Polygala, so anyone interested in getting down on their knees to lend a hand, give us a call!

3. Silver Wormwood Site (funded by a DELWP biodiversity grant & DELWP Coastcare grant)

We've had similar success at this site. Silver Wormwood had colonised a whole valley to the east of Coal Creek. We have eradicated the Wormwood at this site and replanted with a similar rate of success. Thanks to the more than 25 folk who participated in the replanting last winter and thanks to the Wonthaggi Seedbank & Nursery who provided the 500 plants.

4. *Sea Spurge control (funded by a DELWP 2019 Coastcare grant - \$12,957 & a DELWP Biodiversity grant)*

As a continuation of a Sea Spurge control program begun by Cape Paterson Residents & Ratepayers Association (CPPRA) we have extended this program to pulling Sea Spurge from Area 23 through to Area 20. We have used weed contractors followed by working bees. We have had three school groups pulling Sea Spurge, as a community contribution. These events have been highly successful & enjoyed by school children & teachers alike. South Gippsland Conservation Society together with Friends of Harmers Haven provide educators to talk to the groups about conservation, climate change, coastal erosion, Hooded Plovers nesting sites & how we achieve regeneration of the native Spinifex and Pigface after removal of the Sea Spurge. We also had a highly successful working bee with 35 participants from CPPRA, HHRRG & SGCS in February this year.



5. *Cape Honeyflower eradication (funded by a DELWP 2019 Coastcare grant - \$9,365)*



This is a nasty looking monster of a weed that has invaded pockets of our foreshore west of Area 21. It is possible to eradicate so if you see some please contact us as soon as possible and we'll get the weed contractors on to it.

Other Harmers Haven Activities 2019 -2020

6. *Alison Oates' Flora and Fauna Assessment of the Harmers Haven Foreshore (funded by HHRRG)*

In order to better understand, appreciate & ultimately protect the natural values of our coastal foreshore, HHRRG engaged a local botanist, Alison Oates, to do a biodiversity values study of flora (EVCs & plants of regional, state & national significance) & threatened fauna species within the Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve. The report was completed in November 2019, and it will be a crucial document in this year's community consultations about the San Remo-Inverloch walking track.

[Download and/or read the document.](#)

7. *Great Victorian Fish Count (sponsored by the South Gippsland Conservation Society)*

We are excited, as is Reef Watch and the Victorian National Parks Association, that Wreck Beach Harmers Haven has been added as a snorkelling site for the annual *Great Victorian Fish Count*. Thanks to Rod Webster from SGCS for this initiative. This year we had 25 enthusiastic snorkellers on the 7th December (local folk as well as some coming from as far afield as Williamstown and Ricketts Point, Beaumaris) and we saw this year's signature fish the 'ornate cow fish' as well as lots of other local species, the usual rays & even a Port Jackson Shark. If you'd like to take part in the next count we'll put you on the email list.

8. *Monitoring endangered hooded plovers*

During the Bass Coast 2019/2020 season, on beaches between San Remo and Inverloch, thirty-three pairs of Hooded Plovers created 56 nests, laid 129 eggs, and of the 26 chicks that hatched, 11 fledglings survived. Many eggs were lost to ravens, foxes and high-tides again this season. At Harmers Haven, at the mouth of Coal Creek Estuary, we had one successful fledgling, whose proud parents WD and No Bands, survived pedestrian traffic and the loss of one set of eggs to a fox, yet raised a healthy chick. JS from Waterfall Creek also survived an entanglement of fishing line at the end of the breeding season and fortunately didn't lose a foot. TP was banded this summer too (in memory of Tom Paterson).



Thanks Jem Bennett, Tom & Rosemary's grandson, for being a good citizen scientist and recording the event!

9. *Yallock Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park (formerly Bass Coast Marine and Coastal Park): walking trail update*

In February we reported to members on the government's plans to create a walking trail extending from San Remo to Inverloch through the new Marine and Coastal Park. Since then there have been no new formal announcements from government about the progress of this project and we understand that the design services contract has not yet been awarded.

Obviously though some work is continuing as we understand that consideration is being given to how stakeholder consultations can be held in the Covid 19 environment. It appears likely that these will now take place on-line only.

The Yallock-Bulluk Coastal Alliance, of which we are members, was however able to have one face-to-face meeting with Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to voice our concerns about the proposal and to explore what avenues are open to us to have input into it.

Meeting with Parks Victoria and DELWP

The Yallock Bulluk Coastal Alliance met with representatives of DELWP and Parks on 27th February at Harmers Haven. DELWP was represented by Cass Philippou, Project Officer, and Rinske Poulier, Project Manager. Parks was represented by Brian Martin. Ros Eason and Amaryll Perlesz attended on behalf of the HHRR Association and the Friends Group respectively.

The discussion was largely of a preliminary character, at least as far as DELWP and Parks were concerned, as the tender for design services had only closed on 11 February. However we did get some general indications about both DELWP's and Parks' thinking in some areas of concern to us.

- **Consultations.** DELWP apologised for not having been in touch with relevant local groups at an earlier point of time but undertook to do so regularly in future. Cass Philippou indicated, however, that it would be unlikely that the Coastal Alliance would be given a position on the Project Working Group (PWG) as we had proposed.

There was also little appetite for the creation of a lower-order Stakeholder Reference Group. It seemed that the preferred model was for one-on-one consultations with specific stakeholders (e.g. mountain bike riders, walkers, cyclists, environmentalists etc), supplemented by the kind of public open-day where members of the community can make comments on issues and/or proposals but without the structure of a formal meeting. These consultations were being scheduled to begin at Easter.

Events have since overtaken these plans. Public meetings of any kind, including stakeholder round tables, are off the agenda for the time being. Consultations are likely to be on-line only but no timetable has been flagged and a proposed project website has yet to materialise.

- **Camping ground.** Members will recall that one of the key concerns of the Coastal Alliance was the apparent encouragement in the design brief for new camping grounds in the Park.

It became clear during discussions that there was little appetite, especially within Parks Victoria, for the creation of such new camp sites, and although the issue would still be part of the design brief, DELWP indicated that it was "a site" rather than multiple sites that would be considered. Discussion in fact focussed on how existing sites might be upgraded, if required, rather than new ones developed.

- **Dual access.** As explained in our last newsletter, it is not clear from the design brief to what extent the government intends, or hopes, that the new trail provides multiple access ie not only walking, but cycling, horse riding, car access etc. We outlined our concerns on this question, in particular about the environmental impacts of multiple access requirements (widening of existing paths, creation of new surfaces etc).

After the formal meeting, the members of the Coastal Alliance took the DELWP and Parks representatives on a brief walk around a section of the heathland and the beach. HHRR Association and Friends Group were particularly keen to impress two things on them:

- the damage that would be done to native vegetation by any widening of the narrow path that leads from the end of Viminaria Road onto the heathland
- the fact that a continuous walk along the beach was not possible at certain tides.

They seemed to take the point on both counts. But we will see.

STOP PRESS: We have just received notification that DELWP has organised on-line community consultation sessions in May & June. Our Coastal Alliance group will be developing a position to take to those sessions. Here's a website if you're interested in hearing more about the plans for the coastal walk:

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/yallock-bulluk-marine-and-coastal-park-access-and-infrastructure-plan>

9. Summarised Finances for 2019 – Report from Treasurer

We started 2019 with cash assets of \$11,687 (in bank account and petty cash). During the year we gained an additional \$22,824 in income, the bulk of which was for two State Government Coastcare grants. One of the grants was for Seaspurge control (see item 4), the other for Cape Honey Flower control (see item 5).

Our expenses for the year totalled \$14,518. The three biggest expense items were: \$6000 to botanist Alison Oates for the Harmers Haven Flora and Fauna Report (see item 6); \$3817 to contractors to spray Cape Honey Flower; and \$3080 to Bass Coast Landcare Network to spray Sea spurge.

At the end of 2019 we had \$19,986 in cash assets. Of this, around \$14,000 is grants funding that is committed to specific projects. This leaves us with a healthy level of uncommitted funds of around \$6,000.

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From the Executive of the *Harmers Haven Residents & Ratepayers Group & Members of Friends of Harmers Haven*