



Sydney Weeds Committee

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

SWC BOARD MEETING MINUTES Tuesday 5th June 2012 at Hawkesbury River County Council

Attendance:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Jonathan Sanders | National Parks & Wildlife Service (OEH) |
| Chris Dewhurst | Hawkesbury River County Council |
| Joel Daniels | Liverpool Council |
| Jeff Hill | Woollahra Council |
| Steven Smith | Mosman Council |
| Matthew McNaughton | Camden Council |
| Matt Leary | Randwick Council |
| Gareth Debney | North Sydney Council |
| Anthony Schofield | NSW Department of Primary Industries / OHN |
| Rosanna Luca | SWC Executive Officer |

Jonathan Sanders
Chair.

Apologies:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Jillian Macintyre | Warringah Council |
| Michael Michelmore | NSW Department of Primary Industries |

Meeting Open

Jonathan Sanders opened the meeting at 10.10am, and welcomed Anthony Schofield and Gareth Debney, who were attending in place of other Board members.

Quorum Present: Yes

Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

Chris Dewhurst, Joel Daniels, Jonathan Sanders, Matthew McNaughton and Matt Leary declared that their councils/NPWS are recipients of the WAP grant funding.

1. Confirmation of Minutes from the Previous Board Meeting on 28th March 2012

The minutes from the Board meeting held on Wednesday 28th March 2012 were accepted by Chris Dewhurst. Seconded by Jeff Hill. All in favour.

2. Outstanding actions from previous Board meetings

| Action | Responsibility | Progress to date |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Letter of thanks to Ku-ring-gai and request for assistance again for 2012 ABC Expo stall | Executive Officer | No progress to date. |
| Workers Compensation insurance | Executive Officer | Completion of this action will depend on whether SWC remains as an incorporated organisation. |
| Signing of all previous Board meeting minutes and posting on SWC Members webpage | Jonathan Sanders Executive Officer | Action in progress: Rosanna Luca to ensure that all versions of the previous minutes do not say "Draft". |

Outstanding actions (continued)

| Action | Responsibility | Progress to date |
|--|---|---|
| Approach the Hawkesbury Nepean CMA about providing support for developing a new Sydney Region weed management strategy | Executive Officer Jonathan Sanders Chris Dewhurst | The SMCMA has in principle offered some seed funding towards developing a strategy during 2012-2013. We are waiting for confirmation of whether this funding will be included in the SMCMA's budget for the next financial year. Jonathan Sanders and HRCC staff recently attended a meeting convened by the Office of the Hawkesbury-Nepean, which also identified the need to have a strategic overview for aquatic weed management in Sydney. |
| Prepare information for the proposed WAP planning regional meetings, scheduled for August 2012 | Executive Officer | Action in progress. |
| Write a letter to the General Managers of Strathfield and Auburn Councils regarding non-compliance of their councils to inspect around Flemington Markets. | Jonathan Sanders Chris Dewhurst | Rosanna Luca confirmed that Flemington Markets are within the Strathfield LGA. A letter will be sent to the Strathfield Council General Manager and a followed up with a request for a meeting. DPI has produced a resource which may also assist: <i>Noxious Weeds Handbook for Councils & Councillors</i> (on DPI website) |
| Look into feasibility of expanding the Hawkesbury River County Council to take on administration of the <i>Noxious Weeds Act</i> in other local councils such as Strathfield or Auburn | Chris Dewhurst | Action in progress: There is in principle support from the HRCC to take on administration for other councils. Because Strathfield and Auburn are not contiguous councils to HRCC's area, there are some operational issues to look into further. Before progressing the action with reports to Council (HRCC), there will need to be some initial contact made with the General Managers and written support from each of their councils. |

The Board noted the progress of all outstanding actions.

3. Matters arising from the previous Board meeting on 28th March 2012

Jonathan Sanders tabled a letter just received from The Office of the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, Minister for Primary Industries (letter dated 4th June 2012).

The letter was read out at the Board meeting and it states that:

"It is reasonable for funding recipients to contract and devolve funding to other appropriate bodies to undertake activities to meet their project objectives. Each of your project partners has a signed agreement on outcomes and project delivery. This is consistent with our Weeds Action Program policy. The Weeds Action Program does not specify weeds species or who undertakes actions, just that the agreed outcomes must be delivered."

Jonathan Sanders has since confirmed with the Department of Primary Industries that the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority is not the lead agency of the Sydney Region WAP. The "funding recipient" is Sydney Weeds Committee Incorporated, which signs a Memorandum of Understanding with each organisation that receives the WAP grant funding.

It has now been confirmed that the Weeds Action Program funding can be distributed and contracted out by Sydney Weeds Committee to any organisation that can fulfill the objectives of the Sydney Region Weeds Action Program.

The letter from the Minister for Primary Industries was received and noted by the Board.

ACTION: Executive Officer to circulate a copy of the letter to all Board members.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence Out:

26th April 2012 Michael Michelmore, Invasive Species Officer
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Re: Invitation to Invasive Species Officer, Department of Primary Industries to nominate a DPI representative for the SWC Board.

Correspondence In:

4th May 2012 Michael Michelmore, Invasive Species Officer
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Re: Acceptance to SWC's invitation to provide a representative for the SWC Board.

10th May 2012 Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
Re: Notification of unsuccessful grant application submitted by SWC: "Protecting Western Sydney's Cumberland Plain Vegetation communities from the threat of African Olive"

15th May 2012 Michael Michelmore, Invasive Species Officer
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Re: Feedback from WAP Year 2 progress meeting with Executive Officer

Chris Dewhurst moved that The Board notes the correspondence sent and received. Seconded by Jeff Hill. All in favour.

5. Treasurer Report

The Balance Sheet and Profit & Loss Statement were tabled.

Current funds in the bank at 5th June 2012: \$222,000

Of this total amount, \$169,922 is remaining WAP Year 2 funds. The rest are funds generated from annual membership fees.

These remaining funds for 2011-2012 are to cover:

- Contractor salaries (Executive Officer plus GIS, Website and Bookkeeping contractors)
- GST payments to the ATO
- Proposed redirection of funds to control of new incursions
- Site visits for WAP on-ground work
- Updates and reprint of educational material (Stop the Spread, Garden Escapes booklet)
- Production of display material for 2012 ABC Gardening Expo stall

The Treasurer and Executive Officer also proposed an operating budget for 2012-2013:

INCOME

| | |
|---|------------------|
| 10% of WAP Year 3 funds for grant administration | 84,000 |
| Additional 5% of WAP Year 3 funds towards developing strategy documents, co-ordinating strategic actions and the project teams. | 42,000 |
| REC "linear reserves" project final installment ** ** Because the completion of the project has been deferred to the next financial year, the REC Committee Executive Officer has indicated that there is no guarantee that SWC will receive this final installment of \$9,000. There are sufficient funds in SWC to cover this. | 9,000 |
| Annual Membership fees Based on 36 member organisations | 54,000 |
| Total | \$189,000 |

EXPENDITURE

| | |
|--|---|
| Project Officer #1 - Weeds Committees ** 2 days per week (14 hours x \$63ph x 48 weeks) ** The proposed work plan is currently for a 3 days per week position. It can work as a 2 day pw position if some of the duties are reduced. | 42,336 (3 days pw position = an additional \$21,000) |
| Project Officer #2 - Weeds Action Program 3 days per week (21 hours x \$63ph x 48 weeks) | 63,504 |
| Annual Sydney Weeds forum - expenses | 5,000 |
| Service provider contractors (bookkeeper, website, GIS) | 24,720 |
| Site visits to check WAP funded on-ground work | 15,000 |
| Insurances | 4,000 |
| SMCMA office rent | 7,300 |
| Sundry expenses (petty cash) | 900 |
| Web hosting costs & contingency | 2,000 |
| Accountant and auditor fees | 1,500 |
| Printing (brochures, regional maps etc) | 5,000 |
| ABC Expo stall costs | 1,500 |
| Project Officers – conferences, travel, external training | \$4,000 |
| Total | \$176,760 |

Chris Dewhurst moved:

That the Board receives and notes the Treasurer Report

That the Board approves the annual operating budget for 2012-2013

Seconded by Gareth Debney. All in favour.

6. WAP Panel Report

It was proposed to allocate the remaining unallocated Year 2 WAP funds to the following:

(i) Site visits

Redirect \$15,000 WAP funds towards engaging an independent contractor to undertake a series of visits to sites where there has been investment of WAP funds for on-ground work in years 1 and 2. The intention of the site visits is to confirm the work has been done, build relationships, collect data, take photos and get an indication of the capacity out there on the ground. It was noted and agreed that these site visits are not to be "audits". SWC does not have the authority to be an auditor.

(ii) Control of Sydney wide new incursions and emerging weeds

Redirect \$80,000 WAP funds towards control of Sydney-wide new incursions and emerging new weeds at various sites across Sydney. This means providing seed funding to Local Control Authorities, Public Authorities and private land managers where there is a genuine and immediate need for financial assistance with controlling these new incursions during the most appropriate season.

It was also proposed that for the next three years (Years 3-5), a portion of the WAP funding is quarantined as a "nil tenure" component of funding, as an emergency fund to be used for known new incursions and new outbreaks. This is consistent with the highest priorities outlined in the *NSW Invasive Species Plan*. As the WAP funding usually arrives in the middle of the financial year, it will also enable us to retain a small contingency fund each year that can be distributed promptly in the event of emergencies relating to outbreaks of new incursions or emerging weeds.

Chris Dewhurst moved:

That the Board receives and notes the WAP Panel Report.

That the Board approves the roll over and expenditure of \$15,000 from the Year 2 WAP funds for site visits to a selection of on-ground sites where WAP funds were spent in Years 1 and 2.

That the Board approves the roll over and redirection of up to \$80,000 of Year 2 funds towards the control of Sydney-wide new incursions and emerging new weeds.

That the Board approves quarantining up to \$80,000 of WAP funds, each year from Years 3-5, as an emergency fund specifically towards controlling new incursions and emerging new weeds across all land tenures.*

Seconded by Matt Leary. All in favour.

*The "up to \$80,000" figure is to be indexed with CPI each year.

7. Executive Officer Report

Maps of each weeds committee region were displayed at the meeting (recently completed by the GIS officer). The maps show how the data is starting to be collated and indicating: locations of WAP Year 2 zones, high risk pathways and hot spots, overlaid with areas of remnant vegetation, waterways, LGA boundaries, regional committee boundaries etc.

The high risk weeds list is still in progress, and needs to take into account some slightly different priorities among the regions.

*Joel Daniels moved that the Board receives and notes the Executive Officer Report.
Seconded by Matthew McNaughton. All in favour.*

8. Executive Officer work plan

One of the actions from the previous Board meeting on 28th March 2012 was for the Executive Officer to prepare a work plan and highlight tasks where additional contractor support is required. Whilst preparing the detailed work plans it became clear that the demands of the current Executive Officer position far outweigh the practical capabilities within 3 days per week. Therefore an alternative structure was proposed to replace the current Executive Officer position with two new part-time positions, each with separate and clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and commencing from July 2012:

- Project Officer #1 - Sydney Weeds Committees (up to 3 days per week)
- Project Officer #2 - Weeds Action Program (3 days per week)

Both Project Officer positions are:

- Contractors
- An equitable pay scale
- Working very closely (similar to a job share arrangement)
- Accountable to the Board / or a group of representatives from each regional committee
- Based in Sydney, working from the SMCMA office (sharing the desk space)

The contract terms of the current Executive Officer position can be renegotiated to become one of the Project Officer contractor positions.

Arrangements can be made immediately to commence advertising for the second Project Officer through websites such as *NRMjobs*. The Executive Officer can co-ordinate the advertising and recruitment process, and two Board members will be involved in the interview panel and ensure that the recruitment process is undertaken according to Equal Employment Opportunity and other relevant requirements.

In addition to these two core Project Officer positions, are "other service provider contractors" who are engaged as required. Currently, these other contractors are:

- GIS officer (current requirement: 8 hours per week)
- Bookkeeper (current requirement: 2 hours per week on average)
- Website maintenance (current requirement: 2 hours per week on average)

The Executive Officer thanked Anthony Schofield for providing a lot of assistance in formulating the Project Officer work plans.

Chris Dewhurst moved:

That the Board receives and notes the report regarding the Executive Officer work plan.

That the Board approves the engagement of the two new contractors for the Project Officer positions (each position being for up to 3 days per week, and to replace the current Executive Officer position), with both Project Officer positions commencing from July 2012.

That the Board allocates up to \$2,000 towards job advertising costs.

That the Board delegates Chris Dewhurst and Jonathan Sanders to supervise the renegotiation of the Executive Officer contract terms (to become one of the Project Officers) and recruitment of the second Project Officer.

Seconded by Steven Smith. All in favour.

9. Vision and objectives

The proposed vision and objectives were circulated to all Board members. The various activities under each objective can be reviewed as needed, however the objectives should remain broad and consistent over time.

Jeff Hill moved:

That the Board receives and notes the report regarding the vision and objectives of Sydney Weeds Committee and the regional committees.

That the Board adopts the following vision and objectives for the Sydney Weeds Committee and the four regional weeds committees:

Vision

Improved weed management across all land tenures in the Sydney Region

Strategic Objectives

- 1. To prioritise and promote weed management issues across the four sub-regions.*
- 2. To support local control authorities to implement their responsibilities under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993.*
- 3. To co-ordinate the implementation, allocation and reporting of the Sydney Region Weed Action Program funding.*
- 4. To secure funding from other sources for weed management.*

Seconded by Matt Leary. All in favour

10. Sydney Region WAP targets

On 11th May 2012, the Executive Officer met with DPI representatives Michael Michelmore and Anthony Schofield regarding the interim progress report for Sydney Region WAP Year 2. The follow up response provided by DPI supports the following proposals made to the Board:

(i) Reduce the number of reportable WAP targets

A draft list of revised WAP targets was circulated, proposing to reduce the number of reportable targets from 140 to 43. Many of the targets were condensed and/or re-worded to be clearer.

(ii) Revise the figures for in-kind contributions

The in-kind contributions should only reflect activities that are a direct matching contribution to the WAP funding. SWC should not be reporting on projects, activities and weed management budgets of other organisations that are not directly involved with the WAP activities.

(iii) Ensure that the primary focus of the WAP is to manage the impacts of weed species that are still in the period of invasion and spread. This includes weed management that protects significant agricultural assets, as well as biodiversity assets, Endangered Ecological Communities etc.

To date the Sydney Region WAP has focussed primarily on asset protection of EECS (which at times has involved ongoing control of widespread weeds). The focus needs to be balanced to ensure that the WAP is an invasive species program/ weed spread prevention program, that focuses on controlling the spread of the highest risk weeds where they impact a range of areas defined by SWC as an "asset": *An area (and its values) to be protected from the threat of weed invasion and establishment. Categories: Endangered Ecological Community, Individual Threatened Species, Threatened Population, Waterway, Riparian Zone/Wetland, Wildlife Corridor, High Value Catchment and Agricultural Land.*

It was acknowledged that each sub-region in Sydney has slightly different needs for the WAP funding. Examples: capacity building for many Sydney Central councils, an African Olive containment line in SWBM region, protection of bushland corridors in Sydney North region, landholder education about Serrated Tussock in Sydney South West region.

The WAP needs maintain a balance between supporting property inspection programs, education and on-ground weed control. It also needs to be able to address both ends of the spectrum, based on what is most relevant in each sub-region:

- New weeds that are arriving (prevent spread of invasive species)
- Controlling weeds where they are invading natural areas, which are still in good condition (asset protection).

Chris Dewhurst moved:

That the Board receives and notes the report regarding the Sydney Region WAP targets.

That the Board supports the proposed list of revised Sydney Region WAP targets (the circulated list dated May 2012).

That the Board delegates the Executive Officer to apply to the Department of Primary Industries for a variation of the Sydney Region Weed Action Program, to commence from 1st July 2012 (start of WAP Year 3).

Seconded by Matthew McNaughton. All in favour.

11. The organisational structure of Sydney Weeds Committee

The Board discussed the current organisational structure and how it contributes towards the overall goal of improved weed management across the Sydney Region.

If the structure of the organisation was to be changed, it was acknowledged that there would still need to be:

- A steering committee of strategic thinking people to oversee the co-ordination of the WAP
- A team of go-to people for the Project Officers to be able to contact on a regular basis
- A constitution for how the four regional committees are governed
- A high level of co-ordination across the four regions
- A process to enable each of the four regional committees to make decisions about how the WAP funds are allocated in their region (eg. the proposed WAP planning day in August)
- A website, as an important communication tool and repository of information
- Support and positive engagement of all member organisations and associate organisations.

It was agreed to investigate whether an alternative arrangement for administering the pool of SWC funds can be established through a local council, as a "host council". Many other weeds committee regions in NSW administer their funds in this way and there is a high level of transparency within local councils through the *Local Government Act 1993*.

- An administrative fee could be negotiated with the host council to cover the additional administration and auditing requirements.
- The WAP Memorandums of Understanding would need to be re-signed between the funding recipient organisations and the host council.
- A Memorandum of Understanding will also need to be developed between the host council and the four regional weeds committees outlining responsibilities of all parties, procedures for income received and expenditure paid, authorisation for signing of cheques, procurement policies and exemptions etc

The new arrangement for hosting of SWC funds will require written confirmation via a resolution at a council meeting and/or a letter from the General Manager.

Chris Dewhurst moved:

That the Board receives and notes the report regarding the organisational structure of Sydney Weeds Committee.

That the current Board members transition to become (i) the WAP Steering Group and (ii) the support and supervision team for the Project Officers.

That the Board requests the Treasurer and Executive Officer to investigate and proceed with alternative arrangements for all funds to be transferred and administered through a host council.

That the Board either (i) completes all outstanding Board actions or (ii) agrees to delegate any incomplete actions to the relevant Chairs for completion and reporting back at the September 2012 regional committee meetings.

That the Board delegates the President to inform all member organisations and the Department of Primary Industries of the new arrangements for administering the funds.

That the Board delegates the Executive Officer/ Project Officer to arrange for re-signing of the WAP Memorandums of Understanding with the host council and the WAP partner organisations.

That the Board voluntarily cancels the Association "Sydney Weeds Committee" upon
(i) written confirmation from a host council to administer the SWC funds, and
(ii) the re-signing of all Memorandums of Understanding for the WAP funding with the host council.

Seconded by Jeff Hill. All in favour.

ACTIONS:

Executive Officer to keep the Board informed as progress is made with establishing a host council.

Executive Officer to arrange for re-signing of the WAP Memorandums of Understanding between the host council and the WAP partner organisations.

Executive Officer to draft some brief Terms of Reference for the role of the WAP Steering Group/ Project Officer support team.

The meeting closed at 12.50pm.

