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The Project Officer
Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Management Plan Review
National Parks and Wildlife Service
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Dear Project Team

Submission to the Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Management Plan

Introduction

The Clarence Environment Centre (CEC) has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 27 years, and has a proud history of environmental advocacy. The conservation of Australia's natural environment, both terrestrial and marine, has always been a priority for our members, and we believe the maintenance of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity is of paramount importance.

The issue of feral animals, particularly the impact of large hoofed mammals such as horses, has always been a concern to us, therefore we wholeheartedly support this draft plan to greatly reduce horse numbers in this park, but with some provisos.

Discussion

It is our understanding that feral horses have been eliminated from Namadgi National Park and this success should be replicated in all NSW national parks where feral horses are present, including those in our own region in Yuraygir and New England National Parks.

It is essential that the cull be undertaken in the most humane manner possible, with the complete exclusion of 'cowboy' tactics by volunteers using the roping of individual horses and brumby running as control techniques, which are ineffective and lead to extreme stress and trauma.

Therefore, we support use of feral horse control methods that have been independently declared by experts to be both humane and effective. The most effective and humane control measure, is aerial shooting by trained shooters, followed by ground shooting, and this should be undertaken as soon as possible as numbers can climb rapidly with every year's delay.

We believe wilderness areas should be treated as a priority to be made feral horse free, and object strongly to any retention of managed herds of feral horses as proposed for the Pilot and Goobarragandra Wilderness Areas. Under that plan wilderness areas will remain environmentally degraded while less remote areas are restored by the removal of feral horses.

By allowing the degradation of core park wilderness in this way would play into the hands of those loud critics of the national parks system who claim they are a refuge for feral pests.

We believe the unique natural heritage values of the Alpine areas must be restored and protected, to support one of Australia's greatest economic assets and income generators through tourism, and potential income through carbon sequestration.

In the last twenty years those who support the retention of feral horses in this national park have been responsible for terrible environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity in the Alpine areas, and it is time to turn this around, create a pristine environment, grow out biodiversity, improve the water quality, and contribute to carbon storage to combat climate change.

We thank the Minister for this opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Edwards', is written over a faint, light-colored rectangular stamp or watermark.

John Edwards
Honorary Secretary