

COMMISSIONED RESEARCH

Key Topics:

- decision making [1]
- economics [2]
- policy [3]

Assessing the economic value and vulnerability of nature based tourism industry [4]


This project was commissioned and funded entirely by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria.

Project: detail Notabs


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Description

This project was commissioned and funded entirely by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria.

Like much of Victoria, the north east region has been on several occasions negatively and severely impacted by bushfires. The most recent fires (2002/03, 2006/07 and 2012/13) caused loss of property and livestock as well as destruction of extensive protected areas. In particular, this damage severely disrupted the tourism, which is a major economic driver in the region and one that is sympathetic to the extant agricultural, lifestyle and environmental values of the area.

Whilst nature based tourism typically conjures up images of people in pristine locations and engaging in adventurous activities for the purposes of this research, the term will be expanded to include all tourism activities that rely on a natural setting, as opposed to an urban setting. As such, given the region's reliance on wine and food tourism, sightseeing, alpine skiing in the winter, and bushwalking and cycling in the summer, the entire tourism industry in the region will be classed as 'nature based tourism'.

The north east region is generally located within the Federal Division of Indi and includes the western and northern slopes of the Australian Alps and the major rivers and valleys (King, Ovens, Kiewa) that flow north and north west from these slopes to the Murray River. The area is generally formed as a triangle that fans out from the Falls Creek ski fields in the south east to Wangaratta in the west and Wodonga to the north. It includes the townships of Mount Beauty, Bright, Myrtleford, Beechworth and Harietville, which is the prime focus of this work. Harietville and its hinterland is located in the south west zone of this broader area on the western slopes of the mountain range and largely surrounded by national park and dense sub alpine forests. These geographic features, coupled with its reliance on nature based tourism, makes it particularly vulnerable to bushfires.

The project has a drilling down dimension wherein the initial focus was on the broader region of the north east and the wider tourism industry operating with the region. This focus dealt with large scale published statistics and similar metrics and as such will play a key role in quantifying the scope and magnitude of tourism activity in the region.

However, moving beyond this large scale perspective, the work then developed a sharper focus on the township of Harietville and its general vicinity and the tourism industry operating in that precinct. This perspective focussed on the existing capacity of the local tourism industry and community to perceive and assess their vulnerability to risk in particular the risks from bushfire, and their capacity to develop a broad based resilience to risk to assist their adaptation to bushfire hazards. The lessons from this research will have direct relevance and application for similar townships located in heavily forested sub alpine regions elsewhere in Australia and beyond.

Linked Projects

Social, economic, and environmental impacts of the 2012/13 Victorian fire season

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ECONOMICS AND STRATEGIC DECISIONS [10]

Prof John Handmer
RMIT University [11]



[11]

Social values in bushfire management decision making

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ECONOMICS AND STRATEGIC DECISIONS [10]

Prof David Pannell
University of Western Australia [13]



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