

Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Management Plan Review Update for Stakeholders:

NSW NPWS update to stakeholders on the Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) Wild Horse Management Plan Review process and wild horse management program. 3rd September, 2015.

Wild Horse Management Plan Review

- The Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG), which was established to provide advice to NPWS on the future management of wild horses with KNP, continues to undertake its work in relation to the terms of reference established for the group.
- The ITRG received face to face presentations, written submissions and materials from a number of stakeholder groups which it is reviewing along with all available information, data and research on the complexity of issues related to wild horse management within KNP.
- The ITRG is working towards having its final report to NPWS in late October 2015. Part of that report will include a peer review of the Australian Alps Feral Horse Aerial Survey 2014 Design and Analysis report, and a peer review of An Assessment of Feral Horse Impacts on Treeless Drainage Lines in the Australian Alps report.
- The final report from the ITRG will provide important advice and guidance to NPWS, which, along with the community and stakeholder engagement information collected in 2014 will assist NPWS in formulating the next draft Wild Horse Management Plan for KNP.
- NPWS has also commissioned a professional contractor to undertake a heritage values assessment of the wild horse population within KNP. A report from this assessment is expected in October 2015 and again will inform NPWS in its formulation of the next draft Wild Horse Management Plan.
- It is anticipated that a Draft KNP Wild Horse Management Plan along with all supporting reports and documentation will be released in late December 2015. The Draft plan would then be placed on public exhibition for a period of 2 months over January and February 2016. The exhibition will seek a further round of community and stakeholder group input and comment before a finalised plan and future direction of wild horse management within KNP is adopted. The final plan is expected to be released in mid-2016.

Wild Horse Management Program 2015

- Wild horse management programs within KNP have been continuing as per the current KNP Horse Management Plan (2008).
- Trapping and removal was conducted in southern KNP in late summer 2015 with 17 horses being removed with all 17 of these horses rehomed. 3 horses were released as not being fit or suitable for transport.
- The 2015 winter season trapping and removal program finished on 1 September in the northern end of KNP with 122 horses trapped and removed. 72 of these 122 removed horses were rehomed. 5 horses were euthanized as a result of either pre-existing injury or injury sustained during trapping. 48 horses were released from trap sites as not being suitable or fit for transport, mostly assessed as heavily pregnant mares or mares with young foals at foot.
- All trapping and removal is undertaken in accordance with the relevant regulations. These include:

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Land Transport of Livestock) Standards 2013 No 2 under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012.

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/sessionalview/sessional/sr/2013-559.pdf>

NSW DPI -Model Code Of Practice Humane Control of Feral Horses HORCOP – revised September 2014

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/559022/Feral-horses-COP.pdf

Invasive Animals CRC – PestSmart -Standard Operating ProcedureHOR004: Trapping of feral horses

http://www.pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/HOR004_trapping.pdf

Related Issues

- There has been a great deal of activity on social media sites in relation to both the wild horse management plan and wild horse management in general within KNP.
- Unfortunately some of the information, claims and discussion on some social media sites is incorrect and have no factual basis. For example: The NPWS has not undertaken any aerial shooting or ground shooting programs for wild horses within KNP contrary to claims of such operations.
- A number of horses were found shot in the Lower Snowy River area of KNP. It is suspected that this is the result of illegal hunting activities and these activities have been reported to local NSW Police for further investigation and enforcement where possible. NPWS does not condone this activity, it is illegal and creates potentially serious risks and consequences to people and animals. NPWS encourages any persons with information about such illegal activities to report them to either the NPWS or NSW Police through appropriate channels.
- Unfortunately social media has also been utilised by some individuals to personally attack and attempt to intimidate individual NPWS staff or other individuals involved with NPWS in wild horse management. Everyone is reminded that respectful behaviour towards others, including those who may hold a differing viewpoint to their own, is an expectation and right that all participants to this process should be afforded.
- Disrespectful posts to OEH social media platforms will not be tolerated and will be deleted and authors may be blocked if the behaviour continues. Threats of violence, intimidation, bullying, harassment or illegal behaviour have and will be referred to the NSW Police.
- As always, if you have any questions or concerns or would like to discuss anything in regard to the KNP Wild Horse Management Plan Review or wild horse management program those enquiries can be directed to Rob Gibbs, Senior Project Officer, Kosciuszko National Park -Wild Horse Management Plan Review Project. Ph. 6450 5507. rob.gibbs@environment.nsw.gov.au

Thank you for your continued interest and involvement.

Mick Pettitt

Regional Manager – NSW NPWS - Southern Ranges Region