

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



TITLE: BEE KEEPING POLICY

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Beekeeping Policy

Introduction

1. The use of conservation areas by apiarists raises a number of issues which are not easily reconcilable. The apiary industry has traditionally enjoyed access to sites, especially coastal heathlands and some eucalypt forests, which are important to honey production and maintenance of hives.
2. The European honey bee is an exotic species that has adverse impacts on some native biota. A summary of the impacts of honeybees is contained in a review commissioned by Environment Australia (Paton, 1996). The review concluded that introduced honeybees can have negative, positive or neutral impacts on native plants and animals, depending on the type and abundance of native species present, the climate or season, the number of hives in an area and the frequency with which the sites are used.
3. The policy adopts a precautionary and pragmatic approach to the issue of beekeeping on Service managed land by allowing existing sites to continue but not allowing any new/additional sites.
4. Most honey in NSW is produced from Eucalypts which usually flower every 2-4 years (depending on the species and seasonal conditions). Sites are not present on all reserves in the State and in any one year it is estimated that approximately 3% of the total area managed by the Service is accessed by bees from apiary sites. In addition to this, most sites are used for a maximum of 8 weeks in any one year.

Objectives

5. To balance the Service's environmental responsibilities and the needs of the apiary industry for access to Service managed lands.
6. To provide clear guidelines in relation to the transfer of licences and responsibilities of Consentees.
7. To provide a mechanism for the relocation of sites where apiary activities may result in unacceptable environmental impacts, user conflicts or are inconsistent with park management objectives.

Scope/Application

8. This policy applies to all bee hives and apiary licences on Service managed land.

Statutory Context

9. Sites are licensed by the Service under Clause 16(2) of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Land Management) Regulation 1995*. It is an offence under Clause 16 of the *National Parks and Wildlife (Land Management) Regulation 1995* to place beehives on Service land without a licence.
10. Under Section 164 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* the Service has the authority to seize illegally placed hives.
11. A site which has a nominated Consentee constitutes an existing interest under Section 8(5) of the *Wilderness Act 1987*, will be allowed to continue, subject to an assessment of the need to relocate (see Section 33-37). Section 9 of the *Wilderness Act* also details the objectives in relation to management of wilderness areas.
12. The *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* outlines the duties of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in protecting threatened species, communities and critical habitat in New South Wales. Part 5 outlines the preparation and implementation of abatement plans to manage key threatening processes. The impact of bees may need to be considered in areas of identified critical habitat or threatened species and communities.

Policy

13. Consents are valid provided an annual fee, determined by the Director-General, is paid in advance prior to 1 January each year. The site fee will be periodically reviewed to reflect the Service's fee policy of "cost recovery".
14. The Consent is held *bona fide* for the use of the Consentee and shall not be sub-let by the Consentee. Except in declared wilderness areas, sites may be transferred to other family members, or, when an apiary business is sold, to the person who has purchased the business, provided the protocols outlined in Sections 29 - 31 are followed. Sites within wilderness areas must be relocated to areas which are not declared wilderness areas, prior to sale or transfer (see Section 29).
15. The Consent does not confer any estate or interest in the land on which the site is located or any exclusive rights to use.
16. The Consentee must be a registered beekeeper under the NSW *Apiaries Act, 1985*.
17. No additional apiary sites will be approved in areas reserved or dedicated under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974*. However, beekeeping

consents/permits current on all lands transferred to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will be recognised by the Service.

18. Where there is a need to relocate an existing site due to unacceptable environmental impacts, user conflicts or park management programs, a new location *in lieu* of the former site may be created in accordance with the relocation protocol (see Sections 33 - 37).
19. To protect wilderness values, sites within lands to be declared as wilderness under the *Wilderness Act 1987*, will be relocated to alternative sites outside the proposed wilderness wherever possible. In such cases, the Service will consult with apiarists to identify suitable alternative sites. Where suitable alternative sites are not available, sites situated in the core of a declared wilderness will be relocated to the edge of such areas. In these cases, the site is recognised as an “*existing interest*” under Section 8(5) and 8(6), *Wilderness Act, 1987*. This interest is valid for the life of the licensee.

However, the site must be relocated outside the declared wilderness area prior to sale or transfer of the apiary business (see Sections 14; 29).
20. When an apiary site becomes vacant or is surrendered, the site can be reallocated according to the guidelines outlined (see Section 32).

Procedural Guidelines

Notification of change in land tenure

21. The Service is represented on the Beekeeping Industry Consultative Committee by a senior member of staff.
22. Immediately new areas are gazetted as part of Service estate, the Executive of the NSW Apiarists’ Association shall be advised by the Service of the change in land tenure.
23. Following official notice that land subject to a beekeeping consent/permit has been transferred to NPWS, the Consentee(s) is to be notified by the Region of the change of land tenure and the need to obtain a consent from the Service.
24. Apiary sites inherited by the Service in newly gazetted areas will be subject to transitional arrangements. Where an apiarist has already paid a consent/permit fee to a previous landowner and the duration of the consent/permit is different to the Service’s cycle, a *pro rata* fee will be charged by the Service. All subsequent consent fees will be for the period 1 January to 31 December.
25. Where relocation of a site(s) is necessary for whatever reason, such relocation is negotiated with the Consentee and has to be approved by the Director-General, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, or

delegate (Regional Director). (See Sections 33 - 37)

Licensing Protocol

26. Occupation and use of sites is subject to a set of conditions annexed to the consent (Attachment 1) and any additional conditions required by the Regional Manager. These conditions relate, *inter alia*, to:
 - public liability insurance and indemnity requirements;
 - liability for damage;
 - notices and warnings;
 - vehicle access;
 - standards for keeping sites clean;
 - restrictions on use.
27. Provided there is no breach of the conditions of the consent or additional conditions, consents will continue with an annual fee to be paid in advance prior to 1 January each year.
28. The Director-General, on the recommendation of the Regional Director may vary or add to the conditions of the consent or, if there is a breach of any condition, cancel the consent by giving 28 days notice in writing to the Consentee. The vacant site is handled in accordance with Section 32.

Transfer of sites

29. When a Consentee wishes to transfer a business/site to another member of his/her immediate family (spouse, son or daughter), the Consentee shall notify the relevant NPWS Regional Manager of his/her intention, and confirm the transfer in writing once completed. Under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* and the *Wilderness Act*, sites within a wilderness area must be relocated outside the wilderness before the business can be transferred or sold (see Sections 33 –37).
30. If a Consentee dies, the family should notify the relevant NPWS Regional Manager and indicate if the site is to be surrendered, transferred to another family member, or sold.
31. When an apiarist with a current consent sells his/her business, the vendor must notify the relevant NPWS Regional Manager in writing of the person to whom the business has been sold and provide all relevant contact details. The new owner must agree to comply with all the conditions of the consent prior to the Service approving the transfer of the licence or the licence will not be transferred.

Vacant sites

32. When a site becomes vacant, surrendered or the consent is cancelled, the Service will notify the NSW Apiarists' Association. The Association will

then advertise, in industry journals and at least one major regional newspaper in the area where the site is being offered, for a new apiarist. If there is more than one interested party, the Association will run a ballot and notify the Regional Manager of the successful applicant. If no advice is provided to the Service within 6 months of the date of the letter of advice to the NSW Apiarists' Association, the site will be permanently surrendered.

Relocation Protocol

33. Any relocation will be undertaken in consultation with the Consentee and must be approved by the Regional Director, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.
34. The Service will examine the need for relocating a site where one, or more of the following factors are involved:
 - site is located within lands declared as Wilderness under the *Wilderness Act, 1987*
 - the use or efficient management of a reserve, may require relocation of the bee hives. Such situations may include, but are not restricted to, relocation to avoid areas of high visitation, or where there is a need to close/alter an access route;
 - scientific studies have shown that a particular landscape may be susceptible to adverse impacts from foraging honeybees.
35. In selecting a new site, the following factors should be considered:
 - available and suitable access for trucks;
 - potential conflicts with other users eg. visitors, concessionaires;
 - cultural considerations;
 - ecological considerations;
 - presence of threatened species which may be affected by the activities of foraging honey bees;
 - provisions of the reserve Plan of Management, where one exists;
 - likelihood of management activities in the area eg. fire and pest control activities; and
 - plant species foraged by honeybees at the existing site.
36. The following process should be followed:
 - need for relocation identified;
 - licensee notified in writing indicating the need for relocation, possible alternatives and contact person
 - alternative site determined by both parties following discussion;
 - proposal sent to the Regional Director, NPWS, for approval
 - on approval, licensee notified and provided with time frame for change of site location; and

- new site location entered onto regional file record and relevant information provided to Head Office (Coordinator, Pest Management)
37. Any disputes in relation to relocation of a site should be referred to the relevant Regional Director, NPWS for resolution. The Regional Director's decision will be final.

Illegal hives

38. When illegal hives are found on Service estate, reasonable attempts will be made to locate and notify the owner. This will include, where necessary, seeking the assistance of NSW Agriculture using apiary registration numbers, and contacting the local branch of the NSW Apiarists' Association. If these attempts are not successful the local police will be advised that the hives will be impounded.

Relevant Legislation

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974

- Section 164
- Clause 16(2), *National Parks and Wildlife (Land Management) Regulation 1995*

Wilderness Act 1987

- Section 8(5)
- Section 9

Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995

- Part 5

Relevant Documents

Paton, D.C., 1996. Overview of Feral and Managed Honeybees in Australia: Distribution, Abundance, Extent of Interactions with Native Biota, Evidence of Impacts and Future Research, Australian Nature Conservation Agency, 71 pp.

Anon, 1999. Standard conditions for the operation and management of apiary sites on NPWS estate.

Benecke, F.S., 1998. Keeping Bees on Forested Lands: A Code of Practice, NSW Apiarists' Association, 9 pp.

Contacts

NPWS

Regional Offices of NPWS. Telephone numbers of relevant regions and areas can be obtained through the NPWS Head Office switchboard Phone 02 9585 6444.

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NSW Apiarists' Association. Telephone numbers of the Executive can be obtained from NPWS Operations Unit, Field Services Division
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Policy Application and Implementation

Coordinator, Pest Management Tel: 02 9585 6651.

Policy Review and Development

Protected Areas Policy Unit, Strategic Policy Division
Phone 02 9585 6422.