



MINUTES

PARKS AND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL

5th Meeting

TUESDAY 30 MAY 2006

8:30AM

Level 1, AXA Building - DARWIN

1. ATTENDANCE

Members

Bill Goedegebuure – Chairman
Anne-Marie Delahunt
Robert Fox
Matthew Ryan

Paula Elmer – Executive Officer
Penelope Figgis
Mick Jerram

Apologies:

Gordon Duff
Jayne Weepers

Djawa Yunupingu

Observers

David Ritchie – CEO, DNRETA (attended afternoon session)
Bill Binns – Director Park Management, DNRETA
Greg Leach – Director Biodiversity Conservation, DNRETA

Presenters

Shoanne Labowitch, Fisheries Group, Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mines
Tony Bowland, Biodiversity Conservation, DNRETA

Meeting opened at 8:30am.

The Chairman welcomed Anne-Marie Delahunt to the Council. Anne-Marie is Assistant Secretary, Parks Australia North. Her team is responsible for the joint management of Kakadu and Uluru Kata Tjuka National Parks, as well as the Indian Ocean Territory Parks at Christmas Island and Cocos. Anne-Marie has been working in the field of conservation for over 20 years in areas of forest conservation, international wildlife issues, the national threatened species programs and environmental impact assessment. It is clear that Anne-Marie has a lot to offer to this Council and we look forward to Anne-Marie's contribution to the issues that are dealt with. The Chairman extended his thanks to Peter Wellings for his valuable contribution on Council and wished him well in his new role with the Department of Chief Minister.

The Chairman thanked Bob Fox for chairing the last Council meeting on his behalf due to illness and thanked Council for their get well wishes.

The Chairman acknowledged the damage caused at Maningrida by Cyclone Monica and advised that Matthew Ryan would talk further on this matter in general business.

The Chairman announced Jayne Weepers had a baby girl a few weeks ago and mother and daughter were doing well. Council passed on their best wishes to Jayne with motherhood.

An article in the Sunday Territorian dated 28/5/06 advised the International Ranger Federation is hosting a congress in Scotland next month which is aimed at furthering the professional standards of Rangers throughout the world. Djawa Yunupingu is attending in his capacity as Director of Dhimurru Land Management Corporation. Also attending is Kristen Appel who is Senior District Ranger with Darwin Parks and also the Australian Ranger Federation treasurer and Phil Wise Senior Ranger at Nhulunbuy who works at the Dhimurru Protected area. It is pleasing to see that this is yet a further effort to learn more about caring for land and set professional standards. It is even more pleasing to see that one of our members Djawa is attending. We wish Djawa well and maybe Djawa can give us a presentation on the Congress at a future Council meeting.

The Chairman announced that the Council has now gone live on the DNRETA Parks and Wildlife website and members photos and details, terms of reference, role and functions and minutes can be viewed at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/parks/index.html>

A copy of the draft amended Dingo Management Program which now incorporates the Council's recommendations summarised in an addendum was handed out for members information. This item was discussed under management plans/programs in general business.

The Chairman advised a member had made an enquiry at a previous meeting with regards to personal insurance/liability. The Chairman advised the matter is in hand with the Chief Executive. The matter is being researched and Council will be informed at a future meeting.

Action: Executive Officer to follow up on outcome of this matter and ensure members are briefed at a future meeting.

2. PRESENTATIONS

2.1 Invasive Species Threat to Australia – Aquatic (*Black Striped Mussel*) by Shoanne Labowitch

Shoanne provided an overview on the Invasive Species - Aquatic presentation which was presented earlier this year to the Sessional Committee for the Eradication and Management of Invasive Species in NT.

Shoanne highlighted the strategies in place to minimise the only declared aquatic species under the *NT Fisheries Act* and the story behind the discovery of the massive infestations of the *Black Striped Mussel* at Cullen Bay on 27/3/99. Three marinas were quarantined and chemical treatment undertaken within a period of a month, involving in excess of 250 personnel and in excess

of \$2.2 million. In response to the outbreak, an Aquatic Pest Management team was established within the Fisheries Department, with the role of monitoring and responding to the presence of invasive exotic species within the NT. For more information on aquatic species, please visit the Fisheries website at

<http://www.nt.gov.au/dpifm/Fisheries/index.cfm?header=Aquatic%20Pests>

Recommendation: Penny Figgis recommended that Council should highlight in our submission to the Sessional Committee the importance of:

- the pearling industry partnership in monitoring;
- the potential role for Indigenous land and sea ranger groups to be involved in monitoring vessels entering their country; and
- the need for the NT Government to take the matter of lack of funding up with the Commonwealth Government.

Action: Executive Officer to forward members a copy of today's presentation and a copy of the Fisheries poster which highlights community awareness of aquatic pests.

Resolution No. 1: The Council resolved that Bill Binns should take these issues discussed today to the Fishing Access Working Group of the Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mines to ensure more public consultation and awareness.

Resolution No. 2: The Council noted today's presentation and highlighted:

1. the importance of the strong potential role for Indigenous land and sea ranger groups to be involved in monitoring vessels entering their country; and
2. emphasised that consistent funding was the critical need for this program to succeed.

2.2 Invasive Species Threat to Australia – Feral Animals by Dr Tony Bowland

Tony provided an overview on Invasive Species – Feral Animals and highlighted the eight criteria set in place for assessing the impact of vertebrate pests. Tony advised that 18 mammal species and 51 bird species have been declared as feral species under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Act*, however, not all these declared species are pests. A list of vertebrate pest species was compiled for the Northern Territory from a national list and 16 mammals, three birds, and one amphibian were extracted from the national list.

In conclusion Tony stated that the major culprits have been identified. The bioregions under greatest stress have been identified. The information provided today is critical in forming the development of a long term Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy.

The Council noted with concern that the analysis showed up the level of stress compared across the bioregions.

Resolution: The Council commends the framework and recommend that Government consider its use in future directions. The Council resolved that the framework should be conveyed to the NT Natural Resource Management Board to ensure integration into their priority setting.

2.3 Feral Animal Strategy by Dr Tony Bowland

Tony provided an overview on DNRETA's Vertebrate Pest Management Strategy for the NT and advised that a 10 year strategy was in place. Tony highlighted the main principles underpinning the management of vertebrate pests and the legislation that manages the control of feral animals. Tony advised about 80 introduced animal species have established significant wild populations on mainland Australia.

Tony advised the Vertebrate Pest Committee is next to be chaired by the NT and that the chair rotates through the states and territories every three years.

Tony alerted Council to the shortage of trained platform shooters within the NT needed to target feral animals and advised negotiations are in place with a registered training organisation to regulate and train up platform shooters. The Council noted progress on this matter and supported the need for more trained platform shooters.

Chapter 9 of the Feral Animal Strategy was handed out to members with Tony asking Council views 'was this Strategy a duplication or complementation of the Dingo Management Plan?'

Resolution No. 1: The Council noted there is potential for duplication between the Strategy and Management Program and recommended that effort be made to streamline and 'nest' these documents. Council noted that there is a significant lack of funding and human resources available to fully implement the requirements of legislation. Council also noted that the Feral Animal Strategy is underway and has underscored the serious challenges to biodiversity posed by feral animals.

Resolution No. 2: The Council resolved that this Strategy was a work in progress and noted the presentation. It was recommended the Chairman identifies these issues discussed for possible presentation to the Sessional Committee and that the Chief Executive could also raise these issues at a national level at the Parks Heads of Agencies meetings.

Anne-Marie Delahunt advised this matter could also be submitted to the Enquiry into National Parks as another avenue.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

3.1 Minutes / Action of Meeting 21 February 2006

The Minutes and Actions of the 4th Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council Meeting were accepted. The following actions have now been resolved.

Action arising from the 3rd Meeting was to forward members a copy of the 'Consultants Brief on Nitmiluk National Park – Commercial Development Plan' and a copy was presented today for information. Note this report is to be treated as 'Council-in-confidence'.

Action: Executive Officer to forward copy of report to members not present today.

Action arising from the 4th Meeting was to invite a representative from the tourist industry at a future meeting to discuss the potential to become actively involved in building public awareness and identifying new weed infestations on the field. As the Chairman was not at 4th Meeting he asked Council if the representative would be from the NT Tourist Association or a tourist operator. As this recommendation was put forward by Mick Jerram, he further clarified the matter by advising that tour operators in the field could be the conduit for education out on the ground and therefore recommended a representative from the tour operating industry be invited.

Resolution No. 1: The Council resolved that rather than invite a representative from the tour operating industry, the introduction of public awareness issues into invasive species, in particular weeds, be handed over to Parks and Wildlife Service for examination on how the tourist operators can become actively involved.

Resolution No. 2: The Council invite a representative from Tourism NT (John Coleman was suggested) to address Council on their views on how tourist operators can become involved and where they saw parks positioned in the industry and what their thoughts were for the future and where they saw infrastructure being developed on parks.

3.2 List of outward correspondence

The list of outward correspondence since the last Meeting was viewed and noted.

3.3 Guidelines for endorsement of Departmental Plans of Management and Management Programs

At the 4th Meeting the Chief Executive advised that plans of management for each park will be prepared and signed off by the Commission, with Council providing independent advice to the Commission. The Executive Officer was to liaise with Parks and Wildlife to develop a set of guidelines to forward to Council.

Council were presented with a paper advising that Parks and Wildlife have updated its operational guidelines to incorporate Council's input into the process of endorsing plans of management/management programs.

Resolution: The Council endorsed the process for the endorsement of plans of management/management programs as outlined herewith:

- **Council will be given an information paper advising that the plan/program has been developed and has been released for public**

comment. (Council members will have the opportunity to provide comments as individuals during the public consultation phase).

- **Once the public consultation period ends and comments incorporated into plan/program as appropriate, the amended plan/program will be tabled at a Council meeting for Council endorsement.**
- **The Council (through the Chairman) will advise the Director of Parks and Wildlife of endorsement or otherwise. The plan/program will then be submitted to the Parks and Wildlife Commission, taking into account any recommendations made by Council.**

Additionally, a copy of the draft amended Dingo Management Plan which now incorporates the Council's recommendations summarised in an addendum was handed out for members information.

Action: Executive Officer to forward copy of the amended Plan to members not present today.

Recommendation: Council have the opportunity to review this Plan out-of-session and an opportunity to provide any further comments to the Chief Executive and Chairman within two weeks of today's meeting.

3.4 Review Members Terms of Reference

As per guidelines of the Members Handbook, the Terms of Reference for Council are to be reviewed by the Council itself at the end of our first 12 months. The review period for Council's first 12 months is May 2006. The Council agreed to accept the Terms of Reference in its present form and no amendments were necessary.

Resolution: The Council resolved to accept the currently approved interim Terms of Reference to be incorporated in the Members Handbook as final.

Action: Executive Officer to advise Minister of Council's resolution.

3.5 Update on National Landscapes Initiative by David Ritchie

At the 4th Meeting a paper from the Australian Government, Director of National Parks titled 'National Landscapes Initiative' was tabled for information and David Ritchie advised he would provide an update on this topic at our next meeting.

David Ritchie recently met with the National Heads of Parks and advised the term "National Landscapes" was not endorsed by all jurisdictions and many issues still need to be addressed.

Penny Figgis advised that a National Reference Group has recently been formed on National Landscapes. Penny has been nominated as a member, along with representatives from Tourism Australia, Tourist Transport Forum and from Parks Australia. Penny attended the first meeting of this Group on 29/05/06 and gave a brief overview of the outcomes of this meeting.

The Council noted the information provided in these updates.

4. PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Park Management Operational Report by Bill Binns

Bill Binns provided an overview on the key issues of Park Management since the last Meeting.

- Park Management's Strategic Plan, Risk Management Plan, Business Plan and Investment Strategy are now being reviewed in line with the DNRETA Strategic Plan. Park Management is in the process of finalising its Strategic Plan and is a month away from completion and ready to go back out into parks for incorporation into business plans and projects.
- The Cabinet Budget Sub Committee Determination required Parks and Wildlife to review facilities to determine appropriate management models and operating arrangements. Manton Dam, Howard Springs Nature Park and Berry Springs Nature Park were considered as possible areas that management and operation could be outsourced, but again, these areas are managed as part of a larger district and savings would be minimal.
- Rehabilitation of Howard Springs Nature Park - problems with water quality and flow of water have all been fixed up and the spring is now open for swimming. The water quality will again be affected next wet season due to the fact that it is a man made swimming hole.
- Lake Leanyer Recreation Park – still looking at outsourcing the management of the Park facility and a proposal to place it out to public tender. In the short term upgrade of facilities i.e. casualty room have been placed on the next capital works program.
- Berry Springs Nature Park – the concept proposal for the Park to be integrated into the Territory Wildlife Park has merit, however, there are issues associated with sacred sites and access across Berry Creek.
- Manton Dam - provides an important outlet close to Darwin for water based recreation. Park Management is trying to discourage swimming as the shallow swimming areas are overgrown with water plants. Water skiing activities, pleasure boating and other water based recreational activities are encouraged. Restrictions on the use of herbicides by Power and Water limit the effectiveness of weed control that is done. Manton Dam is the reserve water source for the Darwin area and consequently cannot be polluted in any way. This places a number of restrictions on the management of the area. The dam is owned by Power and Water and managed under agreement by Parks and Wildlife.
- David Ritchie drew Council's attention to increasing public and government expectations regarding problems from urban parks. It was noted that there was potential for these increased expectations translating into increased costs which could reduce resources to be applied effectively in the Park Estate.

- Channel Point Coastal Reserve – road access to boat ramp is completed. Works on visitation and infrastructure is out to tender. The area will be managed by the Litchfield Parks district.
- Expansion of West MacDonnell National Park – A Cabinet Submission recommending the inclusion of the eastern Alice Valley area of Owen Springs Reserve into the West MacDonnell National Park has been prepared. Comments have been received from other Agencies and the finalised Submission approved for lodgement by the Minister to forward to Cabinet.
- Mataranka – eradication of bats by way of sprinkler system installed high in the canopy appears to have worked and there has been a large decrease in bats. Downside on this system is flooding in the area. Recovery works are in progress. Currently negotiations are underway with the owners of Mataranka Homestead regarding the option of further ablution block at the homestead. Parks and Wildlife are also investigating the options of purchasing a transportable toilet block to ease the load at peak times.
- An ‘Accredited Tour Operator System’ was introduced on 1 April and appears to have been accepted by the tourist industry. Only one complaint has been forwarded to the Minister.

4.2 Update Invasive Species Threat to Australia – Weeds by Alice Beilby

At the 4th Meeting, Ms Beilby delivered a presentation on ‘Weeds - Invasive Species Threat to Australia’ and Council requested to be updated on this topic at future meetings. Council noted the information paper provided today.

4.3 Update NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan

At previous meetings Council have requested to be kept updated on the status of the NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan. Council noted the update provided today.

Resolution: This item is to be kept on future agendas until the Masterplan is endorsed by Cabinet and Council can discuss options of how we can assist its progress. If Cabinet approval occurs prior to next meeting, the Chairman will examine the next action to be taken in conjunction with members.

4.4 Update Recreational Hunting on Reserves

At previous meetings Council have requested to be kept updated on the status of recreational hunting on reserves. Council noted the update provided today and item will be kept on future agendas.

Action: Executive Officer to keep item on future agendas.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Cyclone Monica - Maningrida

Matthew highlighted the issues resulting from the impact of Cyclone Monica in late April at Maningrida and the destruction of vegetation and wildlife. Matthew

advised there was a need for expert advice on regeneration of revegetation. Matthew was encouraged to contact Greg Leach at Parks and Wildlife on this matter.

5.2 *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* – delegation of powers

Bill Binns advised the Chief Executive, as Director of Parks and Wildlife Commission, has delegated his powers under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* to the Director of Parks having control of 'parks' and the Director of Wildlife (Biodiversity Conservation) having control of 'wildlife', rather than the Director of Parks and Wildlife Commission as the sole responsibility.

6. NEXT MEETING

Penny Figgis offered to deliver her presentation on the Major Directions in Parks that Penny recently presented at the National Parks Forum and Bill Binns recommended his Regional Parks Managers attend for this presentation. The Chairman agreed to their attendance at this meeting.

The next meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday 15 August 2006.

Meeting closed at 4:15pm