

## **FORESTRY CORPORATION OF NSW**

### **Submission to NRC's Review of Pest Animal Management**

Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW) broadly supports the recommendations contained in the draft report issued in March 2016. The recommendations are sound and will simplify the State's approach to pest management. However, if implemented, some of the recommendations have significant cost and resourcing implications for FCNSW as the manager of over 2 million hectares of public forests. Compliance costs of any onerous mandatory pest control measures can be very high. Therefore it is critical that FCNSW is treated equitably in the allocation of funds for mandated pest management activities.

FCNSW recognises the importance of pest animal management on its estate and has recently up-skilled 12 protection officers in hardwood forests for wild dog control and purchased equipment like traps and canid pest ejectors to have a much larger presence in the landscape. The Corporation also participated in the development of the recently released Deer Management Strategy in the Hastings Port Macquarie council area.

Below are specific comments on a few of the recommendations:

#### **Recommendation 3i – Regional Pest Animal Management Committees**

FCNSW supports this recommendation and the ultimate objective of integration with weed management committees. FCNSW should be represented on these committees and be involved in planning and recommending the allocation of any grant funding.

#### **Recommendation 15i – Mandatory Pest Control Measures**

While the recent up-skilling of protection officers in hardwood forests is considered adequate for the management of wild dogs and can contribute to other pest management programs, FCNSW does not have specific management plans for particular species, eg deer. The formalisation of pest management programs for horses, deer and cats could add significant costs if FCNSW is obliged to undertake mandatory control measures that require increased control operations and additional resources. Mandatory control of wide spread species like foxes, cats and deer will inevitably involve additional costs compared to the current situation.

#### **Recommendations 16i and 16ii and 22i – Removal of Deer from the List of Game Animals under the Game and Feral Animal Control Act and Active engagement of Hunters in Regional Pest Management**

Control of deer and particularly horses through mandated pest control measures would be expensive in a forest situation and require a high level of management due to the public interest and perception of wild horses.

Deer hunting by recreational hunters is seen as being able to contribute to reducing the impact of feral deer. FCNSW manages recreational hunting on State forests as a recreational activity under a rigorous risk assessment process. Under Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws, if recreational hunters are used specifically to undertake pest control for the Corporation, they would be regarded as volunteers and significant WHS liabilities would arise for the Corporation.

Mitigation measures for such liabilities are costly. For example, the use of hunting by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in controlled and localised pest reduction campaigns required substantial additional funding being provided to NPWS.

One would expect that involving hunting groups in pest management will not be without challenges, one obvious challenge being the difference between recreational aspects of hunting, eg selective taking of animals such as deer, and what is required to actually control pests, eg heavy culling.