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SLOPES - Updates: Vail to buy Whistler Blackcomb - Wild horses in KNP - SLOPES AGM 2016

SLOPES <slopes.au@gmail.com>

10 August 2016 at 09:10

Bcc: frank.zipfinger@gmail.com

Dear SLOPES Members and Associates

This email updates you regarding:

1. Vail Resorts to buy Whistler Blackcomb

Vail Resorts has announced it is buying Whistler Blackcomb in Canada, said to be "North America's biggest and busiest ski resort".

See attached articles on the acquisition.

Vail Resorts of course last year also acquired the Perisher Range Resorts.

Interesting comments in the AFR article include "The deal provides the Canadian company with increased financial strength to expand..." and Vail's pledge "to keep leadership local" and "to invest substantially in Whistler Blackcomb's infrastructure and its expansion of four-season activities".

These are all elements relevant to Vail's ownership of the Perisher Range Resorts, especially in the context of the ongoing Governance Review.

2. Wild Horses in KNP

SLOPES has kept members up to date with proposals regarding the brumby population in KNP (see for example the SLOPES email of 13 July to Clubs).

Attached is an ABC News article dated 7 August 2016.

This highlights that "The draft plan has proposed reducing the brumby population in the state's biggest national park by 90 per cent in 20 years, from an estimated 6000 to 600" in order to reduce their environmental impact.

Public comments on the draft plan are invited by August 19.

The draft plan can be found here: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/protectsnowies/knp-wild-horse-plan-flyer.pdf>

To make submissions as per the draft plan:

Email your submission on the plan to kosciuszko.wildhorseplan@environment.nsw.gov.au

Post your submission to:

Project Officer

Kosciuszko National Park,

Wild Horse Management Plan Review

National Parks & Wildlife Service,

PO Box 2228 Jindabyne NSW 2627

3. SLOPES AGM

A reminder that our AGM this year will be held on Monday 21 November starting at 7.30pm at the Chatswood RSL.

Regards

Frank Zipfinger
President
SLOPES

3 attachments



ABC - Wild Horses.pdf
372K



Vail to pay \$1.4b for Whistler Blackcomb ski resort.pdf
184K



Vail buys Whistler resort for \$1.4b.pdf
637K



NSW Government to cull 90pc of brumbies in Kosciusko National Park over next 20 years

Updated Sun 1 May 2016, 1:50pm

A plan to almost wipe out the Snowy Mountains brumby population over the next two decades has been released by the New South Wales Government today.

The draft Wild Horse Management plan for Kosciusko National Park aims to reduce the current number of wild horses in the national park area from 6,000 to approximately 3,000 in the next five to 10 years.

It then proposes to cut that figure to only 600 over the next 20 years.

NSW Environment Minister Mark Speakman said the horses were damaging the park's fragile alpine and sub-alpine environment.

Scientists have long campaigned for the removal of all brumbies from Australia's alpine areas, arguing they damage sensitive waterways and endanger native species.

Mr Speakman said a range of humane control methods including trapping, mustering, fertility control and ground shooting would be used to carry out the cull.

Aerial shooting, brumby running and roping have been ruled out, he said.

The plan also identifies three locations in the park that could carry the smaller population with less environmental impact.

Mr Speakman said the Government recognised that there was some cultural heritage value to the wild horses.

"But the numbers need to come down quite dramatically, because they're unsustainable and they're doing serious damage to the park," Mr Speakman said.

"We have to do something, we've put out this plan to get public feedback."

He said that the Government has had the chief scientist of the RSPCA as the deputy chair of our independent technical group.

Mr Speakman said where rehoming was possible the Government would do so.

"Wild horse management is an emotive and complex issue," he said.

"There are diverse opinions in the community and often deeply held views which polarise stakeholder groups.

"It is clear, however, that the broader community values the unique environmental values of Kosciuszko National Park and looks to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to protect these values."

The draft plan will be on public exhibition from May 1 to July 8. The community will be able to provide feedback during that time.

Charity calls for fertility control of horses

The founder and president of charity Save the Brumbies Inc, Jan Carter, said the proposed cull was "absolutely horrific".

She said her organisation was opposed to aerial culling and ground shooting of horses.

"At the moment we are trialling fertility control, we want to see that established in the parks," Ms Carter said.

"We've had a 75 per cent success rate, so far with our trials.

"Fertility control, introduced in groups of horses where the foaling rate is quite high in good pastures combined with passive trapping and removal ... will significantly reduce the numbers."

She said the horses were an important part of Australian history.

"They are our culture, they are an icon and they deserve to have protection and above all they deserve to have humane handling," she said.

She said the brumbies do not cause as much damage to the environment as some scientists have said.

"We have independent reports, scientific reports ... that [say] they do not cause the damage that they are accused of."

She said wombats and feral animals such as cats, dogs and pigs caused a lot more damage to the environment, but the horses were out during the day, rather than at night, so they were more noticeable.

Proposed culling methods 'nothing short of cruel'

Peter Cochrane, the former local MP for Monaro and the president of the Snowy Mountains Bush Users group, has called the planned cull a "massacre".

He said while the Government had ruled out aerial culling, they had not ruled out other "cruel" methods, including ground shooting.

"Ground shooting is a new element that has been introduced and in the environment of Kosciuszko National Park it's extremely difficult, but it's also unnecessary," Mr Cochrane said.

"The traditional methods of roping and trapping could save the Government, the taxpayer, a lot of money and would result in a greater amount of horses being rehomed.

"The Snowy Mountains Bush Users group have no fundamental opposition to culling brumbies ... what we do have opposition to is ... the methodology in culling the brumbies [which] is nothing short of cruel."

He said the brumby numbers could easily be managed by locals, as they had been in the past.

"The fact that they've ruled out roping and trapping by locals, is in itself a disgrace," he said.

"This was the way this issue was managed for 150 years.

"Now that the National Parks and Wildlife Service have outlawed that method of capturing the brumbies, this has raised the ire of the entire community."

He said that the horses originally came from South Africa and India and were used by the Light Horse Brigade in World War I and World War II.

"Therefore they're part of the cultural heritage of the Kosciuszko National Park and Australia," he said.

"There's a need to protect the DNA of those horses who have a strong link with our history."

Topics: animals, perisher-valley-2624

First posted Sun 1 May 2016, 10:23am



Kosciuszko: Minister vows to stop Snowy Mountain brumbies doing more damage to national park

Landline By Kerry Staight

Updated Sun 7 Aug 2016, 2:35pm

The NSW Environment Minister has vowed to deal with what he describes as an out-of-control brumby population in Kosciuszko National Park, despite strong opposition to the Government's wild horse draft management plan.

"You can have wild horses in many parts of Australia," Mark Speakman said.

"I don't want to see Kosciuszko National Park continue to deteriorate on my watch as Environment Minister and I am determined that we have to intervene."

The draft plan has proposed reducing the brumby population in the state's biggest national park by 90 per cent in 20 years, from an estimated 6,000 to 600.

But wild horse advocacy groups said that would be a tragedy.

"It's part of our cultural image and one that we need to protect at all cost," Peter Cochran from the Snowy Mountains Bush Users group said.

Colleen O'Brien from the Victorian Brumby Association said there was "nothing quite like actually seeing wild horses being wild".

"Brumbies out in the high country; it's just absolutely magical," she said.

"The plan as it stands is the death knell for our brumbies in Kosciuszko."

'Very little suffering' in ground shooting, Speakman says

While aerial culling has been ruled out as a control method in the draft plan, the report recommends using ground shooting as a management strategy.

"As I understand it, an expert shooting at the cranium of a horse can kill it in eight or nine seconds so there is very, very little suffering," Mr Speakman said.

RSPCA chief inspector David O'Shannessy said ground shooting was a humane way to euthanise horses, if it was carried out by skilled professionals in a way that caused no distress or suffering to the animal.

But Mr Cochran, a former National Party MP, said that was unrealistic.

"It's folly to think they can put snipers up there and shoot horses without some of them escaping wounded. It's an outrageous proposition," he said.

"There is nobody on the brumby advocacy side which would support any form of culling under the current proposal."

Brumbies threatening habitats of endangered species: NPWS

The draft plan aims to reduce the environmental impact the wild horses are having.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) said the brumbies, among other feral animals, were damaging the wetlands and bogs of the Snowy Mountains and threatening the habitats of endangered animals like the broad toothed rat and the corroboree frog.

Graeme Worboys from the Australian National University said people did not understand what was at stake.

"The catchments and the water supply and the damage to that has an effect on so many millions of people downstream all the way to Adelaide," he said.

"And secondly, these Australian animals are only found in the high country.

"I like horses too, but I like Australian animals as well and why shouldn't they have a chance to live, to survive, to continue?"

But Ms O'Brien said the ecosystem was healthy and that in some cases the horses were helping the environment, by keeping introduced grasses under control.

"What we're seeing in Kosciuszko is lots of healthy horses and lots of healthy environments," she said.

Mr Speakman said the group of scientists assembled to look at the situation in Kosciuszko had found there are no ecological benefits from having wild horses in the park.

"I think there's a lot of wishful thinking in the minds of some people who have this emotional attachment to wild horses that they aren't causing significant damage," he said.

To take the pressure off the environment park staff have in recent years relied on what they call passive trapping.

Brumbies are lured into yards using salt and mineral blocks or molasses and, if they are lucky, sent to new homes.

'A wild horse is honest and genuine'

Ms O'Brien has been rescuing Snowy Mountains horses for 15 years and has trained and re-homed 350 in that time.

She said it was rewarding but costly and time-consuming process.

"We actually find they're safer than domestic horses to train," she said, from her brumby sanctuary west of Melbourne.

"They're absolutely delightful to have around and they bond with you in a way that almost a dog would bond with you."

Since the trapping program started in 2002 more than 3,200 brumbies have been caught, but fewer than a fifth have found new homes.

The rest have been trucked to abattoirs and knackeries and killed.

It is a wasted resource New South Wales pastoralist Joe Hughes now wants to tap into.

"The offer that I've made to National Parks is that we will take all the horses that are available to us," Mr Hughes said.

The former cattleman turned sheep producer recently picked up his first lot of Kosciuszko horses.

While other re-homing groups are unfamiliar with him, he said he was addicted to training brumbies after growing up breaking in wild horses on remote stations.

"I don't know what crack's like but God, it can't be anywhere near as good as this," he said, from his Belarabon station south-west of Cobar.

"A wild horse is honest and genuine. They are the best horses to deal with."

Brumbies 'can be trained, they can be useful'

While he is a brumby lover, Mr Hughes has been involved in controlling wild horse numbers in the past and supports the State Government's draft proposal to reduce the Kosciuszko population to 600.

"The community has said let's make it a national park and now a certain amount of the community is saying, well, let's thrash it out and destroy it. It doesn't make any sense," he said.

But he said he would prefer to save, train and sell as many Kosciuszko brumbies as possible and, in the process, create a profitable business.

"People think that stallions can't be trained," he said.

"We've got six and seven year old stallions here that we're training and crawling through their legs within a matter of hours.

"They can be trained, they can be useful, they can become somebody's companion for many years."

Under the draft plan the trapping and re-homing program would continue.

But Mr Speakman said other management strategies were also needed.

"The numbers are now out of control basically, so business as usual is not working and we need to do something more," he said.

The public is being invited to comment on the draft plan, with submissions closing on August 19.

Topics: rural, pest-management, environment, animals, jindabyne-2627, nsw

First posted Sun 7 Aug 2016, 5:31am

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Aug 9 2016 at 3:27 AM Updated 1 hr ago

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Vail to pay \$1.4b for Whistler Blackcomb ski resort



Vail said it plans to invest substantially in Whistler Blackcomb's infrastructure and its expansion of four-season activities. AP

by Prashant Gopal and Katia Dmitrieva

Vail Resorts, which owns ski destinations in Colorado, is buying Canada's Whistler Blackcomb Holding, North America's biggest and busiest ski resort, in a cash and stock deal valued at about \$C1.4 billion (\$1.41 billion).

Vail is offering Whistler Blackcomb shareholders \$C17.50 a share in cash and 0.0975 shares of Vail stock for a total value of \$C36 a share, or 43 per cent more than Whistler Blackcomb's closing price on August 5, according to a statement Monday. Whistler Blackcomb shares jumped 45 per cent to \$C36.48 in morning trading in Toronto. Stateside, Vail rose 6 per cent to \$US153.02.

"We will build upon the guest experience at Whistler Blackcomb while preserving the unique brand and character of the resort as an iconic Canadian destination for guests around the world," Rob Katz, chief executive of Vail Resorts, said in the statement.

Furthermore, Vail said it is planning to integrate Whistler Blackcomb into its season pass products for the ski season beginning in November 2017. The deal to buy the Canadian resort is expected to close before the end of calendar 2016.

The deal provides the Canadian company with increased financial strength to expand, one of the world's most popular mountain resorts. The property in

Properties



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operations and sought to diversify.

Whistler Blackcomb's chief executive Dave Brownlie will join Vail's senior leadership team in the mountain division and will continue as the resort's chief operating officer, according to the statement. Whistler Blackcomb, whose board has unanimously approved the deal, is also nominating one of its directors to join Vail's board.

Vail pledged to keep leadership local, retain most staff and continue ongoing negotiations with First Nations groups about its master development agreement. Vail said it plans to "invest substantially" in Whistler Blackcomb's infrastructure and its expansion of four-season activities.

Whistler Blackcomb said it isn't immune to regional weather patterns and that the transaction secures the "long-term future" of the resort. As temperatures rise globally, many ski resorts, including those in California, have had to delay their season openings or close early due to lack of snow.

Brownlie earlier said that Whistler Blackcomb could expand its ski terrain by about 25 per cent from more than 3300 hectares now.

Greenhill & Co served as financial adviser to Whistler Blackcomb while Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt LLP and Farris, Vaughan, Wills & Murphy LLP were its legal advisers. Stikeman Elliott LLP and Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP provided legal counsel to Vail.



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Vail buys Whistler resort for \$1.41b

APR 10/18/16

Prashant Gopal and Katia Dmitrieva
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Vail said it was planning to integrate Whistler Blackcomb into its season pass products for the ski season beginning in November 2017. The deal to buy the Canadian resort is expected to close before the end of calendar 2016.

The deal provides the Canadian company with increased financial strength to expand, while giving Vail one of the world's most popular mountain resorts. The property in Whistler, 120 kilometres north of Vancouver, draws two million people each year to its slopes. While traffic has increased as



Whistler resort in British Columbia draws two million people each year to its slopes. PHOTO AP

the low Canadian dollar attracts global visitors, management has expressed concern about the effects of climate change on its operations and sought to diversify.

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