

19 July 2024

Fred Weir
Alpine Resorts Victoria
PO Box 50
FALLS CREEK VIC 3699

RECEIVED
**Department of Environment, Land, Water
and Planning**
13/08/2024

Dear Fred

Summit to Gully MTB trail reptile monitoring schedule

Our ref: Matter 41113

This letter provides an adaptive management approach to be applied on the Summit to Gully mountain bike (MTB) trail (Planning permit #PA2402974) to ensure any impacts to reptiles are understood and inform whether any curtailment in trail use is warranted during the first season of use. The protocol below should be appended to the 'Falls Creek Resort Management – Mountain Bike Trail Management Plan'.

Reptile Survey Protocol

Four site inspections will be undertaken during the mountain biking 'season' with the first inspection occurring immediately post-construction, prior to the trail opening to riders. It would be preferable for the trail to have undergone a 'settling in' period of up to three months post-construction without use by riders. This will allow for some assessment of the trail area after settling in post-construction and prior to the potential disturbance from active use of the trail by riders once it is operational. A second, third and fourth inspection will then be undertaken on separate days in the early, middle, and late season respectively (post-trail opening).

On each day of survey, the trail would be walked three times (including the morning, midday, and late afternoon) to gain a spread of microclimatic conditions throughout the day. This will necessitate the closing of the trail while this survey occurs. It will be important for the surveys to ensure that no MTB or other access is allowed on the days of survey. This would necessitate a physical barrier and signage being placed at the trail head, and consideration of whether a resort staff member is stationed at the trail head may also need to be considered. Survey days will need to be timed for mostly fine and warmer weather.

The zoologist will need to be familiar with the reptiles and their habitats that are potentially present along the trail. The zoologist will move slowly along the trail and examine both the trail surface and adjacent areas up to several metres from the trail edge where habitat is visible. This may entail moving off the trail at times to view adjacent suitable habitat and/or any observed reptiles. Vantage points can also be used to sit quietly and observe both the trail and suitable rocky outcropping habitats where possible. This can be achieved using binoculars as well as with the naked eye.

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Biosis acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work.

We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians and Elders past and present and honour their connection to Country and ongoing contribution to society.

Any reptiles that are observed will be noted and an accurate location record taken on a field tablet for checking in subsequent inspections. This will be particularly important for any sedentary species such as Guthega Skink if they are recorded in proximity to the trail (noting no threatened reptiles were recorded during the initial alignment inspection or subsequent targeted surveys in 2023). Any dead threatened reptiles should be collected and reported immediately to the responsible authority.

Notes will also be made on condition of habitat, particularly noting any disturbance to reptile habitats adjacent to the trail alignment.

An email summary should be provided after each survey day and a final report will be prepared after the final survey. Consideration may also need to be given to whether at any stage an updated significant impact assessment is required for any species of National Environmental Significance that are found to have been impacted.

This data and any other observational data on habitat condition will be used to make recommendations on whether any curtailment in trail use is warranted. Noting that any trail use curtailment recommendations should be discussed with the responsible authority.

A limitation of this survey will be that any sedentary threatened species observed as present (i.e., Guthega Skink, Alpine She-oak Skink) in the trail area that are subsequently found to be absent, will be deemed to have been impacted by the trail and/or use of it. The same will apply to any species found injured or dead on, or adjacent to the trail.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this adaptive management approach.

Yours sincerely



Mark Venosta
Principal Zoologist

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