

# **A MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR FERAL HORSES IN GUY FAWKES RIVER NATIONAL PARK**

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## **Introduction**

1. The aim of this report is to make recommendations on the management of feral horses in Guy Fawkes River National Park (GFRNP). These are animals that remain in the Park in early 2001 after the culling of 606 horses by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in October 2000.

## **Terms of Reference**

2. In relation to this task the following Terms of Reference were issued by the Minister for the Environment in January 2001:

“To develop a plan of management to reduce the number of horses remaining in Guy Fawkes National Park without using aerial culling. This plan is to be presented to the Minister for the Environment by 28 February 2001”.

## **Approach**

3. The approach taken in preparing this report was to consult as widely as was practicable, and to ensure that anyone with an interest in the matter had an opportunity to make a submission. A facilitated workshop was held at Dorrigo on 10 February, with some 25 people invited to participate. This was a diverse group with varying interests in the issue, and included local land owners (some of whom were neighbours of the Park), local stockmen who have been involved in previous horse control programs in GFRNP, veterinarians from both the Rural Lands Protection Board and private practice, including a representative of the Australian Association of Equine Veterinarians (AEVA), tourist operators with some involvement in use of GFRNP, including a representative of the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT), Mr Andrew Fraser MP, scientists from the University of New England and the NSW Department of Agriculture, and NPWS staff and Advisory Committee members. The RSPCA was invited to attend but declined. No invitations were extended to peak conservation bodies but arrangements were made to meet with members of several such organisations after the workshop.
4. Subsequent to the workshop a number of people who attended made further oral or written submissions, and submissions have been received from a number of individuals and organizations both before and since the workshop.

## **Issues**

5. Both in the workshop and in other discussions the main issues were considered to be:
  - a. What factors should be taken into account in the development of a management plan for feral horses in GFRNP, and
  - b. What technical options should be considered in implementing such a plan, with an assumption that such techniques would need to be humane, practicable and workable, and cost-effective.

## **Factors**

6. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into account in any such situation, with a wide range of community and other values that will impinge on any management decisions.

## **Heritage values**

7. Perhaps the first question to be resolved concerns the belief expressed by some that feral horses have significant heritage value, and therefore should be permitted to remain in the wild, including in some national parks. This contention places less emphasis on the adverse impacts of feral horses than on their perceived value as a cultural icon or tourist attraction. However, it is interesting to note that most proponents of such a position do acknowledge that feral horse herds do need to be managed to control numbers below a defined problem density. This is certainly the case in GFRNP, with considerable local support for some horses being allowed to remain in the Park, but with their numbers controlled in some way.

## **Adverse impacts**

8. There are equally strong views from those concerned with the conservation of biodiversity that feral horses are an introduced species that have adverse impacts in the Australian ecosystems where they are found, with potentially severe consequences for our native flora and fauna. These impacts include direct effects on vegetation, soil compaction, erosion, fouling of water and dissemination of weeds, with the magnitude of the effects being density dependent. As with other feral animals this results in legislation and policies that require their removal from protected areas. The extent to which this removal can approach total eradication varies greatly with each situation, but it will always be a matter for judgment about how best to reduce these impacts to an acceptable level. It is rarely if ever a matter of removing the last animal, but always about understanding how to reduce adverse impacts in the most humane, cost-effective way. There would appear to be sufficient information on the ill-effects of feral horses to support this approach, unless a higher priority is placed on other factors for some good reason. In the case of feral horses this is complicated by the differing perceptions that many people have about horses compared to most other pest animals. While this stems in part at least from the cultural icon argument it is also a function of the way horses

affect people as individuals, and this can be a very strong element in any consideration of management plans for feral horses. It is unlikely ever to be an issue in the management of feral pigs, goats, carp and most other pest species found in Australia.

9. It is in the resolution of these two conflicting arguments that the dilemma occurs in the development of a management plan for the feral horses remaining in GFRNP.

### **The current situation in GFRNP**

9. Since the culling operation in October 2001 there have been continuing efforts by NPWS staff to determine the numbers, locations and habits of the remaining horses. These surveillance operations, which are in fact a part of a long term program of horse management in GFRNP, have resulted in an estimate that there are between 60 and 100 horses in GFRNP, with undetermined numbers on adjoining State Forest and private properties. There have been good rains in recent months and there is a considerable amount of feed in the Park. Given these conditions it can be anticipated that a good proportion of mares will raise a foal in the 2001 breeding season, and the numbers of horses in the Park will quickly rise again unless some measures are put in place to prevent this.
10. As a further part of its' feral horse management program the NPWS has also taken steps to monitor the apparent benefits to the Park and its native flora and fauna as a consequence of the removal of 606 horses last October.

### **Research**

11. This monitoring program in GFRNP raises the issue of the need for a better understanding of the adverse impacts of pest animals in Australia. There has in fact been an enormous amount of research on species like rabbits, foxes, feral pigs, goats and so on, and arguably a lot less on feral horses. Even in the well-studied species there is still much to understand, and in the case of feral horses there may be even more to learn. It will be necessary to undertake further studies to better understand the exact nature and extent of the damage caused by feral horses, but there is absolutely no doubt that enough is known about their likely impacts at high densities to warrant control programs being put in place within protected areas. It should be noted that some supporters of the need for further research do so on the basis of thereby defining an "acceptable" number of horses that could be allowed to remain inside national parks. It is also a fact that conservationists disagree emphatically with that approach. The general public is caught in the middle of these arguments, in trying to understand what should be done about feral horses in national parks. While further research may help to refine these arguments it is unlikely to reduce the emotional conflict that many in the community feel when confronted with the realities of feral animal management. Only good programs of community education can resolve this conflict, at least to some extent.

## **NPWS policies**

12. The reality is that in most situations it will not be technically possible to remove every feral horse from a particular national park, nor to prevent new horses from entering that park from adjoining areas – whether by deliberate release or not. However, that does not remove the legislative requirement that NPWS should institute control programs for feral animals in areas under its control, and this currently includes feral horses. Thus, the NPWS Dorriggo District Pest Management Plan (1998) requires that “integrated control programs are adopted utilising a range of options, with the aim being to apply best practice, cost-effective and humane control methods”. In the case of feral horses in GFRNP the plan states that the goal is local eradication of horses from the Park. If NPWS is to take a different approach to these animals it would require a change in policy and possibly even a change in legislation. The adoption of a new management plan, and the range of control options that might be considered, should be seen in this context.

## **Control options**

13. There has been a considerable amount of thought and effort devoted to how best to manage feral horses, both within Australia and elsewhere. The experience gained from control programs in New Zealand and North America is useful in considering the situation in Australia, but it must also be accepted that there is no template that will be effective in every place. The conditions in Australia are unique to this continent, requiring the adoption of control options that take this into account.
14. In reality there are only a limited number of options available in seeking solutions that are humane, practicable and workable, and cost-effective. These were summarised for the participants in the Dorriggo workshop referred to above, and appear as Annex A to this report. The challenge in developing an approach that will be adopted in GFRNP starts with decisions about the way in which the horses will be considered in the future – feral pest animal or cultural icon. This matter requires some consideration before a final control plan is adopted.

## **The heritage value issue**

15. There are strong arguments from many in the community that feral horses have heritage values that should lead to them being considered differently to other introduced species. Certainly there is a good deal of oral history that supports this opinion. Furthermore, this history has been reinforced over many generations by accounts of feral horses in poem, film and television, with development of a strong and genuine affection for brumbies as a part of the Australian psyche. This attitude is therefore totally at odds with the reality that the horse is an introduced animal in Australia, and when allowed to run wild in large numbers it should be considered to be just another pest animal.
16. This issue has been raised in GFRNP, alongside an argument that the horses are a tourist attraction that brings visitors to the Park in a way that benefits

local communities. This latter issue is a part of a wider debate about the management of recreational activities in national parks, and will be considered further below. In the case of horses now in GFRNP, there are local stories about genetic linkages to horses used by the Glen Innes Light Horse Brigade for instance. The wider belief that some horses also have direct links to the Walers taken overseas by Australian forces is also very strong, and worthy of consideration.

17. In making decisions about what to do about the horses remaining in GFRNP there are also implications for the management of feral horse populations elsewhere in New South Wales, and especially in the Snowy Mountains. In the latter case the “brumby factor” is very relevant for obvious reasons, and as recently as in the 2000 Olympic Games opening ceremony. The challenge for those tasked with the management of protected areas is to separate the myth from reality in a way that can be accepted by the community. To be able to do so in a way that is credible requires more than a simple acceptance or rejection of the heritage/historical arguments. It seems reasonable to require that these arguments be backed up with evidence that supports them beyond mere claims that such links exist. This should not be seen as placing additional obstacles in the way of a change in attitude to feral horses in national parks, but rather as an opportunity to once and for all demonstrate the validity of these claims of heritage value. Having first resolved just what evidence would be used and accepted in this matter, it would then be possible and indeed mandatory to make rational decisions about what the effects of such evidence would have on management options for feral horses in national parks and elsewhere. In particular it would result in consideration of the best and most humane way to manage horses that are considered to have such values. It would also raise the question about how well this can be done in wild populations in national parks. There would appear to be a strong argument for such horses being taken from the wild and managed in captivity somewhere, where their breeding could be controlled and their health and welfare can be properly taken care of. This cannot be done to any extent in wild populations, where there would also be a continuing need to control population increases using methods that would not be necessary in captive herds.

### **Recreational use of national parks**

18. In discussions about the management of feral horses in GFRNP there have been claims that the animals are seen to be valuable and interesting by many visitors to the Park. This may well be so, and this could be readily tested by use of a survey of visitors. It may equally be true that just as many visitors would prefer to see native flora and fauna in a protected area that is being managed primarily for the conservation of that flora and fauna – a survey would also shed some light on this question. It is worth noting that many believe that good way to get close to some of the native animals may well be on horseback, a fact already appreciated by users of the Bicentennial National Trail in GFRNP. Whether it is important for these visitors to also see feral horses within the Park is open for debate. Perhaps those who wish to see wild horses would be just as happy to do so in places other than national parks.

19. There need be no direct linkage between any control programs for feral horses and access to national parks by horse riders. The NPWS does have the responsibility for determining whether any restrictions do apply to the access available for horse riders in any national park, or to any part of a national park, and this situation should not change. There is a long history of recreational use of national parks in New South Wales and this should not change either. The challenge is always to do so in ways that do not seriously compromise the biological, historical or recreational values of the protected area in question, and this is acknowledged internationally as an often difficult task. It is at the very heart of debate about the development of truly sustainable ecotourism activities.

### **History of feral horse management in GFRNP**

20. There have been efforts by NPWS and local stockmen to reduce the number of feral horses in GFRNP since the early 1990's, and certainly before then an unknown number were mustered by local stockmen. Some of these mustered horses were suitable for breaking and use, but many were transported away for slaughter in abattoirs- some as far away as Caboolture in southern Queensland. NPWS records show that 156 horses were removed since 1992, using a variety of methods. Some were roped, some were mustered into temporary enclosures in the valley of the Guy Fawkes River using both horsemen and in some cases also helicopters, and attempts were also made to immobilise horses using dart rifles. These efforts involved local stockmen and NPWS staff in varying numbers. None of these activities could be considered to have been truly successful, neither in the number of horses actually removed nor in the way that the animals were generally handled. There were animal welfare difficulties with horses injured and killed in some instances, and there was always a major problem in moving trapped horses up from the valley to the escarpment to where suitable vehicles could be used to transport the horses away from the Park. This whole process was not only extremely stressful for the horses but it was also potentially dangerous for the people concerned, irrespective of their experience.
21. There are strong opinions among some local people that these mustering programs should be used again to remove horses from the Park. It is equally true that other local people emphasise the difficulties of doing so in the terrain in this Park. In attempting to resolve these conflicting opinions it does seem clear that unless there are significant changes to the mustering and transport protocols that were used in the past there is every reason to believe that horses will again be killed and injured as they were previously. In seeking improved methods for the handling of these feral horses the techniques developed by Monty Roberts and others may well have a place.
22. There is also the issue of what happens to the horses even if they are captured and moved successfully out of the valley. If every horse were to be adopted and tamed for private use that would be seen by many in the community as the most desirable outcome. Given the wide variety in the type and quality of feral horses in GFRNP and in other places too, it is highly unlikely that every horse will be suitable for breaking and use, with many almost certainly going for

slaughter. This has been the case in the past. There are many in the community who believe that the process of capturing and transporting feral horses for abattoir slaughter is too inhumane to be tolerated, and there are pleas to find other solutions. If the horses in question have no value other than for pet food there is a strong case for not subjecting them to the risks and terrors of trapping and transport. This leaves as the only option that such horses should be killed humanely in the Park. Given the ban on aerial shooting this comes down to ground shooting of selected horses that are still running in the Park, or to the humane euthanasia of mustered horses without attempting to transport them away from the enclosure. There would be some technical difficulties in adopting this latter strategy, and the horses would still be submitted to the risks and stresses of being mustered, but at least they would not be afflicted with long distance transport and abattoir slaughter.

23. Elsewhere in Australia there may be a viable industry based on the capture and slaughter of feral horses, but this should not be seen as an appropriate use of the horses in GFRNP on any continuing basis. There is certainly no great support for this approach in the submissions received, even amongst those who believe that mustering can be more successful than it has been in the past.

### **Ground shooting**

23. The use of ground shooting was discussed in the Dorriggo workshop, and it was interesting to note that there was very little opposition to the ground shooting of some horses, even amongst those who were implacably opposed to helicopter shooting. Support for this method of removing feral horses needs to be tempered with an awareness of the difficulties in following up wounded horses on foot or even on horseback. Even if skilled shooters with appropriate firearms are used there would be no certainty that every horse would be killed instantly, and this is a real concern. It is vastly more difficult to kill a feral horse humanely at some distance, compared to the use of a single shot to the brain at close range in the case of a sick or injured horse being dealt with by a veterinarian. However, there is no doubt that shooting can be a humane means of killing a horse when done correctly.
24. The use of ground shooting may well be considered for the removal of selected horses, including groups that cannot be mustered, perhaps some stallions, and sick or injured horses. It should be at the discretion of the NPWS or an attending veterinarian to take this approach when deemed necessary, but given the animal welfare problems in following up and dealing with wounded horses it should not be used as a primary method of removing large numbers of horses from GFRNP.

### **Chemical immobilisation**

25. There is invariably some support for the use of immobilising drugs delivered by dart rifle to capture and remove feral horses. This approach is seen as a humane and non-lethal way of solving the problems involved in mustering these animals. This ignores the technical difficulties involved in darting horses in terrain such as occurs in GFRNP, where it would be difficult to approach

many horses as close as the 40-60 metres that is required for effective use of dart rifles. Even if this problem is overcome by the use of salt licks or other attractants, there is still a potential problem in the way that an animal may behave when it is darted. Some may in fact subside with little problem, but others will certainly move away and may stumble or fall in rocky ground. There is almost no way of controlling the situation once a horse is darted and until it falls down, with an ever present potential for injuries or worse to occur.

26. In addition to these animal welfare concerns there is also the issue of what to do with the horse once it is immobilised, which may depend partly at least on where it actually falls. The only way to move such an animal may be to lift it out by helicopter, and there would need to be an appropriate destination.
27. The use of chemical immobilisation would therefore be an expensive, labour-intensive option. There would always be a need for the direct involvement of experienced veterinarians, given the nature of the dangerous drugs that are used, and given the range of potential animal welfare and human safety problems that can arise. The method may well be considered for the capture of specific horses, but it certainly is not suitable as an option for the removal of large numbers of horses from GFRNP.

### **Fertility control**

28. Some means of controlling the fertility of feral horses is also seen by many as a humane and non-lethal control option. While it does not usually have the potential animal welfare problems of chemical immobilisation, the simple fact is that there is no current technology that could be applied in GFRNP. Whatever approach is taken from among the current options, including immuno-contraception, there would be a need to first capture the animals for some form of injection. This would make fertility control unsuitable for use in GFRNP at present, but it will certainly be worthwhile to monitor the results of continuing research programs, and to follow the experiences both in Australia and overseas in horse populations that can be handled for the particular procedure. The technology will almost certainly have a place in controlling breeding in captive herds in horse sanctuaries and elsewhere.

### **Recommendations**

28. In making recommendations about what should be done with the remaining horses in GFRNP it is necessary to take into account a complex combination of factors – biological, socio-cultural, historical, economic and animal welfare issues. There is no plan that will satisfy the interests of all observers, just as there is no single control option that is able to deliver a good outcome. As with all feral animal control programs there is a need to adopt an adaptable, integrated, sustainable approach that fits the criteria of being humane, practicable and workable, and cost-effective.



29. In relation to my Terms of Reference I make the following recommendations:
- a. That those who consider that some or all of the horses in GFRNP have a heritage or historical value be offered an opportunity to demonstrate that this is so. There should be formation of a Working Party that can marshal any evidence to support these claims, beyond simple oral history. This Heritage Working Party would need to enlist the assistance of appropriate organisations or individuals to investigate the genetic or other basis for claims of heritage value, and it should be required to submit a report on its findings within 6 months. Suggested conditions and Terms of Reference for this Working Party are at Annex B.
  - b. That a moratorium be placed on the removal of any horses from GFRNP until such time as the Heritage Working Party completes its work, for a period of up to 6 months from the date of the setting up of the Working Party.
  - c. That in the meantime the NPWS continue its surveillance and monitoring of the remaining feral horses in GFRNP, with a view to building up as complete a picture as possible of their numbers, social structure, location and habits. This information will be vital in the further management of these horses, whatever approach is taken.
  - d. That the NPWS continue to evaluate the effects within the Park of the removal of 606 horses in October 2000, as a part of a long term process of better understanding the adverse impacts of feral horses in that type of ecosystem. Any such evaluation would also need to consider the effects of cattle that are found in the Park from time to time.
  - e. That subsequent NPWS decisions about the management of the horses take the Heritage Working Party's findings into account, in consultation with the local community and any other stakeholders. In particular, if any horses are designated as having heritage or other specific values that an opportunity be created for these animals to be humanely removed from the Park prior to any other control programs being put in place. The subsequent management of these horses in another location would be in the hands of those with an interest in breeding them for their heritage value.
  - f. That the removal of any horses from the Park be carried out only after consultation with experienced stockmen, veterinarians and the RSPCA. Before any attempts are made to muster and capture any horses by any means the proposed protocols must be submitted for scrutiny by a panel of NPWS staff, experienced stockmen, veterinarians and the RSPCA. The intention in doing so is to ensure that improved methods for handling and transporting the horses are put in place, thereby reducing the chance of encountering the previous animal welfare problems.
  - g. That such mustering protocols as may be shown to be successful be then used as the primary method of reducing the number of horses in GFRNP to as low levels as possible, and to keep the number as low as possible. The fate of animals successfully mustered in this way is to be at the discretion of the NPWS, after consultation with relevant stakeholders and the RSPCA.
  - h. That the NPWS have the discretion to use ground shooting or chemical immobilisation in removing specific animals, including aged, sick or

injured horses that could not be mustered humanely. In such cases the NPWS will utilise only properly accredited personnel and experienced veterinarians respectively.

A.W. English  
6 March 2001

Annex A *A paper prepared for the Dorrigo workshop on 10 February 2001*

**Techniques for Feral Horse Control – Associate Professor Tony English**

A wide variety of feral horse techniques have been developed which include:

- Roping
- Mustering and trapping
- Chemical immobilisation
- Shooting (aerial and ground)
- Fertility control

The main issues for each of these are as follows:

*1. Various combinations of roping/mustering/trapping*

- The success or otherwise of mustering or trapping will depend very much on the skill and experience of the personnel who are involved.
- Critical elements in any mustering and trapping program will be the location, layout and materials used to construct enclosures.
- Trapping and handling horses in enclosures is very stressful for the horses, with the very real possibility of serious injury or death if they are not well handled. There are substantial animal welfare issues to be confronted in any such activity if the horses are to be trapped, handled and transported out of the Park in a way that is acceptable.
- Once the horses are trapped their removal is a serious constraint due to the rugged terrain and remoteness of the park. Horses once captured need to be moved either large distances along the river (up to 20km) or up steep fire trails to the plateau.
- Long-acting tranquilisers that have been developed for use in recently captured wild animals in Africa. These drugs have greatly reduced mortalities due to the stresses of capture and transport, and may have significant animal welfare benefits in feral horses that are being handled and transported after capture. However, the use of such drugs would not replace the need for effective and humane handling of the animals.
- The process of mustering, trapping and handling of feral horses is not without risks to the people involved, even if they are very experienced.

## *2. Chemical immobilisation*

Many species of animals can be captured by the use of immobilising drugs delivered from dart rifles, and horses are no exception. In considering this option for use in Guy Fawkes the following points need to be considered:

- These rifles have limited range (40-60 metres) and this restricts the ability of even experienced users to dart significant numbers of horses in this terrain,
- Even from helicopters it would be difficult to dart horses without many hours in the air, which would be very expensive,
- There can be a significant risk of injury to darted horses as the drugs are taking effect,
- The drugs are restricted to use by veterinarians, who should preferably have experience in wild animal capture and transport.

This method has in fact been used in Guy Fawkes with very limited success. It may be applicable if a need arose to capture a specific horse for any reason, with expense not being a major consideration. It is unlikely to be used as a primary means of capturing large numbers of horses. Once horses are captured in enclosures it may well be appropriate to use projectile syringes to administer the tranquilisers referred to above, before the horses are roped and handled.

## *3. Shooting*

Aerial culling of horses in national parks in NSW has been banned. Ground shooting may be considered to remove horses that cannot be dealt with by any other means, including emaciated, sick or injured animals. The major problem with ground shooting in this type of terrain is the difficulty in following up and dealing with wounded horses, creating a major animal welfare concern. Only experienced shooters with appropriate firearms and ammunition should ever be used.

## *4. Fertility control*

There are various forms of fertility control that have been used or are under development for use in a wide variety of species, including man. The methods currently available come down to a short list of possibilities for most species, with each varying very much in effectiveness, utility and cost as they apply to the horses in Guy Fawkes

- Surgical desexing of either males or females
- Use of contraceptive drugs in mares – usually subcutaneous implants
- Immunocontraception – the use of molecular biology technologies to immunise animals against their own sperm or eggs. A method involving horses has been used in small herds in the USA, but a major limitation in places like Guy Fawkes is the need to inject the immunising compounds into the horses.

All of these methods require that the horses be captured and handled as a part of the process – making none of them a practicable option in this herd at this time. However,

it will certainly be worth following developments in the technologies that may become available.

### *Conclusion*

The challenge in developing a practical and workable plan is to bring collective experience and knowledge to bear on the situation in Guy Fawkes River National Park for any future feral horse management program.

## Annex B

### **Conditions and Terms of Reference of a Heritage Working Party**

#### *Preamble*

A Heritage Working Party is to be formed to examine and document claims made that feral horses in GFRNP have significant heritage or historical values, sufficient to warrant their being managed on this basis. Following on from the recommendations of this Report dated 6 March 2001, this would mean that any such horses would be humanely removed from the Park so that they can be managed properly in another location.

#### *Composition*

To be effective the Heritage Working Party should have at least the following composition:

- As Chairperson a suitably qualified scientist to steer the Working Party's work and provide scientific and technical advice. The Chairperson's primary task should be to identify valid methods for the investigation of possible genetic links to horses of historical significance among feral horses in GFRNP. It is recommended that this scientist be appointed from the staff of the University of Sydney's Centre for Advanced Technologies in Animal Genetics and Reproduction (REPROGEN), whose Director is Professor Herman Raadsma,
- Four local individuals with an acknowledged involvement with and an interest in the history of the feral horses in GFRNP,
- A representative from the Waler Horse Society of Australia (WHSa),
- A member appointed by NPWS to represent the Service's knowledge and experience of these horses, and to facilitate the provision of any resources allotted to the Working Party,
- The Working Party should have the power to seek the advice of any other person who may have appropriate knowledge or experience of these horses.

#### *Resources*

The Working Party will require the allocation of resources that may be reasonably required to complete its activities. One of the first tasks of the Working Party will be to submit a budget which outlines its' anticipated requirements for funds and other resources.

### *Timelines*

The Working Party should be formed immediately, and will be required to submit a report within 6 months of its' formation. It is strongly recommended that a progress report be submitted within 3 months, with an outline of the measures being adopted to determine the heritage value of the horses. Upon submission of a final report the Working Party should be represented on any expert panel formed to determine the future management of the feral horses in GFRNP.

It must be accepted that in the event that no agreement can be reached on the heritage or other value of horses in GFRNP that the Working Party will be dissolved no later than 9 months from its establishment. There is general agreement that the feral horse population in GFRNP must not be allowed to grow again in an uncontrolled manner.

### *Conclusion*

There will be a significant opportunity for the members of this Working Party to establish a credible basis for any of the horses currently found in and near GFRNP being considered as a heritage resource. This will have to be on the basis of evidence that goes beyond statements in local oral history, and the challenge will be to put together that evidence. Whatever the outcomes of the Working Party's activities, it will then be possible to make rational decisions about the cultural value of the horses, and to factor this into the development of management plans.