



ACT
Government

Territory and Municipal Services

MEETING WITH RED HILL REGENERATORS (RHR) ABOUT THE PROPOSED CANBERRA CENTENARY TRAIL ALIGNMENT THROUGH RED HILL NATURE RESERVE

Location/Date: Red Hill Lookout, Friday 9 December 2011

Attendees: Paul Ratcliffe (RHR), Michael Mulvaney (RHR), Sue Ross (RHR), Ross Kingsland (RHR), Anthony Burton (ABA), Di Hill (TAMSD), Libby Gordon (TAMSD) and Kate Baker (CBRE).

Summary of key points:

Centenary Trail is intended to be safe and achievable and offer a unique opportunity to experience the ACT natural areas.

There is potential for the trail to be something great, attracting increasing investment from government and the private sector and become a catalyst for improved management and funding of natural areas.

Red Hill is an important destination along the Centenary Trail route, due to the views and natural experiences it provides.

The Red Hill Regenerators believe there are no issues with walkers utilising existing tracks and the green route on the attached map utilising Red Hill Drive and Gowrie Drive is a suitable option.

The route shown in the feasibility poses several issues for family bike users, namely the steep descent from the lookout along Red Hill Drive/Gowrie Drive to Mugga Way. This alignment is not considered by ABA to be safe to recommend as part of the Centenary Trail due to its steepness and because of the conflict between vehicles and cyclists, but evidence supporting this position has yet to be presented, and seems contrary to the fact that it is already well used by cyclists.

The Ground-Truthing alignment, while providing excellent views over the Lake and north Canberra, raises the following issues:

- creation of additional trail has the potential to dissect the nature park further and reduce the habitat available to native fauna, in particular the Speckled Warbler, (Canberra Ornithologists Group has data on this species);
- the proposed new multiuse trail will fragment and significantly impact a woodland area of very high conservation value. It would destroy many plants (probably hundreds) of at least one nationally endangered, and nine other regionally rare, plant species that occur along the proposed route. The works and new tracks will be a significant conduit for weed invasion, will disrupt the local hydrology and cause erosion. Rare woodland birds will no longer breed within the tracks vicinity, while it will destroy important woodland invertebrate habitat. The bare earth track scraped across Red Hill's sticky clay and rock substrate will also be difficult to maintain and will not be an attractive option for many bike riders or walkers, particularly when wet.
- RHR strongly opposes the new route ;

- Canberra is 'spoilt' for views and so while the symbolic change from south to north and the value of the unique view down Melbourne Avenue is understood, views should not be the driving factor;
- impacts on the stand of casuarinas is undesirable;
- the northern section of Red Hill features several areas of high conservation value; and
- the eastern alignment may not be warranted if the Mugga Zoo site is not converted to a camp ground. Users may be more likely to access Red Hill via one of the western Hindmarsh Drive crossings, rather than travelling north east to Mugga Way crossing.

Alternative alignments through the Red Hill reserve were discussed and are shown in the attached figure. Generally the preference of the RHR is to utilise existing paths, with some minor upgrades where appropriate to remediate erosion. A preference was expressed for sections to be sealed where this would lead to better management/maintenance outcomes, particularly on steep sections.

Design of the trail will be crucial to ensure it is sustainable. RHR raised the issue of steep slopes and clay soils which may impede the ability to design and maintain to avoid erosion.

Further investigation of the alternate alignments (particularly north western slopes of Red Hill) will be undertaken by Anthony Burton.

Traffic on Gowrie Drive is estimated to peak at approximately 600 vehicles each way per day (peak occurs on Fridays), approximately 400 of which are accessing the Federal Golf Course therefore traffic on the upper parts of the road are expected to be low, potentially making at least the upper section of Gowrie Drive/Red Hill Drive suitable for cyclists.

RHR are also concerned about the suggestion that volunteers may have responsibility for the maintenance of the Centenary Trail. The group stressed that existing volunteers already complete a significant amount of work in the reserve and that there is a strong need for ongoing maintenance funding for the trail. TAMS representatives responded that existing volunteer groups will not be responsible for maintenance of the Centenary Trail rather recurrent funding will be sought to manage the trail. Commercial interest in the trail may also generate income for ongoing management. RHR expressed concern that the Centenary Trail did not have the budget to build new high quality bike riding surfaces and maintenance of a new bare earth track would be highly problematic.

RHR support the idea of the Centenary Trail generally and would like to work closely with the project team to determine an alignment in the reserve that will provide the best experience for users without compromising areas of high conservation value.

All correspondence should be sent to: info@redhillregenerators.org.au