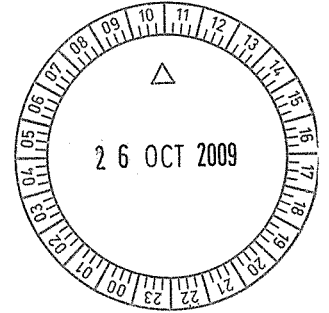


**Stephenson, Cassandra****PUBLIC**

**From:** Mike [mike@bibbulmuntrack.org.au]  
**Sent:** Friday, 23 October 2009 9:48 PM  
**To:** Stephenson, Cassandra  
**Subject:** re submission for Recreational Activities in Drinking Water Source Areas



To: The Public Administration Committee      Via email: cstephenson@parliament.wa.gov.au  
 Chairman: Hon.Max Trenorden MLC.

From: Mike Wood.  
 Chairman, Bibbulmun Track Foundation.  
 Chairman, West Australian Recreation, Sport, Tourism Alliance.  
 Chairman, Recreational Advisory Panel (DSR).  
 Board Member: Munda Biddi Bike Trail Foundation.  
 Board Member: West Australian Sport Federation.  
 Board Member; Trails WA.  
 Community Member for Curriculum Council Outdoor Education Committee.  
 Board Member: Outward Bound WA.  
 Managing Director: Mountain Designs WA.  
 Managing Director: Peregrine Adventures WA

Dear Hon Max Trenorden,

I represent a number of community groups and businesses that have an interest in access to sustainable recreational pursuits and adventure tourism activities in drinking water catchment areas.

Whilst most of the groups that I am involved with will send in separate submissions, I would like to articulate a position that might be considered an over-arching one.

We believe, that as a state, we can have access to both water catchments and potable drinking water – and that these are not mutually exclusive ideals.

It is a fallacy to suggest that recreation users pollute water bodies. As the 'State of Play' report, commissioned by the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) and the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) through Curtin University, conclusively proves there has not been an infection of a drinking water body by recreational users ever - period. The commissioning of this report was deemed necessary due to the dubious nature of the science rolled out by the Department of Water (DoW) to justify their policy to exclude recreation users from water catchments.

In essence, the position of the DoW and Water Corp in regards to Policy 13, is that they tentatively allow trails such as the Bibbulmun Track and the Munda Biddi to pass through water catchments because they are 'managed' trails. This gives our State icon trails a very insecure position and implies that they exist only at the pleasure of the DoW. This lack of secure tenure means that we constantly have to justify our existence and relevance.

I should say that DoW is probably the most difficult government department I have ever dealt with. While others such as DEC, DSR and Tourism WA, have a position which sometimes differs to our own, they are always open to stakeholder consultation which is open and transparent.

Nonetheless, everyone in WA wants clean, potable drinking water, including recreationalists. We fully understand the need for this and we appreciate the demands on government to provide this resource now, and into the future. It is a difficult community resource to balance out all the competing interests.

We believe that it is important for all West Australians to have access to the bush for a number of reasons, including:

- the economic importance of trails, camping and other adventure activities to regional areas. The current 2008 Bibbulmun Track Survey shows an injection of \$40 million into WA economy, 180,000 users of the Track and nearly 380,000 user days per annum.
- the importance of reconnecting with nature for the mental health of the community. Trails allow all members of our community to access the wilderness to relieve the stresses of modern life. Some Trails, like the Cape to Cape, also have wheelchair and disabled access.
- in these days of rising obesity, diabetes and other physical health issues walking, cycling and canoeing offer self propelled methods of transport that encourage physical fitness and promote good health outcomes. Recent surveys have shown that over 80% of the population walks for fitness.
- adventure tourism and eco tourism are the fastest growing sectors of the tourism market and if access is denied to vast swaths of the WA then this will have an adverse effect on responsible tourism's growth.
- access to the bush is important for the growing reconnection of Aboriginal people to the land. DSR are currently engaged in discussions with

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a Nyoongar men's group to explore ways of using the trails network to facilitate behavioural change in their disaffected youth.

- Aboriginal leaders have been mapping the Great Dreaming Trails that meander all over WA and contribute immensely to our State's cultural heritage. This important knowledge might not be utilised if access to water catchments is denied.

Other aspects of the Policy to deny recreaters access to water catchments need exploration; for instance, the inequities of allowing mining, forestry and farming operations in water catchment areas and teh denying recreaters access to similar water catchments is ludicrous.

To suggest that a bushwalker some kilometres from a water body some kilometres in the bush is going to have the same impact on the quality of the water makes no sense.

We contend that the benefits for our community in terms of mental and physical health, and sustainable economic benefits to regional communities, far outweigh possible issues of water quality being compromised.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Regards

Mike Wood