

# Meeting Summary

## Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel

Thursday 27 March 2025

The Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel was formed under the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*. The panel provides advice to the Minister for the Environment or the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) on matters relating to the identification of the heritage value, and the management of, sustainable wild horse populations within Kosciuszko National Park.

The panel met at Jindabyne, with all appointed members present. Five members were reappointed for 12 months on 21 March 2025. The meeting was preceded by a site visit to the south of the park on 26 March.

### Site visit outcomes

Members provided comprehensive feedback from the site visit to the south of the park. Key observations included discussions of heritage value and visitor experience, with members noting the challenge of valuing horses when they are not visible to visitors, despite noticeable environmental impacts. Environmental impact observations highlighted significant changes to the landscape and vegetation damage from horses as well as other feral animals (in particular deer). Members discussed advanced monitoring techniques including dissolved oxygen levels, satellite imagery, and vegetation spectroscopy for assessing peatland and vegetation health.

### NPWS presentations

NPWS presented the Kosciuszko National Park Ecological Health Performance Scorecard 2022-2023. Discussion centred on identifying the most relevant indicators for horse impacts. The presentation emphasised the accountability and transparency aim of the ecological health performance program.

### NPWS update

NPWS provided a program update since the December 2024 meeting. Topics of discussion included:

- Deputy Secretary resignation
- Finalisation of rehoming administrative processes and procedures document
- Reproductive control trial feasibility study
- Legal proceedings involving RSPCA NSW and a former wild horse rehomer
- Rehabilitation of the old Coolamine passive trap site

## **2024 population survey**

Survey results and methodology were discussed, including the Minister's announcement of approximate population estimate ranges. The final report remains delayed, with more detailed information to be provided at the next meeting once the report is finalised.

Members discussed survey methodology and confidence intervals, noting potential improvements with increased sampling effort and the provision of retention area-specific estimates in survey reports.

## **2024 control outcomes**

NPWS provided an update on wild horse control operations, rehoming application status, passive trapping programs, aerial shooting operations, and carcass management. A comprehensive monitoring program examining water impacts, decomposition effects, and scavenger impacts will conclude fieldwork in May 2025.

## **Next meeting**

The panel will consider a future site visit to the north of the park, including conducting a meeting on site. Topics identified for future meetings include highway horse behaviour and safety concerns, management plan briefing presentations, control program results and area designations.