

Kosciuszko Wild Horse Community and Scientific Advisory Panels



Meeting minutes

Details

Location: National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), 11 Farrer Place, Queanbeyan

Date/time: 9 am – 12:30 pm
Friday 14 February 2020

Chairperson: [REDACTED]

Deputy Chair: Prof. [REDACTED]

People present

1. Member: [REDACTED]
2. Member: [REDACTED]
3. Member: [REDACTED]
4. Member: [REDACTED]
5. Member: [REDACTED]
6. Member: [REDACTED]
7. Member: [REDACTED]
8. Member: [REDACTED]
9. Member: [REDACTED]
10. Member: [REDACTED]
11. NPWS representative: [REDACTED] Director Southern Ranges Branch
12. Secretary: [REDACTED] Project Officer-Wild Horses, NPWS

1. Opening and welcome

[REDACTED] declared that they would jointly chair the meeting.

[REDACTED] offered a Welcome to Country.

2. Apologies

Nil

3. Round-table introductions

As this was the first combined meeting of the two panels, all members introduced themselves.

4. Acceptance of previous meeting minutes

As this is the first combined meeting of the two panels, there are no previous meeting minutes.

5. Meetings with the Minister for Environment and Energy

The Deputy Chair of the Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and Chair of the Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) have both been contacted by the Minister for Environment and Energy. The Minister is seeking a management outcome from both panels and was updated on the status of current scientific knowledge of wild horses in the park. As a result of the correspondence, [REDACTED].

6. Post-fire recovery planning by the SAP

[REDACTED] presented a plan for horse control in response to the 2019-20 bushfires. The SAP have been utilising best available knowledge in forming their recommendations and are hoping both panels can work together as a team. The overall aim of management is to minimise negative environmental impact and maximise any positive horse heritage values. The SAP are not providing a target number

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for removal, but a sustainable population target may be identified as a result of management. The SAP acknowledges the differing views on environmental impact by horses but supports management to reduce numbers and reduce negative impact.

The SAP's post-fire recovery planning is based on dividing the park into management areas, similar to those in the 2016 draft Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan, and accounting for the presence of the most sensitive waterways and threatened species. The area of elimination is currently the only area where it is possible to provide a target number for reduction. The SAP have estimated horse population in each of the management areas using the results of the NPWS annual northern aerial survey and the 2019 Australian Alps feral horse survey. The breeding rate for each area was estimated using Michelle Dawson's work. Further surveys of population pre- and post-control will further refine estimates.

The SAP's post-fire recovery plan intends to be consistent with the new wild horse management plan. It identifies three priority areas for management:

1. Nungar Plain – impacted by fire and was historically horse-free. The area is recovering from historical cattle grazing.
2. Cooleman Plan – contains a karst system and acts as a buffer to incursions into the ACT.
3. Kiandra Plain area – contains Broad-toothed rat and acts as a buffer to incursions into horse-free areas further south.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Recovery of swamps will be faster without the presence of grazers, including deer. The SAP agree that other pest species need to be controlled as part of post-fire recovery efforts. [REDACTED]

At the request of members, NPWS provided an overview of the bushfires that impacted the park. The Dunns Road fire hit the Cabramurra and Yarrangobilly areas with intensity but slowed once it reached the Snowy Mountains Highway due to a change weather condition. The Green Valley fire impacted the southern end of the park, but was lower intensity, especially as it reached higher elevations. This fire did not impact Main Range. The Orroral fire also impacted the park in the north east.

ACTION: NPWS to provide CAP members with the summer 2019-20 fire impact maps of the park.

ACTION: The SAP and CAP to review the boundaries of the post-fire recovery management areas.

7. Questions from the CAP to the SAP

[REDACTED] responded to questions previously posed to the SAP by the CAP.

1. Quantitative methodology for measuring impact – impact needs to be distinguished between positive and negative. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
2. Use of drones in population monitoring – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
3. Exclusion fencing – the most difficult component is the initial removal of all animals. Fence maintenance is required. [REDACTED]. Virtual fencing is used at night for emitting an electronic signal to deter animals when vehicles approach. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Exclusion fencing of small areas is a valid way of measuring the impact of animals. [REDACTED]

4. Significant conservation areas – the 2016 draft plan nominated areas of particular conservation significance, including buffer zones to protect other areas. Bogs and fens are sensitive areas still recovering from past landuses. The Nungar Plain area features a unique grass community and the Coleman Plain area contains karst systems.
5. Horse heritage areas – the SAP considered that members did not have sufficient expertise to provide advice on heritage areas where horses should be retained.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Members discussed integrating science into management and monitoring the outcomes. The panel discussed moving the discussion away from numbers and onto managing impact.

ACTION: The CAP and SAP are to provide definitive advice on where horses should be retained for heritage purposes.

8. Control methods

[REDACTED] provided an overview of the animal welfare impacts of control methods. It was important that [REDACTED] based on an international framework for the ethical control of wildlife.

[REDACTED] gave a review of the former Kosciuszko Wild Horse Independent Technical Reference Group's (ITRG) humaneness assessment of control methods. [REDACTED] discussed:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The panels discussed fertility control, with the [REDACTED] While already used in the United States, treatments are not currently available for use in Australia.

The panels discussed the need to increase rehoming.

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The panels discussed aerial shooting, which is still legal for use on horses in NSW. The SAP discussed the methodology and positive and negative impacts of the method and that if completed in accordance with an approved Standard Operating Procedure, it removes many animal welfare impacts of other methods. [REDACTED]

The panels generally agreed on having multiple control methods available, and use depends on the management area.

The panels discussed the use of existing survey data to estimate population for management purposes. The SAP explained the 2019 Australian Alps wild horse survey and NPWS annual northern survey methodology.

ACTION: The SAP is to provide their comments on the 2016 draft Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan to the CAP.

ACTION: The SAP are to provide advice to the CAP on mustering to ensure optimal animal welfare outcomes.

9. Next meeting

9 am – 12:30 pm, Friday 3 April 2020 at NPWS office, 11 Farrer Place Queanbeyan.

10. Meeting Close

12:35 pm

[REDACTED]
CAP Chairperson

[REDACTED]
SAP Chairperson

Actions from this meeting

No.	Action	Responsible	Date Completed
1	NPWS to provide CAP members with the summer 2019-20 fire impact maps of the park.	NPWS	14 February 2020
2	The SAP and CAP to review the boundaries of the post-fire recovery management areas.	SAP and CAP	
3	The CAP and SAP are to provide definitive advice on where horses should be retained for heritage purposes.	SAP and CAP	
4	The SAP is to provide their comments on the 2016 draft Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan to the CAP	SAP	
5	The SAP are to provide advice to the CAP on mustering to ensure optimal animal welfare outcomes.	SAP	