

Submission
By Valleybrook Hunting Club
To
NSW Natural Resource Commission
Pest Animal Management Review
Draft Report

Preamble

I attended the NRC meeting at Tamworth as community Rep for Valleybrook Hunting (VHC) Following the Tamworth Meeting I reported back to scheduled meeting of the May 2016 VHC Safety and Ethics Meeting held at Muswellbrook RSL.

Valleybrook Hunting Club (VHC) is a Federation of Hunting Clubs (FOHC) affiliate with some 200 members in the Upper Hunter. VHC is an approved Hunting Organisation registered with DPI GU. We are a Hunting Club not a shooting club , our core business is Hunting, we are proudly a culturally and ethnically diverse club with members from many nations ,indigenous Australians, Chinese , African , Celtic , several European countries . We have no barriers on gender and Women are well represented in our ranks.

Chairperson

A.P.McManus

Submission

Our club has not reached a consensus with the NRC on their proposal to take deer from the status of game animal and declare them pests. The Valleybrook (VHC) Hunting Club Hunting does not want to reclassify any deer species found in NSW to be declared as pest in status.

The Club wishes the DPI Game Unit to continue in its present roll of administration and enforcement of the Game Animal Act.

Timing of NRC review Meetings

Our Club does not concede the timing of the NRC Meetings enabled all wishing to attend to do so.

The dates set for the Tamworth and **Grafton ,Nowra ,Orange ,Deniliquin,Parramatta,Bourke** , were held during the working week, and have excluded some of our members, Mon. to Fri. working people, from attending .Unable to get leave or afford to take unpaid leave.

We believe our club was not the only group effected, many in the hunting community were also excluded, we submit that the process is therefore not inclusive.

In fact it is weighted towards the various state bodies of whom at Tamworth were extremely well represented, I believe all of the various State bodies were paid for the day and travelled at their Employers expense.

SPC Trials

The Valleybrook Hunting Club (VHC) does not have consensus with the NRC on the inclusiveness of the SPC trials currently being run in NSW National Parks. Opening up National parks under the DPI Game unit model and administration, would have much better outcomes for all stakeholders. It would be fairer/more equitable for all Approved Hunting Organisations (AHOs), cheaper to run, more beneficial to local Communities , land holders , and most of all we do not need to reinvent the wheel in NSW National Parks , we already have a world's best practice model ready to go in the DPI Game Unit model which has been operating successfully since 2006, currently having some 20000 hunters licenced.

On consideration of Commissioner John Keniry's response to the question posed at Tamworth meeting "*Why the DPI GU was not embraced by the SPC trial* ",

John informed the Tamworth Meeting of the Political nature of the circumstances leading up to the SPC trial. He informed the meeting that the then NSW State Premier agreed to open selected National Parks in NSW to Hunting , to get the sale of NSW Power Generators agreed to by the Shooters and Fishers Party, on gaining the sale agreement , Premier O'Farrell reneged on the Hunting agreement due to public opinion.

In this climate the SPC trial was conceived.

It is a matter of record, a memo from A/Head of National Parks wild life service's Bob Conroy (of August 2012) on *Inapproipate expression of anti-hunting sentiment*, was issued, following actions of a group of publically demonstrating uniformed Parks staff, in the lead up to the SPC.

We the VHC Club see the, SPC process as highly politicised, and remain unconvinced the SPC trial can be seen to be unimpeded, in view of anti-hunting sentiment acknowledged by Bob Conroy.

Commissioner John Keniery explained during the Tamworth meeting, that ground hunting was not a primary control, that helicopter shooting and various poisons were examples of primary control. The VHC club does not concede that ground hunting is not a primary control of Deer. In fact non hunter areas have higher populations of deer. Therefore no consensus at Tamworth was reached on this matter

We picked up from John Keniery the SPC trial was not to be judged on cost per animal taken. The end use for the SPC if adopted, would be a tool to get the very few target animals left after a primary control had taken place. With the SPC trial 2 years in, and \$11 million allocated as the budget, some 80 under graduates and graduates in total, are at present in the system, we fear it is set to be too expensive. The 1000 SSAA members registered for the SPC may not be utilised, as on present progress of the SPC, it looks as it may run out of funding or indeed time.

The VHC Club submits that the highly successful, currently operating 'Forestry' model has around 20,000 hunters available, has been operating since 2006, in some cases the forests in which it is operating are close to ,adjacent or adjoining National parks. This forestry model should be extended into National Parks.

Existing Management Mechanisms

NRC's Answers to Graziers on control of deer on their property's at Tamworth NRC meeting, did not fully explain their right under law to **control** Game Animals.

In fact Q&A comments from the floor were used to explain to a grazier from Willow Tree she had the right to control deer and so did her employees it also came from the floor, that there was a least one licenced Harvester in the area for commercialisation/control.

The VHC Club Submits the current arrangements in the Game Animal Act allows for Deer Culling, and does not concede that Deer should be declared a Pest Animal.

The Club recommends, because of a very poor understanding of management mechanisms available in the current arrangements, the existing and adequate provisions should be restressed to stakeholders and be fully exploited before we look for new solutions.

The stake holders in this process should include State Bodies including NRC and LLC.

The VHC Club also submits that, the NSW government should also undertake a public awareness campaign, amongst the State's 47,000 primary producers, of their rights under the current GAFAC Act.

Helicopter shooting of Deer

In 2000, NSW RSPCA prosecuted the NSW National Parks for aggravated cruelty to one horse, which did not die immediately after a cull of 606 wild horses in Guy Fawkes River National Park.

Many brumby advocates still believe that more than one horse died inhumanely in this incident.

The NSW government placed a moratorium on aerial culling after a media backlash and a public outcry.

The VHC submits that Deer also being a “prey animal” also run from fear of the Helicopter, it is a smaller target than a horse.

Deer also have the ability of “planting “new born calf’s . The calf’s defence is to lie still. The risk of shooting lactating does is therefore high, when shooting from a moving Helicopter from above.

The VHC Club submits that the moratorium/Ban on Helicopter shooting of horses should be extended to Deer in all areas of NSW, as in fact the same POCTA issues exist in Helicopter Shooting of both species.

The VHC Club submits to the NRC that the Australian Government Department of Environment code of practice.

Kangaroo Shooting Code of compliance does not allow culling from moving platforms.

Kangaroos must not be shot from a moving vehicle or other moving platform,

The VHC submits that the NRC follows suit and recommends to NSW Government that Deer should not be shot from moving platforms.

The VHC Club submits to the NRC that It is inconsistent to apply a ban on helicopter shooting of Horses and Kangaroos but keep shooting Deer in this manner, especially when 20000 trained and licensed Forest hunters are available for ground Hunting.

OH&S

VHC Club proposal for Eliminating of risks to Helicopter shooting staff

Risks of ground strikes in Helicopter Shooting

There have been 4 inadvertent ground impacts during similar types of operations in the last 5 years Historical likelihood is ranked as ,“ likely”.

Risk of wire strikes resulting in Helicopter to strike ground in uncontrolled manner

ATSB data base shows at least 6 wire strikes by Helicopter and fixed wing aircraft in last 3 years is a common occurrence ,historical likelihood is Ranked as" almost certain" .

The VHC Club notes that the current risk for both ground and wire strike are listed as HIGH. The controls listed are largely administrative.

The VHC Club notes that the lists consequence of most ground and wire strikes result in fatalities.

The VHC did not see consideration for elimination of Helicopter shooting as a control in the Aerial Shooting Task-Specific Risk Assessment publically available.

The VHC submits that the best form of control is elimination of the Hazzard and risk. The VHC Club also submits that Helicopter shooting is replaced by DPI Game Unit licenced hunters. Thus the elimination of Hazards /Risks noted in Aerial Shooting Task-Specific Risk Assessment.

Cost Savings

A spin off on this Hazard/Risk control of elimination Helicopter Shooting submitted by VHC Club would be a saving in costs, as the DPI GU is funded by the R&G Licenced hunters.

Cultural loss and impacts of dismantling the Game Animal Act.

As previously mentioned the VHC Club membership is a cultural, ethnic, and gender diverse group, drawn together by the common thread of ethical, sustainable Hunting, and Utilisation of wild caught Deer meat products. NSW Government recognition of this culture is firmly established by the Game Animal Act. The VHC Club supports and assists the DPI Game Units, administration and enforcement of the relevant act.

The taking of deer off Game Animal status, for extermination, would be viewed by the VHC club as a hostile measure against what is an ethical and legal cultural activity.

The club submits that the NRC's aim to eliminate wild deer from private and State land is culturally insensitive.

The Club also believes the NRC proposal for removal of Game Animal Status from deer will result in the degrading of the DPI Game unit. The Unit is highly visible and successful in combating illegal hunting. Illegal hunting is strongly linked to rural crime.

The DPI Game unit currently administrates Game bird licence tests, degrading of the DPI Game Unit will impact heavily, on mitigation controls of problem birds in NSW.

Poisoning of deer

The VHC Club is appalled by the consideration or testing of use of poisons including Cyanide on deer. The Club submits that the NRC cease support of such programmes in NSW.

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