
NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Meeting No 33

MINUTES

**Plant Research Centre, Gate 2b Hartley Grove, Urrbrae
Meeting Rooms 1 and 2
Friday 4 April 2008
9.00am – 1.00pm**

OPENING

Presiding Member, Dennis Mutton opened the meeting at 9.05am., acknowledging that this meeting was the last meeting in the term of appointment for the current membership. Nominations for NRM Council have gone forward to the Minister for Environment and Conservation. Appointments to NRM Council will be made at the end of April 2008. Rachel Pfitzner was congratulated on her appointment as Business Manager to the NRM Council.

1. WELCOME

The Presiding Member acknowledged that this land that we meet on today is the traditional lands of the Kurna people and that we respect their spiritual relationship with their country. We also acknowledge the Kurna people as the custodians of the greater Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still important to the living Kurna people today.

Comments from the public will not be sought during the meeting but written submissions to the NRM Council for consideration may be made.

PRESENT

Council Members

Mr Dennis Mutton	Presiding Member	Ms Vicki-Jo Russell	Member
Ms Sharon Starick	Deputy Presiding Member	Prof Jennifer McKay	Member
Ms Wendy Bell	Member	Mr Kent Martin	Member
Ms Mikki Bouchee	Member	Ms Karina Lester	Member
Mr Maurie Vast	Member		

Australian and State Government Members

Mr Rob Freeman	Chief Executive, DWLBC	Mr Ben Bruce	Proxy for Geoff Knight, PIRSA
Mr Steve Forbes	Proxy for Allan Holmes, DEH	Mr Tony Circelli	Deputy Chief Executive, EPA
Mr Glyn Ashman	Proxy for John Ringham, SA Water		

DWLBC

Ms Rachel Pfitzner	NRMC Business Manager	Mrs Heather Walraven	Executive Assistant, NRMC
--------------------	-----------------------	----------------------	---------------------------

Apologies

Mr John Talbot	Australian Government	Mr Allan Holmes	Chief Executive, DEH
Mr John Ringham	Chief Operating Officer, SA Water	Mr Geoff Knight	Chief Executive, PIRSA

2. STRATEGIC ISSUES

2.1 *Future NRM Program – Caring for our Country*

Fraser MacLeod and Angela Noack (DWLBC) spoke to the tabled paper Caring for our Country. Fraser and Angela attended the Co-Chairs briefing on the new national Caring for our Country program in Canberra on 18 and 19 March.

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$2.25 billion in funding over the first five years (commencing 1 July 2008) to the new ongoing program. The Caring for our Country program focuses on six national priorities:

1. national reserve system
2. biodiversity and natural icons – including weed and feral animal control, threatened species
3. coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats
4. Sustainable farm practices – including Landcare
5. natural resource management in remote and northern Australia
6. community skills, knowledge and engagement

Caring for our Country will bring together delivery of four Commonwealth programs (Natural Heritage Trust, National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, National Landcare Program, Environmental Stewardship Program and Working on Country Indigenous land and environmental program). The program aims to streamline Commonwealth Government investment in NRM, doing away with the complexity of the current joint decision making process.

Under the new program, regional groups will continue to receive funding from the Commonwealth Government to assist them in delivering on natural resource management outcomes. \$636 million will be provided over the five-year life of the program as a secure base level of funding to regional bodies to invest in actions that complement and contribute to the Government's national priorities. For 2008-09, NRM regional groups will receive similar funding, no less than 60% of the annual allocation received under previous NRM programs. In the following four years, \$127.2 million per annum will be provided as guaranteed base level funding nationally for regional natural resource management with an additional \$10.8 million per annum available to further assist regional organisations in adjusting to the new arrangements.

South Australian regional NRM boards are also eligible for an additional 15% allocation in 2008-09 to assist in the transition to the new arrangements. The boards have commented on the Commonwealth Government's proposed principles for allocating this transitional funding. The NRM Boards are well on the way with their Business and Investment Plans, and so are well positioned to respond to the Commonwealth with their initial investment strategies.

In addition to the secure base-level funding for regional NRM organisations and election commitments, there is approximately \$1.1 billion available for Caring for our Country. The Commonwealth will select what it considers to be the best arrangements for delivering its national priorities. Regional NRM boards will be able to bid for this additional money along with other delivery agents. In September 2008 the Government will release an annual business plan for 2009-10 describing its priority areas for investment. During these early stages it is important to view the program separately to the funding arrangements.

Australian Government Facilitators and Indigenous Land Management Facilitators will continue to be based in each state and territory. The Commonwealth Government will not renew contracts for some facilitators i.e. in South Australia the Regional Liaison Officers and Local Government Facilitator positions will not be funded under the new program. It is considered that these activities are better managed through local

agency ownership and reporting arrangements i.e. regional NRM boards. This could be funded through the 60% annual allocation received by the boards should the boards choose to do this.

Given the importance of local government as an NRM partner and good planning to effective NRM, Vicki-Jo Russell and Mikki Bouchee raised their concerns about the loss of the Local Government Facilitator position, a statewide position unlikely to be funded through individual regional boards.

It is important for Council members to be well informed on the new program and Wendy Bell asked if the information sent to the boards could be forwarded to Council members to assist them in their role as Council Liaison Members to the boards.

Members agreed that the Council's Presiding Member meet with Minister Gago to emphasise Council's support for the program Caring for our Country and ensure the delivery of NRM priorities (particularly in a Climate Change environment) remain robust for South Australia.

Fraser MacLeod and Angela Noack will provide updates on the program Caring for our Country at future NRM Council meetings.

Action: Fraser MacLeod to forward to NRM Council members a copy of information on Caring for our Country received by the NRM boards

Action: Council Presiding Member to meet with Minister Gago in reference to the new program

10.10am Tony Circelli left the meeting

2.2 NRM Council's Business Plan Review

Rachel Pfitzner introduced the paper for the review of the NRM Council's Business Plan. Members noted that the Business Plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure that it is in line with DWLBC (being the administering body for NRM Council's budget) budgetary planning process.

The tabled paper 'NRM Council's Business Plan Review #1" provided members with further information on the performance and the progress on the goals:

1. Champion NRM through increasing visibility and strong relationships
2. Provide timely state advice to the Government on matters relevant to the condition or management of natural resources within South Australia
3. Monitor and evaluate the condition of our natural resources, NRM legislation, plans and authorities established under the NRM Act 2004

Members were asked to consider if the 10 strategic priorities (established at Councils Planning day September 2007) still reflected Council's priorities. Members were also asked to consider changing the date for Councils Strategic Planning day from September to April to come in line with DWLBC financial and budgetary cycle.

Members agreed to hold the NRM Council Strategic Planning Day April 2009.

2.3 NRM Council's 2008 Strategic Agenda

NRM Council progresses the issues of it's 10 priorities (established at Council's Planning day September 2007) through its monthly meetings. The NRM Council's priorities for 2008 are:

1. Water
2. Engagement
3. Monitoring and Evaluation
4. Drought

5. Climate Change
6. Work plan for NRM Council
7. Support regional NRM boards
8. Indigenous support
9. Development Planning
10. Review of the State NRM Plan

As a result of the Planning day, to support the progress of the priorities, planning for future strategic agenda items and advice to the Ministers (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for River Murray, Minister for Agriculture, Food & Fisheries), the Directors NRM Council Taskforce was established. Current membership includes the Presiding Member of NRM Council, the Business Manager of NRM Council and Directors from DWLBC, PIRSA and DEH. The Directors NRM Council Taskforce will also ensure that relevant business of the Inter Agency Directors NRM Group (IADG) and Chief Executive NRM Group (CE) is aligned appropriately with NRM Council's business. At IADGs March meeting it was endorsed that the Directors on IADG champion particular items of Council's priorities for 2008. The CEs group have realigned their meetings to be held three days prior to NRM Council to help facilitate this.

It was also proposed the NRM Council members identify and champion a priority issue to be an independent point of contact for strategic agenda items. Members are to notify NRM Councils Business Manager their keen interest towards any of the priorities. Drivers of other issues are also to be encouraged. Departmental champions were encouraged to contact NRM Council members who identify with the NRM Council's priority issues. Vicki-Jo Russell asked that Biodiversity be placed back on the strategic agenda. Maurie Vast asked for the Coastal and Marine Environment to be placed on the strategic agenda as it is one of the nations six priorities. Members suggested that strategic issues for NRM boards be a standing agenda item. It was agreed that members in their role as Council Liaison Member to boards progress this through the Business Manager by means of their monthly updates to the NRM Council Secretariat. Issues will then be addressed as a report to NRM Council meeting or in cases concerning more than one board (i.e. impact of water usage by Forestry now affecting not only the SE board but also KI and EP boards) as an agenda item to be considered at NRM Council meetings. How to identify NRM board strategic issues will be built into the NRM Council's Business Plan.

Members endorsed IADGs Directors champions for priority issues and the champion of a strategic issue by NRM Council members.

Action: NRM Council members to identify with the Business Manager their interest in a priority issue

Action: Biodiversity and the Coastal and Marine Environment to be placed on the NRM Council strategic agenda

Action: Identifying Regional NRM Board strategic issues to be built into the NRM Council's Business Plan

2.4 Science Technology Information Strategy for NRM

Yvonne Smith thanked Council for its out of session feedback on the questions over the direction of the strategy, presented at the Council's February meeting. The feedback was presented to the Chief Executive meeting in April for discussion. The CEs suggested that the document structure be further developed to include a strategic public document and an internal working document for NRM Research Alliance. They agreed that 'priority themes' be developed to assist with prioritisation. The CEs felt that the strategy was the responsibility of NRM Council whereas the development was

the responsibility of the NRM Research Alliance. It will be the responsibility of NRM Alliance and other stakeholders to deliver. On considering the responses from NRM Council regarding the STIS for NRM, Council members agreed that the words investment and strategy were appropriate when setting the framework. Members agreed that there was a need to prioritise the merit of the proposal. This will be considered at the STIS Priority Setting Workshop on 21 April. Council members wishing to provide further comment before 21 April are to contact Council's Business Manager.

Several options for engaging business and industry have been proposed including meetings, workshops and public presentations. Engaging business and industry will be considered at the NRM Research Alliance -Strategic Plan Planning Day 23/24 April. This engagement could be linked with the community engagement process through the NRM agencies Engaging NRM Community Capacity Steering Group

Council members congratulated Yvonne Smith and Stephanie Williams on their work.

Action: Both words investment and strategy to be used when setting the framework

Action: Council members wishing to provide comment for the workshop 21 April to contact the Business Manager

2.5 State NRM Plan Implementation project update and April 2008 Interim Progress Report

Angela Noack opened the agenda item and informed members that at the time of submitting the agenda paper not all reports had been gathered and collated.

To meet the NRM Council's request for a detailed progress report at their April meeting, NRM Agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) were asked to submit information on work being done on current projects against the strategies designated to them in Stage 1 of this project. Lead and Major contacts were requested to gather information on all programs, projects or initiatives linked to the State NRM Plan strategies. NRM Boards were asked to determine relevant strategies against their current projects rather than determining projects against strategies. This process differed slightly to that of the NRM agencies due to contacts for boards not being established in Stage 1. The project team supported and worked closely with the boards during this period. By July 2008 it is hoped that the gaps (through PIRSA) for planning and development will be filled.

Although not all agencies and NRM boards provided information on activities there is sufficient data to show how and which strategies are being implemented. Qualitative assessment of these strategies cannot be determined at this stage as this type of analysis needs collective knowledge of all Lead, Major and Minor contacts.

NRM Council members agreed that now is the time to communicate to the public the progress and achievements of the implementation of the State NRM Plan. Angela informed the meeting that there was no need to wait for the collection of all data but by picking key issues a communication could go out to the public now. Several means of communication were suggested – NRM Council's and NRM Boards newsletter, LGA regional communication publication, DWLBC Strategic Communication and Marketing group, production of a 4-6 page brochure.

The value of the report to promote partnerships across projects and identify gaps in an effort was discussed and it was suggested that a mechanism for NRM partners and key stakeholders to access more details be facilitated.

A request for completion of action plans has been sent to Lead contacts from all NRM

agencies and NGOs. Analysis of these action plans together with data from the Interim Progress Report will form the basis of the September Progress Report to NRM Council. Contacts from the regional boards will meet 10 April to find the best approach to establishing NRM board Lead and Major contacts and the preferred process for the next phase.

NRM Council members thanked Angela and her team for the comprehensive and positive report. Dennis Mutton assured Angela that she and the team have Council full support.

Action: Rachel Pfitzner to follow up on the development of a communication for the public

3. MINUTES MEETING FRIDAY 7 MARCH 2008

Agenda Item 2.2

Items for discussion with Climate Change Council to also include in first dot point:

- NRM Council to provide support to Climate Change Council –interface with government and industry on NRM adaptation and carbon offsets and how they can be progressed.

Agenda Item 2.3

Include representation from PIRSA Agriculture, Food and Wine Division.

Agenda Item 5.3

To be spelt 'feral' instead of 'ferrell'.

Agenda Item 6.5

Vick-Jo Russell to be corrected to Vicki-Jo Russell.

Following the above amendments NRM Council endorsed the minutes of the meeting held Friday 7 March 2008.

4. ACTION ITEMS NOT ADDRESSED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

NRM Council meeting 7 March 2008

Agenda Item 5.1

Completed. As this is a State whole of Government Strategy no peak bodies or stakeholders will be consulted. Members wishing to comment may address this through the Directors of the NRM agencies for feedback to Wendy Bell. Wendy agreed to provide the NRM Council members with the key findings of the Communications Workshop and NRM Council peak body representatives to notify Wendy Bell of their response to these.

Action: Feedback through Directors for Wendy Bell

Action: Wendy Bell to provide the NRM Council members with the key findings of the Communications Workshop

5. STATUTORY PROCESS MANAGEMENT

5.1 NRM (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2007 (and forward outlook for other key legislative amendments on NRM)

The Minister for Environment and Conservation is in the process of seeking Cabinet approval to draft a miscellaneous amendments bill for consultation. The proposed miscellaneous amendments bill will progress the majority of the principally, minor, recommendations included in the statutory review of the NRM Act in 2007.

Consistent with the National Water Initiative agreement the review also recommended that commercial forestry be accounted for in the consumptive pool (volume of water available for allocation) and be provided with a licensed forest water allocation that

reflects its hydrological impacts on a water resource. Cabinet approved the drafting of a separate forestry amendment bill to implement this recommendation. The proposed forestry amendment bill will provide for commercial forestry to be licensed in a region where it is shown to be having significant hydrological impacts on a prescribed resource. Currently forestry expansion in the South East is managed by a regulation that requires proposals for new or expanded commercial forestry to be referred, for direction, to the Minister for Environment and Conservation. (A limit to forestry expansion in the SE - the forest threshold was agreed in 2002). As the SE NRM Board has raised a forestry licensing proposal in recent, preliminary consultation on the draft Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan, the Minister is seeking to progress a forestry licensing amendment bill as soon as possible. The response to a question about when a forestry bill might be introduced to Parliament was that the approach to legislative drafting is currently under consideration.

A concern was raised that one of the proposed miscellaneous amendments to the NRM Act will clarify that a regional NRM plan sets the direction for all agencies in that region (in as far as that agency's activities relate to NRM functions under the NRM Act). However section 6(2) of the NRM Act requires all agencies and instrumentalities of the Crown to, as far as practicable, act consistently with an NRM plan (State or regional), so, it is suggested that including the proposed amendment in Chapter 4 will only clarify the effect of section 6(2) for those utilising the planning provisions. A question was asked regarding the proposed amendment that provides that a Water Allocation Plan must be reviewed at least once during each period of 10 years following adoption of the plan. The response provided was that this amendment is consistent with the requirements of the National Water Initiative, and would not preclude review and/or revision of Water Allocation Plans occurring as required.

Members noted the item regarding proposed and further amendments to the NRM Act 2004 and thanked Christina Shepherd for the report.

5.2 Native Vegetation Reform (DWLBC)

As a result of the submissions received during the Review of the Administration of the *Native Vegetation Act* in early 2007, the Minister for Environment and Conservation announced new directions for native vegetation in July 2007. Members noted the update on the new directions.

5.3 Office for Water Security

The Office for Water Security, established within DWLBC, became operational on 11 March 2008. It is designed to be the single policy hub for developing and coordinating strategic water policy within the South Australian Government on issues of strategies, development of comprehensive statewide security plan, National Water Initiative and National Plan for Water Security. A Water Security Council and an independent Commissioner for Water Security will be appointed.

Members noted the briefing on the new Office for Water Security and requested a further briefing at a future NRM Council meeting.

Action: Office for Water Security briefing to be future NRM Council agenda item

6. STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

6.1 Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting (MER)

Michael Deering, Knowledge and Information, DWLBC provided NRM Council with a briefing on the progress on the MER Operational Plan.

There are three components to the Operational Plan draft concept:
Component A – clear definition of purpose of the plan at a strategic level
Component B – define the NRM MER system in South Australia

Component C – description of protocols, procedures, registers, maps etc that will facilitate coordinated implementation, operation and continuous improvement

Consultation on the MER Operational Plan will begin early in the 2008-2009 financial year. The Operational Plan draft concept being a statement of purpose, framework for MER Systems and components of the MER system was endorsed by the MER Policy Group in March. The concept of a Common Indicator Pool, a coordinating and continuous improvement mechanism for indicators, was endorsed by the Chief Executive NRM Group in 2007 and earlier this year they endorsed the estuarine, coastal and marine resource condition indicators. The MER Policy Group is reviewing a more detailed statement of purpose for the Operational Plan and DWLBC is developing a draft MER system model.

A workshop to evaluate Performance Story Reporting as the basis for reporting on Goal 1 of the State NRM Plan, in accordance with the South Australian NRM Reporting and Evaluation Framework endorsed by the NRM Council in December 2007, was held on 18 March. The workshop was supported by the Australian and South Australian Governments and attended by staff from DWLBC, NRM Boards, Australian Government, EPA, DEH and PIRSA. While a number of limitations were identified, Performance Story Reporting provides a number of distinct advantages including its participatory nature and the concept of bringing multiple lines of evidence, including qualitative data. It is proposed that Performance Story Reporting will form the basis for reporting against Goal 1 of the State NRM Plan with a draft report to be delivered for Council's consideration by 30 September 2008. The South Australian State of the Environment Report will be considered in November 2008.

Action: Model for reporting framework for Goal 1 to be an agenda item NRM Councils September meeting and SoE the November meeting

Action: Model for reporting framework for Goal 1 to be an agenda item NRM Councils September meeting and SoE the November meeting

6.2 Aboriginal Issues

ASAC update

Karina Lester provided the following update on ASAC

- ASAC meeting 28 April 2008
- Looking at prioritising their workplan for the next three months
- Reviewing the ASAC budget
- Attending regional NRM meetings (N & Y – 28 July 2008)
- Adrian Simpson is acting in the interim for Eyre Peninsula board
- Resignation of Derek Walker is a great loss to ASAC
- Kangaroo Island NRM Board is seeking an indigenous representative to ASAC
- Members feel strongly that it is important for ASAC to be in the 'NRM arena'
- Concern that there is very little inclusion of aboriginal representation at NRM agency and peak body forums/workshops
- Concern that there is no indigenous representation on the Native Vegetation Council (NVC)

The Presiding Member in common agreed Karina Lester represent ASAC at Native Vegetation Council.

- Invitations to the Forum are due to go out – RSVP 13 July
- Agenda has been developed
- ASAC Members and members of the working group feel there is a good balance of representation in each region
- The Forum is receiving promotional support through DWLBC Communication team

The Presiding Member agreed with the concern raised about representation on the NRC and said there were mechanisms for ASAC to input its views.

NRM Council members were reminded that the Forum is to be held 25/26 September in Port Augusta. Council will hold their September meeting on Wednesday 24 September in lieu of Friday 5 September (October meeting will remain as scheduled). The agenda is still to be developed. It will focus on the interface of the indigenous community with NRM. Consideration is being given to a field trip to areas of natural resource management in and around Port Augusta.

Action: Mechanism for ASAC representation in the NRM arena to be considered.

6.3 Volunteer Committee update

At its February meeting Council expressed concern that the Regional NRM Boards had not been fully briefed on the NRM Volunteer Committee's recommendations in regard to future award schemes to recognise volunteers working in NRM in South Australia. The Volunteer Committee coordinated a roundtable discussion with regional board/staff representatives on 18 March 2008 to collect feedback on the proposed future structure. Boards were asked to respond to several questions regarding both a regional award scheme and the Premier's NRM Awards.

A summary of response and the NRM Volunteers Committee position on a regional recognition scheme:

"The Committee will work with regional NRM Boards to establish a process and put mechanisms in place that enables a regional recognition scheme to feed into the State recognition scheme. The Committee will provide the structure (allowing flexibility to acknowledge achievements in areas specific to a region)."

A summary of response and the NRM Volunteer Committee position on Premier's NRM Awards:

"Where appropriate and relevant remove words which imply a competitive element, use plain language, simplify the process for nomination and improve the communication process. In addition the Committee will liaise with regions to create a mechanism to recognise people providing a service as an NRM committee/board member in South Australia"

A communiqué will be developed from the NRM Volunteer Committee to the roundtable discussion group based on the recommendations endorsed by Council at this meeting.

NRM Council members endorsed the Volunteer Committee's statements and support the Committee to continue to work with boards to develop a process that enables regional volunteer recognition schemes to feed into a statewide scheme and forward to Council for endorsement. The intention to develop a communiqué was noted.

Members agreed that the stakeholders network beyond volunteers was a separate issue and needed to be discussed at a future Council meeting.

Action: Notify the NRM Volunteer Committee of Council's endorsement

6.4 Presiding Member/Member updates

Vicki-Jo Russell, NRM Council's representative to the SA SOE Steering Committee notified members that most chapters are now drafted and have received peer review. The first six have been reviewed by the steering committee, the next six are due for

review over April and the last chapters in May. Vicki-Jo explained that her editing role was both in terms of NRM and biodiversity knowledge. The report is due to be released November.

Mikki Bouchee spoke of how informative the International Salinity Forum 1-3 April was. Mikki will forward the documentation to the Council secretariat for the availability of other Council members.

Action: Make the International Salinity Forum documentation available for Council members

Dennis Mutton notified members that the Australian Landcare Council had been asked to go into recess pending the Australian Governments position on NRM advisory bodies.

7. KEY ISSUES FOR FUTURE MEETING

Refer agenda item 2.3.

8. ADVICE TO THE MINISTER

- The need to progress NRM in a Climate Change environment and the need to build better links for delivery of NRM in the region
- The importance of supporting SA State NRM Plan priorities within the emerging funding arrangements with the Commonwealth
- NRM Council's Strategic Agenda
- STIS update
- State NRM Plan implementation update
- Write separately to the Minister inviting her to the ASAC Caring for Country Forum in Port Augusta

NEXT MEETING

Friday 2 May 2008 9.00am – 1.00pm

Plant Research Centre, Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, Entry 2b, Hartley Grove, Urrbrae

Adopted at the meeting of the Natural Resources Management Council held on Friday 4 April 2008.

.....
Dennis Mutton
Presiding Member
Natural Resources Management Council