

WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY FARM AND UPDATE



FROM WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



NARRAP RESTORATION PLAN

In October 2020, members of the WCFFC steering group went for a walk around the grassy woodland at the farm site with Rephael and Uncle Sean from the Narrap ('Country') Unit from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. This was the start of a conversations about how the Narrap Unit see restoring and management of the woodland on the farm as an opportunity to rebuild links with Country, reintroduce cultural practice (such as cultural burning regimes), and embed cultural ecological considerations in biodiversity and land management practices. We met again in February 2021 and discussed a 3+ year plan for restoration of the grassy woodland. We are very hopeful to be able to progress this project with the Narrap Unit, with big dreams to look after the woodland and embed community participation and learning into Narrap's work. - *Charlotte*

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MEETING WITH WURUNDJERI ELDERS

Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) and the partner representatives from Yarra Valley Water (YVW), City of Whittlesea (CoW) and Melbourne Polytechnic (MP) met with Wurundjeri Elders and service managers from the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation in February. We discussed the farm project and the Cultural Heritage Management Plan and heard their thoughts around bush food enterprises and having interpretive trails. We also talked about having a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung name for the farm or elements of the farm, which we hope to work with them to further develop.

NEW FACES AT THE FARM AND FOOD COLLECTIVE



Hello. My name is Viktor Faulknor. I've happily taken on the newly created position of Whittlesea Community Farm Coordinator. What an exciting project to be a part of! I'll be focusing my energies over the next year on the farm planning process and coordinating the Community Advisory Group.

I come to Whittlesea Community Connections and this role with a diverse work and educational history. I have a background in permaculture, having studied a Diploma of Permaculture (focused on environmental design, sustainable food and energy systems and community development), taught on the CERES Permaculture Design Course, and spent nine years developing a 26ha rural property in South Gippsland.

I also studied for a Bachelor of Arts in History and Politics and a Master of Environment, which ranged across environmental policy, climate change and sustainable food systems. Among other things I have worked as a carpenter, handyman, international tour guide, importer, green grocer, university tutor, and primary school teacher.

I look forward to meeting some of you, and working with the community to bring this project to fruition.



Heritage listed stone wall on the western side of the community farm



WHERE IS THE FARM PLANNING PROCESS AT NOW?

In January RM Consulting Group (RMCG) were engaged to create a detailed farm plan and site layout that will form the basis of a planning application. In mid-March RMCG delivered an initial analysis of proposed agricultural enterprises for the site. RMCG is now working closely with the Farm partners to determine the type and scale of agricultural enterprises, their operational plans and infrastructure requirements, in a planning approach that integrates with conservation and cultural heritage protection and enhancement. - Viktor



Satellite imagery of the farm site. Aurora Estate on the western side, with Galgi Ngarrk to the east. Approximate border of the farm site boundary. Located in the centre is Yarra Valley Water Waste to Energy Plant and Aurora Water Treatment Site, and to the south is the water reservoir for those operations.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP 2ND MEETING

WCC has coordinated the establishment of a Community Farm Advisory Group (CAG).

The role of the Community Farm Advisory Group is to:

1. Enable key community stakeholders to contribute to the development of the farm.
2. Provide input and feedback into farm planning, strategic priorities, operational plans and policies and procedures.
3. Assist WCC in monitoring the progress of the project against its objectives.
4. Assist WCC identify potential participation opportunities, income generation possibilities and funding sources.
5. Facilitate linkages with other initiatives, groups or community members.
6. Provide advice to WCC to ensure the project is maximising the opportunities for community participation.

The CAG had its first meeting on February 4th. Michael Longmore (Merri Creek Management Committee), Jane Juliff (City of Whittlesea), Jenni

Atkins (local resident), Alex Haynes (WCC), Oreste Pompetti (WCC), Sharna Brown (WCC), Vinay Nair (local resident), and Charlotte Gordon (WCC) were all in attendance. A brief history of the farm project was given, as well as an update on planning developments, including current timelines and the involvement of RM Consulting Group. Alex, CEO of WCC, spoke of the value the Farm CAG has in informing WCC decision making and allowing WCC to reach further into community networks. The group discussed ideas around reducing the local food insecurity exacerbated during 2020 and improving mental health through farm activities.

On April 8th the group met for the second time. Iraj Maghadesi (local resident), Pablo Gimenez (Coburg resident), Harry Williams (local resident), Sally-Ann Delaney (MP Andrew Giles office), and Viktor Faulknor (WCC) attended. Viktor updated the group on the farm planning process and the conservation projects being considered, which stimulated a good discussion. There was plenty of interest in the pastured poultry system under consideration, and a flagging of Hume Freeway noise at the site and grass fire risk.

The CAG will be meeting monthly from here on. If you'd like to find out more, and/or are interested in joining the group, please contact Viktor: vfaulknor@whittleseacc.org.au; or 0483294547. - Viktor



Food collective and demonstration garden from above, Melbourne Polytechnic, Epping Campus.



CURLY SEDGE CREEK RESTORATION

We are working to develop a restoration project for the land where Curly Sedge Creek runs through the farm site. Curly Sedge Creek begins north of the farm, passes Austral Bricks on the western side and continues past the farm, through Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands) until it meets Merri Creek. For this project we are hoping to bring about a space for diverse community engagement in restoration and land care, focusing on our partnerships with local schools, Thomastown West Neighbourhood Hub, Mernda Community House, AMEP at Melbourne Polytechnic, and volunteers and community members already part of the WCC community.

The program will focus on re-establishing Growling Grass Frog habitat along this part of the creek, allowing the frogs to disperse from known upstream populations. Replanting native marsh plants along this section, and native grasses and shrub species in the riparian zone, as well as bringing in logs and rocks on the creek banks for habitat. Additionally, the project aims to make the environment suitable for Curly Sedge, working to bring the local population back towards it's previous number of around 10,000 individuals (of a remnant 500,000 in Australia).

We met with Melbourne Water on 21st April to discuss funding options for community restoration of the creek. We are also working with Community Development Officers in Council to establish links with local Landcare and environmental groups. There are opportunities to

collaborate with Merri Creek Management Committee in their restoration work surrounding the creek section that runs through the farm. We are also working with Nature Stewards, a conservation education program, who are running their program in Whittlesea this year. Two members of the WCC community are being sponsored and we presented about this restoration project at one of their workshops. Exciting days are ahead to keep this creek alive and flourishing! - *Charlotte*





FOOD COLLECTIVE SUPERMARKET UPDATE

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, the Whittlesea Food Collective Supermarket is finally in full swing!

After making almost 5000 deliveries last year in our trusty steed, Fergus the Food Truck, we were all thrilled to begin 2021 by opening the doors to the Whittlesea Food Collective supermarket.

Since welcoming our first few families into the supermarket in January, we have been gradually growing our service to the point where we are now serving up to 40 local families each week with free pantry items, fresh produce and frozen meals. Our food has come from various sources, including local businesses and donations from FareShare, individuals and local organisations.

Our clients come from many different backgrounds and situations, and it's a privilege to be able to meet a

small practical need in their lives and to connect with the diverse people that make the City of Whittlesea such a wonderful place to live and work.

Of course, none of what we do would be possible without our superstar volunteers, who bring an incredible enthusiasm and dedication to our cause. We are also thankful for the members of our community who have begun donating their excess home-grown fruit and vegetables - every little bit helps!

We're excited for what the rest of 2021 holds at the Whittlesea Food Collective. We will continue to grow and learn, finding more opportunities to connect with and serve our community. - Steve

GROW TO GIVE LAUNCH

The Whittlesea Food Collective has launched the 'Grow to Give' project working on sourcing fresh healthy foods from people's gardens. Three local primary schools and Thomastown West Community Hub have already begun growing food to donate to the collective, as well as some local residents in the area.

**WHITTLESEA
FOOD
COLLECTIVE**
a place full of food and opportunity

PRESENTS

GROW TO GIVE

DONATE YOUR HOMEGROWN FRUIT AND VEGGIES AND FEED YOUR COMMUNITY

Whittlesea Food Collective needs your help to support our free food supermarket, providing healthy food to more than 50 families in need every week.

To find out more visit: <http://foodcollective.org.au/>.
Donations can be dropped off at the corner of Dalton Rd and Cooper St, Building D, Melbourne Polytechnic, Epping Campus, 3076. Wed and Fri.

in partnership with



TOO MUCH PRODUCE? SHARE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOUR!

If you grow food at home, at a community garden or school and have too much to eat - please help us provide fresh food to those in need in your local community.

Please spread the word with your workplaces, schools, family and friends.

We are accepting any type of fresh produce, from herbs to potatoes, in any amount!

Fresh, homegrown spinach from Pierre - one of our donors!

For more information about Grow to Give, call Charlotte on 0481945111 or email cgordon@whittleseacc.org.au.

MARGARET ANGELOU



SCHOOLS PROGRAM UPDATE

It's been a quick end to Term 1 and an exciting start to Term 2 for the Whittlesea Food Collective and our school programs! We were so grateful to have a group of students from Ivanhoe Grammar School complete a volunteering day with us during the last week of term; they created and designed a beautiful mural on their own to cover our smelly compost heaps! Others preferred to work on our garden beds and build a wonderful scarecrow. We are currently in the process of visiting our partner secondary schools onsite, whose students will be cooking up a storm and providing frozen meals for the supermarket!

Term 2 has been an exciting start for several schools in the local areas as Hannah delivered our very first pilot program at Ashley Park Primary School in Doreen. The children were all smiles and particularly loved using tomato seeds from plants they had grown themselves on site, and are waiting eagerly for spring! The next primary schools we will be visiting are St Mary's in Whittlesea and Hume Anglican Grammar! Finally, we're ecstatic to have a small cohort of St Monica's college students volunteer with us weekly at the Food Collective. All teachers involved have been fantastic to work with and are genuinely interested in sharing the 'why' behind the work completed at the Food Collective with their students -
Stephanie

Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC), the City of Whittlesea, Melbourne Polytechnic and Yarra Valley Water are working in partnership to create the Whittlesea Community Farm and Food Collective (WCFFC). The WCFFC is supported by the Victorian Government. In July 2020, the Victorian Government committed \$1.5 million to commence infrastructure development for the farm at Yarra Valley Water's Aurora Treatment plant site. The Partners have committed a further \$0.9 million to the farm and are working to finalise design of the first stage and obtain the necessary approvals. Design includes detailed farm and enterprise planning which involves discussion with existing farmers, local stakeholders, networks, nurseries, conservation groups and interested residents.

