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Questions arising from the Barmah Forest Survey

Introduction - Parks Victoria Survey states that;

"Parks Victoria is undertaking a study to assess the social and heritage values of the Wild horse population in Barmah National Park. This survey seeks to understand the Values, both positive and negative, that people ascribe to the horses". Then goes on to say "The purpose of this survey is not to collect opinions on the management of the wild horses in the Barmah National Park".

This introduction adds queries about park management strategies to be directed to Parks Victoria at barmahhorses@parks.vic.gov.au

The Australian Brumby Alliance welcomes the opportunity to submit a range of queries relating to future management of Brumbies living wild in Victoria's Barmah Forest.

Question 1 – What evidence and documentation has Parks Victoria used to support their decision to remove Brumbies from Barmah Forest and is it possible for the ABA to receive a copy of this evidence or documentation?

Question 2 – Why did Parks Victoria decide late 2013, that all Brumbies will be removed from Barmah Forest, without waiting to hear the;

- Conclusions of the Barmah stake holders Steering Committee, organised by Parks Victoria to consider a range of issues and make recommendations. and
- Results of Park's survey to assess the social and heritage values of Barmah's Brumbies.

Question 3 – Why does Parks Victoria consider the relocation of Barmah Brumbies a suitable option since;

- Wild Horse have evolved as a result of living wild,
- Once removed from their wild location, Brumbies will need to be looked after, and
- Skills Brumbies developed to survive e.g. Natural selection, survival of the fittest and social learning from living in family groups - core Brumby qualities - will be lost.

Question 4 – Why does Parks Victoria maintain that Brumbies cause damage to National Parks and should be removed, when there is substantial evidence from scientific research that wild horses in sustainable numbers (as with any species),

can co-exist within their wild environment. The Brumby population in the Barmah forest is the same now as numbers originally recorded, showing they have reached a natural balance within their ecosystem. Furthermore, a visit to Bogong High Plains recently by Parks Victoria showed a healthy environment that clearly demonstrated that Bogong Brumbies in sustainable numbers can co-exist within National Parks.
att.1- The Grazier, issue 02 – winter 2010 "role of equines in conservation grazing"

Question 5 - Why doesn't Parks Victoria carry out scientific research in Barmah to record *current* flora, fauna and land health - before changing its ecosystem. There is significant documentation around showing that decisions to remove wild horses then had to be reversed because their absence impacted negatively on the environment.
att.2 – Natural Horse, Vol7, issue3 - "how they help the Ecosystem"

Question 6 - Why does Parks Victoria not commission research for Barmah Forest comparing different types of damage, what causes the damage, the percentage of land involved and the capacity for natural recovery? E.g. compare damage from 4x wheel drives, Motor Bikes, weed transfers from hikers clothing & shoes and vehicles tyres with Brumby behaviour, fire fuel levels, pigs, goats, deer, etc.
att.3 – Savoy Institute - "Holistic Planned Grazing"

Question 7 – Why does Parks Victoria not trial fertility control if Parks feel Brumby numbers are increasing now. Fertility control has successfully reached and then held mustang populations at sustainable levels in America for over 20 years to. Fertility control is a humane method to keep wild horse numbers at a sustainable level, and

- In time this will be a cost effective management option for many species, including wild horses, and
- This option minimises imprints or damage to the environment compared to other control methods.

The ABA is keen to receive answers to the above questions as soon as possible, thanks for the opportunity to ask questions.

Yours sincerely,



Jill Pickering
President,
Australian brumby Alliance Inc.

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Attachments

att.1- The Grazier, issue 02 – winter 2010 "role of equines in conservation grazing"
att.2 – Natural Horse, Vol7, issue3 "how they help the Ecosystem"
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