



MINUTES

PARKS AND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL

8th Meeting

THURSDAY 8 MARCH 2007
8:30AM
Level 1, AXA Building - DARWIN

1. ATTENDANCE

Members

Bill Goedegebuure – Chairman	Paula Elmer – Executive Officer
Anne-Marie Delahunt	Robert Fox
Mick Jerram	Matthew Ryan
Jayne Weepers (via tele-conference)	Djawa Yunupingu

Apologies

Penelope Figgis (meeting commitments in Sydney)
David Garnett (interstate meeting commitments)

Official Observers

David Ritchie	CE, DNRETA (attended morning session)
Graham Phelps	Executive Director Parks, DNRETA
Greg Leach	Executive Director Biodiversity Conservation, DNRETA

Guests

Dave West	Director Northern Region Parks, DNRETA (attended part morning)
Richard Sellers	Executive Director, Minerals and Energy, Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (attended McArthur River Mine Open Cut briefing)

Meeting opened at 8:50am.

The Chairman welcomed members and observers and advised Jayne Weepers will link up via tele-conference for the Tiwi Islands Forestry Project and McArthur River Mine items.

The Chairman announced that the Minister has appointed Dr David Garnett as a member of Council, following a vacancy created by Professor Gordon Duff.

2. PRESENTATION

2.1 Functions NT Firearms Council

Bob Fox was recently appointed President of the NT Firearms Council (NTFC) and provided a brief overview on their functions and membership.

The NTFC is represented by 14,000 registered firearms holders which includes; licensed gun dealers and armourers, members from the NT Professional Hunters Association, sporting shooting clubs, and professional hunters. The NTFC is not an activist or a lobbyist body. Bob stated the NTFC has, in part, a parallel function to this Council with respect to the *Firearms Act*. Bob advised the NTFC main funding source is from the Office of Sport and Recreation, who provides an annual budget of \$64,000.

David Ritchie commented that there had been problems in the past which he hoped would be remedied. Dave West advised that Parks and Wildlife has a good relationship with the NTFC and are being proactive with regards to allowing access to shooters on hunting reserves.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

3.1 Minutes / Actions of Meeting, 22 November 2006

The minutes and actions of the 7th Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council meeting were accepted.

An action arising from last meeting was for the Chairman to discuss with DNRETA the option of Council being able to view previous Plans of Management (PoM) and Management Programs (MP). Chairman advised he had discussed this option with Graham Phelps. Graham advised Park Planners are now standardising PoM so they are easier to follow and will take on board with the planning team the option of including an addendum sheet of changes in future PoM. Greg Leach advised he will adopt a similar process for MP and liaise with the Planners.

3.2 List of despatched correspondence

The list of despatched correspondence since the last meeting was noted.

Greg Leach advised the Dingo Management Plan has been accepted by the Administrator. The next step is for the Minister to table the Plan at the next Legislative Assembly Sittings enabling the Plan to come into operation.

3.3 McArthur River Mine Open Cut Project

Richard Sellers, Executive Director, Minerals and Energy was invited to brief Council on the specific conditions relating to the risks to the environment that were identified by the Minister for Environment and how these risks will be managed for the life of the mine through the Mine Management Plan (MMP).

Richard provided a comprehensive briefing on how these conditions will be managed and advised that the life of the mine was 25 years.

Richard advised that the MMP was confidential at the moment, however, is going through 'Freedom of Information' process and will be available shortly under FOI as commercial-in-confidence. The draft Environmental Impact Statement by the NT Environment Protection Agency can be viewed on the web at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/assessment/register/mcarthur/draft.html>

Richard advised his Department are in the process of tendering for an independent group to monitor and address any environmental concerns with the mine operator, Xstrata and report back to his Department and the community.

Comments provided by David Garnett on this item were distributed and noted.

Resolution: Council requested to be updated on this Project and invited Richard Sellers to attend a future meeting when further information is available.

3.4 Tiwi Islands Forestry Project

A briefing paper on status of the Tiwi Islands Forestry Project by Greg Leach was noted. David Ritchie advised he recently visited the Islands with the Minister for Environment and representatives from Great Southern (forestry operators) to view the areas breached. David advised the extent of breaches have been thoroughly documented by Commonwealth investigators from the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) who recently visited the Project area. DEH investigators appeared to accept that there have been a number of significant breaches to the approvals granted under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Investigations are continuing. Great Southern has accepted they have breached conditions of their Agreement. The investigations report from DEH is pending.

Resolution: Council requested to be kept updated on this Project at future meetings.

3.5 Update NT NAP and NHT Investment Guidelines for Three Year Investment Strategies 2004/05 to 2006/07

A briefing paper on status of the NT NAP and NHT Investment Guidelines was noted. David Ritchie advised the draft final strategy will be settled at a Natural Resource Management Board meeting on 9 March 2007 and then forwarded to the Steering Committee.

Resolution: No further involvement for Council at this stage, however, Council will have a role in the review later in the year. Executive Officer will advise Council accordingly.

3.6 Draft Displaced Wildlife Policy

At the last meeting, Council endorsed the Policy 'in principle' with recommended changes and requested the revised Policy be placed before Council again for final endorsement.

The Parks and Wildlife Service have since updated this Policy to incorporate Council's recommendations and the title has been amended to better reflect the intent of the Policy.

Resolution: Council endorsed the Displaced Wildlife Policy with no comment.

3.7 Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve Plan of Management

The Tnorala Conservation Reserve Plan of Management has been amended to empower the Conservation Land Corporation to grant the sub lease to the pipeline consortium (as detailed in the agenda paper). The Plan is in its tenth year of operation. It has been reviewed as appropriate and it is considered it will continue to provide adequate guidance for the Reserve's management for several more years. It is considered not necessary to rewrite the Plan at this

time. There is no legislative requirement to seek public comment for minor amendments to Plans of Management.

Comments provided by David Garnett on this item were distributed and noted. David's comment on the error in the spelling of *Xanthorrhoea Thorntonii* will be forwarded to Parks and Wildlife for correction.

The Chairman advised Council's role today was to endorse the amendment only, not the whole Plan.

Resolution: Council endorsed the amendment to Tnorala (Gosse Bluff) Conservation Reserve Plan of Management with no comment.

3.8 Park Management Operational Report

Graham Phelps and Dave West briefed Council on current key issues within the Park's Division and highlighted the following items:

Litchfield National Park – recent heavy monsoonal rains have caused intensive flooding in the Park, with a number of tourists being stranded. There has been extensive damage to roads and tracks, with main roads into the Park being closed. Additionally, the rains have inundated Fogg Dam and Mary River Ranger Stations and they are currently closed until water subsides.

Channel Point Coastal Reserve – ongoing works continuing on the upgrade of the boat ramp which is due to open later this year.

Howard Springs Nature Park Draft Plan of Management – public comments closed on 9 February 2007 with 13 submissions received.

Visitor Monitoring Program on Parks – Parks and Wildlife are reviewing their processes and options to better capture visitor numbers.

Cultural Heritage Management – Parks and Wildlife are currently preparing a policy document which will provide evidence on management of Indigenous and non-Indigenous heritage sites.

Young Achievers Awards – Congratulations to Rangers Peter McDonald from Watarrka and Sam Washusen from Nathan River who are finalists.

Lake Leanyer Recreational Park - due to a recent aggravated assault of a ranger at this Park, Parks and Wildlife are reviewing procedures and protocol in dealing with these types of incidents and training will be arranged for rangers.

West MacDonnell Visitor Facilities – construction is now underway and completion is anticipated for June 2007.

3.9 Renewal of Membership

Council's term of membership is for a two year appointment. Membership officially expired on 31 January 2007, however, acceptance of appointment didn't take place until April 2005, therefore, the full two year membership will expire on 30 April 2007. In order to have Council lawfully act in their role, it is necessary for renewal of appointments to be made prior to April 2007. An 'Expression of Interest' form is included in agenda papers.

Action: It is recommended that members indicate whether or not they wish to review membership of Council and forward their 'Expression of Interest' to the Executive Officer. The Department will then proceed to arrange a Ministerial appointment.

4. PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Update NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan

A briefing paper on the current status of the Masterplan by Stuart Gold was noted. David Ritchie advised that Graham Phelps has identified the need for increased funding for Indigenous ranger groups and this has recently been identified in a Budget Cabinet Submission.

Action: Item to stay on agenda and Executive Officer to arrange for an update at next meeting.

4.2 Update Recreational Hunting on Reserves

A briefing paper on the current season of recreational hunting on reserves by Keith Saalfeld was noted.

4.3 Outcomes on Inquiry into Invasive Species and Management Programs

A briefing paper on the current status on Inquiry into Invasive Species and Management Programs was noted.

Action: Executive Officer to forward a copy of the Sessional Committee's final report to Members' once tabled at the Legislative Assembly.

4.4 Profile Marine Biodiversity Group

A briefing paper on the profile of the Marine Biodiversity Group was noted.

4.5 Members' Personal Insurance

A briefing paper on Members' personal insurance was noted.

4.6 News Items

A briefing paper on current Parks and Wildlife news items was noted.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Parks Australia

Anne-Marie Delahunt advised that Parks Australia which is located in the Department of Environment and Heritage has recently changed their title and is now the Department of Environment and Water Resources. The Federal Minister is Malcolm Turnbull and Assistant Minister is John Cobb.

Anne-Marie advised the Kakadu National Park Management Plan came in to force on 31 January 2007 and will forward a copy to the Executive Officer for distribution to members.

Action: Anne-Marie Delahunt to forward a copy of the Kakadu National Park Management Plan to Executive Officer.

5.2 New Wildlife Management Programs/Policies

Greg Leach advised his Division is currently drafting new wildlife management programs/policies for the following: Commercial Bush Tucker Industry, Macropods in Central Australia, Dugongs and the Freshwater Crocodile. It is anticipated these documents will be forwarded to Council over the next few meetings.

1:30pm – 3:00pm FIELD TRIP HOWARD SPRINGS NATURE PARK

The Council travelled to Howard Springs Nature Park where Chief District Ranger, Dal Hartley and Senior District Ranger, Paul Cawood provided a brief background on the Park. Jacqui Hindmarsh, Senior Park Planner provided an overview of key issues arising from the Howard Springs Nature Park Plan of Management.

6. NEXT MEETING

The Chairman provided a proposed itinerary for next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 29, Wednesday 30 and Thursday 31 May in Katherine.

Action: Members to provide an indication of their availability to attend next meeting to assist the Executive Officer with planning.

Meeting closed at 3:00pm after field trip.