

Bushwalking Queensland Inc (BWQ Inc) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Collaborative Management Group (CMG) Meeting #7

Date : Wednesday 21st July 2010
Time: 3pm start
Venue: DERM/QPWS office – level 4 400 George St Brisbane City
(come to level 3 and ask at reception for Di Maclean ext: 25244)

Purpose: The purpose of the MOU is to foster a cooperative approach to sustainable bushwalking and bush camping in Queensland's parks and forests between Bushwalking Queensland Inc (BWQ Inc) and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

Attendees

DERM/QPWS:	Guy Thomas, Manager Tourism and Visitor Services, Dianne MacLean, Tourism and Visitor Services
BWQ	Neil Douglas BWQ member John Marshall President BWQ

Apologies

Andy Ryan, BWQ Treasurer Gavin Dale, Secretary BWQ

Pre-meeting notes

Actions from previous minutes

- **Statistics on day walks – forwarded by John**

Agenda 1 Conondale Great Walk consultation.

BWQ expresses its disappointment at its non inclusion in the intended consultation process for the Conondale Great Walk, as well as the non notification of its opening. As a key stakeholder in the Great Walks, BWQ suggests a better coordination of consultation processes be considered for any similar projects in the future. (E.g. will a Great Walk now be considered for Stradbroke Island once the mining leases are expired?)

QPWS Response – Conondale GW

Early in the planning process Bushwalking Queensland (BWQ), the Conondale Range Committee (CRC) and the Sunshine Coast Bushwalking Club (SCBWC) were invited to comment and make suggestions for the proposed CRGW. The BWQ did not become involved in the process at that time and the CRC and SCBWC did take an active role in the process.

Towards the end of the construction stage some discussions were held with BWQ as well as the CRC and SCBWC regarding volunteers for maintenance of the CRGW. The BWQ nominated the Glass House Bushwalkers to take on this role and we have accepted their offer, however this function has not yet come to action. SCBWC are currently active at least once per fortnight with a group of volunteers working on the CRGW. The CRC has also provided some volunteer assistance to both the construction and maintenance of the walk and facilities, and the CRC are developing a program of sustained weed maintenance at the Summer Falls camp.

In considering the guest list for the Conondale Range Great Walk opening the Department needed to be mindful of numbers due to the restricted parking and catering logistics at the site. While we would have liked to be able to invite everyone who had a stake in the CRGW this was simply not possible and invitees were selected on their past, present or future

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connection with the project. There were about 140 invitations sent out and almost 120 people attended the opening. Representatives of the SCBWC and the CRC committee attended the opening.

DERM will attempt to provide current information about the walk, which is best accessed via the DERM web site www.derm.qld.gov.au

QPWS Response – Nth Stradbroke Island proposed NP

Moreton Bay Regional Manager, Miles Yates, advises that the process of transferring the USL land and expired mining leases on Stradbroke Island across to gazetted national park will be a staged process commencing in the next 6 months and extending over many years.

The management planning process will be commenced in due course as/when the NP is gazetted. The mgt planning process will address recreation and visitor facilities, including walking tracks and trails, however there are no plans being developed as yet.

QPWS advise BWQ and its members to submit their comments through the current consultation process (outlined below).

North Stradbroke Island—a strong, green future (extract from DERM website) **Consultation**

The Director-General of the Department of Environment and Resource Management, John Bradley, attended a community information session at Dunwich on North Stradbroke Island on Tuesday 29 June.

Have your say

The public are invited to provide their thoughts on the future of North Stradbroke Island. You can register your interest in attending a community information session or send your comments via email Straddie.Vision@derm.qld.gov.au or by calling 1300 130 372.

See DERM website <http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/stradbroke/index.html>

Comments

- BWQ advised there was no official approach to BWQ for consultation on the CRGW
- QPWS believe invitations were made but there is an apparent issue about who individuals were representing & information may not have been passed around / between clubs
- Discussion of proposed NP for Stradbroke Is.; DERM is working towards a co-ordinated approach to planning for outdoor recreation and tourism with all government agencies and NGO's.
- BWQ is interested in consulting on the proposed plans for Nth Stradbroke and were advised to prepare a submission during the current consultation phase with DERM

Action 1

- The official point of contact for BWQ is the Secretary of BWQ

Agenda 2 Revision of MOU

Provision is made for the MOU to be reviewed annually. No review has been done since acceptance in 2006. Discuss procedure for a review.

QPWS Response

For discussion at CMG

Comments

- QPWS discussed extending the MOU review period to 3 years (or as needs basis).
- Both organisations have had a name change and MOU should be updated
- Both parties agreed to review document and finalise by December 2010.
- BWQ are invited to send proposed changes to on a word document after consultation with your members (using track changes).

Actions

Action 2.1 Di to send word doc of MOU – will attach with final minutes

Action 2.2 BWQ to email suggested changes to MOU using track changes in word doc.

Agenda 3 Group Activity Permits

BWQ seeks clarification of QPWS policy regarding both the necessity for GAPs and group sizes if they are required. Our MOU (Section 8) indicates that GAPs are not normally required for groups which are simply going for a walk, except that larger groups should be split with staggered departures. GAPs may be required for any major events involving 100 or more participants. The MOU also states that 12 is the number above which a GAP may be required for other club activities. Some clubs have recently been challenged on requirements for GAPs, and the party size ruling seems to vary between parks, adding to confusion among clubs.

BWQ suggests that a standard party size of 20 be considered for any general recreational activity in National Parks (i.e. a small charter bus group), before a GAP is required, and not at all for groups which are using the infrastructure for their intended purpose of walking or nature observation, on the understanding that any larger groups split their group and stagger walk departures to minimise any impact on other users.

QPWS Response

QPWS is currently reviewing the group size limits for access to various Landscape class settings over the coming year. The aim is to provide a range of group sizes within the various settings (1-9) which enable QPWS to undertake sustainable management of visitor impacts in varying environments.

The intent is to minimise impacts in the remote and wild settings (1-2) to protect the unique experience and natural values, and revise, with a possibly of increasing, some group size limits in the more commonly visited areas (3-5) natural/semi-natural settings.

For further discussion at CMG

Extract from MOU...

8 GROUP ACTIVITY PERMITS

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This MOU will ensure that most Federation activities do not require a Group Activity Permit (GAP). The annual pilgrimage that involves about 100 walkers may be an exception. Group activity permits are not required for party sizes fewer than 12.

QPWS and the Federation recognise that party size can adversely affect the environment and the social experience of other park and forest visitors. The Federation will consider this when conducting outings. In places where QPWS requests the public to limit walking party sizes, the Federation will encourage affiliated clubs to split larger groups and stagger departure times to maintain the specified party size or to seek QPWS approval for larger party sizes.

Where either the Federation or an affiliated club plans activities other than bushwalking and bush camping, standard site rules and permit requirements will apply.

Comments

- QPWS advise that off track walks will often have a lower setting class and group size.
- John suggested that reference to the LSC be included in the MOU. Neil suggested including clarification of the grey areas of the LSC with reference to group size.
- Guy discussed the proposed approach the TVM unit were taking in regard to this issue. Rather than having a fixed max group size for a setting there would be a range for group sizes.
- When a new max. group size range is established the information will be available through either the camping booking system or through the local rangers. Guy reiterated that QPWS are reluctant to have QPWS or BWQ complete approvals/permits for day walks just as an administrative exercise.
- John suggested that the group size be increased from 12 to 15 in the MOU.
- Guy advised that remote areas and different parks will have different group size limits and it is not possible to have a hard and fast number that can be included in the MOU (especially for off-track and remote sites.)
- Neil advised that he would only like to see the limit of 6 applied to the very remote locations.
- GT suggested that a key principal is that BWQ do not require a GAP for a sanctioned club walk for a group size of up to a certain limit (TBA) – on the condition that any large group off-track walks the local rangers are advised and that any specific local conditions would over-ride this general condition. Therefore clubs could self-regulate their numbers on most walks
- GT will undertake further discussions with key regional staff – Girraween, Main Range, Mt Barney, Lamington, D'Aguilar NP regarding recommended group number limits for their parks/or sites.
- BWQ Neil advised that a simple usable system would be preferred rather than complex tables to set general group limits..

Actions

Action 3.1 Both parties to undertake further discussions to develop a workable agreement on group size limits

Action 3.2 QPWS to investigate if need for GAP's can covered in MoU instead

Agenda 4 Abseiling in National Parks

BWQ seeks clarification on policy regarding groups undertaking abseiling or using ropes, harnesses and climbing hardware as a safety device on off track walks in national parks. A club was recently challenged at Lamington N.P. for taking a rope on their Shipstern walk.

We note that Binna Burra Lodge runs abseiling activities for their guests, including the Shipstern route .

<http://www.binnaburrallodge.com.au/Binna-Burra/News-Events/Events/Wild-Walk-Weekends-Gold-Coast-Hinterland>

Abseil at Binna Burra in Lamington National Park (extract from website above)

This is why Binna Burra is the adventure capital of Southern Queensland! Discover the thrill and heart pumping action of abseiling. An 11mm diameter rope is your lifeline as you rappel down a 10m volcanic escarpment. Then, challenge the knee-shaking, specially selected, 40m or 90m cliff-face. This is always an unforgettable experience. Numbers are limited, so please check availability when planning your visit. The 10m abseil is included in your tariff as a guest at the Lodge.

QPWS response

Binna Burra Mountain Lodge and DERM operate under a Deed of Agreement. In this agreement it states that Binna Burra Lodge can conduct abseiling with small groups at two designated site in Lamington National Park;

1. Binna Burra Road Practice site (Windy Corner small 10m cliff face)
2. Ship's Stern (Kooloobano Point).

Unregulated abseiling or any other type of cliff based activity outside of this agreement is not currently allowed at Lamington National Park.

QPWS is in the process of developing a full policy on the management of these Cliff based activities (including rock climbing, abseiling, canyoning) with relevant QPWS staff and external stakeholders. An interim policy has been drafted to provide climbers and QPWS staff with some clear direction while the final policy is being drafted, but is not currently available for public circulation.

QPWS expect to able to provide BWQ with a copy of the interim Cliff based activities policy when it has been approved by AD QPWS in the next few months.

Comments

- QPWS clarified that walkers can take and use ropes in Lamington, or any other park, for the purpose of a safety aid only whilst engaging in walking activities.
- BWQ advised that their Public Liability Insurance covers members to abseil down a site whilst undertaking a walking activity. BWQ support the AAS Abseiling guidelines.

- John tabled a set of points in relation to abseiling and BWQ. BWQ members need to liaise with local rangers to establish the local approved 'cliff based activity sites' in the park and the local conditions.
- Guy advised that parks are working towards establishing a database of key abseiling/cliff-based activity sites in SE Qld. The interim cliff-based activities policy is expected to be released soon.
- QPWS can not provide a blanket approval for BWQ to abseil in NP's.
- BWQ advise that Mt French NP is one site where cliff based activity is currently permitted.

Agenda 5 Campsite Monitoring / Bush Campsite booking

5.1 & 5.2 BWQ is continuing voluntary monitoring of bush campsites by bushwalkers with liaison with Mark Burnham. We seek feedback on the effectiveness of monitoring to date, whether there is any evidence of substantial degradation of sites due to heavy use or non-permitted camping, and whether there is any continuing necessity for remote bush campsites to remain on the QPWS booking system.

5.3 While our MOU (Section 7) states that some flexibility is permitted with regard to remote sites, BWQ would prefer an expansion of a "camping zone" system managed by local rangers to apply to remote sites, to dilute any impact over a wider area, coupled with education of bushwalkers in minimum impact techniques.

5.4 For internal strategic planning purposes, BWQ would also be interested in statistics on remote bush campsites booked through the permit system, to gauge trends in both club and non club overnight bushwalk activity.

QPWS Response

5.1 Mark Burnham has apologised for not forwarding the minutes of the previous BWQ monitoring meeting in February and will forward the minutes to BWQ in August. Mark advises that there have been no assessments to date where the reported impact on the bush camping sites has triggered any management actions or changes to setting class. He advises that most changes are within the acceptable limits of change for those sites classifications.

Some issues have been raised with regards to bush toileting and visitor behaviour i.e. Mt Barney, these issues have been noted and forwarded to the relevant Park Manager. If BWQ monitoring volunteers have further issues they can contact Mark Burnham directly on ph: (07) 3512 2323.

5.2 For discussion at CMG

5.3 For discussion at CMG

5.4 IAParks administrator advises that to provide a 12month report for 2009/10 financial year on all bush camping site bookings is a substantial job, and will take sometime as each report for a park has to be run separately, when this report is compiled it will be forwarded to BWQ. A short sample report has been provided (attached).

There are a lot of the bush camping sites that are self-registration or processed by local/regional offices and the booking data is not recorded on IA Parks i.e. Lamington's IA Parks report doesn't show any entries for bush camping. A few other parks that are self registration bush camping only don't have any records in the IA Parks reports, so this data is not readily available.

There are many 'bush camping' sites, and Great Walks camping sites, across

Queensland, if BWQ have specific sites they require data for can they please identify those sites.

Extract from MOU

7 BUSH CAMPING

QPWS identifies bush camping sites on a case-by-case basis by considering use levels, visitor safety, the fragility of the park landscape and/or wildlife, sensitive cultural values, traditional owner views and the availability of suitable campsites.

The Federation respects that QPWS has the right to decide where and under what circumstances bush camping will be permitted. Management plans identify and approve areas where dispersed bush camping is allowed. In bush camping areas, dispersed use is encouraged in settings 1–3. The Federation will encourage affiliated clubs to use defined bush camping sites where possible. Where camping occurs outside defined sites, Federation affiliated clubs will avoid camping in areas of environmental concern or degraded sites. Federation requests to camp within sensitive bush camping areas, instead of defined bush camping sites, will be considered in consultation with regional staff.

Except where special access is granted under 2.9, QPWS will not permit bush camping when a park or park section is closed for safety or sustainability reasons or where camping is prohibited by management plan or advice from Traditional Owners or native title holders.

QPWS agrees that the maximum party size for dispersed bush camping areas will be 12 in settings 3–9 except where a management plan, direction or operational policy defines a higher limit. In areas with defined bush camping sites, the Federation will encourage affiliated clubs to comply with any specified bush camping site limits. This Memorandum of Understanding does not necessarily preclude party sizes of up to 12 in settings 1 and 2.

The Federation acknowledges that while online bookings will be available for most sites and areas, camping outside defined bush camping sites may require bookings through QPWS offices. The QPWS camping refund policy entitles the Federation to a credit on unused camping fees in most circumstances. QPWS acknowledges the convenience of self-registration for bush camping and will provide this option where circumstances permit. Number restrictions apply at bush campsites based on ecological, social and cultural grounds. QPWS agrees that bush camping site capacity limits will normally be fully available. However, the number of camping parties may also be restricted at specific sites to ensure sustainability and protect the social experience. In the first instance, the Federation or affiliated clubs will refer any concerns about bush camping site limits or bookings to the District Liaison Officers appointed under this MOU.

Comments

- BWQ advised that there was some disappointment with the lack of feedback on the value and effectiveness of the monitoring program.
- BWQ are questioning whether bush camping site monitoring should continue. The program was instigated to monitor and review number restrictions in bush camp sites. BWQ would like clarification on the current status of the data.
- BWQ asked if walkers could pitch a tent and camp anywhere as long as they pull-up camp early in the morning i.e. without a camping permit. Example in Lamington NP walkers on Middle Range traverse want to camp anywhere on the Darlington Ridge
- Guy advised that any walker intending to camp would need to either book on line, self-register or seek approval from the local ranger.

- BWQ has advised that members have found it extremely difficult to contact some park offices.
- BWQ have requested a list of all park ranger ph.no's for both contact prior to a walk for bush camping enquiries and for emergency purposes.

Actions

Action 5.1 GT will discuss with SE Region and respond to BWQ

Action 5.2 DM to establish policy regarding Park office telephone no's and advise BWQ.

Agenda 6 Track Maintenance Volunteers

An induction day was held at Daisy Hill in February, but now we need to follow up with First Aid Courses and to schedule site inductions to start the maintenance program. Chloe Jackson has been contacted on 5th July in this regard to follow up for us.

QPWS Response (provided by SE Region)

South East Region priority for BWQ volunteer assistance is track maintenance projects on some of the shorter more accessible tracks at Lamington NP such as Morans Falls, Python Rock, the track down to Elabana Falls off the Border Track, Caves Circuit, Lower Bellbird and possibly the Box Forest Circuit. The work would involve drain clearing, benching, and possibly sign cleaning / painting.

First Aid courses are not mandatory for current BWQ members to undertake volunteer work on QPWS projects. However, where opportunities exist for volunteers to participate in scheduled First Aid training being conducted by SE Region opportunities will be offered to the various volunteer groups.

BWQ should contact Chloe Jackson, SE Ranger, Communications and Community Engagement Unit Telephone (07) 3512 2326 to liaise on both the first aid course and track maintenance programs.

Comments

- BWQ received a call from Chloe Jackson inviting a small number of nominations from BWQ for a forthcoming first aid course in November, this matter is in hand and being dealt with by the SE Region. – No action required

Agenda 7 QPWS Management Plans

7.1 Lamington Management Plan

Date of release?

QPWS Response

The submission period has now closed and approx. 120 submissions are now being reviewed by the planners, the expected date of release of the final is within the next 6 months.

7.2 D'Aguilar Draft Management Plan

Date of release?

QPWS Response

The dates for the commencement of the D'Aguilar NP mgt plan process have not been approved by the A DG QPWS but it is expected to take place with-in the next 2 years.

Comments

- BWQ have prepared a submission for D'Aguilar NP for when the process commences.
- No action required

Agenda 8 Mt Beerwah

Update on reopening.

QPWS response

The Mount Beerwah Summit Trail will reopen later this year once track works have been completed and revised public contact information (interpretation and advisory signage) has been installed.

The Agency has investigated thoroughly options for reopening the site, which would satisfy public demand for access whilst mitigating the risk to visitors as far as possible yet protecting natural and cultural integrity of the site. It was concluded that rockfalls cannot be prevented and no suitable viable routes exist to steer visitors away from the hazard. Hence the Agency could only close the site permanently, therefore eliminating the risk, **or** allow the public the opportunity to choose for themselves whether the risk is too high. To do the latter requires explicit and effective visitor information and it is this option that is currently being put in place.

Some site modifications have been made to encourage experienced walkers and discourage those without suitable equipment and fitness levels. Ultimately however, climbing to the top of Mt Beerwah will be a matter of **informed choice**. A full-time communications specialist is working on a package of geological, cultural and safety interpretation panels that will be supported by a web-based, downloadable risk and safety brochure and on-site safety advisory signs.

Given the scale of the rock face from which boulders may fall, the use of tell-tale plates to monitor movement is neither viable nor helpful. However the site will be closed after periods of very heavy rain, given that this is when the risk of large rockfalls is at its highest.

For further information please contact Claire Wright, Maroochydore Office on 5459 6110.

Comments

- BWQ commented that there was a feature story in the Sunday Mail about base jumping with a photo from Mt Beerwah. Neil supports the QPWS proposal to reopen Mt Beerwah on the basis of 'informed choice' – No action required

Agenda 9 Great Short Walks

Are any likely to proceed?

QPWS Response

There are no proposed Great Short Walks projects approved or funded at present.

Comments

- No funding approved was approved under the program so no projects will proceed.

Agenda 10 - What is the situation with Glen Rock N.P?

Are parts of it to be sold or leased for grazing purposes, and if so how will that affect walking tracks or routes on the lower slopes?"

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QPWS Response

Glen Rock has not been gazetted as NP as yet. No parts of Glen Rock are to be sold. There is a proposal for stock grazing over part of the property. A final decision on stock grazing is yet to be made. There are no plans to close any of the management roads.

Current indications are that 10 lots of USL at Glen Rock will become 2 lots, Lot 1 is flagged as becoming SF and Lot 2 is planned to become NP. Negotiations continuing with DERM State Land Asset Management (SLAM) Branch, dates for finalisation of process are unknown.

Comments

- John Carter, A/Operations Manager for D'Aguilar advised that any proposed grazing leases would not affect current use of tracks or trails.

Agenda 11 Parks Outdoor Recreation Forum

Comments

- Currently 12 participants from various outdoor recreation organisations are attending. Dianne will ask QORF to send reminder next week.

Agenda 12 Next meeting Date

Next mtg proposed for February 2011 – we will liaise on a date and propose to meet by Dec 2010 to review the MOU.

QUEENSLAND PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE CONTACT LIST

POSITION	NAME	CONTACT DETAILS		LOCATION
Assistant DIRECTOR-GENERAL QPWS	Andrea Leverington	3330 5270	Fax: 3330 5398	BRISBANE
Principal Advisor	Lisa Watts	3330 5186		BRISBANE
Director, Partnerships & World Heritage	Ross MacLeod	3330 5394	0419 675 457	BRISBANE
Director, Business & Asset Services	Rob Allen	3225 1542	0421 614 796	BRISBANE
Director	Clive Cook	3330 5275	0408 774 677	BRISBANE
Director, Strategy & Planning	A/ Jason Jacobi	3330 5272	0404 142 879	BRISBANE
Director, Conservation Management	Mike Harris	3330 5271	0418 621 271	BRISBANE
Director, Tourism & Visitor Services	Anne Greentree	3330 5273	0412 581 705	BRISBANE
Director, Wildlife Management	Nick Rigby	3330 5274	0448 166 874	BRISBANE
Director, Cape York	Buzz Symonds	4046 6769	0417 637 520	CAIRNS
TERRESTRIAL				
Senior Director	Annie Moody	3225 1955	0407 759 264	BRISBANE
RM - Wet Tropics	Wolf Sievers	4046 6657	0408 077 361	CAIRNS
RM - Sunshine Coast/Burnett	Geoff Brittingham	5459 6112	0408 732 721	COTTON TREE
RM - Cape York/Savanna	James Newman	4046 6610	0427 024 615	CAIRNS
RM – Capricornia	Leigh Harris	4944 7802	0447 048 792	MACKAY
RM - South East	A/ Neil Cambourn	3512 2320	0411 230 873	THE GAP
RM - Western	Rob Murphy	4699 4344	0429 640 433	TOOWOOMBA
MARINE				
Senior Director	Terry Harper	3227 8870	0401 991 835	BRISBANE
RM - Northern Qld Marine	Richard Quincey	4722 5243	0407 225 219	TOWNSVILLE
RM - Central Qld Marine	Damien Head	4967 7350	0407 154 235	AIRLIE BEACH
RM - Great Sandy	Ross Belcher	4121 1629	0413 005 309	MARYBOROUGH
RM - Moreton Bay	Miles Yeates	3131 2853	0423 025 794	CLEVELAND