



## MINUTES

### PARKS AND WILDLIFE ADVISORY COUNCIL

#### 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting

WEDNESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2007

8:30AM

Conference Room, Darwin Plaza – Darwin

#### 1. ATTENDANCE

##### Members

Bill Goedegebuure – Chairman  
Anne-Marie Delahunt  
Robert Fox  
Mick Jerram  
Jayne Weepers

Paula Elmer – Executive Officer  
Penelope Figgis  
David Garnett  
Matthew Ryan  
Djawa Yunupingu

##### Apologies

Greg Leach                      Executive Director, Biodiversity Conservation  
Stuart Gold                     Senior Policy Advisor  
Richard Sellers                Executive Director, Minerals and Energy  
Brian Hearne                  General Manager, MRM

##### Official Participants

David Ritchie                  Chief Executive  
Graham Phelps                Executive Director, Parks  
Tony Bowland                 Principal Scientist, proxy for Greg Leach

##### Guests

Stuart Blanch                  Northern Landscapes Manager, World Wide Fund Australia  
(attended for presentation only)

Meeting opened at 8:30am.

The Chairman welcomed the Hon Delia Lawrie, Minister for Parks and Wildlife to the meeting and thanked the Minister for taking the time out of her busy schedule to attend. The Chairman welcomed members and official participants. The Minister attended the meeting for an hour and spoke to Council on a number of key issues which are noted under relevant agenda item.

David Ritchie presented members with a complimentary copy of the threatened species publication 'Lost from our Landscape'.

## **2. PRESENTATIONS**

### **2.1 NT Parks and Conservation Masterplan**

In the absence of Stuart Gold, David Ritchie and Graham Phelps briefed the Council on the Masterplan advising there has been little progress since the last meeting as the Department was awaiting Cabinet's approval.

The Minister spoke briefly on the Masterplan and the importance of obtaining a commitment from the Chief Minister in signing off on the Masterplan. The Minister advised she was meeting with the Chief Minister shortly in preparation for the Masterplan to be placed before Cabinet early next year.

Penny Figgis expressed her appreciation to the Minister for the efforts of Parks and Wildlife in producing such an excellent Masterplan.

**Resolution: Council requested Stuart Gold to update the Masterplan's Implementation Schedule for February 2008 Meeting.**

### **2.2 Tropical Rivers – "A Way Forward in Developing a Living Rivers Program for the NT"**

"A Way Forward on Developing a Living Rivers Program for the Northern Territory" is co-authored by World Wide Fund Australia and the Environment Centre NT. Dr Stuart Blanch was invited to address Council on the Living Rivers Program in the Northern Territory and went on to address the threats to the Territory's tropical rivers and wetlands and the importance of looking after the quality of our rivers. Dr Blanch advised that a key commitment of the NT Government to deliver on was how the Daly River will be managed as a part of a new and innovative living rivers program. Dr Blanch advised that new legislation will give special status to our icon rivers for the benefit of all users.

The Chairman will consider what further action is necessary from the Council.

**Action: Executive Officer to forward a copy of Stuart Blanch's Living Rivers presentation to members.**

## **3. GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **3.1 Minutes / Actions of 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 22 August 2007**

The minutes and actions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council meeting were accepted with an amendment to spelling errors on page 1 and 6 of the Minutes.

### **3.2 List of despatched correspondence**

The list of despatched correspondence since the last meeting was noted. Matthew Ryan expressed his thanks to Chairman and Council for writing to Federal Ministers on the withdrawal of the CDEP program in the Northern Territory.

### **3.3 Forward Agenda Program**

At the last meeting a Forward Agenda Program was proposed to assist Council to plan twelve months ahead. The Chairmen met with David Ritchie, Graham Phelps and Greg Leach and subsequently it was decided to separate the Agenda into two documents:

1. Forward Agenda Program - items listed for Council's consideration.
2. Works Program - items requiring outcome/action from Parks and Wildlife.

Mick Jerram added the NT Strategic Plan for Tourism on the Forward Agenda Program and Jayne Weepers added land clearing guidelines on the Works Program.

**Resolution: Council endorsed the above Programs with the inclusion of NT Strategic Tourism Plan being placed on the Forward Agenda Program and land clearing guidelines being placed on the Works Program.**

### **3.4 Tiwi Islands Forestry Project**

A briefing paper on status of the Tiwi Islands Forestry Project by Greg Leach and correspondence from the Minister was noted.

Tony Bowland advised there has been little activity at the moment and that he had heard nothing from the Federal Government, although he noted a brief had gone to the Attorney General.

### **3.5 McArthur River Mine Open Cut Project**

Richard Sellers Executive Director, Minerals and Energy and Brian Hearne, General Manager, MRM were invited to address Council on the progress of McArthur River Mine, however, due to interstate commitments were unable to attend meeting. A briefing paper on the status of the project by Richard Sellers was noted

David Ritchie advised that Environmental Earth Sciences, a Victorian company, has been appointed as the independent monitor for the project and have now commenced.

The Minister advised that the Deputy Chief Minister recently viewed the area and that the attention is on ensuring the river diversion complies with the conditions of the Mine Management Plan. The Minister's feedback to date was the company are paying careful attention to these conditions.

### **3.6 Wildlife Policy Review**

At the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting Council resolved that Parks and Wildlife prepare an overall review of policies relating to the management of wildlife where there are adverse interactions with people.

Terms of Reference (ToR) were drafted by Peter Whitehead, DNRETA's Senior Policy Officer to assist Council in dealing with this matter. At the last meeting Council resolved to accept the ToR's as final with suggested amendments. Dr Whitehead has amended the ToR's as per Council's Resolution and the revised ToR's were tabled today.

Tony Bowland advised that Dr Helen Neave of the Biodiversity Conservation Unit is now running with this Review. Tony provided a brief progress report and invited Members to provide comments. Updates on the progress of this Review will be provided at future meetings.

**Action: Executive Officer to forward a copy of the Wildlife Review Progress Report to members for comments for collation by Tony Bowland.**

### **3.7 Park Management Operational Report**

Graham Phelps briefed Council on current key issues within the Parks Division and highlighted the following:

Channel Point Coastal Reserve – Design and construction has now been completed for construction of a concrete boat ramp within budget allocation. A temporary boat ramp was constructed in 2006, but there was concern that vehicles would need to be driven too far into the water which could prove difficult at times due to the tides. The site of the proposed ramp within the Reserve is subject both to native title and land claims.

Casuarina Coastal Reserve – application for issue of permits to allow the unrestricted use of blokarting (land yachts) on the beach has been declined by Parks and Wildlife based on a risk assessment.

West MacDonnell Visitor Centre – A brief for the Interpretation Plan is almost complete and will be sent to Department of Planning and Infrastructure for tender. Red Centre Way “Branding Strategy” and “Interpretive Principles” are being developed under contract by Tourism NT and are underway to construct in 2008 financial year.

West MacDonnell National Park – joint management planning workshops have been held with traditional owners and their approval of the first draft of the plan will be sought in March 2008. Joint management planning workshops have also been held with traditional owners of Chambers Pillar Historical Reserve.

Nitmiluk National Park – Gorge crossover is nearly complete and project is going really well. Nitmiluk Tours are expressing potential for resort development in the Gorge precinct.

Gregory National Park – joint management camps have been held in 2007 bringing together traditional owners of relevant areas together with Northern Land Council and Parks staff.

Little Red Flying Foxes – have gathered back at Mataranka Thermal Pool.

Barranyi National Park – there has been change of land title from NT Freehold to ALRA title. A meeting is still pending between traditional owners and Northern Land Council lawyers to ascertain the wishes of traditional owners. Until this meeting is held negotiations on the future of the jointly managed park are at a standstill.

Joint Management – two additional Joint Management Planners have been employed with Parks and Wildlife located in Darwin and Katherine and their role is to facilitate a number of joint management plans in the future.

### **3.8 Revised Joint Management Plan for Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve**

The draft Joint Management Plan for the Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve was released for public comment in July 2007 and Council members as individuals had an opportunity to provide comments to Parks and Wildlife at the public consultation stage. Comments from the public consultation stage have been reviewed by Parks and Wildlife and incorporated into the revised Plan

which was endorsed at DNRETA's Executive Leadership Group on 30 October 2007.

Graham Phelps advised that pending Council's endorsement today and subsequent administrative approvals, the Plan will be tabled with the Legislative Assembly at the earliest opportunity next year.

David Garnett suggested editing amendments to the references and his comments will be forwarded to Graham Phelps for consideration.

**Resolution: Council endorsed the revised Joint Management Plan for the Rainbow Valley Conservation Reserve subject to:**

- **Editing changes to references from David Garnet; and**
- **Resolution of sacred site clearance between Parks and Wildlife and the Central Land Council (see paragraph 5.7 of Plan).**

### **3.9 Draft Kangaroo Management Program**

It was noted the draft Kangaroo Management Program is in its early stages and currently only distributed within the Biodiversity Conservation Division.

The draft Program will be released for public comment early next year, however, Parks and Wildlife have provided an advance copy in order for the Council to be briefed prior to having the opportunity make comment at the public consultation stage. Tony Bowland provided an overview on the Program highlighting some points for Council to ponder when providing comments:

1. Accessibility and variable nature of the resource (e.g. 3.34 to 0.13 reds/sq km).
2. Harvest levels and economic of scale (local vs migratory shooters).
3. Cost of implementation.
4. Contribution to NT economy.
5. Other macropod resources (i.e. Agile wallaby).
6. Traditional harvest fraction.

Penny Figgis emphasised the need that an order of discussion should have an executive summary upfront stating it is a non viable economic activity and that the value of the animal be stated.

Jayne Weepers suggested the report be renamed 'assessment' rather than 'management' of the viability as this would be a more useful document.

After discussion the Council felt that the fact this is a non viable economic activity should be stated upfront as well the value of the animal should be documented in the Program and the importance of the species for traditional owners and international travellers should be included.

The issue of revising the order of the management program template was discussed and members were asked to forward any suggestions to the format for the Department's consideration.

The Chairman noted that Parks and Wildlife are available to provide further background on plans of management and management programs to members wherever possible. Chairman advised that with future plans/programs that an

effort will be made by Parks and Wildlife to brief Council prior to the public consultation phase.

**Resolution No. 1: Council agreed to refer the Draft Kangaroo Management Program back to Greg Leach to take into account the comments of the Council. Council agreed that the Program was not needed and is to be replaced by an assessment report.**

**Resolution No. 2: Members to forward any suggestions on the order of the format on management programs to Executive Officer for collation by Tony Bowland.**

### **3.10 Draft Exotic Pest Animal Policy**

The current Feral Animal Policy was endorsed in 2002. Recent assessment indicated that this Policy was in need of minor revision. Exotic pest animals are a significant threat to the natural, agricultural and built environments of the Northern Territory. This draft Exotic Pest Animal Policy seeks to clearly identify the Department's stance with regard to exotic animals. The draft Policy has had minor amendments made and the title of the Policy has been adopted to better align with national terminology for non-native pest animals.

**Resolution: Council endorsed the Draft Exotic Pest Animal Policy with no comment.**

### **3.11 Draft Problem Native Animal Policy**

No policy currently exists for the management of native 'pest' or 'problem' animals in the Northern Territory. However, these animals pose a significant dilemma for the Department because established management techniques activities often conflict with the values of the organisation. For this reason, it seems appropriate to adopt a Problem Native Animal policy to inform Government employees, as well as members of the public of the organisations' position as relates to native pest animals.

Tony Bowland advised this Policy was an interim Policy while the Wildlife Review progresses. After discussion Council agreed that the Policy be withdrawn until the Wildlife Review is finalised as this Review will supersede this Policy.

**Resolution: Council resolved the Draft Problem Native Animal Policy to be withdrawn while the Wildlife Review progresses and this was agreed to by Tony Bowland, Principal Scientist.**

### **3.12 Recreational Hunting on Parks and Reserves – Lead Shot and Recreational Waterfowl Hunting**

Council have requested to be kept updated on the status of recreational hunting on parks and reserves.

The Parks and Wildlife Service have asked the Council to consider the issue of the use of lead shot in the Northern Territory in terms of recommending a policy position to the Minister. A comprehensive briefing was tabled by Greg Leach.

Tony Bowland advised that Parks and Wildlife are currently revising the Magpie Goose Management Program.

After lengthy discussion the Council suggested the following points to be researched by Parks and Wildlife and resubmitted to Council at future meeting:

- Major engagement is undertaken with shooters groups and Land Council's.
- Effective and long term education policy is undertaken.
- Other States need to be researched.

Bob Fox in his capacity as President of NT Firearms Council offered his organisation's assistance to Parks and Wildlife in developing a policy.

**Resolution: Council supports the banning of lead shot in waterfowl hunting and recommends that Parks and Wildlife consult with relevant stakeholders with respect to developing a policy.**

#### **4. PAPERS FOR INFORMATION**

##### **4.1 Inquiry into Invasive Species and Management Programs**

The Sessional Committee have advised they are still considering the contents of the final report and it may be ready for tabling at the November Sittings, otherwise, it is anticipated to be tabled at the February 2008 Sittings.

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

##### **4.2 West MacDonnells World Heritage Values**

The West MacDonnells World Heritage Values report by Geoff Mosley was tabled by Andrew Bridges, Director Southern Region Parks. Council were requested to treat the document as 'Council-in-Confidence' until otherwise advised.

Graham Phelps advised the West MacDonnells is an NT Government election commitment to pursue nomination on the World Heritage Listings. Graham provided an overview on progress and advised nominations close on 21 December for the tentative list and that it is unlikely that the Australian Government will submit a nomination for West MacDonnells to be inscribed on World Heritage List within the next 10 years.

Penny Figgis suggested the Executive Summary needs to be enhanced, however, Graham advised the report is now final, but that a clear summary would be amended when it is put on the Parks website.

Anne-Marie Delahunt suggested the NT Parks Minister write to Commonwealth Parks Minister as the report reflects Commonwealth jurisdiction and it would be polite to advise the Commonwealth Minister this report is in existence.

**Action: Anne-Marie Delahunt's suggestion that the NT Parks Minister write to the Commonwealth Parks Minister on the West MacDonnells World Heritage Values report be considered by Graham Phelps.**

Anne-Marie informed Council of her conflict of interest as she manages Uluru and Penny informed Council of her conflict of interest as she is involved with IUCN which is the advisory body to UNESCO involved with the World Heritage nominations. Council noted their interests.

#### **4.3 Profile NT Environment Protection Authority**

The NT Environment Protection Authority has been placed on Council's Forward Agenda Program for information. Ms Lyn Allen, Executive Director Environment, Heritage and Arts was invited to brief Council today, however, was on leave at the time of our meeting and has provided a briefing. Ms Allen has offered to provide a presentation to Council at the February 2008 meeting in the event an Authority member is unavailable. Council noted the briefing.

#### **4.4 Payment of Sitting Fees**

The Executive Officer tabled a briefing on the procedures for payment of sitting fees. Council noted the briefing.

#### **4.5 2006-07 Annual Report**

The 2006-07 Annual Report for Council has been forwarded to the Minister for Parks and Wildlife and will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 28 November 2007.

**Action: Executive Officer will forward a copy of the Annual Report once tabled at the Legislative Assembly.**

### **5. OTHR BUSINESS**

#### **5.1 Briefing on moratorium on land clearing in Douglas Daly**

David Ritchie advised the Minister for Lands will make a decision with Cabinet by end of year on lifting or keeping the moratorium in place and whether the Government will be setting new guidelines under the *Planning Act*.

The website for the Daly River Management Advisory Committee (DRMAC) can be viewed at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/water/drmac/index.html> and the land clearing guidelines can be viewed at <http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/natres/natveg/guidelines/index.html>

#### **5.2 Future agenda items**

Anne-Marie Delahunt offered to provide a presentation by Parks Australia on the Kakadu Tourism Management Plan and branding activities on the Park.

**Action: Executive Officer to place Kakadu Tourism Management Plan on a future agenda.**

### **6. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is proposed for 19 February 2008 in Darwin. Proposed meeting dates for 2008 were discussed with the May meeting proposed for two days on 27 and 28 to enable a visit to Territory Wildlife Park and Botanical Gardens. It was proposed the meeting date for August be brought back a week to be held on 13 and 14 August in Maningrida. February and November meetings will be held in Darwin. Dates will be confirmed and forwarded in due course.

The Chairman wished Members a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Meeting closed at 3:45pm.