

# Notes of the Community Working Group Meeting

## Lord Howe Island Museum Library 30/3/2016

4.30pm – 6.05 pm

Attendees: Penny Holloway (CEO LHIB Board); Anthony Wilson (LHIB Board); Andrew Walsh (LHI Board); Ian Hutton; Rob Rathgeber; Mark McKillop; Carole Rathgeber; Rodney Thompson; Esven Fenton; Therese Turner; Bronwyn Tofaeono; Helen Tiffin; Jim McFadyen; Peter Curtin

Guests: David Wendell and Beth Wurtzler (University of Cincinnati); Ben Hoffman (CSIRO).

Apologies: Barbara Ardill; Karen Wilson; Frank Reed; Beth Wilson; Jack Shick; Pam Goyen; Bert Simpson

### 1. Introductions and apologies

Penny opened the meeting, thanked everyone for attending and made introductions. Penny asked if anyone else would like to chair the meeting. No one else expressed interest.

Beth Wurtzler introduced herself as a PHD student currently on the Island.

### 2. Notes from last meeting: Action items and matters arising

#### 2.1 Notes from the last meeting

The notes were discussed and members asked for any amendments

Helen asked for amendments to comments made regarding Peter Harrison's opinions from the last meeting. Helen said that while of course everyone is entitled to an opinion, there are knowledgeable opinions and Peter Harrison's is one such where as the opinions of various members of the CWG are not-knowledgeable. Helen also commented that the Macquarie Island project only had 15-18 scientists on the Island during winter so it is not a permanent population like Lord Howe community.

Rob wanted to clarify Jack's comments about woodhens being able to access bait stations. It was agreed that it was better to ask Jack when he was in attendance. Rob also asked about the email he had sent to committee regarding bait station distances. Penny replied that we would discuss all new business shortly.

Rod wanted clarification on the woodhens eating insects and if that would then kill them. He thought Anthony had said this in the last meeting. Anthony clarified that Therese had only asked in the last meeting if brodifacoum would kill insects if they eat it, not woodhens to which Anthony had replied that they have a different blood/clotting agents in their system. Andrew also explained that insects can consume bait and therefore ingest Brodifacoum but are not susceptible to Brodifacoum poisoning. He also explained that birds can eat insects that have possibly eaten some baits but this was a minor exposure pathway. Andrew said woodhens will eat both baits and dead rodents which presented a much higher exposure pathway than consumption of insects with brodifacoum.

Helen asked Andrew for clarification on the effect on insects. Andrew said that studies he had read had not shown Brodifacoum effects on invertebrates.

Ian explained that mitigation against woodhen deaths was taking as much of the population as possible into captivity. He explained that there are approximately 200-250 woodhens and the majority of those will be caught and held in captivity during the program.

Rodney asked about fish and liver accumulation. Carole said that Jack had said that the fishing industry is no good now. Rob said that he thought Jack meant that the sharks were more of a problem now.

Carole wanted to know if accumulation of brodifacoum would change the insects' DNA or affect their endocrinology. Andrew explained that brodifacoum has a short half life in insects and excretes from the body through the faeces within a couple of months.

Andrew explained that secondary poisoning and bioaccumulation for both fish and birds were important considerations that would be addressed in the approvals process considering whether a pathway existed and the exposure concentrations.

## **2.2 Actions arising from the last meeting**

Anthony advised that an update on Henderson Island would be provided in the next month or so. Jennifer Lavers would be back on the island and could present a final report then.

Anthony supplied a paper on the Channel Islands (West Coast USA) eradication success to the group. Helen said she didn't realise there was an eradication on the Channel Islands near California and requested that papers be supplied for the Channel Islands off the UK. Anthony said he would chase that information up or the next meeting.

### **Action- Provide information or reports on Channel Island rodent program off UK.**

Anthony presented the information on how many bait stations would be required to do the whole of Lord Howe Island. The estimate is that 210,000 bait stations would be required. That is based on a bait station grid of 10x10m and over the 3 Dimensional 2,100 ha as recommended by eradication experts. Rob asked who the experts were as Mackay had recommend different spacing. Anthony replied the Island Eradication Advisory Group Members, Keith Broome and Peter McClelland for example. Rob requested names of the IEAG members. Andrew said he could provide this.

### **Action – Provide IEAG member names to CWG**

Ian suggested we put the debate about using bait stations exclusively on the island for the program to bed; it had been done to death. Esven seconded the motion. Ian then showed comparison pictures of Brush Island (one of Rob's examples of successful bait station eradications) and Lord Howe Island. Ian showed the comparison between the topography of the two islands and then showed photos of steep cliff faces of Lord Howe and asked how it would be possible to bait station those areas.

Carol asked if how bait could stay when dispersed by a spreader if bait stations could not be placed on cliffs. Ian explained that the spreader uses a motor to project bait onto the cliffs.

Rodney said that he knows a scientist who has been to the island 9 or 10 times and has taken pictures of the cliffs and said that baits will just fall down the faces of the cliffs into the water. Penny asked for the scientist's name so she could contact him. Rodney replied he wasn't going to give his name.

Rob said on Acapaca they shot pellets up into the cliffs to get them into the gaps.

Esven said that bait stations have to be serviced every 3 to 6 days and possibly more often if they are emptied of bait, and that this would not be feasible on cliffs.

David Wendell entered the meeting and gave a brief overview of his background into ground water sampling and creating a microbial transport model for the lagoon.

Penny explained that bait station distance and application depends on terrain and local conditions. Experts have been consulted to determine appropriate spacing distance on LHI for rat and mouse eradication. Rob asked who the experts were.

### **Action – Send list of peer reviewers of 2009 Eradication Plan**

### **Action- Provide expert advice on 10x10m bait station placements on Lord Howe Island.**

Carole asked about the comparison between bait stations and pellets spread aerially going into the lagoon and poisoning fish. Penny stated the program was being done to best practice in all facets of implementation.

Helen asked whether all could agree that it was not possible bait station the whole island because of the cliffs. She also added that she thought pellets would not work either. Andrew suggested that we separate the two issues and asked if we could agree that we can't do bait stations over the entire island. Some members said yes. Rob said he is not agreeing to anything and "that you are putting words in our mouths". Andrew said he was simply asking the question and people could say yes or no.

Penny moved onto Peter's actions from the last meeting and discussed points raised. Penny advised that budget and schedule update would be given in the progress update section of the meeting. Penny explained the requirements of the EP&A Act and advised that any construction works (e.g. Bird enclosures) would need assessment and consent under Part 4 of the Act. Assessment of the baiting activity will be done under Part 5 of the Act given the public interest.

Peter then asked about the number of bait stations required for each property and Penny explained that will be discussed in the Planning and Approval update.

## **3. Planning and Approvals – update on progress to date**

### **3.1 Mouse Toxicity Trial**

Andrew gave an update on the mouse toxicity trial and explained that the OEH Science team would be arriving Monday 4 April. Andrew discussed the experimental design and explained that the Animal Ethics Committee had exercised their right to get an expert opinion from Western Australia and the trials have now been given approval.

Carol asked what will happen to the mice during the trial. Andrew explained it is a no choice trial and the mice will be fed toxic bait to determine lethal bait consumption rates.

Peter asked if the Billings & Harden report could be sourced and circulated.

Carol asked whether there were any reports on the trial captive management of the woodhens. Andrew said he would follow this up.

### **Action-Source Billings and Harden and Woodhen Captive Management trial reports**

### **3.2 Chief Scientist Scope of Work**

Penny discussed the scope of work for the additional Human Health Risk Assessment proposed to be undertaken under the auspice of the NSW Chief Scientist. Andrew handed out the draft scope had been provided by the Chief Scientist's Office and explained the proposed process. He asked if the group was happy with the process and who would like to be on the assessment panel for assessing the applicants.

Helen nominated Frank Reed and Rob nominated himself.

David suggested Nick Ashbolt from University of Alberta has good experience in this area and could help in providing Australian contacts.

Penny confirmed that Frank and Rob had been selected as the group's representatives (subject to Frank's agreement to the nomination). It was agreed that CWG would provide any comments on the Chief Scientist's draft scope within one week.

### **3.3 APVMA and EPBC Act applications**

Andrew gave an update on the APVMA permit application. He outlined the different modules: Chemistry and Manufacture; Environment, Safety and Efficacy and OHS. He said that the concentration of brodifacoum, pathways and bioaccumulation have to be included in the application for assessment. Rob asked if it also looks at longer term affects. Andrew said yes.

Helen asked if the studies are only looking at endemic species. Andrew said that APVMA look at both transient and local species. Helen then asked if the group doing the assessing will come to the island and have a look. Andrew said he didn't believe the APVMA would come to the island, but they look at the application and the global scientific evidence.

Helen said she has been impressed with the sustainable energy project and how they have presented impacts to species specifically found on LHI.

Ben explained that in his experience with the APVMA they send relevant bits of applications to different experts before they make decisions. From his experience, if they require any additional information or studies, they ensure they receive them before processing an application.

Helen asked whether they assess the marine environment and if they have enough information to make an informed decision because in her opinion it's not informed because it has come from the Board. Andrew said yes they consider the marine environment and global evidence. It is their job as the Australian government regulator.

Rob asked if the CWG could see the APVMA Permit Application. Andrew said no as it there is no public exhibition for a minor use permit application.

Carole said that brodifacoum should not be broadcast over human populations so why are we applying for approval for its use. Andrew explained that APVMA have already approved the use of brodifacoum as an active constituent in Australia and have approved its use in over 70 products but not the Pestoff pellet form, which is why we need to apply for a new permit for our particular application. Andrew said the APVMA have also previously issued minor use permits for Pestoff in Australia including Macquarie island.

Rod said it is different here to Macquarie Island. Andrew agreed and reiterated that is why we need our own APVMA permit and assessment of our situation.

Penny gave a recap on the EPBC Act and what has been presented to the CWG before. Rodney asked if that will be accompanied with a risk assessment for all bird life. Andrew said yes for the APVMA but the assessment under the EPBC Act only related to Matters of National Environmental Significance. Andrew explained the process for public submissions and timeframes for comment.

Carole asked David for his opinion on the program. David said that in this type of process, poison can end up where you don't want it to be. Some poison can transport through the air as particulate matter and can end up in the ground water and on vegetable gardens through a project like this. He said these risks need to be considered.

Rob asked if the authorities would be aware of the extent of the program on the Island. Ben said in his opinion they most definitely would. Ben said the studies will be done at the highest level of detail and scrutiny.

Ian said that there had been some studies of vegetables grown on the island (possibly Jack Schick) to see if any brodifacoum was taken up.

Rodney said that he thought that currawongs and woodhens were the only two bird species we were concerned about.

Mark entered the meeting.

Peter said that if additional studies needed to be undertaken, this would blow out timelines. Rob asked if that would prevent the program going ahead.

Penny explained the current timeline aimed at winter 2017.

Carole asked David whether the brodifacoum dropped in winter with lots of rain and wind would wash out into the environment and or blow into water tanks so that people would end up drinking it. Andrew asked to put that into proper context and clarify that the program won't be dropping bait over the settlement area. Penny said that it would be unfair to put David on the spot about

the LHI program and the use of brodifacoum without having a chance to study the program in detail and consider it for himself.

Rob asked if the distance from houses for the bait drop could be nominated ie. was 40m the closest it would be dropped. Anthony said that 150m is the distance from houses that pesticide regulations allow if owners don't agree to closer application. Andrew also commented that buffer distances around houses consider the swathe width and use of the deflector arm on the spreader bucket to control bait spread direction. David suggested small scale penetration studies.

Helen asked Andrew about the species risk assessment and who determines the value of individual species such as the non-endemic ground dove and how the value component is assessed. Andrew explained that the APVMA permit process considers risk to all species present on the island and the EPBC approval process considers risks to Matters of National Environmental Significance such as Federally listed threatened, marine and migratory species. Andrew explained that Federal and State Environment Departments set the value of individual species in their listing of species. Andrew agreed to provide more information on the listing processes.

### **Action – Provide additional information on species listing process**

#### **3.4 Property Management Planning**

Penny asked Anthony to give an update on the property management planning. Anthony reported that to date we have undertaken 87 property visits; this included some churches and another 7 inspections of special leases. Some houses have multiple residents living in conjoined houses on the lease. To date, 1700 bait stations have been flagged for the settlement area (this number includes some lodges). This number will fluctuate if the program progresses to implementation because residents' circumstances may change e.g. older children, pets leaving the Island). Carole asked whether the PMP process was putting the cart before the horse until approval or the final go ahead was received. Andrew responded that the two processes should and would run concurrently and no one had yet been asked to sign a property agreement.

Andrew gave a Milestone update. Peter suggested a contingency plan be developed to show the funders that progress would continue even if the project was delayed until winter 2018.

Rob asked whether it was a consideration to use bait stations in areas where access is available instead of aerial method. Penny explained the need for quick distribution of bait into the landscape for rodent exposure.

Rodney asked if other scientists could put forward a bait station only proposal. Penny said that if anyone else wanted to put forward a different proposal for consideration they could by all means do so.

Helen wanted to know if and when lodges would be informed of when the project will go ahead as bookings for winter 2017 will commence soon. Andrew advised that information for tourism operators was important and that we are working with the Tourism Association around key messages for operators and tourists. Penny mentioned it is difficult message to develop as a final decision to proceed has not yet been made.

Rob asked for a copy of the full project schedule. Andrew said he would keep the CWG up to date with milestones and progress but there was no reason to provide the detailed electronic project management chart as it is simply an internal tool to manage the project.

Therese questioned the adverse impacts of the program on the tourism industry. Penny said it has been taken into consideration in the planning. Many lodges are closed in winter when the project will occur. Project staff will also need accommodation as there will be not only the rodent project but airport terminal upgrade project happening at the same time

Rodney said that the Board has no insurance for the program. Penny replied that the Board does have insurance under the Treasury Managed Fund which covers the Board's activities.

Rob asked whether the insurance covered a down turn in tourism and what will happen if the Board receive a claim. Penny advised that any claims on the Board's insurance would be

assessed on their merits by the insurance company. It would be the insurance company's decision whether claims were valid or not.

Carole wanted to know what will happen if residents don't want poison spread around the perimeter of their property. Penny replied that we will work with all residents on an individual basis about what is going to work for them.

Helen asked about access to houses and legal responsibility. Penny reiterated the Board's Access to Leasehold land procedure, which had been handed out at the CWG second meeting, and the powers under legislation. The Board can access properties but not houses without owner/occupier permission. Andrew said that is why we are working individually with lease holders. Rob said that access to houses without permission would require a warrant. Penny agreed that this was the case but that, in any case, the Board did not have such powers under the LHI Act.

#### 4. CWG Issues

Rob explained that he had sent out an email to CWG members with his estimated costs for bait stations in comparison with DOC costings. He also questioned the program and stated that in his view the phasmid is still the main reason why the project is progressing to implementation

#### 5. Communication

This area was not discussed as the meeting had run out of time.

**Meeting finished at 6.05 PM.**

**Next Meeting: in a month's time – date to be determined.**

