

Media Release

Fire and flood bring new life to the desert

Immediate release

Tuesday 27 October 2009

Recent years of drought, fire and now a fresh flood of water have combined to make the Little Desert National Park a great place to visit this spring.

The Wimmera River has long held immense cultural and spiritual significance as a lifeline threading through the land of the five Traditional Owner groups of the Wimmera Mallee; the Wotjobaluk, Wergaia, Jupagalk, Jaadwa and Jadawadjali peoples.

Parks Victoria managers and the Barengi Gadjin Land Council have a united message - to Care for Country while visiting this vibrant 'desert that isn't'.

"Dalkaiana wartaty Wotjobalukity dyadangandak" (*We are glad that you have come to our Wotjobaluk land*).

Wotjobaluk Elder Aunty Nancy Harrison says "The return of the water and the spiritual nourishment it brings to our land and people is welcome, as are the visitors that come to see and enjoy it."

"We encourage people to make the most of their visit to see the water flowing and we hope visitors will care and respect the Country, especially the Wimmera River and desert country."

The Wimmera River is an important journey trail for the five Traditional Owner groups. The Creation of the river has huge spiritual meaning, and the ongoing spiritual and cultural connections were formally recognised in the 2005 Native Title Consent Determination by the Federal Court at Horseshoe Bend, near Dimboola.

The formation of the river relates back to *Purra the Kangaroo* hopping through the scrub from the Wimmera to the Mallee after being tracked by *Duan the Sugar Glider*. Additionally, the river connects the mountains to the Mallee through *Tchingal the Giant Emu* chasing *War the Crow* from the Mallee to Gariwerd (Grampians) where *Tchingal* chased the crow in such a fury that locations such as Roses Gap was formed.

"The Desert's spring heathland displays along with the refreshed river environment will be excellent over the next month or so and we anticipate increased visitor numbers to the park and surrounds."

"Fire and flood have combined to showcase the little Desert National Park this year and the display of spring wildflowers in the deserts heathland is testimony to their link with fire in their lifecycle," adds Parks Victoria Ranger in Charge Alan Braithwaite.

The Eastern Block of the park currently showcases some of the Deserts spring wildflowers. A 2WD option is the Nhill-Harrow Road and for 4WD enthusiasts the Salt Lake Track is good.

We encourage visitors to get out of their cars and walk on Country. There are some short and longer walks available. We suggest Pomponderoo Hill near Dimboola, the Stringybark Walk near Little Desert Lodge. These are best done before the onset of hot weather in the desert areas away from the river.

Camping along the river is at Horseshoe and Ackle Bend near Dimboola. Enquire through the Parks Victoria Information centre on 13 1963.

Media Enquiries

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Parks Victoria celebrates the return of the water with co-managers the Barengi Gadjin along with the renewal of links between the spiritual and physical environment that is the Wimmera River as we know it.

“Looking to the future we are happy and optimistically cautious that this first flow is the beginning of a healthy park and recovering river environment. We invite and welcome visitors returning back to Wotjobaluk Country,” conclude Alan Braithwaite and Aunty Nancy Harrison.

More information on local attractions is available from the Horsham and Nhill Visitor Information Centres.

More information about the Little Desert National Park and other parks in the Wimmera/Mallee area can be found at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au (see Publications) or call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1936.

Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation can be contacted on 03 5381 0977.

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Photo caption for file: “Skuzza NancyStu”

Parks Victoria Rangers Damien Skurrie (on left) and Stuart Harridine with Wotjobaluk Elder Nancy Harrison at Ackle Bend in the Little Desert National Park.

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