

## **MINUTES OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE NSW KANGAROO MANAGEMENT ADVISORY PANEL**

**OEC CENTRE, DUBBO – 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2007**

**PRESENT:** Joshua Gilroy – Chair (DEC), Nicole Payne (DEC), Sarah Carr (DEC), Arthur Snook (DEC), Sandy Bright (PAWD), Marie Russell (RLPB), Steve Coleman (RSPCA), Dick MacFarlane (Dubbo Field Nats), Mike Mulligan (AGMPA), Dr Anthony English (AVA)

**APOLOGIES:** Mike Cavanagh (KIAA), Rosemary Barnes (NSW Farmers Association), Marsha Isbester (Alternative - NSW Farmers Association)

### **1. Formalities**

#### **Adoption of Agenda.**

Mike Mulligan asked that we add the “increasing of carcass weights” which was discussed at the KIAA general meeting earlier in the month, to Other Business.

#### **Ratification of Minutes #8**

- No changes asked for.
- Minutes for Meeting #8 were formally adopted.

#### **Review of Actions from Meeting #8**

##### **Action 1: Summary of returned tags to be emailed to the panel.**

Sent 1 November, 2006. Posted to Dick MacFarlane.

##### **Action 2: DEC to determine what marks the boundary between zones six and seven and send to the members.**

Sent with covering letter and amended draft Minutes #8 on 15 November 2006.

### **2. Review of 2006 Statistics**

#### **Tag allocations**

- Wallaroos were the only species not near 100% allocated.
- Tags across the State were 96% allocated. This was adjusted to 94% with the return of tags after the year's end. These tags were valid to 31/12/06.
- This figure could still change slightly as the Kangaroo Management Section continues to chase up unsubmitted tags and returns.
- DEC feels that this level of allocation is probably as good as it is possible to achieve. It is likely that 2007 will be similar to 2006 in allocations.

*Action 1: Supply members with a month by month tag allocation breakdown for each species and for each zone. This would be done by way of a graph.*

#### **Commercial Harvest**

- 92% take overall, compared to 96% original allocation (94% adjusted after returned tags). This figure will also change slightly as unsubmitted returns are received.
- The only zones not in 90% take were Tibooburra reds and Armidale wallaroos.
- Sandy asked why Tibooburra was not fully allocated.
- Industry's answer was that even though there were plenty of shooters and chillers available the density of kangaroos in this area was low and so more difficult to come across.

- DEC raised the issue of the pitfalls involved with releasing 60% of the quota in June. These included the processors not being able to cope with the influx in supply generated by the release. This year DEC will release 30% of the quota in June and a further 30% in July, to try to counteract this and to assist in making the commercial industry active over a longer period.
- RLPB have spoken to many trappers and landowners who are not happy with the 40-60% split in the Cobar zone, and many that were unhappy that the Bourke zone was left to its own devices without any restrictions. Because there is not a significant area of winter cropping in the Bourke zones, there is no justification to apply the 40-60% split. Consequently, Bourke zone has already allocated its full eastern grey quota for 2007.
- If 2008 is similar to this year, for DEC to apply the 40-60% in more zones such as Broken Hill and Bourke, we run the risk of industry running out of supply between when the initial licences expire and when the remainder of the quota is released.
- Graziers would not approve of 40-60% in the more arid zones. It is more sensible that the kangaroos are harvested when needed, and in these areas, the demand for commercial activity does not rely on cropping activity.
- If farmers run out of commercial quota, non-commercial tags are always available, even though this may not be their first choice.
- Although the Bourke zone had run out of quota early in 2006 only 250 animals were taken for the year on non-commercial licences. This indicates that there isn't a significant increase in demand for culling, and that there is no justification to restrict the rate of quota allocation early in the year.
- As the quota has declined because the population has declined, the issue of allocating limited quota is inevitable. When the demand is low and the population is high there is no need for systems such as the 40-60% split to be in place. This is not the case at the moment. Historically, quota could be moved between zones. However, this practice lacks transparency, and is no longer utilised.
- NSW invests more dollars in surveys than any other state, and short of spending double the money to get the same answer, there is not much more DEC can do.
- The system is robust, and cannot be changed simply because one or more stakeholders has a problem with it under particular circumstances.
- Members passed on comments that trappers are not happy with the service they are receiving in some Area offices, and Area office staff feel that they are not being provided with sufficient training.
- The number of licensed trappers was again raised. How could DEC discriminate between applications? All licence applications must be assessed on their merits. Organisations are welcome to submit for discussion suggestions as to how DEC can approach this issue.
- It will always be the trappers with more initiative that will survive in the current climate of limited commercial quota.
- All potential new trappers are advised by DEC before they licence, of the costs involved with becoming a professional trapper and how difficult it is at the moment to recoup those costs.
- Mike Mulligan will advise DEC an estimate of the costs involved in setting up a shooting vehicle, minus the cost of the vehicle itself.
- There is a place on the Panel for an organisation that represents trappers, which would allow them to air these grievances. However, trappers have not as yet shown any interest in forming an organisation.
- Dick MacFarlane asked if many farmers were trying to improve their income in the drought by becoming kangaroo shooters. Most Organisation members thought there was limited interest in this option because farmers are too busy to add this to their list.
- DEC are happy to discuss any problems with member Organisations at a time suitable with them.

### **3. Approval of new plan**

#### **Commonwealth alterations to draft.**

- An amendment was made to the special quota provision of the plan. A cap was placed so that on a state-wide basis this could not exceed 1.5% of the population estimate for each species in any one year, although in any one zone, special quota can be allocated up to a limit of 5% of the population estimate.
- An extra aim was added - specific to animal welfare, following submissions made to DEC regarding the draft plan. This was discussed previously by the Panel during analysis of the submissions.

- The Plan was otherwise approved as submitted.
- A new appendix will be added when the new Code of Practice is in place.

### **Publication and availability**

- The Plan is still being printed and copies of the new plan will be sent to the Panel's organisation and members when available.
- Members have already received a copy of the plan as it will be printed, and a copy of the approval of the plan by the Commonwealth was distributed today.
- DEC also provided members with a copy of the "Review of submissions to the draft NSW Kangaroo Management Plan 2007-2011".

### **Probable AAT challenge**

- The Commonwealth advised DEC on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March that the Wildlife Protection Association of Australia Inc has lodged an appeal against the new plan. The exact details of the appeal are not yet known, as no documents have been sighted by DEC, but animal welfare issues are likely to be involved.
- The appeal seeks a review of the decision of the Federal Minister for the Environment to declare the NSW Commercial Kangaroo Harvest Management Plan 2007-2011 an approved Wildlife Trade Management Plan pursuant to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.
- DEC joined with the Commonwealth as defendant for the last challenge and DEC has no doubt this will also be the case with this appeal.

## **4. Latest statistics**

### **Tag allocation**

- Most Eastern zones are now at 40% allocation, and we are 34% allocated state-wide.
- The allocated figure will not change much now until June except in those zones where the 40 – 60% split does not apply (Griffith, Bourke, Broken Hill and Tibooburra).

### **Ballot System**

- The ballot system was applied in 4 zones in January this year (Narrabri, Glen Innes, Upper Hunter and Armidale). The system used was simple and transparent. The forms were numbered as they were received by DEC Area Offices, and a random number generator was used to determine the order in which the applications were processed, up to the limit of the available quota. Nicole Payne (Manager of KMS) and an independent trapper from a zone where the ballot was not needed conducted the ballot. The Dubbo DEC office, where the ballot was conducted, did not have access to information that could identify either the trapper or the landholder on each application.
- The process has been the subject of an external audit. Following receipt of the audit report, any changes considered necessary will be made before the process is used again.
- DEC expects that trappers who missed out on quota will be upset, but felt the ballot was more transparent than the previous method of "first in, first served" system. Other options were discussed at the previous KMAP meeting, and it was agreed that the ballot provided the most transparent and equitable way of allocating limited quota when demand exceeds supply.
- DEC is currently analysing the ballot data to determine the distribution of quota among landholders and trappers. It will then be possible to judge whether the ballot overcame previous problems in which some geographic areas failed to obtain quota in the "first in, first served" allocation. The analysis will also attempt to compare the number or proportion of trappers who received tags under this system compared to last year. These were the issues DEC was attempting to address.
- DEC is happy to speak to any of the members Organisations at their convenience about these matters.

### **Commercial Harvest**

- This figure is fairly low, at this time only 6% across the State. This figure only takes into account those kangaroos taken in January.

- Rainfall early in the year is likely to be having an effect on the harvest figures and DEC believes that in some areas a blanket extension on occupier's licences may be necessary.

## **6. FATE Proposal**

- Panel members were all given a copy prior to the meeting of the new proposal sent to DEC by FATE.
- The new proposal is based on the issue of a s120 General Licence, which need not specify a single landholding. The s120 licence can be issued to the BARG properties collectively and would cover all specified trappers. This overcomes the major problem with the previous proposal, in which the s121 Occupier's Licence may only be issued to one property owner.
- A number of issues were raised by DEC and Panel members about the proposal. They included:
  - Goal – does the proposal meet adaptive management criteria
  - Can the group access more quota, if it is available, after they have used what was initially allocated to them
  - Should the tags reside with the property owner rather than the trapper/s
  - Compliance issues – would the swapping of tags make it harder for law enforcement
  - Licence conditions – are they adequate and do they need to be reviewed
  - If a property in the trial applies to an Area Office for an individual Occupier's Licence (s121) should they then drop out of the trial
  - Equity issues

*Action 2: Sarah will summarise the FATE proposal for KMAP members by the 16<sup>th</sup> March.*

*Action 3: DEC will distribute electronically to all organisations ASAP a copy of the FATE proposal, along with dot points of the issues discussed at the meeting.*

*Members were requested to have their 1<sup>st</sup> comments back to DEC by the 25<sup>th</sup> April.*

- DEC will distribute comments to the rest of the Panel, analyse them, advise the Panel of DEC's views on the proposal and ask for the Panels comments again.

## **7. Review of panel membership**

- Current membership of the panel expires this year.
- DEC will write to all current members inviting nominations to the next panel.
- DEC will also place Public Notices in newspapers and on the web site inviting new members, so that the new Panel represents a wide range of stakeholders.
- This will occur between now and the Oct/Nov meeting.
- Humane Society International has sent a letter to DEC asking that they be taken off the mailing list.
- The new Panel will be appointed by the DG to represent stakeholder groups.

*Action 4: DEC will consider how an organisation representing professional trappers may be formed, so that the interests of trappers can be represented on the new Panel. DEC will keep the Panel updated on any progress made.*

## **8. Other business**

### **Major projects for 2007**

- 1. DEC will develop a strategy for dealing with epidemic mortality events of kangaroo following a "big wet".**
  - What are the causes of epidemic mortality and what are the implications for kangaroo harvesting and human health?
  - Sarah is currently liaising with various people and organisations.

- DEC will put in place a set of procedural guidelines to adjust the harvest quota should it be necessary.

## **2. Development of a more sophisticated compliance database**

- This will make compliance statistics easier to access and to report on to various stakeholders.

## **3. An audit of properties listed in our database.**

- Do they exist and who are the current owners?
- Are there duplicate properties?
- DEC is still considering the most effective and efficient way of conducting the audit. One thought is to request a copy of a rates notice with all new applications.

## **4. A review of the SENSW trial which will be completed this year.**

- The trial will be assessed against the objectives. There is nothing to say at this time that it will not continue. The last three years of evidence have ticked all the boxes.
- The new plan allows DEC to make a policy decision to keep the zone as a permanent part of the commercial harvest zone.

## **Compliance update**

- Arthur Snook, the new Compliance Officer for the Dubbo area –gave an update on compliance issues for the period 1 July 2006 to present.

Chiller Inspections                      126

Infringement notices issued 56

Of which:

Unsubmitted returns	46
Underweight carcasses	2
Untagged carcasses	3
Wrong species	2
Unreturned tags	1
False information	1
Unlicensed Trapper	1

Current Inquiries:

False information	7 Occupiers Licences – 2 trappers
Body Shot	10 – 7 trappers
Underweight	47 – 16 trappers

- DEC is trying to arrange a meeting with SA and Qld counterparts to improve consistency between the States on a range of compliance issues, particularly the acceptance of non-head shot kangaroos. If such carcasses are found in NSW from other States DEC can only relay information to the appropriate State for them to take action.
- Industry believes that it should be zero tolerance in all States
- A new compliance officer – Brett Edwards – has been appointed in Broken Hill.

## **Code of Practice Review progress**

- There are still two or three sticking points.
- When finalised the new code will be placed on the Internet for public comment.

## **Research involvement**

### ***Currently developing/commenced:***

1. Working with: University of NSW, Melbourne University – Seasonality of Breeding. Is it possible to reduce the need for euthanasing pouch young and/or young at foot by not targeting females at certain times of year?
2. Working with CSIRO – Harvest carrion and the impact on predators and disease cycles *etc.* The range of possible outcomes from this research includes improved knowledge of some diseases that impact on human health, and improved management of threatened species by reducing the adverse impact of introduced predators.
3. Working with NSW Department of Primary Industries – review historic data. *Eg.* Aerial survey data collected on goats. Possible improvements in the strategic management of goats for biodiversity outcomes.

### ***Scheduled for 2009:***

- Survivorship of young at foot. Where young at foot are not euthanased (*eg.* because the trapper does not see the animal), what are its chances of survival? This is important given the level of concern among the public regarding the fate of young at foot.
- Marie asked if there was any research being done into blindness in kangaroos. At this stage this issue is not a priority.

## **Meetings (Armidale/Narrabri, KIAA)**

- DEC thanked KIAA for the invitation to attend the annual general meeting held in Brisbane on 28<sup>th</sup> February. It was a valuable experience.
- The meeting in Armidale, primarily intended for trappers, had to be postponed due to work commitments by KMP Staff. The meeting is still on the agenda, and trappers will be informed of the new dates.
- As there is a lot of interest being generated in the Narrabri area for a similar meeting, DEC will try to organise this as well.
- Joshua asked for views from around the table as to how DEC could best inform trappers on procedural changes. Previously this has always been done by way of a "mail out". This is a one way process.
- Industry suggested we use the network of the processors to advise trappers *ie.* a notice to the chiller operators who would then pass on to their trappers.
- RLPB suggested talking to landholders who could in turn talk to trappers and report back to RLPB.
- DEC have neither the time nor the resources to travel around the state seeking the views of individual trappers (over 800).
- A solution to this problem would be for the trappers to form an organisation that could then hold meetings with its members and bring the information and views of the trappers back to the Panel.

## **AWMS Conference**

- Nicole Payne and Sarah Carr attended the Australasian Wildlife Management Society conference held in Auckland in December.
- Both papers presented were well received.
- Sarah's paper on aerial surveys is to be written up for inclusion in a research journal. The paper is called "Aerial surveys of kangaroos in New South Wales: an illustration of the interdisciplinary nature of wildlife management decision making."

## **Additions to commercial zones**

- Several RLPB zones have expressed interest in forming a new commercial zone around Hunter, Mudgee, Molong, Forbes and Dubbo.
- Nicole will attend a meeting in Mudgee on 13<sup>th</sup> March 07 to discuss this.
- There are several questions to be answered before DEC will consider a new zone:

1. Non commercial statistics need to justify a commercial cull.
  2. Is industry interested in servicing the new zone?
  3. Surveys that need to be done before a quota can be approved are costly, so need to know if the zone is likely to be viable.
- The opening of a new zone can, under the new Plan, be a policy decision rather than requiring specific approval from the Commonwealth, provided population estimates have been done. A proposal on the new zone could be received as early as mid year.
  - Bombala have asked several times to be included in the SENSW zone. However, as this zone was approved as a trial, and it is necessary compare “before and after” information, adding new areas part-way through the trial is problematic. There is also likely to be a significant issue in relation to firearms and small properties *etc.*
  - The question was raised as to why the Commercial Zone finished where it did. This was mainly because of the difficulties with aerial surveys and fixed wing planes being too dangerous in the remaining areas. Also the lower populations of kangaroos and problems with trapper access.

### **“Trapper” Terminology**

- The word “Trapper” is used in the legislation for a licence issued under s123, it does not imply a method of taking the animals.
- The word “harm”, used on the S121 form is also considered by the Panel to be the wrong terminology.
- DEC is bound to use this terminology, which has been in place since the Act came into force in 1974. Several attempts have been made in the past to change this, but as the Act refers to other animals, plants *etc* and not only kangaroos, it has been hard to make the changes.
- The consensus of the Panel is that this terminology needs to change. Because of animal welfare issues at the moment the members feel this is a priority.
- KIAA has received an email from AQIS, which illustrates how confusing this terminology is to people who are not familiar with the Act or the Kangaroo Management Program.

*Action 5: DEC will take up a fresh proposal with the new Minister to change this terminology and will keep the Panel up to date.*

*Action 6: The Panel has asked for a copy of Mike’s email from AQIS. DEC to send.*

### **Other matters as raised by members**

#### **Minimum weights increase.**

- This was raised at the annual general meeting of the KIAA. A unanimous decision was made by all present at that meeting that this should be increased from 12kg – 14kg for Pet Food carcasses and 13kg – 15kg for Human Consumption carcasses.
- The views of those not present at the KIAA meeting have been sought and when a unanimous decision has been reached Industry would like the changes to go ahead as soon as possible.
- The reasons for the changes were:
  - Problems in the market with smaller skins
  - By lifting minimum weights the harvest will be spread out over the months.
  - It will be beneficial to Industry and its image.
- The submission from Industry will need to state what they propose to do with underweight kangaroos *eg* pull the underweight carcass out, recoup money from chiller operator who will in turn recoup money from the trapper responsible.

*Action 7: Members need to start talking to their organisations now. When the proposal is received from Industry DEC will distribute to member Organisations and seek views. Turn around 2 weeks.*

### **Next meeting**

- Date will be sought when the review of the Panel membership is completed.
- Location – Western Plains Zoo.

*Action 8: Out of session proposal of dates for the next meeting.*

### **List of Actions**

**Action 1: Supply members with a month by month tag allocation breakdown for each species and for each zone. This would be done by way of a graph.**

**Action 2: Sarah will summarise the FATE proposal for KMAP members by the 16<sup>th</sup> March.**

**Action 3: DEC will distribute electronically to all Organisations ASAP a copy of the FATE proposal, along with dot points of the issues discussed at the meeting.**

**Members were requested to have their 1<sup>st</sup> comments back to DEC by the 25<sup>th</sup> April.**

**Action 4: DEC will consider how a Shooter's Organisation can be formed, so that the interests of the Trappers can be represented on the new Panel. DEC will keep the Panel updated on any progress made.**

**Action 5: DEC will take up a fresh proposal with the new Minister to change this terminology and will keep the Panel up to date.**

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