

# A new beginning for the Alpine National Park

Fact Sheet: The decision on cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park May 2005

## What is the decision?

The Government has decided that licensed cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park will cease at the end of the current seven-year licences. Most of these expire on 13 August 2005 with four expiring on 30 June 2006.

Cattle grazing will continue in the high country in State forest outside the national park. State forest areas in the vicinity of the park are licensed to graze about 10 000 cattle (compared with less than 8000 in the park).

## What will the government be doing to implement the decision?

More than \$5.4 million will be invested over the next three to four years to improve the natural condition of the park, help provide a sustainable economic future for local communities by helping to boost tourism, and assist affected licensees. Projects include:

### Transitional assistance

- To assist in the permanent transition from grazing in the park, the Government is providing assistance to cattlemen and women to help them adjust their enterprises. This payment will be calculated at \$100 per head of cattle (defined as licensed adult equivalent) per year over a three year period, up to a maximum total payment of \$100 000 per operation\*. \$1.85 million has been allocated for this purpose.

### Improving the park

- additional weed and pest animal control programs in the park (\$2.2 million)
- rehabilitation of damaged areas of the park, particularly mossbeds (\$650 000)

### Support for tourism and cultural heritage

- implementing aspects of the Omeo Tourism Destination Plan (\$265,000)
- support for historic hut maintenance by volunteers, such as the High Country Huts Association (\$60 000)
- interpretive signage and information on the history of the high country, including grazing, to improve visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the high country (\$240 000)
- support for cultural heritage events and festivals in the high country (\$200 000)

## Why is grazing ending in the Alpine National Park?

The Government wants to provide greater protection to the Alpine National Park. This is for the benefit of the natural environment and this and future generations.

Cattle affect water catchment, soil and nature conservation values and spoil visitors' enjoyment of this magnificent national park. Cattle:

- trample streambanks, springs and soaks
- damage and destroy fragile alpine mossbeds
- create bare ground, disturb soil and cause erosion
- pollute water
- are a significant threat to a number of rare and threatened plants and animals and plant communities
- reduce what should be spectacular wildflower displays
- spread weeds
- cover the landscape in cowpats and spoil the enjoyment of the area for visitors.

## Will grazing continue in the high country outside the national park?

Yes. Cattle grazing will continue in the high country in State forest outside the national park. The traditions and skills of the mountain cattlemen will continue.

\* 'Operation' refers to a single licence or set of licences for which there is a common group of licensees with the one nominated contact person.

### **Why is the government considering this issue now?**

Most of the seven-year licences to graze cattle in the park are expiring in August 2005. Four of the licences expire in June 2006. The Minister decided that the issue of whether cattle grazing should continue in the park should be reviewed.

### **What was the role of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce?**

In May 2004 the Minister announced the formation of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce comprising four government Members of Parliament to investigate and report on options for the future of cattle grazing in the park. The Taskforce was not required to recommend a preferred option.

The Taskforce consulted widely and was greatly assisted by the information provided to it by many people. It:

- received approximately 3600 submissions
- met with representatives of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV), Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), Parks Victoria and several scientists in Melbourne
- visited several parts of the national park with representatives of the MCAV, VNPA, the Alpine Conservation and Access Group, and Parks Victoria
- met with members of the community and representatives of various organisations and local government in Bairnsdale, Omeo, Bright and Mansfield.

The Taskforce presented its report to the Minister in March 2005. The Taskforce made 47 findings on a range of topics. The report can be downloaded from [www.dse.vic.gov.au/alpinegrazing](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/alpinegrazing).