

Branch / Group: Waterways – River Health Group

Issue / Topic: **DRAFT MINUTES: Western Treatment Plant Biodiversity Conservation Advisory Committee**

Date: 10 March 2009

Location: Theatre, Western Treatment Plant, Discovery Centre

Present: John Barkla, Tom Fletcher, Maarten Hulzebosch, Richard Loyn, Peter Menkhorst, Bernie McCarrick, Marc Cassenet, Clive Minton, William Steele

Apologies: Chris Lester, Aaron Organ, Cr Bob Fairclough, Brad Mclean, Justin Horne      Guests: Bob Swindley, Greg Bain, Nicola Mendleson

Item No.	Details / Issues	Responsibility	Due Date
<b>1</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>		
	These were confirmed. Motion by JB and seconded by BMC.		
<b>2</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>		
2.1	Letter for Tom Fletcher:  WKS to arrange a formal letter of invitation for Tom Fletcher. This is now overdue but will be done by April.	WKS	April
2.2	New and emerging weeds:  BMc raised the concern regarding Tall Wheat Grass with Geelong City Council. Darren Coughlan from Melbourne Water to speak with MH and learn exact locations of infestations.	MH	ASAP
2.3	New and emerging weeds:  MH requested that Melbourne Water undertake an annual review of priority weeds to be tackled.  WKS reported that Melbourne Water had now drawn up a new priority list of weeds. It had been suggested that Melbourne Water should keep some budget allocation 'free' each year to allow flexibility in response to tackling new and/or unanticipated weed outbreaks.	WKS to incorporate into annual works planning	June
2.4	Ferretting:  WKS reported that he had made enquiries about the use of ferretting at WTP and that there were informal arrangements	WKS to convey recommendation to Melbourne Water.	ASAP

	<p>with a group who ferret on the site.</p> <p>Discussion took place that ferreting can be a good measure to control rabbits if done in a controlled manner and in conjunction as part of an integrated control program.</p> <p>However, the BCAC maintained its concern about having informal ferreting taking place on site due to the danger of ferrets escaping and establishing wild populations that attack local wildlife.</p>	All to record sightings and send in to WKS.	
2.5	<p>Shellfish collectors on the coast:</p> <p>BMc has liaised with DPI regarding this matter and it remains an ongoing concern to control.</p> <p>Any sightings should be reported to "13 FISH".</p>	All	
<b>3</b>	<b>Parks Victoria pest control works</b>		
	BMc reported that Parks Victoria are planning to conduct fox and rabbit control work in mid-April in The Spit Nature Reserve		
<b>4</b>	<b>Western Lagoon Works</b>		
	<p>WKS reported that Ecology Australia has completed 'benchmark' mapping the vegetation and that the freshwater vegetation in saltmarsh areas is already dying off.</p> <p>Melbourne Water has removed rocks from around ponds 4 and 5 and started getting rid of some of the sludge. The cheapest option is to put it in some of the other ponds. The aim is to sculpt the bottom and then leave the ponds till EPBC referral and introduce salt water in 12 month's time. Early results of this program look good.</p> <p>Funding for next year's major earthworks is to be applied for under Caring for Our Country.</p>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Status of EPBC Act compliance</b>		
	<p>(a) <u>2002 EIP</u></p> <p>We are still waiting on feedback from DEWHR on the 2007 report. The draft of the 2008 annual report is being prepared and will be circulated to the Committee in the next two weeks.</p> <p>CM asked if we are any closer to being able to predict which variables are affecting duck numbers. WKS reported that a comparison with the Summer Water Fowl Count showed that there was a site-specific decline in filter-feeding ducks at the WTP following the decommissioning of Lake Borrie and it has to be accepted that the EIP has resulted in reduced numbers.</p>	WKS	March

	<p>(b) <u>2008 Land Use Strategy and outsourcing</u></p> <p>The WTP Land Use Strategy and outsourcing was declared a controlled action by the Federal Minister last year. Melbourne Water will be assessed on preliminary documentation and this will include an ECD and a management plan for the agricultural areas. Melbourne Water hopes to submit its preliminary documentation no later than June 2009 and is aiming for the ECD by the end of April. Ecology Australia are preparing the ECD for the WTP.</p> <p>Warren Blyth has been appointed to develop the management plan for the agricultural areas.</p> <p>WKS has commissioned Ecology Australia to prepare the Ramsar site management plan for the remaining areas of the WTP and this was expected in September. Committee members were encouraged to respond to any requests for information from the team preparing the Ramsar site management plan. They would have an opportunity to comment on drafts.</p> <p>WKS noted that no-one from the Committee had attended the recent tour of the site which would have provided an excellent opportunity to inform the consultants preparing the ECD.</p> <p>Committee members noted that the information about the purpose of the tour arrived late and did not adequately communicate the context of the tour or how important it was for them to attend.</p> <p>GB and WKS to provide feedback from the BCAC and find out if there will be another opportunity for BCAC members to provide this input to inform this process.</p> <p>(c) <u>Irrigation efficiency plan</u></p> <p>Melbourne Water is currently preparing an irrigation plan for the WTP site at the request of EPA. MC commented that he is concerned that EPA might place requirements on the farm for irrigation efficiency improvements that will require EPBC referral. MC to inform the Committee if their input will be required.</p>	<p>GB/WKS</p> <p>MC</p>	<p>ASAP</p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Other Business</b>		
6.1	<p>WKS reported that Melbourne Water has formed an alliance called Sewage Treatment and Pump Stations (STAPS) to undertake major capital works at WTP and is planning a number of programs. All programs will be subject to a triple bottom line approach and all usual safeguards and</p>		

	<p>requirements apply.</p> <p>A representative from the alliance has asked to come and speak to the Committee and this will take place at a future meeting (tbc).</p>		
11.2	<p>WKS reported that Melbourne Water has a response program in place after the recent bushfires and it was hoped that part of this will involve monitoring birds in the recently burned catchment areas. Melbourne Water is interested in gaining advice and assistance in undertaking this monitoring. WKS to meet with BOCA and Birds Australia. PM suggested that the program manager involved contact DSE and speak to Steve Platt.</p>	WKS to arrange	ASAP

11.3	Bob Swindley asked why birdwatcher access to Walsh's Lagoon is currently denied. WKS replied that was an agreed part of the access management strategy. BS should speak with Operations people if this was affecting his work-related access to any areas.	BS	
11.4	PM asked about the status of birdwatching access at the site and new signs. JB said that letters were supposed to have been received before the end of 2008.  WKS reported that a timetable had been established for these actions but that unforeseen delays had occurred. It should happen soon.		
11.5	Formal meeting finished at 6.59 and then the Committee review took place from 7-9 p.m. A report from this review will be circulated to the Committee before the next meeting.	WKS to circulate.	

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Next Meetings: Suggested dates are:

- 5 May 2009
- 4 August 2009
- 3 November 2009

Venue: Conference Room, Western Treatment Plant Discovery Centre