



Response from the NSW Apiarists Association to:- the invitation to comment on the Morton State Conservation Area Draft Plan of Management, June 2017

1. Background to respondent organisation.

The NSW Apiarists Association (NSWAA) is responding to the invitation to comment on the Morton State Conservation Area Draft Plan of Management, June 2017. The NSWAA is aware and supportive of the fact that this response will be made publicly available.

The NSWAA is the peak industry body for NSW commercial apiarists and has provided over a century of service to its members. The NSWAA represents a majority of the states commercial beekeepers and the NSW apiary industry is characterised by:-

- Being the nation's leader in production of honey and ownership of hives accounting for 40 – 45% of the national honey crop.
- Having approximately 5,491 registered beekeepers accounting for 313,636 registered hives.
- Contributing \$36 million annually to the NSW economy from the value of honey and associated bee products.
- Contributing to \$94 million of national gross value of honey and associated bee products.
- Providing the greatest number of commercial pollination hives nationally that service the 35 agricultural industries dependant on honey bees for their production. On a national basis the economic value of the pollination of agricultural industries is estimated to be in a range of \$4 - \$6 billion.

2. The importance of Morton State Conservation Area to NSW Apiarists

The NSWAA acknowledges the significant economic and environmental use and value to their commercial members of the State Conservation Areas such as the Morton State Conservation Area. The Conservation Areas provide apiary sites, that either directly through the provision of floral resources on the reserve, or where the site can provide access to floral resources further afield as honey bees can forage up to 3 kilometres from their hives.

In an environment of declining floral resources access to Conservation Areas are essential in the provision of a diverse range of flora that are unique in their capability to be highly productive in terms of nectar and pollen resources for honeybees. This high level of resource production with its diversity allows honeybees to develop strength, vigour and health before and after pollination events.

NSW as the nation's leading apicultural state is ideally located to capitalise on the growth of paid pollination services that has significant benefits to regional economies and the State as a

whole. To meet predicted demand from the almond industry alone will require 270,851 hives by 2025 or 60 % of Australia's current total number of hives. This one industry, that is completely dependent on honeybees, achieved a farm gate value of \$ 1 billion in 2015 from 82,000 tonnes of almonds produced. This accounted for a third of Australian horticultural exports.

This prediction of hives required to service the almond industry in 2025 would not be currently achievable and every one of these predicted hives required needs to have had time exposed to the nectar and pollen resources from flowering native plants and woodlands found in the State Conservation Areas the surrounding private and public lands.

3. Comment on Section 5 Management Operations and Other Uses specifically 5.2 Other Uses - Beekeeping

The NSWAA welcomes the acknowledgement on page 30 of the Draft Plan of Management

"There are 10 authorised apiary sites with the park. These sites were originally established under occupation permits when the area was part of Yalwal State Forest and will continue to be permitted as existing interests".

and the fact that on page 31 that

"While no problems are currently known in the park, hive sites may cause unacceptable environmental impacts or user conflicts in the future."

there is no reason why the NSWAA can foresee any unacceptable environmental impacts or user conflicts in the future. Wherever impacts or conflicts may be substantiated the NSWAA support the Management response 5.2.1 noted below.

5.2.1 Continue to authorise and manage the existing apiary sites within the park in accordance with NPWS policy and consent conditions.

It is the intention of the NSWAA to continue its efforts to progress the objective of streamlining the process and system involved with apiary sites on public lands in NSW. A position paper was developed in February 2015 titled "Apiary Sites on Public Lands". In the foreword the then President of the NSW AA, Mr Casey Cooper, highlighted that access to floral resources was of greater significance to the commercial beekeepers of NSW than any other issue.

However he also highlighted that "The extreme variability between government departments in their view of commercial beekeeping and willingness to work with our association has made our job extremely difficult".

This call for help from a peak industry body whose commercial apiarists' activities are on a scale that require access to public lands cannot be ignored. The position paper, "Apiary Sites on Public Lands", clearly stipulated six requests to government.

1. Provide an "all of government approach" to dealing with apiary sites on government land tenure.

2. Provide a policy on beekeeping from each government agency managing lands traditionally utilised by apiarists for apiary sites.
3. Provide a consistent set of apiary site use permit conditions across all government land tenures.
4. Grant access to any government lands for apiary sites where this does not cause public risk or undue damage to the area in gaining access.
5. Recognise the “National Best Management Practice Guidelines for Beekeeping in the Australian Environment”.
6. Provide long term permits of 5 years or greater.

4. Conclusion

All State Conservation Areas that have vehicular access are of significant importance to commercial apiarists. These public assets that are available to apiarists in areas where they do not infringe upon recreational and or public amenity are highly valued and respectfully cared for by the apiary industry.

Pollination by the honey bee is essential to 35 agricultural industries for the majority of their production. To enable this pollination to occur access to public lands such as State Conservation Areas and their surrounds with their diversity of floral resources and nectar that is free from pesticide, insecticide and herbicide impacts is essential. This access allows the honey bee to build up health and vigour before and after pollination events.

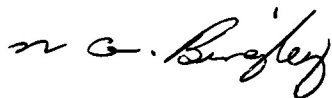
Commercial apiarists are not shooters or fishers; their requirement for access to public land is not predicated on a recreational need it is based on a need to sustain healthy honey bee stocks that are gentle on the environment. Beekeeping has extensive benefits for all of the citizens of NSW and their communities, environment and economy. This need is not to be ignored or trivialised but supported and enhanced. The comments provided in this response heighten the need for a clear unambiguous way forward for the State of NSW in how it effectively manages public land such as in State Conservation Areas for the apiary industry with benefits accruing to Government and the whole NSW community.

References

GHD (2017) Framework to assess compatibility of beekeeping on public lands National Framework. Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Draft Publication.

Somerville, D. (2015) Apiary Sites on Public Lands - A NSW Apiarists Association Position paper.

Signed by President



Neil Bingley