



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

1. Background to respondent organisation.

The NSW Apiarists Association (NSWAA) is responding to the invitation to comment on the Monga State Conservation Area Draft Plan of Management, October 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 5,500 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 Monga 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 Monga State Conservation Area. The Conservation Areas provide apiary sites or the potential for 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 270,850 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. Almonds 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 areas such as the State Conservation Areas and the surrounding private and public lands.

3. Comment on Section 5 Management Operations and Other Uses specifically 5.2 Non – NPWS uses / operations.

The NSWAA notes that on pages 15 and 16 of the Monga SCA Draft Plan of Management no reference is made to either past or future beekeeping activities and / or beekeeping sites in the Monga SCA. In fact within the whole document no mention has been made of beekeeping as a previous activity within the boundaries of the Monga SCA. This omission is disappointing as it is a fact that bee sites have been held on the top of Clyde Mountain within the Monga SCA. The tree species brown barrel (*Eucalyptus fastigata*) and pinkwood (*Eucryphia moorei*) are significant floral resource found within the Monga SCA and have been accessed in the past by beekeepers.

The NSWAA requests that previously held apiary sites be reinstated as soon as practicable and the release, where possible, of new sites within the Monga SCA be a point of discussion with representatives of the NSWAA.

4. NSWAA aim is to continue in its efforts to progress the objective of streamlining the process and system involved with access to and maintenance of apiary sites on public lands in NSW.

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 NSWAA, 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 requires 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.

5. Conclusion

All State Conservation Areas within NSW 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