

# *Turtons Creek and Falls Strategic Plan 2014*

*Jewel in the Prom Country Crown*



February, 2014



### *Turtons Gold*

*I was hiking through the rugged hills out near Woorarra West  
When I spied a spreading messmate tree, a tempting place to rest.  
I pulled some fresh green bracken fern to make a couch so fine  
And there I lay me down to rest by the trail called Serpentine.  
While I lay there sweetly resting tiny wagtails came to peep  
And lyrebirds sent forth their calls from out the gullies deep.*

*Did I dream or did I see them? Those old diggers on the trail  
With axe and shovel, sluicing pan and tent and water pail.  
Those men were to Turtons to dig the precious gold  
And most were young with eager feet but some were tired and old.  
They wrecked the ferny gullies and built their huts so warm,  
In every cosy gully head gathered in a swarm.*

*So the lyre birds and possums and the native bears  
Moved swiftly out of Turtons to new and safer lairs.  
Now where the lyre bird had his mound and daily danced and sang  
We hear the clang of shovels and smell the campfire's tang.  
Still they came and some were lucky, while others came and died.  
A few more started farming and cleared the countryside.*

*And now the gold is finished, Mother Nature's healing scars.  
No more the gaunt men gather in noisy drinking bars,  
But I have seen their humpies of wattle bark and clay,  
In one they called The tabernacle I often kneel to pray.  
Did I dream or did I see them? Even know I do not know  
But I'll walk their trail to Turtons and I'll ponder as I go.*

*Will Rumble*

Will Rumble farmer, late of Boolaroong in the hills above Turtons Creek: acknowledged as the district poet. Turtons Gold – has been reproduced from "Turtons Creek – Valley of Treasure and Charm written by May McMaster 1996 and reproduced with the kind permission of the McMaster family and the Foster and District Historical Society.

The development of this Plan has been funded by the Victorian Government as part of the 2012-13 Regional Growth Fund Flood Support Program managed by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCA).

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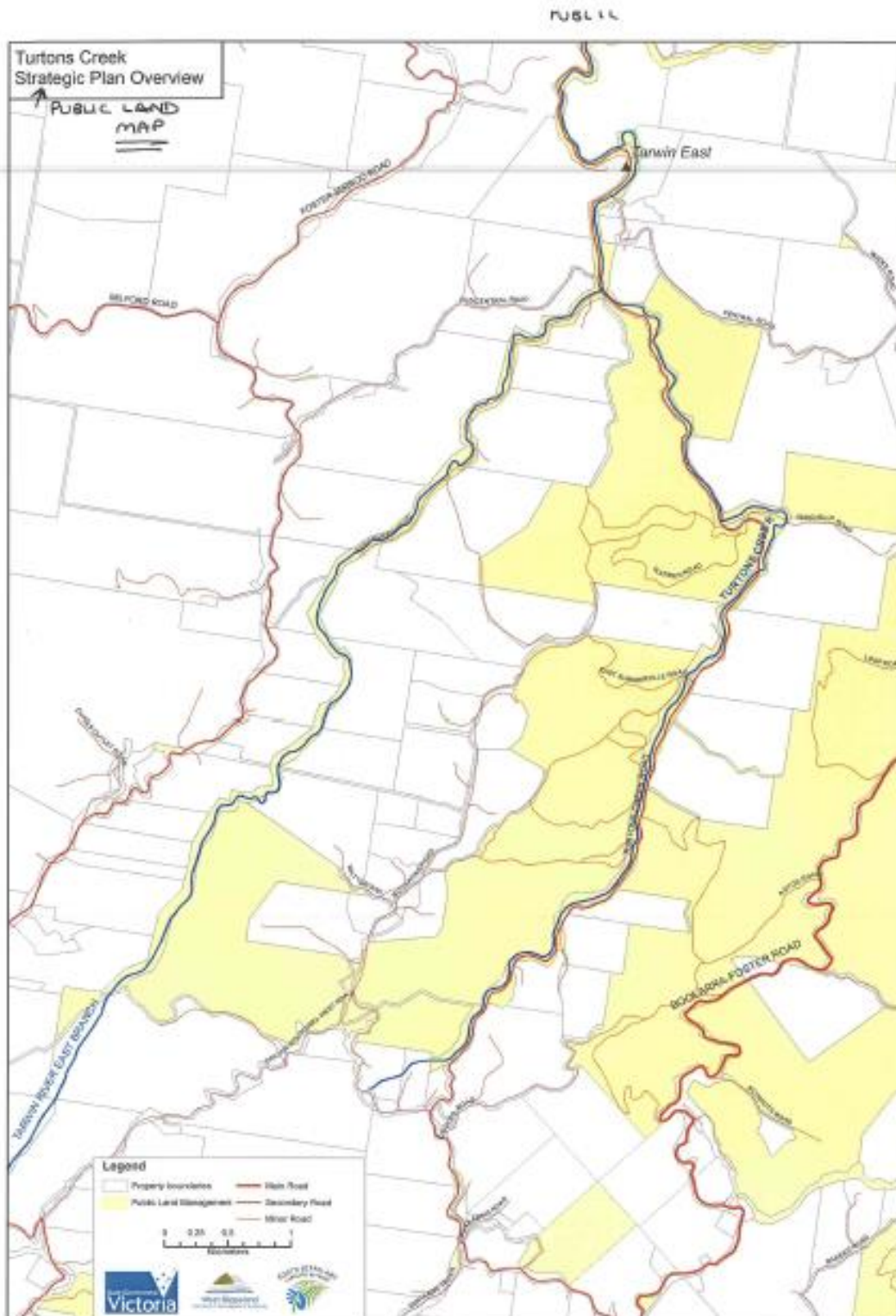
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All photographs taken by Belinda Brennan for SGLN.

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# Turtons Creek Area Map



**Figure 1: Turtons Creek Area Map**



## Turtons Creek and Falls Strategic Plan 2013

### Executive Summary

Turtons Creek includes a waterfall set in spectacular wet forests, located approximately 20 kilometres north of Foster in the beautiful Strzelecki Ranges. The waterfall is an iconic regional tourist destination in the Prom Country. *Truly a jewel in the Prom Country Crown.*

The Strategic Plan has been developed by funding from the **Victorian Government Regional Growth Fund** and supported by South Gippsland Landcare Network in partnership with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Passion for the Turtons Creek and the Falls, in particular was evident during the community consultation process. With over 60 individuals, South Gippsland Shire, HVP, DEPI and Foster Community Association actively engaged and involved in the development of the Plan.

The community of Turtons Creek includes a variety of people and organisations – private and corporate landholders, local and State government agencies and authorities, farmers, foresters, “tree changers”, tourists, and those who love the unique and peaceful nature of the Strzelecki Ranges.

Issues identified as threatening the Turtons Creek area included

- Weed infestations along the creek, and willows in the creek
- The damage done by users such as large groups monopolising the campground, leaving rubbish and camp fires not fully extinguished, damaging the trees and local tracks
- Contamination of the waterway from campers
- Habitat protection

The development of a vision and series of management actions will help guide the community and agencies in the protection and enhancement of this valuable asset.

The Vision for Turtons Creek and the Falls is:

*To recognise the natural beauty and heritage values of the Turtons Creek area, and to protect, restore and enhance the area enabling tourism and recreational opportunities that are in harmony with these values.*

The Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve provides an excellent starting point to protect, restore and enhance the natural values along Turtons Creek and the Falls. The creation of native vegetation buffers or corridor along Turtons Creek will protect and enhance the creek and create valuable wildlife habitat.

A coordinated weed control program including willow control, the development of a tourism campaign focused on the environmental and heritage values and development of a series of walking tracks around the area are just some of the recommendations in the Plan.

A willow control program for Turtons Creek would commence in the Scenic Reserve dealing with the smaller infestations from the start of the creek and then controlling the larger infestations that exist adjacent to the plantations and private land.

The Plan highlights the development of a Tourist drive including interpretative signage. This would include information on the forestry and agricultural activities present, the mining and heritage of the area and the high environmental value of the creek and its surrounds.

The stakeholders in the Turtons Creek catchment will form an integral part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The Plan brings together all sectors of the community including local and State Government agencies and authorities, corporate and private landholders, and farming and Landcare community.

## Section 1: Project Overview

Turtons Creek includes a waterfall set in spectacular wet forests, located approximately 20 kilometres north of Foster in the beautiful Strzelecki Ranges. The waterfall is an iconic regional tourist destination in the Prom Country. Local landholders, business operators and community groups have a keen interest in promoting Turtons Creek, improving the visitor access and experience, and enhancing the values of the waterway in particular around the Falls.

South Gippsland Landcare Network in partnership with West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority received funding from the **Victorian Government Regional Growth Fund** to

- Work with all stakeholders to identify priority actions for protection and enhancement of Turtons Creek area
- Support local communities in their efforts for the long term protection and management of the Turtons creek area
- Remove weeds and re-establishing native vegetation
- Contribute to the upgrade of facilities and interpretive signage at the Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve

The original project scope was primarily focused on the Falls and the adjacent waterway. However, it was recognised during community consultation that in order to protect and enhance the Turtons Creek Falls, the Strategic Plan should address Turtons Creek for its full length. This idea was confirmed with the WGCMA and the scope of the plan broaden to meet the community needs.

### Scope of the Plan

The Turtons Creek and Falls Strategic Plan has been developed from the headwaters in the hills above Foster to where Turtons Creek ends as it joins with the East Branch of the Tarwin River, just south of Old Central Road.

Turtons Creek flows into the East Branch of the Tarwin River, and it forms part of the water supply for the townships of Meeniyan and Dumbalk. Therefore, the restoration and protection of the creek is not just for aesthetic or environmental outcomes but will also contribute to clean water for local communities.

The key in the development of the Strategic plan has been communication with all sectors of the community at all stages. Regular updates have been an integral part of the Plan's development.

The stakeholders in the Turtons Creek catchment will form an integral part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The Plan brings together all sectors of the community including local and State Government agencies and authorities, corporate and private landholders, and farming and Landcare community.

Everyone recognises that this will not be an easy task, but given the importance of the area, one that is extremely worthwhile pursuing.

The development of the plan has followed the guidelines and philosophy detailed in the Bunurong Catchment Ecosystem Strategic Directions Statement produced by the WGCMA in 2010.

*The Bunurong Catchment waterways and wetlands support a diversity of environmental and associated ecosystem services. Ongoing investment into improvement works across the catchment, including on ground works such as revegetation, erosion control and water quality management, delivery of environmental flows plus associated monitoring programs, is vital for the protection and enhancement of these natural assets. The WGCMA and partners have been actively involved in delivering works to protect waterway wetland health across the region. Continued investment into these programs will assist in enhancing waterway and wetland health and contribute towards the expansion and connection of biolink pathways across the catchment.*  
*Extract from Bunurong Catchment Ecosystem Strategic Directions Statement, Oct 2010.*

## Section 2: Community Consultation

Consultation with the local community, local landholders, government agencies and stakeholders has been an essential part of the planning process. There were four stages of community consultation in the development of the Plan.

**Stage 1** involved a series of meetings with key stakeholders involved in the Turtons Creek area:

- West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA)
- South Gippsland Shire (SGSC)
- Foster North Landcare Group members
- Hancocks Victoria Plantations (HVP)
- Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) (now Department of Environment and Primary Industries, DEPI)
- Parks Victoria

These meetings provided background into past work and current resources dedicated to the Turtons Creek area. A key message from all meetings was that everyone was fully supportive of the development of a Plan focusing on the protection of the Turtons Creek area. Various management activities have occurred in the past and stakeholders welcome a coordinated approach to protecting and enhancing Turtons Creek.

A common theme of the meetings was that the Plan must recognise that resources in all areas are limited and that the Plan should be realistic in its intentions.

**Stage 2** of the consultation was the **Turtons Creek Falls and Surrounds Community Usage and Future Ideas Survey**.

*(Appendix 1: Copy of survey and Appendix 2: Summary of responses)*

One hundred and fifty eight surveys were mailed directly mailed to landholders including

- o 77 landholders adjoining Turtons Creek or between Turtons Creek Road and McCartins Road including private, corporate and government authorities,
- o 53 Foster North Landcare members
- o 28 Mardan Mirboo North Landcare members
- o 30 were handed out at meetings and other opportunities such as presentations at the Foster North Landcare Group meeting and the Foster Community Association meeting

Forty one responses were received; a 22% return rate.

It is evident from the survey responses that many people are passionate about Turtons Creek and want to be actively involved in the long-term protection and enhancement of the

area. Twenty-six of the respondents were interested in being part of a "Friends of Turtons Creek Group".

### Stage 3: Community Action Workshop

The focus of the workshop was

1. *Feedback from the community on the issues for Turtons Creek inc. survey results*
2. *Photos and mapping to show land management areas*
3. *Development of actions to protect and enhance Turtons Creek*
4. *Identify priority actions and next steps*

Figure 2: Example of media ad as part of the community consultation process



A fantastic turnout to the Community Action Workshop for Turtons Creek and the Falls on Sun 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2013 reinforced the importance of the area and the need to protect its natural beauty.

The initial community consultation of landholders in the Turtons Creek Catchment and local Landcare Groups showed the passion that exists for this beautiful area, it also painted a diverse but not always pleasant picture.

- Highlighting the natural beauty of the area, visiting for picnics and sight seeing
- Weed infestations along the creek
- The damage done by users such as large groups monopolising the campground, leaving rubbish and camp fires not fully extinguished, damaging the trees and local tracks
- Contamination of the waterway from campers

"The community believes there is considerable opportunity to improve the environmental values of the area. Initial actions identified included;

- Camping by permit only with the fees going towards the maintenance of the area
- Regular visits and policing of the area by local authorities
- Moving trail bike riding away from sensitive areas of the creek
- Establishment of a vegetation buffer along the entire length of the stream involving ALL land managers
- Creation of linkages across the landscape for Strzelecki Koalas
- Improve access at the Falls for all access viewing
- Turtons Creek brochure highlighting the history and natural beauty of the area
- Getting Turtons Creek back on the tourism map

Direct action from the workshop and stakeholder meetings was South Gippsland Shire supporting a "Clean Up Australia Day" event. This initially scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> June, however, it was postponed due to excessive rainfall leading up to the day. The community hope that this could be an annual event to help promote Turtons Creek and the need to look after it.

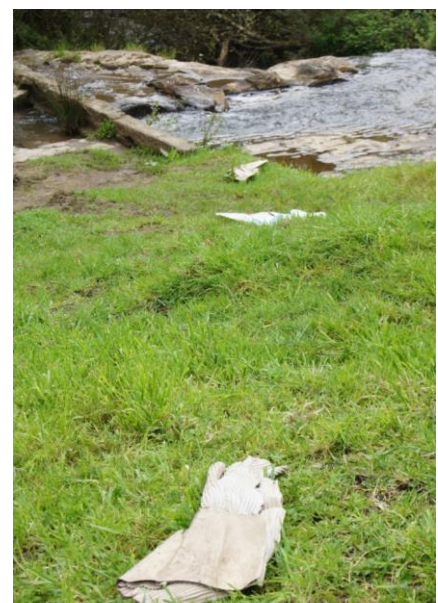


Figure 3: Rubbish is dumped along all areas of the creek



The community survey and community action workshop has resulted in 60 people across all community and government sectors being on the mailing list for all Turtons Creek updates and directly involved in the development of the Strategic Plan.

**Stage 4** was a series of working group meetings, and follow up meetings with stakeholders to clarify issues identified.

A Working Group meeting was held on 16<sup>th</sup> May, this raised a number of issues that were then followed up by/through meetings with Shire re: tourism and signage, HVP – community concerns and weeds, DSE and DEPI management responsibility.

The idea of a Friends of Turtons Creek Group was seen initially as a key to the protection of the area, however, concerns were raised about handing management responsibility to community without any regulatory responsibility and no resources. This idea will need to be further explored to ensure the community remain engaged without handing them full management responsibility.

The workshop identified that key users of the area had been missed – campers, trail bike riders and fisherman who enjoy the Turtons Creek area. It is important that all users of the area are involved in the planning process. A updated survey was sent to motorbike and caravanning clubs, various retailers, fishing clubs and others across Gippsland to seek their input however, only one response was received, which was similar in some aspects to other responses received.

*The challenge will be to protect and enhance Turtons Creek and the Falls area, and have tourism and recreation pursuits that are sympathetic to environmental importance of the area.*

### Section 3: Future Vision for Turtons Creek and the Falls

***To recognise the natural beauty and heritage values of the Turtons Creek area, and to protect, restore and enhance the area enabling tourism and recreational opportunities that are in harmony with these values.***



Figure 4: Tree ferns abound in the Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve.

## Section 4: Management Zones – Current status and challenges

For the purposes of the Turtons Creek and Falls Strategic Plan, the length of the Creek can be defined in four distinct management zones, each with its own management issues, public/ private land interfaces and challenges. As expected many of the issues overlap or are an issue in more than one zone. This section highlights the current management practices, challenges and considerations for action in each zone.

### 4.1 Zone 1: Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve

The first section of Turtons Creek flows through the Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve, which is managed by Parks Victoria. The reserve is 140ha comprising allotments I1 and I3 and the existing Livingstone Creek Mining Reserve.

Scenic reserves are set aside to preserve scenic features or lookouts of particular significance. An aim of the management of these areas should be to maintain the character and quality of the landscape and to maintain the native vegetation and protect water quality.

The Turtons Creek Scenic reserve is highly valued for the Beech trees, ferns and other forest species present. Large (60m tall) Mountain Ash trees are remnants of forests cleared for mining and settlement in early 1900's. As the area was previously a mine area, there may still be old mine shafts in the Reserve.

There is currently no vehicle access into the Reserve and walking access is via Livingstone Creek road. Turtons Creek road runs along the eastern side of the reserve for several kilometres, which makes for a gorgeous tourist drive. Stopping along Turtons Creek road, however, to explore the reserve can be dangerous as there is little room for a car to stop and still allow safe passage of other vehicles.

Weed infestation is probably the greatest challenge facing the Scenic Reserve. There are limited willow infestations along the creek and any control would need to be on foot and sensitive to the surrounding native vegetation.

A willow control program for Turtons Creek would commence in the Scenic Reserve dealing with the smaller infestations from the start of the creek and then controlling the larger infestations that exist adjacent to the plantations and private land.

Weed such as ragwort and blackberries are along the Turtons Creek road adjacent to the reserve. The control of these weeds should be part of an overall program along the length of the creek. Rubbish on the roadsides is a constant issue along Turtons Creek Road.

The roadside weed control and regular rubbish collections could form part of regular working bees for the community interested in enhancing Turtons Creek.

Promotion of the Scenic Reserve should be restricted to part of the tourist drive and enjoying the Australian Bush. Due to possible old mining sites that are present within the reserve, bush walking or camping should not be encouraged in the Reserve. This could also damage the fragile ecosystems that have established since mining ceased.

## 4.2 Zone 2: Livingstone Creek road to Turtons Creek Falls

Zone 2 has the greatest level of interaction and activity along the length of the Turtons Creek.

The zone is characterised by plantations, cleared farming land, and Crown Reserve including grassed areas along the creek.

Crown Reserve runs along the length of the Turtons Creek Road, the reserve varies in width from 20 –60m in this zone, with the road being on the eastern side.

HVP Plantations are present along the length of the creek on the western side in this zone with the exception of one private landholder approximately two thirds the way along.

In 2000, Hancocks Plantations implemented a Stewardship Project supported by South Gippsland Shire and WGCM. A sign at Livingstone Creek Road explains that project, wording below.

Hardwood and Pine Plantations established in 1969 and 1970 being harvested and replanted in 2000.

Large (60m tall) Mountain Ash trees nearby are remnants of forests cleared for mining and settlement in early 1900's.

Pine Plantations next to Turtons Creek will be replanted as native forest. These areas together with regrowth blackwood and eucalypt forests will be managed for conservation values providing a scenic corridor between the Livingstone Creek Mine Reserve and Turtons Creek Falls.

A Hancocks Victorian Plantation Stewardship Project supported by the West Gippsland CMA and South Gippsland Shire. "



Figure 5: Photo of Stewardship Sign

There appears to be minor areas of plantations abutting Turtons Creek in the Scenic corridor area, however, it is difficult to assess whether these are native plantation that won't be harvested or part of the harvestable plantations. HVP mapping shows that some minor areas of plantation right up to the creek. Community expectations would be that the areas directly adjacent to the creek would not be harvested to protect the waterway.

HVP has also worked with private landholders on the eastern side of Turtons Creek Road to establish native vegetation as scenic buffers and corridors.



There are several large grassed areas between the Turtons Creek road and the creek, with private farming properties on the eastern side of the road.

The grassed areas are used as camping areas. Rubbish dumping is a significant problem along with weed infestations both within the creek eg: willows and adjacent eg: blackberries.

Figure 6: Grassed area adjacent Turtons Creek shows damage caused by vehicles.



Damage to the creek and adjacent areas by motorbikes and 4WD vehicles in particular during wet periods is particularly evident.

Trees are being cut down for firewood, rubbish is being left by campers, and camp fires left smouldering are also challenges faced in this zone.

Large blackberry infestations are along this section of creek as well as some significant willow infestations. Willow control in this zone will be costly and will form part of the overall plan with smaller infestations upstream being the first priority. Care must be taken when implementing weed control work within or directly adjacent to the creek. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the blackberries are protecting platypus habitat and preventing erosion due to human access.

Just past the private land on the western side of Turtons Creek is a Mini Falls area. This is a lovely area with direct access to the creek. The area is used by campers and has similar issues to the larger grassed areas further along. Although being a smaller area, damage by vehicles is limited.

The local CFA use this area to take water for fire fighting and therefore access to the creek at this point must not be compromised.

The Mini Falls area is a attractive roadside stop that would be a perfect stopping point along a Turtons Creek tourist drive.

Regular removal of rubbish and signage to remind campers and day trippers to take their rubbish with them will help address some of the issues facing this area.

The opportunity exists to revegetate areas on the eastern side of the creek between the creek and the road. This would form part of an overall native vegetation corridor along the length of the creek. The width of such a corridor would vary greatly with the road being close to the creek in a number of places.



*Figure 7: Mini Falls along Turtons Creek*

Concerns have been raised that revegetation activities could be the target for vandalism as has occurred in the past in the campground area. Therefore, any on ground works will need to be accompanied with community awareness and education activities to increase community ownership of the Turtons Creek area and reduce the risk of damage.

Any revegetation program along Turtons Creek should involve all land tenures, public, private and corporate land managers.

Harvesting of a private plantation close to Turtons Creek Falls has resulted in damage to the waterway with rocks and soils entering the creek. An opportunity exists to work with the local landholder to establish a native vegetation buffer along the creek prior to any other replanting for harvesting purposes.

Interpretative signage is an option along this section as part of a Tourist Drive. This would include information on the forestry and agricultural activities present, the mining and heritage of the area and the high environmental value of the creek and its surrounds.



### 4.3 Zone 3: Turtons Creek Falls and Camping Area

Turtons Creek Falls is truly a jewel in the Prom Country Crown. The Falls are easily accessed from Turtons Creek road with some picnic tables and rock track leading down to a viewing area.

The Turtons Creek Campground and Falls area were previously under management of Parks Victoria with work such as tree planting, fencing, stairs and walkway to the Falls from campground and a walking track from the Falls to the mini falls on the western side of the road established in the mid 1990's.

However, since that time the area is no longer under control of Parks Victoria and the responsibility for management of the area sits with the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) (formally Department of Sustainability and Environment). It is classified as unreserved Crown Land.



*Figure 8: Turtons Creek Falls*

Issues associated with the inappropriate use of the area by campers were highlighted through the development of the plan

- Trail bike riders wrecking tracks, damage, noise, dust, fumes, gates left open
- Vandalism
- Pollution of the creek by campers eg: faeces and used toilet paper along creek bank at camp ground
- Campfires left smouldering
- Dead baby wombat that had been thrown on a campground
- Pollution of creek water and environs from run off (agricultural and plantation)

The campground is a beautiful area for visitors to enjoy the Australian bush. The message that is coming through loud and clear regarding the campground area is that the community has had enough of people using the area but not recognising its value. The dumping of rubbish, damage by motorbikes and using areas close to the creek as a toilet cannot continue.

Unfortunately DEPI has limited resources (financial and staffing) to dedicate to the campground and falls area. They are however; keen to work with the community to identify opportunities to implement protection and enhancement measures.

In June 2013, DEPI undertook works to define the day use area and camping area at the base of the Falls. The day use area would be to the right as you enter the campground area and camping to the left. Also reinstating the walking track with some minor surface re-establishment from the carpark to the falls. Bollards and barriers are to be erected to prevent motorcyclists riding bikes up the walkway next to creek.

DEPI agree with the community in the belief that motorbike riding is not an appropriate use of the campground and that passive camping with tents and caravans would be more in keeping with the surrounds.

The turnout area at the top of the Falls would be an ideal place for some interpretative signage about the value of the Falls, Turtons Creek and surrounds.

The opportunity exists to do some minor works on the turnout area to allow for a number of cars to safely park to view the Falls. Additional works would be required to allow for people with limited access to safely view the Falls. This would need to be a consideration if the area was to be promoted as a tourist drive.

DEPI would like to work with the community on a site plan and location and type of signage required to help encourage more appropriate behaviour amongst users. The South Gippsland Shire would also need to be involved with regards to any road works or signage on public roads. Consideration needs to be given to both the initial cost of signage and the cost to maintain and replace if vandalised or damaged.

#### 4.4 Zone 4: Turtons Creek campground to end of Turtons Creek

The zone from the campground to where Turtons creek meets the East branch of the Tarwin is different from the three previous zones in that there is minimal opportunity for recreational or tourism activities.

The Creek flows along the eastern side of the road with a significant drop from the side of the road to the creek for much of the distance.

Private forestry plantations and HVP plantations are on the eastern side of both sides of the creek. These plantations established in the early 2000's are due for harvesting within the next 10 – 15 years.

Pine plantations along the western side of the road are right up to the road and have fallen onto the road in several places due to strong winds and excessive rainfall. Pines have also fallen into the creek over recent years due to the steep nature of the terrain.

The key challenge for this zone will be the protection of the road and the creek when harvesting activities occur. Harvesting companies and contractors will need to assess the risk of damage to the creek if pines are to be removed. This harvesting operation will need to be closely monitored with waterway protection being paramount in the operation.

The final approximately 500 metres of the creek is cleared farming land in private ownership. This area is similar to all the creeks and drainage lines that flow into Turtons Creek and the Tarwin River across private land. Fencing and revegetating the creek banks will help to protect the waterway as well as create corridors for wildlife movement across the Strzelecki ranges.

Establishing corridors across the Strzelecki Ranges for koala habitat is the focus of a South Gippsland Landcare Network project: Friends of Strzelecki Koala – Habitat for Life. The Foster North Landcare Group has produced a Koala Action Plan which is included in appendix 4 to illustrate the possible linkages around the Turtons Creek Catchment.

## Section 5: Themes for Action

There are 4 key themes for action to achieve the Vision for Turtons Creek and Falls. Themes 1- 3 are applicable across each of the four management zones with Theme 4 dedicated to the Campground and Falls as there are specific management considerations. The four themes are

- 1. Biodiversity and Waterway Protection**
- 2. Weed Control, Rubbish removal and Road Maintenance**
- 3. Tourism and Recreation including Community Education and Awareness**
- 4. Campground and Falls Area**

The following section provides details of actions proposed to address each of the above themes. Generally, all parties are committed to the implementation of the Plan, however it should be noted that most of the actions are dependent on funding commitments or an allocation of resources that may vary from year to year."

### 5.1 Biodiversity and Waterway Protection

The Turtons Creek Scenic Reserve provides an excellent starting point to protect, restore and enhance the natural values along Turtons Creek and the Falls. It is important that the Scenic Reserve is protected with minimal recreational and tourism activities promoted for this area.

The creation of native vegetation buffers or corridor along Turtons Creek is necessary to protect and enhance the creek and create valuable wildlife habitat. This will involve working with all landholders in the catchment both public and private to gain their commitment to the creation of this vital corridor.

The corridor has commenced along the western side of the creek as part of the HVP Stewardship project. Ideally, this project would be strengthened and expanded along the length of the creek where feasible.

The Turtons Creek corridor would form part of the Habitat for Life – Friends of Strzelecki Koalas project being undertaken by the South Gippsland Landcare Network. The corridor will be a long term goal of the plan with some areas being targeted for initial revegetation works and others over the next 5- 10 years as the opportunity exists. The extension of the HVP Stewardship project along all the length of Turtons creek when harvesting and replanting occurs would be a significant part of the corridor and significantly benefit the biodiversity and waterway protection program.

<b>Biodiversity and Waterway Protection Recommendations</b>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>Partners</i>
1. Establish a native vegetation corridor along Turtons Creek on both sides.	SGLN	HVP
2. Investigate incentives to assist landholders to fence and revegetate along Turtons Creek	SGLN	
3. Extend HVP Stewardship program along section from Campground to end of plantations near junction of Tarwin River and Turtons Creek.	HVP	SGLN
4. Encourage landholders to protection waterways and gullies feeding into Turtons Creek	SGLN	WGMA
5. Link protection and revegetation program to other initiatives such as SGLN's Habitat for Life – Friends of Strzelecki Koala	SGLN	
6. Investigate planning controls to protect the beauty and significance of Turtons Creek's natural environment, particularly the interface with foresting activity along tourist routes.	SGSC	HPV

## 5.2 Weed Control, Rubbish Removal and Road Maintenance

The effective control of willows along the length of Turtons Creek is a long term program. The work would commence at the upstream end of the Creek and in stages work along the creek dealing with infestations as they occur.

By tackling the problem from the upstream end, the reinfestation downstream would be reduced. The West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority would be engaged to undertake the program as funding became available. The initial stages of the program would be controlling isolated infestations on foot, whereas larger infestations further downstream will require machinery to remove the willows. Complementing the willow removal would be fencing and revegetation of these sections of the creek.

Weeds are an issue along the length of the creek. A one off spraying program is not an effective management option. In order to have effective weed control, a long term program will need to be implemented. This would start with smaller infestations that could be controlled over a number of years, moving to larger infestations as the funding was available.

The illegal dumping of rubbish along Turtons Creek is also a major concern for local residents. Some residents do an almost daily rubbish pick up as they walk along the Creek. Rubbish left by campers is of particular concern. Compliance activities are important but cannot be relied upon as the only tool. A range of measures will need to be implemented to address the problem.

The South Gippsland Shire is responsible for maintaining Turtons Creek road. If the area is to be promoted as a Tourist drive and people encouraged to visit, it is vital that the road is properly maintained.

<b>Weed Control, Rubbish Removal and Road Maintenance</b>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>Partners</i>
7. Develop an integrated weed control program for all land tenures along Turtons creek including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Map weeds along length of the creek</li> <li>ii. Key land managers to confirm budgets for weed control program</li> <li>iii. Combination of community, public, corporate and private landholders undertake strategic weed control work.</li> </ul>	SGLN	HVP South Gippsland Shire (SGSC) DEPI
8. Undertake a Willow control program along length of Turtons creek commencing in headwaters.	WGCMCA	SGLN
9. Encourage rubbish to be taken home via a combination of publicity of importance of Turtons Creek area, reminder signs and enforcement of non compliance	DEPI	SGSC
10. Clean Up Australia Day event "Clean Up Turtons Creek" to be conducted each year	SGLN	DEPI HVP SGSC
11. Investigate the idea of a community campaign: "adopt of section of TC" for weed control and rubbish removal	SGLN	DEPI HVP SGSC
12. South Gippsland Shire to implement a regular road maintenance program.	SGSC	



### 5.3 Tourism and Recreation including Community Education and Awareness

Turtons Creek Falls are a jewel in the Prom Country Crown and over recent years has fallen off the tourism radar due to the inappropriate and damaging use by some members of the public.

There is a need for an integrated education and awareness program that would highlight values and uses of the Turtons Creek environs such as Forestry, Environment, Agriculture, Historical Values. The benefit of such a program would be to encourage people to visit who would respect and value the area. This could reduce the vandalism, rubbish dumping and damage to the environment that is currently occurring.

The area should be promoted for passive tourism pursuits such as walking, fishing, and camping.

There is a significant need to discourage motor bikes riders and 4WD drivers from damaging the area. Riding across HVP land, damaging roads, breaking fences and gates and accessing private property needs to cease. A police blitz on illegal behaviour would help in getting the message across that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated.

The creation of a series of walking tracks would be an ideal opportunity to promote the natural beauty of the area. Tracks exist throughout the area including along Livingstone Creek Road, between the Campground and the Falls, between the Falls and Mini Falls. Some maintenance of existing tracks needs to occur and then there is a need to document the walking tracks and promote to walking groups.

Over half the respondents to the community usage survey indicated they would like to be involved in a Friends of Turtons Creek Group. The purpose of the group would be to assist local land managers such as DEPI and South Gippsland Shire with protection and enhancement activities. These activities could include weed control work, tree planting, rubbish removal, and tourism activities. As many of the respondents do not live near Turtons Creek on a full time basis, any activities would need to be well planned in advance to maximise participation.

<b>Tourism and Recreation including Community Education and Awareness</b>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>Partners</i>
13. Develop and Implement Tourism campaign <b>"Turtons Creek – Jewel in the Prom Country Crown"</b> i. Prepare tourism drive brochure for Turtons Creek Drive ii. Create linkages to Prom Country tourism programs	SGSC	Prom Country Tourism (PCRT) SGLN
14. Work with enforcement agencies to ensure trail bikes riders are licenced and following regulations	DEPI	Police
15. Enforcement Blitz by Victoria Police on key weekends	DEPI	Police
16. Improve road signage to allow greater access to Turtons Creek	SGSC	
17. Development of a walking track program including maintenance and promotional material	SGLN	SGSC PCRT
18. Investigate the formation of a "Friends of Turtons Creek Group".	SGLN	SGSC DEPI

## 5.4 Campground and Falls Area

The Campground and the Falls are the focal point for the area. Unfortunately this means that they are also the focal point for inappropriate behaviour that is damaging the Turtons Creek reputation and preventing it from shining as a true jewel should.

The development of a management plan for the area would be the starting point for the improvement of the area. The Plan would need to be developed by DEPI as the land manager with community input and ownership.

Issues to be considered in a management plan should include

- The designation of a day visitor area and a dedicated camping area
- Signage regarding regulations
- Enforcement at key times to control illegal behaviour
- Limited mobility access at the Falls
- Additional parking spaces at the Falls viewing area

The possible installation of toilets in the campground is a contentious issue. Twenty five per cent of survey respondents were in favour of toilets to be installed at the camping ground provided they are properly maintained. It is the maintenance that can be a problem, some one has to be responsible for properly maintaining the toilets and in a campground that has no dedicated ranger or management resources, this is unlikely to happen. Concerns were also raised about possible vandalism of toilets constructed. At a cost of between \$60,000 to \$80,000 for a set of toilets, careful consideration of all issues in particular maintenance must be undertaken before any decision is made.

<b>Campground and Falls Area</b>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>Partners</i>
19. Promote the Turtons Creek for its natural and environmental values	ALL	ALL
20. Ensure camping that is sympathetic to the environmental values for the area	DEPI	SGSC
21. Development of management plan for the Falls area and the campground	DEPI	SGSC SGLN

## 6. Management Actions Recommendation Summary

<b>Biodiversity and Waterway Protection Recommendations</b>	<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Partners</b>
1. Establish a native vegetation corridor along Turtons Creek on both sides.	SGLN	HVP
2. Investigate incentives to assist landholders to fence and revegetate along Turtons Creek	SGLN	
3. Extend HVP Stewardship program along section from Campground to end of plantations near junction of Tarwin River and Turtons Creek.	HVP	SGLN
4. Encourage landholders to protection waterways and gullies feeding into Turtons Creek	SGLN	WGCM
5. Link protection and revegetation program to other initiatives such as SGLN's Habitat for Life – Friends of Strzelecki Koala	SGLN	
<b>Weed Control, Rubbish Removal and Road Maintenance</b>		
6. Develop an integrated weed control program for all land tenures along Turtons creek including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Map weeds along length of the creek</li> <li>ii. Key land managers to confirm budgets for weed control program</li> <li>iii. Combination of community, public, corporate and private landholders undertake strategic weed control work.</li> </ul>	SGLN	HVP South Gippsland Shire (SGSC) DEPI
7. Encourage rubbish to be taken home via a combination of publicity of importance of Turtons Creek area, reminder signs and enforcement of non-compliance	SGLN	DEPI SGSC
8. Undertake a Willow control program along length of Turtons creek commencing in headwaters.	WGCM	SGLN
9. Clean Up Australia Day event "Clean Up Turtons Creek" to be conducted each year	SGLN	DEPI HVP SGSC
10. Investigate the idea of a community campaign: "adopt of section of TC" for weed control and rubbish removal	SGLN	DEPI HVP SGSC
11. South Gippsland Shire to implement a regular road maintenance program.	SGSC	
<b>Tourism and Recreation including Community Education and Awareness</b>		
12. Develop and Implement Tourism campaign <i>"Turtons Creek – Jewel in the Prom Country Crown"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iv. Prepare tourism drive brochure for Turtons Creek Drive</li> <li>v. Create linkages to Prom Country tourism programs</li> </ul>	SGSC	Prom Country Tourism (PCRT) SGLN
13. Work with enforcement agencies to ensure trail bikes riders are licenced and following regulations	DEPI	Police
14. Enforcement Blitz by Victoria Police on key weekends	DEPI	Police
15. Improve road signage to allow greater access to Turtons Creek	SGSC	
16. Development of a walking track program including maintenance and promotional material	SGLN	SGSC PCRT
17. Investigate the formation of a "Friends of Turtons Creek Group.	SGLN	SGSC DEPI
<b>Campground and Falls Area</b>		
18. Promote the Turtons Creek for its natural and environmental values	ALL	ALL
19. Encourage camping that is sympathetic to the environmental values for the area	DEPI	SGSC
20. Development of management plan for the Falls area and the campground	DEPI	SGSC SGLN

## 7. The Next Stage

The Strategic Plan has identified a series of priority management actions for the protection and enhancement of the Turtons Creek Area. Now it is time to start implementing those priority actions to make the Vision a reality.

The community and stakeholders of Turtons Creek will need to all work together to achieve the Vision for Turtons Creek and The Falls. Many of the recommendations are not a once off fix and will be part of an ongoing commitment to protecting and enhancing the Turtons Creek area. Therefore, the implementation will be a staged process as funding and resources become available.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network will be coordinating the initial stage of the implementation of this Strategic Plan.

The Victorian Government Regional Growth Funding will focus on

- Commencing a coordinated weed control program including engaging WGCMA in willow removal,
- Revegetation of priority areas along the creek,
- Working with the South Gippsland Shire and Prom Country Tourism in the development of a tourism campaign.

Local landholders, business operators and community groups have a keen interest in promoting Turtons Creek, improving the visitor access and experience, and enhancing the values of the waterway in particular around the Falls.

Subsequent meetings over coming months with the lead agencies for the management actions will allow a clearer picture of available resources for the implementation of the Plan.

SGLN will also work with the local community and agencies to investigate the potential for a Friends of Turtons Creek Group. The Group could work with various agencies to support and assist in the implementation.