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ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

Re **Namadgi National park Draft Management Plan**

Administration of the Consultation Process

This Association participated in public discussions in 2002 on use of Namadgi National Park, particularly about recreational use. We submitted comments on the 2005 Draft. And now in 2008 we have read the Report on Submissions in response to the ...Draft...

This has been a lengthy process and we feel it is unfortunate that so much time has had to be spent by citizens and the ACT public service on development of the plan. Early discussions and submissions expressed concern on the restrictions proposed on recreational use. So it is now pleasing to see in the Report on Submissions... that there is some relaxation of those restrictions proposed in the 2005 Draft to allow more flexibility in regard to some recreational activities. We cannot comment on why this has taken so long but consider what must be the overall cost regrettable.

Effectiveness of Consultation with Key Stakeholders

Changes made for Horse Riders and the Bicentennial National Trail

This Association is naturally pleased that our concerns about safety on the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) route have been recognised. Use of the Burnt Hill Fire Trail and the Grassy Creek Fire Trail, rather than the Boboyan Rd, will substantially improve safety for BNT trail users. It will improve safety also for motorists on the Boboyan Rd. (p.17 - 8(k) (i, ii, iv,v) We note that "Access to the Grassy Creek Trail will be reviewed following a trial period. Following the trial period, a review of the route may be triggered should environmental impacts, access and compliance issues arise." We would like to know what report would be used as a base for assessing impacts. The report in the PA on conditions would obviously not apply following construction of the fire trail along the Grassy Creek route. We request that any such review of the Grassy Creek Fire Trail as the BNT route be notified to this Association and the BNT (NSW) Coordinator.

Spread of Weeds by Horse Riders (p.17 - 8(k) (vi) But we are concerned that writers of the Report on Submissions... continue to believe that there is sufficient scientific evidence to support the premise that ridden horses introduce weeds. Alone amongst the recreational users of Namadgi, horses continue to be identified as spreaders of weeds. We consider it is not justified to leave in a statement in the Plan that "There is sufficient scientific evidence to support the premise that horses

introduce weeds.” or “One of the many impacts caused by horse riding is the introduction of weeds via horse droppings.” (p. 111 of the Sept 2005 Draft Plan) The 2005 Draft Management Plan itself states (p.60) that in Namadgi “Most of the weeds occur along roadsides and areas that have been disturbed through previous land use, construction works and fire.”

Review of the references quoted justifying the premise that horses introduce weeds highlight the difficulty of categorically linking weed dispersal and establishment with horse riding. Tests with horse manure in pots in glasshouses, exclusion of grazing by wild animals from landscape plots, assessment of weeds on roads and tracks used not only by horse riders, but by cyclists, walkers and vehicles all make establishing horse riding as a cause of weed spread extremely problematical. For example one of the references quoted in the Report on Submissions ... states “vehicles carry large numbers of [weed seed] species over long distances, and many bird species are known to ingest and disperse seeds...” (Vicki Weaver and Robyn Adams p. 386 *Eleventh Australian Weeds Conference Proceedings* 1996). Sara Beavis states “A direct causal link between horses and the dispersal and establishment of weeds on trails has not been established, and the impacts of horses have not been isolated from other users.” (p.114 *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management* v.12, June 2005)

We believe a more balanced approach to the subject of weed spread is necessary in the Management Plan to avoid misleading the general public.

Beth Stone

Secretary

11 April 2008