

## Sustainable Water Strategy - Northern Region.

With future sustainable water flows into our rivers and towns, one must start with the headwaters on the great dividing range, if it really is global warming, land managers like D.S.E. and Parks Vic must learn to manage the bush and the high plains as these areas were managed for many decades, by mountain cattlemen, Soil Conservation Authority and the Forest Commission.

Under the regime of these groups, the head waters of our areas major rivers, like the Goulburn, Broken, King, Rose, Buckland, Buffalo, Ovens, Kiewa, Mitta and Murray never reached the fuel loads that generated the intense heat of the 2003 then 2006/07 feral fires.

These fires have effectively robbed the catchments of at least 30% of the flows for the next 30 to 50 years. Dr. Wendy Craik of Murray Darling Commission has stated that Dartmouth alone is down 1237G/L year for at least the next 20 years as a result of the 2003 fires.

Some ancient civilizations died out because they never looked after their head waters, so here we are in Australia 2008, the driest inhabited continent on earth and the current state government considers the lock it up and leave it type management of our headwaters is the way to go.

I have personally been involved with land management for over 40 years and the only way I have seen to manage grasslands ie high plains, is by grazing, which brings up another statistic, there is up to 28% more water run off grazed or slashed country so effectively through mismanagement, of removing grazing and adding bush fires, our headwaters will be down at least 50% flowable water.

The authorities must totally disregard the Esplin report on the 2003 fires as Esplin concluded that Alpine grazing didn't reduce the fire intensity, as it would be a first in the history of the universe, that less fuel didn't equal less heat.

It is interesting to note at the moment that the only healthy areas at the Bogong High Plains and Kosciusko plains is where there is grazing by large numbers of brumby horses, pretty simple science, the evidence is there.

To make the most of what water we have left, the remaining 50% we must have more storage, there are two dams in our catchments that were built with two stages in mind, and only ever reached stage one, these being Lake William Hovel and Lake Buffalo. William Hovel on the tail end of the worst drought in the history of the north east, overflowed from April 2007 till February 2008, with Lake Buffalo not being all that far behind that performance. These two dams are at the foot of very high rainfall country, with very steep runoffs, they are deep dams that fill very quickly.

The Buffalo/Ovens system, I believe is the main filling source of many of the aquifers down stream, ie the Murrumbidgee basin as there was about 20/30 mg per day going missing between Myrtleford and Wangaratta during the 2007 drought.

I also believe that a revamped Lake Mokoan would also be imperative in the future of our water in the region, halve the lake and make it deeper as an anti flood and short storage dam, supplying the first water each year to go back into the Broken Goulburn system. Enlarging these three dams will give better water flow surety and continuity to both the environment and water users all the way downstream to the ocean in South Australia. The infrastructure is there, improve it and use it.

In conclusion, why should we accept the fact that the Victorian Government is telling us to expect major bushfires every 2 to 3 years, if it is global warming, we must manage our catchments better with logic. We don't have to reinvent the wheel, just go back to sound and proven practices that have kept our catchments rivers flowing for the past 170 years.

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