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National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (SEQ) Steering Committee
Friday 4 March 2022
Teleconference
(AEDT) 10.30am – 12.00pm

MINUTES – EXTRAORDINARY MEETING 2/2022

ATTENDANCE

Attendees	Wendy Craik, Chair Jo Laduzko, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (C'wealth) Scott Charlton, Department of Primary Industries (NSW) Nigel Ainsworth, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (VIC) John van Schagen, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (WA) Marcelle O'Brien, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (TAS) John Robertson, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) (QLD) Mike Richards, External Financial Consultant Jasmyn Lynch, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (ACT)
Observers	Malcolm Letts, Deputy Director-General/Chief Biosecurity Officer, Biosecurity Queensland, (DAF) Graeme Dudgeon, General Manager (NRIFAEP) Brett Turville, Director Operations (NRIFAEP) Andrew Turley, Director Strategy (NRIFAEP) Tom Roberts, Manager, Policy (NRIFAEP) Jacqui King, Director, Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (DAF) Elissa Van Oosterhout, Department of Primary Industries (NSW)
Secretariat	Kerrian Nobbs, Senior Policy Officer (NRIFAEP)
Apologies	Anne Walters, Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT) Nathan Rhodes, Department of Primary Industries and Regions (SA) Rae Burrows, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (TAS)

The meeting opened at 10.30am (AEDT).



MAIN DISCUSSION

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees to the extraordinary Steering Committee meeting, noting Anne Walters, Rae Burrows and Nathan Rhodes as apologies.

The Chair provided an overview of the meeting scheduled to discuss and approve the national Program's 2022-23 Work Plan (for a recommendation to be made to the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee (AGSOC)), and the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST) overview provided out of session to members.

The Chair provided comments to the Program out of session on the 2022-23 Work Plan.

The following feedback was provided during the meeting:

- *NRIFAEP Strategy 2022- 2027*
 - The 'recommendation' is to endorse the content relating to the 2022-23 plan and that the information in relation to 2023-27 is for context only.
 - Triggers should be built into the KPIs in the reporting framework ie monthly and quarterly (two successive reports) rather than annually, to include forecasting of resources availability etc.
 - Scale-up process to be broken down into different elements with more objective measures.
 - The trigger for cost of local eradication could be reworded.
 - Governance of the Steering Committee to remain as is for 2022-23 with the inclusion of an epidemiologist as a member and a member of the FAST as an observer (Jacqui King).
- *NRIFAEP Response Plan FY2022-2023*
 - A stylised diagram could be incorporated under 'Eradication' header for where treatment is occurring.
 - More clarification required under 'Outbreak Controls' in relation to the operational boundary and significant detections.
 - Suggested that 'Southern Suppression Area' terminology be removed.
 - The 'Schedule of Audits' document be presented to the Steering Committee for noting.
- *Business Services*
 - Suggested amendment that current premises be reviewed prior to lease agreements expiring.
 - With the scale up, it is planned to have a dedicated financial administration team shared across the Program and the Taskforce with clear sight of transparency.
 - The issue of 'labour shortage' was discussed and the potential to open an additional depot to address this and the possibility of outsourcing 'treatment' to companies with existing pools of employees.



- List the strategies to deal with the issue for the Program in retaining staff as the Program is unable to provide permanent employment to staff with limited life funding; and the possible use of international labour.
- *Policy*
 - Suggestion to document the interaction/relationship between the national Program and the Queensland Suppression Program.
 - More detail could be added around compliance and inspections.
- *Science*
 - Suggestion to include a definition of a microsatellite.
- *Communication and Engagement*
 - Reporting could be added to second dot point within the five goals of the Communication and Engagement Strategy, ie. Encourage community fire ant surveillance and reporting.

Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce

The DAF Director-General chaired the first FAST meeting on 24 February 2022 to coordinate the components of the management and control of fire ants within the suppression area. Attendees included representatives from the local government, the Local Government Association of Queensland, DAF, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Queensland Treasury and the Nursery and Garden Industry Queensland. Feedback from attendees was positive and collaborative.

There are currently four projects underway, the Ipswich Suppression Project, the Oxley Creek Consortium, an SEQ-large landholder suppression project and a SEQ community suppression project.

The recruitment process is almost complete for the four community and engagement positions. Jacqui King will lead the taskforce activities in the Director's role.

A member of the Steering Committee will be an observer at FAST Committee meetings. Both the Taskforce and the Program will have ongoing interactions and ensure the governance is in place so that responsibilities are allocated appropriately, including cost apportionment and resources.

There were discussions about bait procurement and how that would be undertaken to ensure the Taskforce bait purchases were outside of the executive council minute.

The Steering Committee was concerned the two triggers for FAST were not measurable or immediate enough and suggested Jacqui King provide further information in respect of the FAST plan and potential triggers by the end of next week, in collaboration with the Program.

It was also suggested that the Taskforce look at the KPIs and the triggers based on the impacts if we don't suppress.

An update on the Taskforce will be included in the brief being provided to AGSOC.



OTHER BUSINESS

The spread of fire ants from the recent flood activity in South East Queensland was discussed. There has been some evidence of fire ants rafting which could cause some spread (noting most rivers with local fire ant activity flow to the east into the current suppression area), some will die off and some will go to ground into a suspended animation for a period of time until the flood waters recede. A risk assessment will be carried out to identify areas for next surveillance season and also the risk of uncontrolled movement with residents moving fire ant carriers to higher ground in flooded areas.

Brett Turville provided an update on the Program's delivery of treatment and how the rounds are progressing for this season. One helicopter performed aerial situational awareness this week to see the impact from the floods for this round of treatment and it appears the area has not been heavily impacted, which will enable the Program to continue with the remainder of the planned treatment. Further assessments will be carried out next week.

The Steering Committee:

- **AGREED** the Program will provide the Steering Committee an updated version of the NRIFAEP 2022-23 Work Plan, including funding contributions and amendments to the triggers for approval out of session.
- **AGREED** Jacqui King will provide further information in relation to the FAST plan and potential triggers to the Steering Committee, in collaboration with the Program.
- **AGREED** the Steering Committee will approve the 2022-23 Plan out of session and note the update to the FAST plan, prior to being submitted to AGSOC.
- **AGREED** the 'Schedule of Audits' document be presented to the Steering Committee at its next meeting.
- **AGREED** the Steering Committee meeting being held on 25-26 May 2022 will be a face-to-face meeting to be held in Brisbane.

Action items		Responsibility	Target	Status
1.	Provide an updated version of the NRIFAEP 2022-23 Work Plan to the Steering Committee out of session for approval prior to sending to AGSOC.	Andrew Turley / Secretariat	11 March 2022	
2.	Provide further information in relation to the FAST plan and potential triggers to the Steering Committee.	Jacqui King	11 March 2022	
3.	The NRIFAEP 2022-23 Work Plan and FAST plan be submitted to AGSOC with a covering brief.	Program / <u>DAE</u>	16 March 2022	
4.	Schedule of Audits document to be presented to the Steering Committee at its next meeting.	Andrew Turley / Secretariat	25 May 2022	



Meeting closed 12.00pm (AEDT).