

LORD HOWE ISLAND BOARD

Business Paper

OPEN SESSION

ITEM

Lord Howe Island Rodent Eradication Project (REP) Implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board note the update to the REP.

BACKGROUND

The REP is now in Stage Three: Final planning, implementation and evaluation of the eradication plan.

Stage Three involves delivery of the eradication plan (planned for implementation in winter 2019) over an approximate three – four month period. Key elements are:

- Finalise detailed logistics and operational planning including Property Management Plans
- Assemble and train remaining resources
- Finalise construction of captive management facilities for the woodhen and currawong
- Capture of woodhens and currawongs
- Operational readiness check
- Implementation of ground and aerial baiting
- Follow up monitoring and release of woodhens and currawongs
- Maintaining an ongoing biosecurity and rodent detection monitoring network.

CURRENT POSITION

An update on elements that have changed or advanced since the previous meeting is provided below.

1) Status of Required Approvals

APVMA Permit

The Board have been advised that an appeal against the Permit issued by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has been lodged with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The APVMA have advised the Board that they stand behind their decision to

issue the permit and will defend the decision in the tribunal hearing. It is important to note that the permit remains valid during the hearing process.

Biosecurity Control Order

As per the resolution from the previous meeting, the Board have formally written to the Minister for Primary Industries requesting the issuance of a Control Order to support the project.

2) Staffing

The following actions have been undertaken since the previous meeting:

- Graeme Beech accepted a temporary role as the Assistant Project Manager – Operations and commenced on 29 Oct 2018 until 31 Aug 2019.
- Jessie Owens has accepted a temporary Clerical Officer role within the team until 29 July 2019.
- A recruitment process was undertaken to secure a Project GIS Officer. The successful candidate from the process was Dion Fabbro. Dion has now been engaged on a temporary secondment arrangement from the New Zealand Department of Conservation commencing 26 Nov 2018 until 31 Aug 2019. The agreement will allow some initial flexibility in on-island and off-island project work, before Dion formally relocates to the island in mid Jan 2019.

3) Community Engagement Update

Ecotourism update

Following the success of the 2018 ecotourism campaign, work has commenced on the development of the 2019 campaign. The team, with the Museum, Marine Parks, the Tourism Association and tourism operators and wholesalers, have:

- Reviewed the 2018 campaign for lessons learnt
- Developed a campaign framework and draft program for 2019.
- Prepared to launch the campaign at the Ecotourism Australia Conference in Townsville (26- 28 Nov 2018). Darcelle Matassoni and Ian Hutton (representing the Board and Museum respectively) have been offered speaking roles at the conference.

Community Acceptability

Jaclyn has continued discussing individual Property Management Plans (PMP) with leaseholders and tenants. At the time of writing this report, 66 of the 128 Leaseholders (some leaseholders have multiple leases) have formally signed a confidential PMP, with another 36 verbally agreeing.

4) Operational Planning

Work has continued on detailed operational planning including:

- Procurement of bait, bait pods for transport and bait stations required for the project
- Final field trials of the field data collection system incorporating high accuracy GPS and mobile devices
- Spreader bucket calibration trials
- Logistics of transport and delivery of all project equipment

- Scheduling of operational readiness checks
- Recruitment of remaining staff (predominantly ground baiting staff)
- Minor works to the captive management facility (expected to be complete Dec 2018).

The updated Operational Plan will be presented to the Island Eradication Advisory Group (IEAG) for critical review on 30 Nov 2019.

5) Budget

Actions taken since the previous meeting to address the budget shortfall include:

- Execution of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Invasive Species Council
- Issuing and assessing a Request for Quote for a Fundraising Campaign Readiness Assessment
- Developing the “case for support” to be taken to prospective philanthropic and corporate donors
- Further identification of potential donors
- Active budget management in procurement.

In pursuing philanthropic donations it is important to donors to know whether government has contributed. The following is proposed to be undertaken as soon as practical:

- The CEO to formally write to both current funders (NSW Environmental Trust and the National Landcare Program) seeking additional funds.
- Further investigation of other government funding sources.

SUMMARY

Detailed operational planning is well underway, PMPs are progressing and steps are being taken to actively address the budget shortfall.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board note the update to the REP.

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