

Community Resilience Newsletter

Wye River Fire

COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE

WYE RIVER | SEPARATION CREEK

21 JUNE 2016

This newsletter is issued by Colac Otway Shire to provide the community key updates about recovery following the fire.

Wye and Sep residents healing their home

Residents of all ages joined together in Wye River over the Queen's Birthday weekend to learn about weeds and birds and make a positive impact healing their local environment, devastated by the Christmas Day bushfire.

More than 50 people attended the Weeds and Bird Workshop, organised by Wye Weed Warriors, part of Wye to Wongarra Land Care.

Organiser of the workshop and local resident, Rex Brown, said the Wye River and Separation Creek landscape had been dramatically impacted by the Christmas Day Bushfire.

"Seeing the devastation to the environment, we quickly realised that we had an opportunity to play a major part in reshaping and renewing our local environment," Rex said.

"The Workshop brought together a great mix of experts and enthusiasts from the local community to learn about caring for birds and the use of nesting boxes and habitat hollows, understanding weeds and how they can be treated and eradicated, local plant species and vegetation and what to plant.

"It was wonderful to see [63] families request 63 bird nesting boxes be installed on their land and several others wanting to install them in the future.

"After a great BBQ lunch, provided by the DELWP team, 45 people headed up to Paddy's Path for a 'planting bee' where we planted 250 seedlings.

"Our youngest planter was six and our most experienced was 68 – it was a great opportunity for families and individuals to join together and help our beautiful Wye River and Separation Creek landscape heal.

"Now both ends of Paddy's Path have a welcoming gateway of plants for everyone to enjoy.

"One of the best outcomes of this workshop is that residents are now forming or joining neighbourhood groups to care for their local environment.

On Monday, a group of landowners in Separation Creek continued the effort preparing for planting another 50 seedlings near Mitchell Grove.

"We welcome everyone to join us at future events, to ask questions and learn more about the beautiful natural environment in Wye River and Separation Creek," Rex said.

For more information about the Wye Weed Warriors or Landcare, please contact Rex Brown on 0408 006 992 or visit www.wyeseconnect.info for regular updates and events.

Paddy's Path Re-opened

Residents and visitors were thrilled to see Paddy's Path re-opened in time for the Queen's Birthday long weekend.

Extensive work was undertaken and will continue to be done to stabilise the path, however the reserve surrounding the path remains a land slide hazard area.

Measures are in place to manage these hazards, however, due to the effects of the fire on the slope stability the community is asked not to stop for long periods while walking along the path.

More land slide hazard mitigation work will occur over the coming months.

Please obey all warning signs and barriers when using the path.

Retaining Wall colour selection

WyeSep residents were invited to vote on a selection of colours for the replacement of damaged and destroyed retaining walls classified as being high risk and very high risk.

These high and very high risk retaining walls are on both private and public land and are being replaced as soon as possible to stabilise land and minimize risk of landslide and impact on public safety.

These high and very high retaining walls are being installed by the State Government.

The most popular colours were Charcoal and Sandstone.

Residents installing retaining walls on their own property can choose the construction material and colour of material appropriate for their property and BAL rating.

Exploring Asset Protection Zone Options for Wye River and Separation Creek

Asset Protection Zones (APZs) have been raised in community discussions as one of many ways to potentially influence future bushfire risks to Wye River and Separation Creek.

There is a great deal to assess when considering APZ's for any community and DELWP, in conjunction with Colac Otway Shire and independent bushfire experts, would like to invite residents and landholders to discuss APZs and other vegetation management options during a number of upcoming engagement opportunities.

The APZ Engagement Program includes three different components to enable community members to choose the level they would like to be involved:

1. A bus trip Field Day on Sunday 3 July, 9am to 1:30pm to look at APZs in nearby towns to discuss their functions, design options, effectiveness and impacts on adjacent communities.
2. Eight Cluster Meetings will be held on Friday 8, Saturday 9, Friday 15 and Saturday 16 July, to discuss and explore APZ options at a street-scale based on topography, vegetation and other local factors.
3. Open House Events at Wye River and in Melbourne to share the results of the Field Trip and Cluster Meetings with the wider community.

Through this program, community members will be able to explore a range of issues including local values and considerations, and the potential feasibility, costs, benefits, purpose and effectiveness of different APZ options around the settlement.

Although Cluster Meetings are open to all interested residents and landholders, properties immediately adjacent to potential APZs will receive a direct invitation during the next week inviting them to attend their specific Cluster meeting if possible.

Please note that the Cluster Meetings will be held outside and on-site (final locations still to be confirmed) unless the weather is inclement.

More information will be available soon via direct e-mail, WyeSep Connect and the Bushfire Recovery Information Centre.

6x6 Design Exhibition brings architectural design solutions to WyeSep residents

More than fifty community members attended the '6x6' Design Exhibition, held on Saturday 18 June at the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club.

The exhibition, curated by EdwardsMoore Architects and commissioned by the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, enabled community members to hear from six different architects about designing and building homes in townships similar to Wye River and Separation Creek.

Victorian Government Architect, Jill Garner, hosted the event which, in addition to the presentations, provided an opportunity to guests to ask questions in a panel style session.

Upon arrival, community members were able to mingle with architects and browse all of the information available before each architect gave a 15 minute presentation about their design, outlining the client brief, challenges they faced, good design considerations and outlining budgets and fee structures.

Representatives from Colac Otway Shire, the Victorian Building Authority and DELWP were in attendance to assist community members with queries about the planning permit application processes.

Common themes shared by the architects included the importance of designing for elements such as fire and coastal winds from the beginning rather than modifying existing homes; incorporating features that can be used daily, the importance of building relationships with local fire agencies, trades and builders, and understanding the topography of the township.

Following a break for lunch, the architects formed a panel where residents were able to ask questions and hear a range of opinions and answers.

Ultimately, the architects were of the view that our community has a chance to turn adversity into opportunity and rebuild a stronger and more resilient town.

One of the most important remarks of the day was that 'good architecture should be accessible to all'.

A second 6x6 exhibition is scheduled to take place in Melbourne in late July – details will be provided on WyeSep Connect.

Clean-up almost complete

Grocon has now cleaned up almost all of the properties in Wye River and Separation Creek and is on track to complete its clean-up efforts by the end of June (weather permitting).

All property owners who have had their land cleaned by Grocon should expect to receive formal notification of completion within the next fortnight.

Landslide risks and public safety

As well as the geotechnical assessments and active work being undertaken by Grocon, the Colac Otway Shire and private landowners on retaining walls, Emergency Management Victoria has also established a plan to guide an Incident Control Team (ICT), which is being overseen by the State Response Controller.

The establishment of an ICT is undertaken when potential risks to public safety are identified and there is a requirement for ongoing monitoring and the implementation of mitigation strategies.

An Incident Controller from Barwon South West has been appointed to bring relevant agencies together, to develop a preparedness plan and identify any activities to be undertaken.

The Incident Controller reports to the Regional and State Controllers. This is part of the state's emergency management arrangements.

The Incident Controller's role is to monitor the situation, with inputs from key departments and agencies, and take necessary actions to reduce public, environmental and road safety risks.

This includes planning for scenarios, requesting the installation of measures, such as temporary retaining walls to reduce the risk of landslips, and contacting landowners to understand township movements and individual property information.

Planning is well progressed to install more permanent measures and there is a strong commitment to keep local community members updated on landslide issues.

A portable weather station has also been installed to help monitor local weather and conditions, which will guide readiness levels.

Planning, Building and Fire Work Group

The Planning, Building and Fire Work Group had its first meeting on Thursday 9th June.

The Work Group has 10 members including property owners Roger Gribble and Andy van Gemert, who both have extensive building experience and Denis Morrissey from Holiday Great Ocean Road who in addition has town planning qualifications.

The Work Group also includes Doug McNeill from COS and planning and fire personnel from DELWP (Erin Letovsky, Andrew Morrow, John Ginivan, Peter Galvin and Tegan Brown).

CRC Community Representative, Ian Angus, is the Chair of the Work Group but while he is away I am filling in for him.

At our first meeting we looked at what the current short and longer term priorities should be for our work and identified these as being

- drainage, retaining walls, waste water and roads
- neighbourhood cluster discussions, which will involve groups of neighbours having on site discussions with a range of experts; APZ, waste water, geotech, building and vegetation issues; to explore options, costs, benefits and trade-offs. These neighbourhood cluster discussions are planned for early July and details will be posted on [wyesepconnect](http://wyesepconnect.com) when they are finalised so watch out for them.

Our next meeting will be on the 23rd of June and we have invited John Mealia to attend and bring us up to date on the work of the Expert Panel. The Expert Panel is developing voluntary guidelines to enable Wye and Sep residents to build and renovate their homes within

the current regulatory frameworks and in a way that represents best value for the property owner and is resilient to fire.

Diane Sisely, Acting Chair

Flora, Fauna and Beachscape

Flora, Fauna and Beachscape is a big part of what we all love about Wye River and Separation Creek, and most of us place great importance on renewing what we have lost, and moving ahead to a more resilient future as we confront the tests of climate change.

The recent *Determining our Future Workshop* re-confirmed how strongly the community values our natural environment.

DELWP is doing a great job around community consultation, and I urge everyone to take advantage of the many opportunities to have input. But beyond that are there aspects that need a greater focus, or more explanation?

Are there new issues coming up that might involve COS, OCC, CCMA, SOLN or a whole lot of other acronyms?

Don't worry if you don't know who is responsible for what – just tell us what you think!

Feel free to speak to the members of the Work Group – most people will know at least one of us – or email your thoughts to crcwyesepcommunityreps@gmail.com

We are: Joanne Tyler (Community Resilience Committee Community Rep and chair), Ted Gannan, Yvonne Sheppard, Sybille Noras, Juliet Le Feuvre, Kelly Boladeras/Stewart Anderson (Colac Otway Shire) and Erin Letovsky (Program Manager – Bushfire Recovery, DELWP).

The minutes of our first meeting, and all of the CRC Work Group meetings are available on www.WyeSepConnect.info

We were all really pleased to see DELWP deliver on re-opening Paddy's Path for the long weekend, there is a new playground coming for Christmas, and there will be lots of celebration when the revamped River Walk opens.

A *Wye River Separation Creek Weeds Steering Committee* has been established involving a number of agencies and *Wye Weed Warriors*, with weed control commenced to support the return of indigenous flora and fauna.

On the long weekend the *Weeds, Birds and Replanting Day* was a great example of what can happen when agencies work together, supported by the community this time ably represented by Rex Brown and Yvonne.

Many happy gardeners look forward to watching their new seedlings flourish along Paddy's Path!

We have challenges ahead in renewing Wye River and Separation Creek, and right now we are all being bombarded with necessary information about a whole range of things.

There are also opportunities. When the time is right for you, let us know what you would like to see us tackling. We have had some great ideas already, and would like to hear yours.

Joanne Tyler, Chair.

Business and Tourism

The Business and Tourism Work Group is working closely with Regional Development Victorian and Colac Otway Shire to develop ideas and events to benefit local businesses and increase tourism in Wye River and Separation Creek.

The membership of the Work Groups includes Paul Greene, CRC (Chair); Rex Brown; Brydie Paton; Sharee Evans; Clare Malone (COS), Tony White (COS); Kerri Erler (RDV).

Detailed minutes of the group's first meeting and future meetings are available on WyeSep Connect and members of the community are invited to share ideas with members of the group.

Connection and Wellbeing

The Community Connection and Wellbeing Work Group held its first meeting on Saturday 4th June, in Wye River and minutes of this meeting and future meeting will be available on Wye Sep Connect.

The Work Group is working closely with a range of people and groups across the community to discuss matters including grants and donations, community events, the role of the COS Recovery and Community Development officers, access to firewood, long term accommodation solutions and health and counselling services provided by DHHS and Lorne Community Hospital.

The Committee includes: Debra Hocking (Chair); Carolyn Tatchell; Yvonne Sheppard; Alexandra Forbes; Charles Le Feuvre; Christine Shaw, Matthew Chamberlain, DHHS; Clare Malone (COS).

Burning-off in WyeSep

Some residents in Wye River and Separation Creek have started to prepare for the next fire season by clearing and disposing of vegetation, including burning-off.

Now that the Fire Danger Period (November – May) has ended, residents in Wye River and Separation Creek are permitted to burn-off on their property, as long as they comply with local laws which prohibit fires being lit or to remain alight, except for Friday or Saturday between 10am and sunset.

Before burning-off

- Check and follow local regulations or laws set down by the CFA or Colac Otway Shire
- Notify neighbours at least two hours before starting the burn

- Notify the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) on 1800 668 511
- Check the weather forecast for the day of the burn and a few days afterwards
- Check the fuel moisture conditions
- Establish a fire break of no less than three meters cleared of all flammable material
- Make sure there are enough people to monitor, contain and extinguish the burn safely and effectively

More information and an application form to conduct a burn-off during the Fire Danger Period can also be found on the Colac Otway Shire website, or by calling Colac Otway Shire Fire Prevention on 03 5232 9400.

What's On in July

APZ Field Trip

Sunday 3rd July, 9am – 1:30pm

Departs from Anglesea DELWP Office

APZ Cluster Meeting

July 8, 9, 15 and 16

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club.

Residents will receive information advising them of their neighborhood cluster groups.

Community Meeting

Sunday 24th July, 10:30am – 12 midday

Community Catch-up to follow

Wye River Surf Life Saving Club

Community Meeting

Thursday 28th July, 5:30 – 7pm

Meeting Room 3, Richmond Town Hall Meeting

Future Events

Details of future events will be included on the Community Resilience Newsletter and in the Community Calendar on WyeSep Connect.

If you have an event you would like to share with the community, please e-mail

bushfire.recovery@colacotway.vic.gov.au