



MINUTES
PARKS AND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL
9th Meeting

WEDNESDAY 30 MAY 2007
9:00AM
Conference Room, Nitmiluk Centre - Katherine

1. ATTENDANCE

Members

Bill Goedegebuure – Chairman	Paula Elmer – Executive Officer
Penelope Figgis	David Garnett
Matthew Ryan	Jayne Weepers
Djawa Yunupingu	

Apologies

Anne-Marie Delahunt (Commonwealth meeting in Darwin)
Robert Fox (ACTA meeting Wagga Wagga)
Mick Jerram (interstate National Tourism meeting)
Greg Leach (International Conference in the Netherlands)
John de Koning - Director Katherine Region (Management Forum in Darwin)
Sarah Kerin - Chief District Ranger Nitmiluk (Accompanying Minister to Mataranka)

Official Participants

David Ritchie	Chief Executive
Graham Phelps	Executive Director Parks
Anne Walters	Senior Scientist – Wildlife Management (Proxy - Greg Leach)

Guests

Andrew Davies	Senior Park Ranger Nitmiluk (attended morning)
Carol Kinnaird	Senior Planning Officer, Parks Katherine (attended morning)
Norm Greenfield	Park Ranger Nitmiluk (attended morning)

Meeting opened at 9:30am.

The Chairman welcomed members, official participants and guests to our first regional meeting. The Chairman acknowledged the attendance of Geoffrey Walla and Jane Rungu, Traditional Owners of Nitmiluk National Park, who were present for the morning presentations. The Chairman thanked them for welcoming Council to their country.

The Chairman acknowledged that the Minister has re-appointment him as Chairman and has re-appointed all members for another two year term on Council.

Comments provided by Bob Fox on agenda items were noted by members and taken into consideration at the relevant agenda items.

The Chairman advised members that compilation of the 2006/07 Annual Report for Council will take place in June and if Members have any contributions or suggestions please forward to Executive Officer.

2. PRESENTATIONS

2.1 Overview of Parks Division Katherine

Carol Kinnaird provided an overview on the Parks Division Katherine. Carol advised that the Katherine Region was divided into three main parks districts, the VRD, Gulf and Nitmiluk, totalling 33 million hectares, of which 3 million hectares are managed as protected areas. The presentation then went on to provide details of the District and Parks Division's activities therein.

Action: Executive Officer to forward a copy of presentation to members.

2.2 Overview of Dhimurru Land Management Corporation and Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation

Djawa Yunupingu and Matthew Ryan delivered a presentation on the role of their respective organisations and their strong involvement in joint management arrangements.

Djawa advised Dhimurru employ 10 rangers under CDEP funding.

Matthew advised Bawinanga employ 20 rangers under CDEP funding and briefly highlighted the current land and sea management activities of men and women rangers. Matthew also highlighted Bawinanga's enterprise initiatives and plans for the next 5 years.

Resolution No. 1: That the Council having been briefed on the progress of developing joint management in the Katherine region wishes to convey to Government through the Minister for Parks and Wildlife, its satisfaction that impressive work is being done by all parties and good progress is being made. The Council congratulates Traditional Owners, Indigenous communities and the Parks and Wildlife Service staff involved in their commitment to the process and to two-way learning.

Resolution No. 2: That the Council express its strong support to both Federal (Ministers' Mal Brough and Malcolm Turnbull) and Territory (Minister Marion Scrymgour) Governments for programmes which support Indigenous land and sea management.

Such management is particularly critical in remote Australia for both biodiversity conservation and bio-security. It also generates positive cultural and social outcomes within community.

The Council acknowledges recent increases in funding, but recommends further boosts to funding and an emphasis be placed on seeking permanent salaried jobs for Indigenous people in this vital sector.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

3.1 Minutes / Actions of Meeting 8th March 2007

The minutes and actions of the 8th Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council meeting were accepted.

3.2 List of despatched correspondence

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

3.3 McArthur River Mine Open Cut Project

A briefing paper on the status of the McArthur River Mine Open Cut Project by Richard Sellers, Executive Director, Minerals and Energy was noted.

David Ritchie outlined what the points were in the legal challenges to the approval for the project and the legislation put in place by the NT Government to allow the project to continue.

Resolution: Council requested to be kept updated on the progress.

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 that the Commonwealth is yet to come back to the NT Government with their investigation report in regards to alleged serious breaches by the plantation operators. David advised that Great Southern Plantations have not lodged a Notice of Intent for the proposed expansion of the forestry operations as yet.

The Council consider these alleged breaches to be serious and such actions should be discouraged to prevent similar occurrences.

Resolution: Council requested to be kept updated on the progress.

3.5 Park Management Operational Report

A briefing paper on the 'Healthy Country/Healthy People Schedule' to the Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs by Graham Phelps was noted.

Graham further briefed Council on current key issues within the Park's Division. The briefing included reference to the fact that to date the Schedule 1 of Parks and Reserves (Framework for the Future) has not been dealt with by the Commonwealth and it is now unlikely to be tabled during the winter Sittings of Federal Parliament. Therefore, the issue can not be advanced. In view of this action it is proposed to bring forward the Parks and Reserves over which Park Freehold title is to be granted under Schedule 2 of the Act. The areas listed under Schedule 2 are:

- Dulcie Range National Park
- Kuyunba Conservation Reserve
- Native Gap Conservation Reserve
- Watarrka National Park

It would have been desirable to enact both Schedules simultaneously, but in view of the delay by the Commonwealth Schedule 2 is proposed to be dealt with first.

Resolution No. 1: Council resolved that the Chairman write to the Minister for Parks and Wildlife requesting her to urge the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs to act immediately to schedule those Parks that are to be granted ALRA title as part of the implementation of joint management arrangements in the Northern Territory.

Resolution No. 2: Council resolved that the Chairman write to the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs urging him to act immediately to schedule those Parks that are to be granted ALRA title as part of the implementation of joint managements arrangements in the Northern Territory.

Resolution No. 3: The Council welcomes the intention of the Northern Territory Government to grant Parks Freehold title to the agreed four parks as soon as possible.

Howard Springs Plan of Management – public consultation period has closed and 14 submissions received. Parks and Wildlife have viewed the National Guidelines for Recreational Waters and it has been established that Howard Springs Nature Park has never met with these guidelines. The Plan will now be held off for approximately 12 months while further research is conducted with regards to health management for safe swimming.

3.6 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 by Brent Williams was noted.

Resolution: Council requested to be kept updated on the progress and a copy of the final Regional Investment Strategy to be forwarded to members when received from the NRM Board.

3.7 Overview Joint Management for Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park

Andrew Davies provided an overview on the joint management arrangements in place for the management of Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park. This presentation was brought forward to the morning whilst the Traditional Owners of Nitmiluk were present.

Andrew advised that Nitmiluk was declared a National Park in 1969 and joint management arrangements have been in place since 1989 between the Jawoyn Association and Parks and Wildlife. There will be a review of joint management arrangements later this year.

Andrew briefly highlighted the role and functions of the Nitmiluk Board, advising the Board was chaired by John Ah Kit and consisted of 13 members, of which 8 members were Jawoyn people.

3.8 A Way Forwarding on Developing a Living Rivers Program for the Northern Territory

'A Way Forwarding on Developing a Living Rivers Program for the Northern Territory' is co-authored by World Wide Fund (WWF) Australia and the Environment Centre NT. Dr Stuart Blanch, WWF, was invited to address Council on tropical rivers, however, due to the meeting being held in Katherine, Dr Blanch was unable to attend.

Penny Figgis suggested this item be placed on the agenda of Council for information to flag that the Northern Territory has some of the most pristine waters on earth and the importance of conserving our rivers systems.

A briefing paper by Andrew Buick, Senior Policy Advisor, DNRETA, who has been tasked to develop the 'Living Rivers' initiative was noted.

Resolution: Council agreed to defer this item to its next meeting in Darwin and Dr Blanch to be invited to address Council on tropical rivers.

3.9 Flying Fox Policy

It was noted that no policy currently exists for the management of flying foxes in urban areas. Proposed activities in relation to the flying fox in the near future would benefit from clear departmental policy on this protected species therefore, the attached policy has been prepared by Parks and Wildlife. Parks and Wildlife seek the endorsement of Council, prior to the policy being forwarded to the Commission for approval. Dr Anne Walters delivered a presentation on the flying foxes outlining the environmental and cultural values, ecology and threats to bats.

A discussion took place and Council suggested various amendments be incorporated into this Policy prior to being adopted.

Resolution No. 1: Council have not adopted the Policy in its current form, amendments have been suggested for Dr Walters to assist her in redrafting a Policy. When completed the amended Policy to be circulated to Council out of session for endorsement.

Resolution No. 2: Council requested Parks and Wildlife prepare an overall review of policies relating to the management of wildlife where there are adverse interactions with people.

3.10 Tourism Experiences on NT Parks

Penny Figgis provided a briefing paper of extracts from a Tourism Task Force Research Report published in 2004 called "A Natural Partnership: Making National Parks a Tourism Priority - June 2004" for members information.

Graham Phelps briefly addressed how NT Parks approach visitor needs in concentrated areas and visitor experiences referencing Nitmiluk Park and advised that Park's practices align with the statements outlined in the extracts.

4. PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

4.1 Update NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan

A briefing paper on the status of the Masterplan by Stuart Gold was noted. It was noted that the Masterplan is currently with the Minister seeking permission to proceed to Cabinet for final Government endorsement. Once the document is endorsed by Cabinet it will be printed. A copy of the new look Masterplan was available for viewing at the meeting.

Action: Executive Officer to forward a copy of the Masterplan to members when endorsed by Cabinet.

Resolution: Council have requested to be kept informed on the status.

4.2 Invasive Species - Weeds

A briefing paper on the status of weed management by Alice Beilby was noted.

4.3 Dingo Management Plan 2006-2011

It was noted that the Management Plan for the Dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) in the Northern Territory 2006-2011 has been approved by the Administrator of the Northern Territory.

4.6 News Items

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

6. NEXT MEETING

The Chairman provided a proposed itinerary for next meeting scheduled for Tuesday 21, Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 August in Alice Springs.

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

Suggested item for the next meeting:

- a presentation from the Central Land Council on key issues they are dealing with.

The following topics:

- briefing on West Arnhem Land Fire Management Program
- briefing on Climate change

to be placed on agenda of a future meeting.

Action: Members to forward any suggested items for next meeting to Executive Officer.

Meeting closed at 4:00pm.