FRIENDS OF PARKS PRESIDENT’S REPORT

TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

23RD NOVEMBER 2020

Since our 2019 AGM, the Friends of Parks (FOP) has been ‘overtaken’ by the coronavirus pandemic and this has certainly had an effect on all our lives. Thankfully, most South Australian’s have adhered to the COVID-19 safety rules, and we are now starting to see a semblance of normality creep back into our lives.

Most FOP groups are now back working in their parks and reserves and I would like to offer thanks to all those volunteers who have continued to maintain the administration of their groups during the lock-downs. Just about all groups continued with their newsletters, keeping members informed and updated, and our great team of DEW staff have maintained the flow of emails to the groups.

Following the devastating bushfires, a ‘Wildlife and Habitat Bushfire Recovery Taskforce” was formed to provide Government with recommendations on ways to better coordinate resources and funding following the 2019/2020 bushfires. Your FOP’s Board has been involved in this taskforce and other working groups targeting specific areas; e.g. Kangaroo Island.

In May this year, the Minister for Environment and Water launched a $5 million Nature-based Tourism Co-investment fund, which will provide grants to organisations to establish well-planned and sustainable experiences in South Australia’s national parks and other public lands.

The Fund was developed on advice from the recently formed “Nature Based Tourism Reference Group”, comprising representatives of the tourism industry, state and local government, the conservation sector and the Friends of Parks Board. FOP groups will be actively engaged in consultation on proposals, in line with the “Friends of Parks Engagement Charter”, developed with DEW in August this year.

2019/2020 has also been a year of growth for the Fop in that the following groups were added to ‘our FOP Family’: Friends of Windara Reef – full membership; Adelaide Dolphin Sanctuary Action Group – full membership; Williamstown & Lyndoch Landcare Group Inc. – Affiliate membership; Marine Life Society of South Australia Inc., - affiliate membership; Friends of Minda Dunes – affiliate membership; Friends of Scott Conservation Park – full membership (re-instated) and Friends of Torrens Island – affiliate to full membership.

Another addition to our Parks system was the formation of the ‘100 Volunteer Park Rangers’ program introduced in October 2019. I have to say that DEW has done an excellent job in obtaining, training and placing all of these 100 Rangers in our Parks, by October 2020.

Our FOP Marketing sub-committee, led by FOP Board member Carole Pinnock and working in conjunction with Treetop Web Studio, has worked tirelessly to produce a totally new website that is now ‘live’. Our Facebook page has over 1,800 followers and Instagram, 500 followers.

With funding provided by DEW, the FOP has had a beautiful marquee and some ‘teardrop’ banners produced. The marquee is for use by all FOP member groups to use at a variety of events. Please contact Pam Smith to arrange pick-up. The marquee can be viewed on the FOP website.

 The Board again offered Board sponsored training and of particular interest to our members were the Gluepot Environmental courses where we subsidised 20 places and the Trees for Life ‘Bushcare Workshops’ – we thank both organisations for their wonderful support.

The 2019-20 Volunteer Support Grants have been progressing well, despite some understandably requiring an extension due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The FOP couldn’t exist without the strong support of our partner DEW, through the NPWS. Pam Smith - as the Secretary to the Board - provides all the day-to-day contact with the FOP groups supported by Gill Peacey (Manager, Volunteer Programs Unit) and Ian Radbone (Co-ordinator, Volunteer Partnerships and Strategy). In addition, we very much appreciate the support of Mike Williams (Executive Director NPWS) who usually attends our Board meetings and Grant Pelton (Director, National Parks and Crown Lands).

The corona virus prevented us having a 2020 Friends of Parks Forum in September and we are now planning to target the next Forum for 2022.

All in all it has been a tough year for the FOP and the environment in general. However if we spend all our time ‘down in the dumps’ worrying about situations we can’t change then it is our wonderful parks system that will suffer. Thankfully, it seems to me that the FOP membership is mainly composed of volunteers who just want to get ‘back into it’ and help make our Park system the best in Australia – what a wonderful challenge!!

I would like to thank all members of the FOP Board for their support of our great organisation over the past year and in addition I wish to thank to our partner DEW for their unstinting support of all we do – it is VERY much appreciated.

Your Board will keep you appraised of any new opportunities that may arise over the coming year and if you read all of Pam Smiths ‘Wednesday Weekly Email Mailouts’ then I guarantee you will be up-to-date in respect to what is the latest news concerning our parks, the environment and conservation in general.