

# Meeting Summary

## Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel

Thursday 13 February 2020

**The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel was formed by the Minister for Energy and Environment to provide independent scientific and technical advice to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to prepare a draft wild horse heritage management plan.**

The panel met at the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) office in Queanbeyan for its third meeting.

### Post-fire response

Through mapping, the panel estimates 25% of the known horse distribution area in the park was impacted by the recent bushfires. Given the lower density of horses and the lower severity of fire in most of these areas, a park-wide resurvey was not deemed especially warranted, and the panel has presumed that the population has altered little.

The panel explored the effect of control on population dynamics. It is possible to eliminate all horses from specific management areas, but to prevent re-incursion, the surrounding populations must be maintained at or below carrying capacity.

The panel supported scientific evidence that post-fire control of wild horses was needed to aid the recovery of areas affected by the recent bushfires. The panel acknowledged that the concurrent control of other species such as deer and pigs would also be needed. As such, the panel discussed a draft post-fire control plan they have developed, which recommends control of horses in three areas affected by fire and containing natural assets sensitive to grazing and trampling impacts during their post-fire recovery. The plan makes recommendations for the monitoring of environmental impacts, horse population and animal welfare impacts of control methods, as well as aboriginal archaeological surveys. The post-fire control plan would be a precursor to the new wild horse management plan and would be discussed with the Community Advisory Panel at the joint meeting of the panels on the 14 February.

### General points of discussion

- The panel will produce a final report of their recommendations to the Minister for Energy and Environment and NPWS. All advice will be supported by scientific evidence wherever available.
- The panel completed a review of the former Kosciuszko Independent Technical Reference Group's (ITRG) humaneness assessment of control methods. While new scientific evidence exists to update the assessment, there is agreement with the overall ranking of control methods. Since the ITRG assessment is based on theoretical evidence, the review recommends monitoring to quantify the actual welfare impacts of each control method to individual animals.

## Next meetings

Thursday 2 April 2020 in Queanbeyan – panel meeting.

Friday 3 April 2020 in Queanbeyan – joint meeting with the Community Advisory Panel.