

straight Talk

hear every voice, know where you stand



Wild Horse Management Plan Review Stakeholder
Meeting – 25 June 2014

28 July 2014

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1 Introduction

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is currently reviewing its Wild Horse Management Plan for the Kosciuszko National Park. Straight Talk has been engaged by NPWS to work with it on this project and undertake a range of stakeholder and community engagement activities to feed into the review.

To that end, NPWS and Straight Talk invited stakeholders with an interest in the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan to attend a two hour meeting on Wednesday 25 June 2014 in Tumut.

The purpose of the meeting was to hear and capture initial stakeholder views about the management of wild horses in the Kosciuszko National Park and understand the best way to engage with them and their constituents over the coming months.

This record details the key discussion points made at the meeting by stakeholders and the agreed next steps.

2 Key discussion points

- Lots of history around brumbies – believe we were conned with first horse plan to remove only 17 horses, then another plan to exclude horses from parts of the park – what does exclusion mean – but eradication? No target figures about how many to remove, learn from NPWS they are not taking enough out but don't know what the target number was
- Understand pest management plans, isn't it about eradication? Are you going to establish a sustainable number of horses, rabbits etc?
- Would be more comfortable if we rid eradication from the discussion – there are 5 plans that say NIL horses – this plan didn't have those words because of us – have a feeling there are anti-brumby/horse NPWS who want to get rid of all horses
- What is the end objective of the plan?
- Want the brumby recognised and protected (it's not a feral animal)
- Why is there a horse management plan from 2000 when they have been in the park for 160 years – they weren't an issues, it's because of NPWS mismanagement
- Previously people used to get brumbies, numbers have increased because of controls breeding in exclusion zones
- Hasn't the environment changed in that time – bushfires, floods etc – lots of other animals having an impact (i.e. pigs' poo in waterholes is a big health issue) – aerial culling is a really scary thing
- Parks have created this problem themselves, stopping people taking horses, controlling horses
- From 2008 management plan – steering committee – doesn't say anything about sustainable numbers, my group thinks this is about exterminating horses – we will consult if there is trust with Straight Talk and NPWS, if not it is 'head butt' zone – want to sit down to green-fields document
- Originally removed horses form wilderness, then other areas, it's all about numbers
- KNP – not one thing about horses in the plan, nothing about the value of horses in the plan
- P28 of management plan is about measuring and how it will be monitored, assessment of its effectiveness and how can you develop a new plan without this being assessed. Have the assessments been made available? – need to see this before moving forward, need to see evidence base
- Saying the plan isn't working but survey results aren't known, how do you know the plan isn't working?
- TRG – from bush users group can't sit behind the microscope – we all love the bush, we want to keep it for our kids – there is knowledge in this room and don't want to pay consultants when the knowledge is in this backyard
- We are relying on NPWS and their paid scientists to do their job/right thing
- Passionate about bush, history, heritage
- Credibility of evidence has to be addressed before we move forward – scientists have pre-determined views (spreading seeds etc), media has so much influence
- More sphagnum bogs destroyed by the fires than would have been destroyed by horses – opponents (ABC, NPWS, NPA) – all funded by government
- With TRG have a representative from each interest group?
- Is the aerial survey result peer reviewed?
- TRG sounds great but it's one sided – you are determined to do what you want to do – there are feral animals on my land, why aren't NPWS doing something about them, why are they picking on horses?

- Won't get the answer from scientists, will get the answer from having all of us involved
- Want to be part of the TRG – not one wild horse person on the TRG – it's just people with letters after their names, we've got 50 years' experience in the bush
- Who goes on the aerial survey flight paths – why can't an independent person be involved so they can know the right number? – someone who doesn't have a conflict of interest
- NPWS has been dodging – are they able to give up what a sustainable number is? – it not, is won't be a management plan, it will be an eradication plan – the survey is irrelevant
- Why are you continuing to trap and remove, if there are some unanswered questions?
- Don't have a management plan if you don't know what you are managing (i.e. the numbers), aerial survey results are contentious, population growth figures are way out, as are the projected numbers – all detail can be proven to be incorrect
- Overseas data might be irrelevant here, i.e. survival/foaling rate – decisions based on incorrect data
- This consultation is a ploy to expand time whilst trapping program continues to be done – no-one from NPWS has agreed to consult on sustainable numbers, are you prepared to suspend trapping?
- No-one knew they were trapping horses in Snowy Plains – this is happening all over the KNP
- NPWS, will go hell for leather to remove horses as quickly as possible
- There is not the numbers of horses in the park to trash it – will you suspend the trapping program?
- If it is not a management plan, why not start putting \$ on the horses and start earning money from them?
- There is no independent person counting the number of horses being removed – there is a reason to take more – as many as possible
- Can get rid of a number of horses – shouldn't they go to those people before they go to the knackery – they make \$50 each – horses that could be placed are not being placed
- Why can't individuals come along and take a horse from the trap
- We want to be better represented in the final decision making process
- We were the only 2 pro-brumby people on the committee – we signed a letter saying we didn't support it – we were told nothing could happen til review
- It's a P.O.V. not facts – it's NPWS opinion
- Fact sheets – need to show the whole story – history, heritage etc, cultural value
- Calling it a fact sheet is a problem – there's no evidence – call it an information sheet not a fact sheet
- Hundreds of people go horse riding in the KNP
- One of the key points is that we are not getting a representative on the TRG
- Select a time to have a meeting to work out the consultation process
- Bush users group has been negotiating for three years with NPWS – we have established a relationship (we have been informed when we asked for it) – you can catch more bees with honey than with vinegar – if you haven't got trust first – need to make it work with NPWS
- Can't you let general public know when you go up in chopper to let people know
- Had calls to say things are coming up so we are prepared (have trust with NPWS)
- Australia did have kangaroos with hooves, large animals some only extinct last 6,000 years - ground animals secret to our fire tolerance – need to review this – want to have ability to put this into the process
- It's a farce – it's a pre-determined outcome, the information is all negative material, it's a wank

- Why isn't roping allowed, what law is stopping it? How much does it cost to remove horses?
We would do it for free
- What happened to other people who hurt themselves in the park?
- We want to be allowed to run brumbies
- We run tours – many people come to see brumbies – they are an attraction – skiing is becoming less sustainable – now working to extend/develop summer time activities – people come from around the world to see brumbies, they are an icon
- People caught horses for the war, so it is part of our history
- If brumby running is so bad, why not stop the places/events that have brumby roping
- Horses aren't in the KNP, the KNP was put around horses
- Had loads of plants, small animals – there will be a travesty if we get rid of brumbies – we will see outcome in 100 years – similar to issue with removal of bison
- NPWS are infinitely better, better trust than Victoria.

3 Next Steps

During the meeting the following next steps were agreed:

- Participants would be sent a copy of the notes taken during the meeting (this record)
- A second stakeholder meeting would be held to discuss the engagement process in more detail
- The meeting would be held during the day on a weekend.