



Sydney Weeds Committees

• Sydney Central • Sydney South West
• Sydney North • Sydney West – Blue Mountains

MINUTES OF THE SYDNEY WEEDS STEERING GROUP MEETING

Tuesday 21st May 2013 at Five Dock Library

Attendance:

Jonathan Sanders
Chris Stanfield
Alex Burgess-Buxton
Matthew McNaughton
Jeff Hill
Rob Stevenson
Mel Hall
Steven Smith
Rosanna Luca
Liz Pearce

Representing:

Sydney West Blue Mountains Weeds Committee
Sydney West Blue Mountains Weeds Committee
Sydney South West Weeds Committee
Sydney South West Weeds Committee
Sydney Central Weeds Committee
Sydney Central Weeds Committee
Sydney North Weeds Committee
Sydney North Weeds Committee
Project Officer - Weeds Action Project
Project Officer - Sydney Weeds Committees

Apologies:

Chris Dewhurst

WAP project lead agency, Hawkesbury River County Council.

1. Welcome

Jonathan Sanders (Chair) opened the meeting and invited roundtable introductions of all in attendance.

2. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

Jonathan Sanders, Chris Stanfield, Alex Burgess-Buxton and Mal Hall declared that their councils/NPWS regions are recipients of the WAP grant funding. Matthew McNaughton arrived late and his council is also a recipient of WAP funding.

3. Budget – Income and Expenditure to date

Rosanna Luca presented the financial report to the Steering Group:

Total amount of Sydney Weeds Committees funds deposited into Hawkesbury River County Council since 10 th December 2012	\$1,045,875.98 plus GST
Balance of Sydney Weeds Committees funds currently held in Hawkesbury River County Council at 20 th May 2013, deducting all expenditure to date (\$686,844.59 excl GST)	\$359,031.39 plus GST

The remaining balance of funds held within the HRCC includes:

- Carried over unspent WAP funds from Years 2 and 3 (to be allocated in year 4)
- Unspent membership fees and weeds committees general funds.

The Department of Primary Industries approved the WAP Project Variation in March 2013, and any leftover funds will now be appropriately allocated and spent in Year 4.

Some of these funds are for Project Officer salary until the Year 4 WAP funds and membership fees arrive.

As a separate task, Rosanna Luca prepared a summary showing allocation of all expenses against the various income streams since the date of SWC incorporation in October 2010, and projecting ahead to 30th June 2013. This involved allocating all payments of salaries, website, WAP grant amounts and other expenses against: weeds committee annual membership fees, WAP Years 1-3, Roadside Environment

Committee grant, sponsorship received for the 2013 forum and various reimbursements.

Motion:

That assistance is sought from a bookkeeper to check over the allocation of all expenses since 2010 against the various sources of income, and clarify questions regarding GST payments and reimbursements, to ensure the summary is a true and accurate reflection of the funds now currently available.

Vote: All in favour. Resolved: Up to \$1,000 approved for Rosanna Luca to engage a bookkeeper.

4. Draft Operating Budget 2013-2014

Rosanna Luca presented the draft Operating Budget for 2013-2014, which also includes the projected carry over amount after 30th June 2013.

Motions:

1. That the Project Officer (Sydney Weeds Committees) salary is increased to 21 hours per week (for 48 weeks) for 2013-2014.
2. That Pittwater Council is invited to apply for WAP contingency funds should assistance be required to control recent new incursions of *Asparagus falcatus*.
3. That the committed allocation for Kudzu control at Boundary Creek is retained and can be made available to the landholders if required, up until June 2014.
4. That the amount of any "spare" remaining funds is clarified by the bookkeeper, and the funds are used for the benefit of all 37 member organisations.
5. That the Steering Group approves the Draft Operating Budget 2013-2014 in principle, subject to clarification about the correct amounts of unallocated surplus funds, as confirmed by the bookkeeper.

Vote: All in favour. Resolved: Rosanna Luca to finalise and circulate the 2013-2014 Operating Budget by 31st May 2013, once the figures have been checked by a bookkeeper.

6. Weeds Action Project update

Rosanna Luca reported on the WAP Planning Day held on 1st May.

- All project partners attended. Year 3 activities are progressing well.
- Approx \$100,000 (out of the \$715,000 allocated to the partners) will be carried over past 30th June 2013. All funds have been committed, much of the targeted Boneseed control will happen during flowering time until end of Spring 2013.
- Year 3 reporting requirements, instructions and the deadline were discussed.
- Deadline for signed WAP reports from all project partners is **Friday 26th July 2013**.
- The deadline for the collated annual report to DPI is 31st August. Rosanna will commence preparation of the Year 3 annual report for DPI, and handover to the new Project Officer or another nominated person for completion by 31st August.

Most project partners will continue with existing activities into Year 4.

Year 4 funds are anticipated to arrive around September 2013.

Actions:

1. Rosanna Luca to send reminders about Year 3 reporting deadline early June 2013.
2. New Project Officer to send letters of offer out immediately after receipt of the Year 4 grant, to enable work to commence promptly.

Requests for variations (with same WAP allocations) were presented:

Partner	Variation of activities in Year 4	Decision
Hawkesbury River County Council	Redirect some of the existing WAP allocation away from on ground weed control in EEC sites, towards expanding the property inspection program	Approved by Steering Group
Pittwater Council	Control of Boneseed will be done as part of council's existing bushland reserve management program. Redirect WAP allocation to Horsetail control and containment site, new incursion <i>Asparagus falcatus</i>	Approved by Steering Group

	and strategic control of Cats Claw Creeper (working with private landholders).	
Partner	Variation of activities in Year 4	Decision
Sutherland	Council funds will be used to control more widespread aquatic weeds such as Ludwigia. Redirect WAP allocation towards more surveillance in upper catchment surrounding the Senegal Tea Plant at Audley Weir in Royal National Park (working together with NPWS)	Approved by Steering Group
Warringah	Redirect some WAP allocation towards control of Horsetail. Will seek assistance from DPI.	Approved by Steering Group
Wollondilly	Other funds have been acquired to assist with African Olive containment and Maurandya control. Redirect WAP allocation to Asparagus plumosus control at two sites, follow up at Kudzu control site. Re-inspection, mapping and follow up control of previous Boneseed control sites. Any Boneseed plants found will be removed.	Approved by Steering Group

New funding requests for Year 4 were presented to the Steering Group.

Partner	Year 4 request for funds	Decision
NPWS Metro South West region	Control of Senegal Tea Plant at Audley Weir, Royal NP. Links with Sutherland Council inspection and surveillance program to check for source and spread in surrounding areas.	Approved in principle by Steering Group
NPWS Metro South West region	Boneseed control in Nattai Valley, Thirlmere Lakes, Burragarang. Links in with Wollondilly Council Boneseed control program	Approved in principle by Steering Group
NPWS Metro South West region	Boneseed control in East Heathcote area. Links in with Sutherland Council Boneseed control program.	Approved in principle by Steering Group
NPWS Metro South West region	Alligator Weed suppression at Gulguer Gorge. An extension of Nepean River Alligator Weed suppression program by Camden, Wollondilly and Campbelltown.	Approved in principle by Steering Group
NPWS Metro South West region	Boneseed control in around Prospect Reservoir.	TBC, may be done as part of NPWS program.
NPWS Metro North East region	Boneseed control from Mt Colah to Mt Ku-ring-gai ridge top, difficult access areas. Seek support from transport corridor agencies to control Boneseed in adjacent rail corridor, F3 and Pacific Highway as a partnership project.	Approved in principle by Steering Group
Hunters Hill	Property inspection program around Buffalo Creek assets. Expand council's inspection and private landholder education program.	Approved in principle by Steering Group
NPWS Metro North East region	Control of isolated Asparagus investigation at Mackerel Beach. NPWS critical priority area.	Approved in principle by Steering Group
Canterbury & Rockdale	Strategic control and education about Corky Passionflower, working with NPWS around sections of Wolli Creek. NPWS medium priority area.	TBC, more information and WRA result needed before decision made.

Motions:

That the Steering Group approved in principle the new requests for funding, subject to the availability of WAP funds in Years 4 and 5 and clarifications mentioned above.

Vote: All in favour.

Resolved:

WAP Project Officer to work with each partner to clarify details of funds required and WAP targets to be achieved, and report back to the Steering Group.

WAP Project Officer to report back about the Weed Risk Assessment results for Corky Passionflower before making a decision about funding control work around Wolli Creek.

Boneseed in Sydney Central LGAs

Hurstville, Burwood, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Botany Bay, Kogarah are not currently active members of the Sydney Central committee. It is quite possible that there are Boneseed plants located within the rail corridors and other parcels of land throughout those LGA's.

Action:

New Project Officer (WAP) to work with those council officers and the Railcorp representative to identify best ways of checking the landscape for Boneseed across these local government areas.

7. Updates from Project Officers

Motion: That the professional forum should be held as planned on 18th October 2013.

Vote: All in favour.

Action: Rosanna Luca to follow up with HNCMA about the progress of the proposed mapping of a Sydney wide African Olive containment line.

8. Recruitment of new Project Officers

New office space for Project Officers

Motion: That the office space of the Project Officers is located in Parramatta, as a geographically central location for Sydney, convenient to all members.

Vote: All in favour. Resolved: Jonathan Sanders to seek approval for a temporary arrangement to host the Project Officers in the NPWS office in Parramatta. A more permanent arrangement to be sought over time.

Structure of the positions

Motion: That recruitment commences as soon as possible for two contractor positions, including one as more senior position to be accountable for the budget, the main contact person for the Steering Group and Sydney Weeds Committees, and to program and co-ordinate the work activities of the other Project Officer and GIS officer.

Vote: All in favour. Resolved: Liz Pearce and Rosanna Luca to update the work plans and circulate to the interview panel for approval, prior to advertising.

Motion: That the two advertised positions are for 21 hours per week for a period of up to 12 months, with review and possibility of extension after that time.

Vote: All in favour.

Motion: That the work contracts include a clause for a three month probationary period.

Vote: All in favour.

Resolved: Liz Pearce to update the advertisement and circulate to the interview panel for approval. Jonathan Sanders, Rob Stevenson and Chris Dewhurst to be on the interview panel. Matthew McNaughton offered to be a back up if required. Interviews to be held at the NPWS office on Parramatta.

Accountability of the Project Officers/contractors

There was some discussion regarding the terms of engagement of the contractors by the lead agency administering the funds (Hawkesbury River County Council), and the fact that this means the contractors working on behalf of the Sydney Weeds Committees report to the lead agency on a regular basis, rather than to the Steering Group of Sydney Weeds Committees.

The contractors currently working for Sydney Weeds Committees and the Weeds Action Project now come under the definition of a “worker” in the NSW Work Health and Safety legislation. The Hawkesbury River County Council is required to provide the Workers Compensation insurance, and carries a significant legal and management responsibility in engaging the contractors on behalf of the Sydney Weeds Committees.

It was noted that the HRCC and its General Manager, Chris Dewhurst, had put in a significant effort with Rosanna Luca over the past year to get many of the administrative processes of the WAP and SWC finalised, and operating smoothly. It was also discussed that, thanks in part to this work and the work of other SWC members in finalising the other SWC foundation rules, the administrative workload of running the SWC and the WAP was now much less time-consuming. There was discussion about the necessity of ensuring that all administrative and financial processes are above board and meet all necessary standards consistently.

It was pointed out that the WAP funding guidelines have been revised and now say that a regional incorporated organisation can be a WAP project lead agency. This means that Sydney Weeds Committees (as an incorporated association) is now in a position to be the lead agency for the WAP project. There was some discussion about whether this would be a retrograde or progressive step, and whether the issues that caused the set-up of the current arrangement would recur. It was pointed out that the major obstacle to previous operations had been the inability of an independent incorporated association to be a lead agency, and that this obstacle had now been removed by DPI. It was also pointed out that the considerable work that had gone into the development of administrative procedures now allowed the organisation to run on a lighter administrative workload, which had been the other major issue.

It was also confirmed that Sydney Weeds Committee is still a registered, incorporated association with the NSW Department of Fair Trading, and that it still has an operational bank account. It was also discussed that the Steering Group is in fact the same composition as the former SWC Board, elected by the same process, and in fact has continued to operate in directing the affairs of the Sydney Weeds Committees and the WAP, while delegating detailed management and administration to the HRCC. It was confirmed that it is therefore possible to rescind the decision of the June 2012 meeting of the Board, and resume operational responsibility for all aspects of the operation of Sydney Weeds Committees and the Sydney Weeds Action Project.

Motions:

That the “Sydney Weeds Committee” resumes its operational responsibility, operating as an incorporated association that administers the weeds committee membership funds, WAP project funds and other received funding, resumes its role as the lead agency for the Sydney WAP, and engages the contractors directly, subject to the ability to attain Workers Compensation Insurance.

That the Sydney Weeds Steering Group meets six times each year, which can be via face to face meetings or teleconferences and involves the minimum quorum (at least five Steering Group members), with a financial statement and resolutions of each meeting documented and signed off by the Chair.

That the incorporated association “Sydney Weeds Committee” changes its name and all associated documentation to “Sydney Weeds Committees”, to reflect the collective of four committees successfully working together across the Region.

That the Steering Group be formally recognised as the management committee/Executive for the organisation Sydney Weeds Committees Incorporated.

Vote: 7/1. All four Motions carried.

Resolved: Seek quotations for Workers Compensation and in principle agreement from the Department of Primary Industries. If the insurance and a WAP project variation (only relating to the lead agency aspect, all targets to remain the same) with DPI are deemed feasible, commence formal correspondence with the Hawkesbury River County Council and NSW Department of Primary Industries.

If the insurance is not feasible, commence formal correspondence with the General Manager of the Hawkesbury River County Council to discuss whether there are options for an alternative arrangement to engage the contractors working on behalf of the Sydney Weeds Committees.

An election was then held for the office bearers of the incorporated association:

Jonathan Sanders – elected as Chair

Steven Smith – elected as Treasurer

Matthew McNaughton – elected as Secretary (all elected unopposed)

9. Terms of Reference for the Steering Group

The draft Terms of Reference were circulated for comment.

All comments are due to info@sydneyweeds.org.au by 3rd June 2013.

10. Next Steering Group meeting

Teleconference – Date and time to be advised.

The meeting closed at 1.15pm.