



Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Victoria Ltd

Submission to Parks Victoria

Plenty Gorge Park Concept Plan
Draft 2015

July 2015

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Recommendations

The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria) recommend:

1. The partnership between SSAA (Vic) and Parks Victoria in relation to the fox control program at Plenty Gorge Park continues under the Memorandum of Understanding and Project Funding Agreement between Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria) and Parks Victoria.
2. Pest management programs for Plenty Gorge Park and specifically the fox control program be included as a key initiative for the general direction of the park.

About Sporting Shooters Association Australia (Victoria)

The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria) Ltd is a public company with 34,000 members.

Aims and objectives of Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria) are:

- to promote and encourage competitive target shooting and practice shooting with a view to developing proficient and safe use of firearms
- to promote and encourage ethical hunting and field shooting and related ancillary activities
- to promote and advocate game fauna conservation and to promote a better understanding between members, land-holders, regulatory bodies, other interested groups and general public
- to promote and facilitate the development of knowledge of the history of firearms and ammunition development and design
- to promote and advocate the rights of firearms owners to legislative and regulatory bodies and to the general public
- to promote Country Centres throughout the State of Victoria for the purposes of carrying out any of the objectives of the Company

About the Conservation Pest Management Program

A Memorandum of Understanding and Project Funding Agreement between Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria) and Parks Victoria was signed in August 2012. The Agreement provides a framework for the “Expansion of cooperative pest animal control programs” for specific areas managed by Parks Victoria.

SSAA (Vic) is enabled under the Agreement to plan, coordinate and deliver pest control programs by volunteer operators on land managed by Parks Victoria subject to approval of Parks Victoria. Programs are designed to maximise positive biodiversity and good neighbour outcomes and to control threats to key conservation values in parks as identified by Parks Victoria.

SSAA (Vic) and Parks Victoria fox control program at Plenty Gorge Park

The Fox Control Program at Plenty Gorge was initiated in response to a growing fox population and its threat to native species of fauna including the endangered Growling Tree Frog.

Two SSAA (Vic) volunteers who have been trained and accredited as pest management operators introduced their fox whistler program in 2008. To date they have contributed over 400 volunteer hours to the program and harvested 255 foxes.

The program is delivered Tuesday and Thursday of each week and will continue as part of the parks overall management of key threats.



Park Victoria Ranger, Bill Pitt and Program Team Leader, Abe Andrews

Key Points

1. The 'Draft Vision' for the Plenty Gorge Park Master Plan refers to the following guiding principles:

- *Encourage community interaction and care for the park by involving partners, user groups, local communities and volunteers.*

SSAA (Vic) comment: The Plenty Gorge Fox Program embraces this guiding principle through the partnership between SSAA (Vic) and Parks Victoria in the delivery of the program and through the contribution made by SSAA (Vic) volunteers.

- *Protect and enhance the park's rich biodiversity by careful distribution of park activities, active management of key threats such as weeds, pests or inappropriate activities.*

SSAA (Vic) comment: The Plenty Gorge Fox Program makes a significant contribution to the management of fox populations that threaten the park's rich biodiversity including the Flat-tailed Dunnart, Blue-billed Duck, Brush-tailed Phascogale and the endangered Growling Tree Frog.

2. The Plenty Gorge Park Concept Plan, Draft 2015 proposes key initiatives that will provide general direction for the park including promoting conservation of flora and fauna. The fox control program is viewed by Parks Victoria as a successful partnership between the two organisations in reducing fox numbers in the park.

SSAA (Vic) employs a dedicated full-time 'Conservation Pest Management Program' manager who works closely with Parks Victoria managers in

planning and coordinating the program including the development and implementation of operational safety plans.

The fox control program at Plenty Gorge Park is included in the Parks Victoria 2015/2016 'schedule of pest management programs'.

The end result of the fox control program is that there are fewer predators on the ground and therefore all native wildlife is benefiting as are the 170,000 people who visit the park each year as well as conservation in general.

The proposed key initiatives in the draft park concept plan do not include any reference to existing pest management programs, or specifically the fox control program.

SSAA (Vic) recommends that pest management programs at plenty Gorge Park and specifically the fox control program be included as a key initiative for the general direction of the park.