

Meeting summary

Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel

Wednesday 6 November 2019

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 inaugural meeting.

Membership

Dr Kate Sawford resigned from the panel on 5 November 2019. The panel decided that the experience and expertise of the remaining members were adequate to address any potential gap in knowledge left by Dr Sawford's resignation. Members agreed not to seek replacement of Dr Sawford.

NPWS led a discussion on the governance of the panel and member's responsibilities under NPWS codes of conduct.

Timeline for a new wild horse heritage management plan

The Minister for Energy and Environment requires that the final plan is completed by 1 May 2020. To provide enough time for consultation, this means the draft plan will need to be completed by February 2020.

Handover from the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Independent Technical Reference Group

Dr Bidda Jones, Deputy Chair of the former Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG), attended the meeting as a guest and provided information to the panel on the work undertaken by the ITRG in drafting the 2016 Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. Dr Jones discussed new work and review of the ITRG's work that could be completed by the panel in drafting a new wild horse management plan. This included:

- reviewing the humanness assessment of control methods
- benefits of a site visit by the panel
- tailoring control methods for each area of the park
- adaptive management approach

- wild horse welfare implications of 'no management'
- reviewing the 2016 draft wild horse management plan's management zones and their recommendations.

Members also discussed a range of management topics including:

- measuring the environmental impacts of wild horses
- trapping and removal of wild horses
- aerial culling
- the value of social science.

The panel also reviewed the requirements for a new plan under the Act.

Meeting priorities

The following priorities were raised for discussion at further meetings:

- the ITRG's recommendations for further work
- questions from the Community Advisory Panel
- revision of the humanness assessment of control methods, including the use of scientific data to support assessments
- 2016 draft management plan – what needs to be revised?

Next meeting

Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 December in Jindabyne (TBC). Includes a site visit.