Western Murray Land Improvement Group

Striking a Balance

KOONDROOK-PERRICOOTA FOREST COMMUNITY VISIONING OUTCOMES

BACKGROUND

With a purpose to develop a cohesive community vision for the Koondrook-Perricoota (KP) Forest, a series of community engagement events were facilitated by Western Murray Land Improvement Group (WMLIG) between December 2020 and April 2021.

One introductory seminar, two field days, and a follow-up visioning workshop were held to invite the attention and perspectives of local community members. The field days provided attendees with an opportunity to visit the Pollack Wetland and the currently dry Smokehouse Lagoon in the KP. As environmental contrast sparked discussion, these events provided community members with a platform to provide input regardless of their position and interests in the KP.

Over 160 participants attended this event series, as the engagement footprint spanned across Barham, Caldwell, Moulamein, Mallan, Deniliquin, Moama, Koondrook, Leitchville, Gunbower, Cohuna, Kerang, Swan Hill, Budgerum East, Melbourne, and Canberra. This event series was held with funding support from the Forestry Corporation of NSW and Murray Local Land Services.

Prior to follow-up community visioning workshop on 26th February 2021, a survey was conducted to provide an additional and anonymous avenue for community members to state their visions for the KP. This survey received 42 responses, which have been utilised in combination with the workshop visioning to produce the present outcome summary.

Consolidated feedback was used to establish:

- Three vision pillars to encompass shared objectives of the KP Forest,
- A series of key themes and interests that community members deemed important in the future of KP Forest,
- A series of draft community vision statements.
- A finalised community vision for the KP Forest

KEY VISION PILLARS

A HEALTHY FOREST

A FOREST WITH PERMANENT WATER HOLES TO SUPPORT RICH, DIVERSE FLORA AND FAUNA.

A FOREST WITHOUT DOMINANT PEST SPECIES.

A FOREST TO SUSTAIN BREEDING EVENTS FOR WATER BIRDS, WITH SUPPORTING POPULATIONS OF NATIVE FISH.

A FOREST WITH SELF-REGULATING NATURAL CYCLES.

A PEOPLE'S FOREST

AN ENGAGED AND EVOLVING COMMUNITY WITH A UNIFIED VOICE.

A FOREST WITH RECOGNISED CULTURAL HERITAGE, BOTH INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS.

A FOREST FOR LIFE-LONG ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.

CO-DESIGNED, CO-MANAGED OBJECTIVES WITH TRANSPARENCY IN COMMUNICATION.

BROAD COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND NATIONAL, MAINSTREAM MEDIA ATTENTION.

A WORKING FOREST

A RECREATIONAL AND ACCESSIBLE FOREST WITH SUPPORTED INFRASTRUCTURE.

A FOREST FOR POSITIVE ECONOMIC OUTCOMES, INCLUDING TOURISM AND LOCAL EMPLOYMENT.

A FOREST WHERE FIREWOOD CAN BE GATHERED AND TIMBER CAN BE HARVESTED.

RECOGNITION OF THE FOREST AS A RAMSAR-LISTED SITE, CARED FOR AND MANAGED APPROPRIATELY.

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KEY THEMES AND INTERESTS

The table below summarises community-identified interests, both short and long term, as present in event discussion and the visioning survey. Key themes and interests are here divided into four major categories, though many are cross-cutting.

Sociocultural	
CULTURAL HERITAGE	Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous
EDUCATION	Primary, Secondary, Lifelong, and Recreational.
RECREATION	Tourism, camping, birdwatching, fishing, and other activities.
Ecological	
HABITAT	Establishing habitat for refugia and breeding for native species.
FISH	Managing pest carp populations and re-establishing native fish species and yabbies.
BIRDS	Establishing food resource and breeding refugia for migratory and permanent bird populations.
VEGETATION	Improving biodiversity, managing weeds, controlling over-abundant species
Economic	
FIREWOOD COLLECTION	Continued.
TIMBER HARVESTING	Continued.
EMPLOYMENT	Creating employment opportunities via infrastructural, ecological enhancement, environmental monitoring, tourism, and other projects.
TOURISM	Attracting visitors to the KP, establishing 'something to see', developing infrastructure to support this.
Management	
WATER DELIVERY	Establishing a watering regime for optimal environmental outcomes and minimising third-party impacts.
THIRD-PARTY IMPACTS	Resolving third party impacts of water delivery, including levy bank repair and removing barriers where appropriate (e.g. log jams).
ACCESS	Establishing emergency and non-4WD vehicle access into the KP.
INFRASTRUCTURE	Roads, campsites, toilets, interpretive information, bridges, and fish screens.
FIRE RISK	Managing fuel load in the KP, including leaf litter.
RECOGNITION	Facilitating broader local engagement and attracting mainstream media attention toward the condition of and visions for the KP.

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DRAFT COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENTS

The following statements were written to summarise the common themes, focuses, and values identified in the preliminary K-P engagement series.

WITH A UNIFIED VOICE, THE COMMUNITY CALLS FOR THE KOONDROOK-PERRICOOTA FOREST TO BE:

A HEALTHY WORKING FOREST WHERE NATIVE SPECIES CAN FLOURISH, AND WHERE LOCAL COMMUNITIES CAN CONNECT AND CO-MANAGE THE FOREST FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

A HEALTHY WORKING FOREST WHICH SUPPORTS AND IS SUPPORTED BY A VIBRANT, THRIVING RURAL COMMUNITY.

A HEALTHY, MULTI-USE FOREST WITHIN WHICH LOCAL COMMUNITIES ARE CONNECTED, EDUCATED, AND ACTIVELY INVOLVED.

OUR FOREST: STRENGTHENING PEOPLE, STRENGTHENING NATURE.

A HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE FOREST OVERSEEN BY A REVIEWABLE MANAGEMENT PLAN CREATED BY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS WITH INPUT BY FOREST USERS AND FOREST APPRECIATORS.

COMMUNITY KOONDROOK-PERRICOOTA FOREST VISION STATEMENT

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A community vision statement was finalised by online vote with the option to submit a hard copy vote on the 1st April 2021.

From a list of the five draft statements, the below was selected by a 70% majority.

A healthy working forest where native species can flourish, and where local communities can connect and co-manage the forest for future generations.

Western Murray Land Improvement Group and its partners will now be working on how to bring this vision statement and pillars to life.

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