Community Update – November 2018

The Grampians Peaks Trail® is a world-class walking experience of 160 km that can be experienced in sections, or as one 13-day journey long-distance hike of 13 days and 12 nights. It will showcase the spectacular natural and cultural landscapes of the Grampians National Park. Construction for Stage Two is well underway and the complete trail is expected to be finished in late 2020.

The project
Welcome to the November 2018 edition of the Grampians Peaks Trail® community update which provides the latest information on how work is progressing. Please stay in touch or register for updates via gpt@parks.vic.gov.au

Stage One
Stage One of the Grampians Peaks Trail, a 36km walk showcasing the spectacular rock features of the Wonderland Ranges close to Halls Gap, is a favourite with locals and tourists and offers a 3 day - 2-night hike starting at Halls Gap.

The first dedicated hikers camp ‘Bugiga’ is also a must see, with elevated timber tent platforms and an architecturally designed, award winning communal shelter. Nestled between Mt Rosea and Sundial Peak, it offers stunning views across to the Serra and Mt William ranges.

Stage Two
Upgrades to approximately 60 km of existing walking tracks that will form part of the trail are complete. Next steps are to build 100 km of new walking tracks, 10 hiker camps and one school camp.

Signature experiences
There will be a range of hiking options, available including fully-facilitated walks and guided tours. The north experience is a three-day hike from Dead Bullock Creek to Halls Gap with spectacular views and Aboriginal culture. The south experience, a three-day hike from Cassidy Gap to Dunkeld, will focus on the culinary offering of the region opening up potential for commercial opportunities.

Scoping
Scoping teams have been walking the new track alignment to determine the best route to ensure a positive visitor experience while protecting cultural and natural heritage. The teams are providing notes to inform the mapping of the Trail. These notes include GPS waypoints, current track conditions, trail gradients, recommendations on works, photographs of the sections and other comments useful in the planning of construction.

Scoping for the northern and southern section is now underway.
Current works

Mt Christabel
Mt Christabel building, which has been informally accessed for many years and was subject to illegal activity, will be removed in November. The building will make way for a new campground that will form part of the trail.

Once the building has been demolished the site will be revegetated. Bricks and materials from the building will be crushed and used as road base on sections of Lynches track.

Clearing vegetation and tree removal
Track clearing works are now underway in the northern section. These works involve the pruning and removal of trees and vegetation and are carried out to ensure the corridor is cleared for construction of the walking track. Contractors will, where possible, avoid removal of large trees by changing the Trail alignment.

Track clearing requires contractors to identify the most efficient access points and the most effective means of removing all vegetation from the alignment.

Cinnamon Fungus
Parks Victoria is working to identify Phytophthora Cinnamomi, or Cinnamon Fungus, along the trail alignment. Cinnamon Fungus, a microscopic, soil borne pathogen (disease causing organism) attacks and destroys plant root systems causing plants to die through lack of water and nutrients. It is found across the Grampians and is commonly spread through the movement of contaminated soil and gravel carried by vehicle or foot traffic.

The presence of Cinnamon Fungus threatens not only vegetation communities but it can alter the ecology of entire ecosystems.

Birds, insects, reptiles and mammals that depend on the original plant species for their survival also decline in numbers as shelter and food sources disappear.

When Cinnamon Fungus is identified it is isolated, the GPS location is recorded and the track is realigned or elevated boardwalks are installed to avoid contact with hikers.

Cinnamon Fungus commonly found in the Grampians
What’s next?

Construction (northern and southern)
Selective tender for construction of the northern section (Approx. 35 km) Mt Zero to Halls Gap, and the southern section (Approx. 38 km) Yarram Gap to Dunkeld is now open.

Tenders close at the end of November with work to commence in early 2019.

Finalised camp designs and map
Designs for all new camp sites along the track are now being finalised as well as the Trail alignment as the scoping work ends. We expect to share these hiker camp designs as well as an updated map at the next update.

Stay up to date
Parks Victoria provide updates and information, regarding track closures to allow works to be completed safely. Visit Parks Victoria’s website for the latest conditions in the Grampians National Park

To learn more about the Grampians Peaks Trail visit www.grampianspeakstrail.com.au

Welcome: our new Area Chief Ranger
Parks Victoria is pleased to announce the appointment of a new Area Chief Ranger for the Grampians. Rhonda McNeil brings a wealth of experience in land management, fire and emergency management, recreation, major projects and community engagement for DELWP and local government. Prior to those roles Rhonda worked for over a decade with Parks Victoria, where she began her working life as a ranger.

Rhonda and her team will play an important role in the day-to-day management and servicing of the Trail once it is opened to visitors in 2020.

Thank you to Tammy Shoo and Mike Stevens who did great jobs as acting Area Chief Ranger.

Did you know?
We are currently in “petyan” or the season of wildflowers as it is known by the Jardwadjali and Djab Wurrung people, the Traditional Owners of Gariwerd.

Petyan is when the days are warmer and the bush bursts into life with a huge variety of wildflowers. From beautiful orchids to showy heath and tea-trees. Enjoy the dazzling array of wildflowers in the Grampians from August to November.

The Grampians is home to over one third of Victoria’s flora and 40 of these species can be found nowhere else in the world. When walking in the Grampians National Park it is important to respect the natural environment and leave wildflowers for others to enjoy.

Rhonda McNeil - Area Chief Ranger, Grampians