

Meeting Summary

Kosciuszko Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel

Friday 14 February 2020

The Kosciuszko Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel was formed under the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018* to provide advice on the preparation of a draft wild horse heritage management plan.

The panel met at the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) office in Queanbeyan for its third meeting.

Revised timeframe for a new wild horse heritage management plan

The Minister for Energy and Environment has granted an additional month for completion of the new wild horse heritage management plan. Given there may be only one more meeting remaining until a draft plan is produced, the panel will work on drafting their final recommendations to the Minister prior to their next meeting.

Combined meeting with the Scientific Advisory Panel

The panel met the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) earlier in the day for a joint meeting. All members were positive about the proceedings of the meeting and requested additional combined meetings of the panels.

Post-fire emergency response

The panel discussed the combined Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and SAP meeting. The SAP had presented their post-fire recovery advice that targeted removal of wild horses in three management areas around Nungar, Kiandra and Coleman Plains. As the newest horse population, only Nungar Plain was recommended by the SAP for removal of all horses from the area. The SAP recommended population reduction in the other two management areas. It was discussed how a target number of horses for removal should be based on post-fire population surveys and environmental impact monitoring over time.

NPWS informed the panel that approximately 25 % of the known wild horse distribution area was impacted during the summer 2019/20 bushfires. The panel generally supported the main elements of the three priority management areas proposed by the SAP and acknowledged it was the first step in a longer-term management program. The panel made a number of comments about the history of horses in those locations and the practicalities of undertaking control in some areas given the lack of natural barriers.

It was noted that SAP members may be unfamiliar with the natural terrain and horse behaviours in those areas

The CAP noted that the SAP emphasis should be on the total area being targeted, not population numbers for removal. For each management area, clarity was needed around whether areas are being designated for elimination or reduction of the existing population. There was general agreement that management areas can be similar to the 2016 draft *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan* although refinement is needed in some areas due to topography and horse behaviour. Further work was required on where to retain horses in the park. The panel agreed that population and environmental impact monitoring should occur over time and in each management area.

The panel discussed:

- The need to increase rehoming.
- Having a number of control methods available, depending on the management area.
- Work required to identify additional areas where horses should be reduced or eliminated.

The panel posed several questions to the SAP for their advice:

- definitive boundaries for the three priority management areas for post-fire recovery
- definitive advice and detail on methods of control recommended for post-fire recovery
- identification of future management areas
- advice on numbers that will be required to maintain viable horse populations in management areas where horses are to be retained
- advice on whether the existing population estimates can be extrapolated to smaller areas
- advice on whether a community-run population survey conducted on horseback could be designed so that it gave a statistically rigorous estimate.

Next meeting

Friday 3 April 2020 at Queanbeyan. This includes a joint meeting with Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel.